BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 18

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 18, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

228 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Bible Treasury Volume 18
1. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (1) 1-21
2. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (2) 1-21
3. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (3) 1-21
4. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (4) 1-21
5. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (5) 5
6. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (6) 5
7. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (7) 5:25-26
8. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (8) 6
9. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (9)
10. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (10)
11. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (11)
12. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (12)
13. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (13)
14. Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (14)
15. Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 13:14
16. Thoughts on 2 Timothy 1:7
17. Acts 24:10-21
18. Acts 25:1-12
19. Acts 25:13-22
20. Acts 25:23-27
21. Acts 26:1-8
22. Acts 26:9-15
23. Acts 26:16-23
24. Acts 26:24-32
25. Acts 27:1-13
26. Acts 27:14-26
27. Acts 27:27-44
28. Acts 28:1-15
29. Acts 28:16-31
30. All in John 12:32
31. All Things to All Men
32. And Who It Is That Saith to Thee
33. Angels
34. Baptism of Fire
35. The Believer Entering Into God's Rest: Part 1
36. The Believer Entering Into God's Rest: Part 2
37. Biblical Criticism of the Old Testament
38. The Burden of the Cross: Part 1

39. The Burden of the Cross: Part 2
40. The Burden of the Cross: Part 3
41. Cain and Abel
42. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 13. Doctrine – Christ’s Second Coming
43. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 14. Doctrine – The Revelation Misused
44. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 15. Doctrine – The Revelation Misused
45. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 16. Doctrine – Prophets, and Apostles...
46. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 17. Doctrine – The Incarnation
47. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 18. Doctrine – The Atonement
48. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 19. Doctrine – Justification, Sanctif...
49. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 20. Doctrine – Priesthood and Sacrame...
50. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 21. Doctrine – Tithes, Etc
51. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 22. Doctrine—Symbolism
52. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 23. Conclusion
53. Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ: Part 1
54. Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ: Part 2
55. Thoughts on the Chronicles: Part 1
56. Thoughts on the Chronicles: Part 2
57. Come Unto Me
58. The Cross
59. Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising
60. Death in Atonement
61. Denial of Propitiating God by Sacrifice
62. Development (Duplicate)
63. Ecclesiastical Defilement
64. The Efficacy of Christ's Cross
65. Elimelech and Naomi
66. Eternal Punishment
67. Evolution
68. The Father Seeking Worshippers
69. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:1
70. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:2
71. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:3-5
72. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:6-8
73. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:9-13
74. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:14-19
75. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:20-23
76. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:24-25
77. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:26-27
78. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:28
79. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:29-31
80. The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:1-3

81. It Is God That Justifieth
82. The Gospel and the Church: 1
83. The Gospel and the Church: 2. Good Tidings of Great Joy
84. The Gospel and the Church: 3. The Source of the Gospel
85. The Gospel and the Church: 4. The Subject of the Gospel
86. The Gospel and the Church: 5. The Gospel
87. The Gospel and the Church: 6. Character of the Ministers of the Gospel
88. The Gospel and the Church: 7. The Gospel
89. The Gospel and the Church: 8. The Snares in the Path of Its Ministers
90. The Gospel and the Church: 9. The Church
91. The Gospel and the Church: 10. The Church
92. The Gospel and the Church: 11. Mystery of the Church
93. The Gospel and the Church: 12. What Is the Ground or Foundation of the Church?
94. The Gospel and the Church: 13. Character and Position of the Church
95. The Gospel and the Church: 14. Christian Discipline
96. The Gospel and the Church: 15. The Church
97. The Gospel and the Church: 16. Fatherly Watchfulness and Care
98. The Gospel and the Church: 17. Discipline of Christ As Son Over His House
99. The Gospel and the Church: 18. Ananias and Sapphira
100. Prof. Drummond's Greatest Thing in the World
101. Hannah
102. Hannah's Prayer
103. Hearing and Faith
104. Hebrews: Introduction
105. Hebrews 1:1-2
106. Hebrews 1:2-4
107. Hebrews 1:5-9
108. Hebrews 1:10-14
109. Hebrews 2:1-4
110. Hebrews 2:5-9
111. Hebrews 2:10-15
112. Hebrews 2:16-18
113. Hebrews 3:1-6
114. Hebrews 3:7-13
115. Hebrews 3:14-19
116. Hebrews 4:1-2
117. Hebrews 4:3-10
118. Hebrews 4:11-13
119. Hebrews 4:14-16
120. Hebrews 5:1-4
121. Hebrews 5:5-6
122. Hebrews 5:7-10

123. Hebrews 5:11-14
124. Hebrews 6:1-3
125. Hebrews 6:4-8
126. Hebrews 6:9-12
127. Hebrews 6:13-20
128. If Thou Knewest the Gift of God
129. Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture: Review
130. Joseph: Part 1
131. Joseph: Part 2
132. Joseph: Part 3
133. Joseph: Part 4
134. The Joys of Christ
135. Mr. Haslam's the Lord Is Coming
136. Luke 2:14
137. Man's Need and God's Grace
138. Thoughts on Mark 9:50
139. Thoughts on Matthew 11:27
140. Naaman the Syrian
141. Obedience and Blessing: Part 1
142. Obedience and Blessing: Part 2
143. Obedience and Blessing: Part 3
144. Obedience and Blessing: Part 4
145. Obedience and Blessing: Part 5
146. The Offerings: 1. The Burnt Offering—Leviticus 1
147. The Offerings: 2. The Meal Offering—Leviticus 2
148. The Offerings: 3. The Peace Offering—Leviticus 3
149. The Offerings: 4. The Peace Offering—Leviticus 3
150. The Offerings: 5. The Sin Offering—Leviticus 4
151. The Offerings: 6. Trespass Offering—Leviticus 5
152. The Offerings: 7. Leviticus 5—6:1-7
153. The Offerings: 8. Their Laws—Leviticus 6:8-30 - 7
154. The Offerings: 9. The Priesthood Consecrated—Leviticus 8
155. The Offerings: 10. The Priesthood Consecrated—Leviticus 8
156. On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 1
157. On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 2
158. On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 3
159. On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 4
160. Orpah and Ruth
161. Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 1
162. Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 2
163. Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 3
164. The Death of the Wife of Phinehas

165. Promise
166. The Promise of Life: Part 1
167. The Promise of Life: Part 2
168. Propitiation
169. Few Words on Propitiation or Atonement
170. The Psalms Book 1: Introduction
171. The Psalms Book 1: 3-8
172. The Psalms Book 1: 9-15
173. The Psalms Book 1: 16-18
174. The Psalms Book 1: 19-21
175. The Psalms Book 1: 22-24
176. The Psalms Book 1: 25-28
177. The Psalms Book 1: 29-31
178. The Psalms Book 1: 32-34
179. The Psalms Book 1: 35-37
180. The Psalms Book 1: 38-39
181. The Psalms Book 1: 40-41
182. Punishment and Reward
183. Rahab As Cited in Hebrews and James
184. On Receiving
185. Religious Societies: Part 1
186. Religious Societies: Part 2
187. Religious Societies: Part 3
188. The Rest, the Word, and the Priesthood
189. Samuel, the Last Judge of Israel
190. Samuel the Prophet
191. Samuel's Farewell Address
192. Saul
193. Scripture Imagery: 65. The Slave's Ear Bored, the Thirty Shekels
194. Scripture Imagery: 66. Israel As Illustrating the Principles of Divine Service
195. Scripture Imagery: 67. The Ark, the Mercy-Seat, the Sanctuary
196. Scripture Imagery: 68. The Candlestick, the Table, the Tongs
197. Scripture Imagery: 69. Boards, Bars, Sockets and Curtain of the Tabernacle
198. Scripture Imagery: 70. Coverings of the Tabernacle
199. Scripture Imagery: 71. The Brazen Altar
200. Scripture Imagery: 72. Aaron, the Priests, the Court of the Tabernacle
201. Scripture Imagery: 73. The Breastplate, the Priest's Robes
202. Scripture Imagery: 74. The Laver, the Staves of the Altar
203. Scripture Imagery: 75. The Golden Altar
204. Scripture Imagery: 76. The Incense, the Ointment, Counterfeits
205. Scripture Imagery: 77. The Golden Calf
206. Scripture Imagery: 78. The Intercession of Moses

207. Scripture Imagery: 79. Results of Moses' Intercession
208. Scripture Imagery: 80. Outside the Camp, Illumined Faces
209. Scripture Imagery: 81. Gifts and Work of the Tabernacle, the True Atlantes and C...
210. Scripture Imagery: 82. The Pillar of Cloud
211. Scripture Imagery: 83. Knops, Loops, Taches
212. Scripture Imagery: 84. Abridgment of the 2000 Years
213. Scripture Imagery: 85. Death in the Sanctuary
214. Scripture Imagery: 86. Israel's Diet, the Swine, the Hare
215. Names of God in the Psalms
216. Scripture Queries and Answers: “Baptized Into Christ”
217. Shelter From Judgment: the Soul's Start With God
218. Sin-Bearing
219. The Sin of Eli and Its Results
220. A Few Words on Things New and Old: Review
221. Thou Wouldest Have Asked of Him
222. The Trial of Jealousy
223. True Worship
224. The Two Natures in a Believer
225. The Unwritten Things Which Jesus Did
226. Names of God in the Psalms
227. The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites

Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 18

Chapter 1

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (1) 1-21

The Chronicles are by some thought to be a supplement to the preceding historical books, that is, to supply the omissions and defects supposed to be found in them. This is a denial of God as their Author. For if holy men of old were divinely inspired to write them, failure or error is impossible. To assert that the Chronicles are a mere supplement to correct what went before is to misapprehend the aim and purpose of the Holy Spirit Who has never written one book as a supplement to another, in the above sense and meaning. Each separate book of the Bible is perfect in itself, though each a necessary part to form one divine whole, and needs neither filling up nor correction. Even in the historical books the events related are never a bare record, but all are in special relation to the object the Holy Spirit has in view. And all, being under His control, are just so many steps leading to the accomplishing of His will and purpose. So it may be that many circumstances, having no direct and immediate bearing upon the object of the Spirit in the particular book, are omitted, not because they are unimportant in themselves, but that the purpose of God does not call for their mention. And these same circumstances may be most essential in another book written for another object. The true question is, What is the purpose of God in this or that book? And only when we have apprehended it, can we see why events are mentioned in the one book and not in the other, although both may be concerning the same persons and nation. Take for instance David and Bathsheba and the moral processes by which David is restored, so fully given in the Kings, and not alluded to in the Chronicles. Only one fact connected with it circumstantially is found in Chronicles, viz., that David tarried at Jerusalem when he ought to have been at the head of his army. The consequences are narrated in Kings. The purpose of God in Chronicles did not require that mention.

Yet the Chronicles are the counterpart, the complement, of the Books of Samuel and of the Kings; for complement does not imply defect in that of which it is the complement. Supplement, ordinarily, implies omissions in the thing supplemented. A perfect book or epistle may have a complement, never a supplement in the above sense and meaning. The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians are counterparts to each other, and both are perfect. We have the glories and fullness of the Head in the one; but Head implies body, and the fall privileges and blessedness of the body are given in the other: not the one Epistle supplying omissions in the other, but each perfect in itself. And the body is the fullness (complement) of Him Who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23). These Epistles are complementary to each other. So Paul speaks of filling up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ. That is, the sufferings of the body—the church—are the complement of the sufferings of Christ. Does this mean that His sufferings were not perfect?

So also the Books of Samuel and of the Kings on the one side, and the Chronicles on the other, are complementary. The former is a record of mercy and forbearance. The iniquity of the people reached its climax when they rejected God as their king, yet He forbore. It was God's mind to give them a king, and this necessarily appears in their history, as proof of God's goodness which their sin could not turn away. But it in no way lessens Israel's guilt in desiring a king like the surrounding nations, that it was the purpose of God to give them a king in His own good time. Israel would have

a king before God's man (typical) was prepared for them. The result was ruin. But the point in Samuel and the Kings seems to be the complete breakdown of man as seen in Israel; responsibility and ruin are correlatives. Now in Chronicles, where of course the ruin is as plainly read as in the former books, the point is God's predetermined bringing in of His Only-begotten, through a human line, but His only begotten Son. That is to say, His purpose is the more prominent in Chronicles. The genealogy is proof of this, and gives the key to the book. The sin and rebellion of the Kings involving the ruin of the people is met by God's purpose that His King shall reign.

The grand solvent for every apparent difficulty as to what is recorded or not is that Christ is the one Object before the Spirit of God, whether in the Bible as a whole or in each separate book. Nothing is there but what exalts Him. And He must be before our hearts if we would understand; and then we can laugh to scorn (or rather mourn over) all the futile objections of ignorant infidelity. If David and Solomon are historically more prominent in Samuel and 1 Kings, it is only because they are types of the Lord Jesus, in His rejection, than of His kingly power and glory. Suffering was David's pathway to the throne; it was the necessary path of Christ to His kingdom. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory” (Luke 24:24)? In Chronicles there is no rejected David; his history begins with the transfer of the kingdom to him and the establishment of his throne, though when the kingdom is committed to the responsibility of man, Israel becomes irretrievably ruined. And for the time the ruin is not merely apparent, but real. This, however, only for a season, so that in the end grace will be seen to provide the only stable foundation and sure basis for the accomplishing of the counsels of God. Saul's enmity, David's failures, and all to the consummated sins of the sons of Josiah, could not annul God's counsels or set aside His purpose. What a triumph for Satan if God had on account of Israel's wickedness revoked His promise to Abraham, for in his seed all the nations, not Israel alone, are to be blessed! What would have become of the blessing? Apparently all was contingent upon man's obedience and faithfulness. Really, all rested upon an unassailable foundation, God's promise, given to Abraham 430 years before the law. But if Israel made the fatal step of accepting law as the ground of inheriting blessing, man's failure can never annul the purposes of grace.

Though the people sinned till there was no remedy (save that remedy which was only as yet in God's counsel), and they were carried away captives into a foreign land, during all that dark time of disobedience and idolatry grace was constantly watching over them, and guiding the destinies of this wonderful people. And grace is, now that they are scattered and for the most part unseen by human eye, controlling the world's history for their sakes. Now Lo-ammi is written upon them with a pen of iron; the time is coming when in that place where it was said, “Ye are not My people,” there it shall be said unto them, “Ye are the sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:9). That will be when the true Anointed, the Man of God's right hand, comes, Who is not only Son of David, but also Son of man. For when grace acts in sovereign power it cannot be limited to the sphere of Israel. Such grace must be unto all. Hence the genealogy begins, not with Abraham which might suffice for a Jew, but with Adam proof that not Israel's future blessing is alone before the mind of the Holy Spirit, but Christ in His exaltation and glory. The throne of the world is His, as well as the throne of David.

The types being only of men afford much instruction over and above the great and prominent fact that God is leading His chosen man to the throne. David's trials and faith, his failures and victories,

come in by the way and are written for our learning.

His failure cannot interfere with God's purpose. Rather do they bring out more manifestly the unchangeable decree of God, that David as the great type of his greater Son must sit upon the throne of Israel. For David had done enough to be righteously thrust aside; his willingness (real or feigned) to fight under Achish against Israel was alone sufficient to have debarred him from the throne. But he was the man chosen to be type of Him Who could not fail and so there was a divine necessity that he should reign. Therefore David's failure in offering his services to Achish is not mentioned in Chronicles, nor any part of his life previous to Saul's death. Not God's grace in meeting David's failures in the path of suffering is the point, but the accomplishment of His purpose. David is king. This purpose fulfilled, and a glimpse of the glory seen in Solomon's day, when the temple was finished, and we may say consecrated by the fire of Jehovah consuming the sacrifice, His glory filling the house (2 Chronicles 7.), the proper typical aspect ceases. The exaltation of the king becomes the sphere of his responsibility. Soon the inherent disobedience and evil of man appears, and David's house and the whole nation are speedily corrupted. On Israel's throne we see man in his best estate; the glory of the greatest Gentile monarch, pales before the glory of Solomon, who truly was in honor, but where of himself he could not abide. The kings sinned and the people followed them, and God closes that period in judgment. The kingdom, so bright in Solomon's earlier days ends in Babylon, and an alien if any occupied Israel's throne afterward.

Ruin was stamped upon the kingdom long before the Babylonian captivity. For when the ten tribes were cut off through the revolt of Jeroboam, Judah, alone could in no wise answer to the thought of God respecting His King as the Son of David. Not two tribes but the whole twelve form the kingdom over which Christ the Son, of David must reign. Even if Judah had been faithful, and no evil king ever found on the throne, Christ could not be shorn of His glory in having only two tribes instead of twelve.

But in point of fact Judah became more offensive than Israel, Jerusalem more guilty than Samaria. While there were entreaty and warning, promise and threatening to Israel, but never one ray of goodness from the throne, while in Judah there were some good kings, and the channels of governmental blessings, yet we have the testimony of the prophets that Aholibah was worse than Aholah. God had His own among them. The righteous are distinguished from the wicked, but the condition of Judah as a whole appears far deeper sunken in idolatry and iniquity (see Ezekiel 23).

Idolatry was always dominant in Israel. In revolting against the house of David, the ten tribes forsook the ground of covenanted blessing. Patience waited long, and called with wondrous evidences of mercy and power in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

The signs and wonders wrought by these men were proof that they (Israel) were off the ground of God's covenant. Israel as a nation rebelled against God. Judah as a nation remained professedly true, inasmuch as they clave to the house of David, and outwardly to the temple and worship of Jehovah; yet were in heart as rebellious as the Israelites. God said of them, “This people draweth nigh with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” The hypocrisy of Judah was more hateful to God than the open apostasy of Israel. God had His remnant in both kingdoms. In Israel He had His seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal, and righteous ones were found in Judah with whom it should be well (Isaiah 3:10). Both kingdoms sinned till each filled up the measure of its iniquity:

their land given to strangers, themselves captives.

Aholibah took no warning from the fate of Aholah, but became more idolatrous. If Judah is worse than Israel, why is Judah in captivity preserved as a people? Why not dispersed and lost among the nations, as are the ten tribes? Because there was a purpose of grace to be accomplished and full judgment was delayed. God had set David upon the throne, and it was a pledge that Christ must sit there also. For Christ on the throne of David is God's center of blessing for this earthly sphere. Accordingly the tribe whence the King was to come is preserved till the appointed time when Jesus is born in Bethlehem. So this tribe is preserved while the ten are hidden in the dust of the earth, and has the prominent and sole place in the books of the Chronicles, and the family of David pre-eminent in that tribe. It is the royal tribe, and David's is the royal family. The line of true heirs, during the captivity when the Gentile was in possession of the throne, is sacredly preserved, and after the return from Babylon carried on by Matthew to the birth of Christ in Whom it ceases.

Wonderfully, yea divinely, kept are these family records, so that the title of Jesus of Nazareth to the throne might be established both legally and naturally: by law the Son of Joseph, by birth the Son of Mary. Then when the Christ has appeared Judah is overtaken in full judgment: there was no reason for further delay.

Chapter 2

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (2) 1-21

When Christ was born, a usurper was on the throne, but God has preserved the genealogy of the rightful heir of David, who is also heir of the promises made to Abraham, in whose Seed all the nations will be blessed. “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3-7). This promise was verified to Abraham as regards the former part, surely, but as a whole goes very far beyond him; it looks onward to the Seed, “which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Eternally will they be blessed who bless Him, and eternally will they be cursed who curse or despise Him and reject His salvation. Not all Israel were blessed in faithful Abraham; but in his Seed, in millennial glory, all Israel and all the nations are to be blessed. Israel will be pre-eminent in blessing, but all nations are included in the far-reaching promise.

In Luke it is not the royalty of the Son of David, but the genealogy there is traced up to Adam. Christ is presented as Son of Man in likeness of sinful flesh, but in real flesh. “The Word became flesh,” and thus He takes up the cause of lost man, for it was a too light thing to raise up only the tribes of Israel: “I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:5, 6). Messiah has special relationships with the Jew, with Israel; but, the Word having become flesh, in due time God's salvation must be to the end of the earth; His salvation cannot be limited to a few (Titus 2:11), it is “unto all.”

In Matthew, there is His royalty as from David, but as from Abraham all the promises are fulfilled in Him, for He is the Object of them all. And as regards Israel and the kingdom, it was best that he (Matthew) should not begin with Adam. In the genealogy here in Chronicles, Adam, Abraham, and David are the three salient points, each the head of a class; the first including all men, the second (Abraham) all the seed of promise, the third (David) a line of kings. As from Adam, He partook of flesh and blood (for which humanity is as true of Abraham and of David, yet faith and rule marked 157 these respectively), but that which gives the character to Adam and makes him so fatally prominent is that he FELL. As descended from Abraham, the father of the faithful, the first who lived by that faith which separates from the world, we see Jesus our Lord (who must in all things have the pre-eminence) the Head of a new race, a race marked by faith, righteousness, and a divine nature, not lying under sentence of death because of sin, but having justification of life, (Romans 5). a new line, separate and distinct from the world. As from David, not the Head of a race, but as the heir to the throne, as having the dominion not only of Israel but of the world. If separation from the world (John 17) is seen under the Abrahamic aspect, the Davidic shows that same world in subjection to Him who is alone able and worthy to reign.

Adam is the starting point, and the Holy Spirit leads on through a list of names, yet no unmeaning list, till we come to David, the type of Him who, amidst other glories, is called the last Adam, who will shortly have all things put under Him, and in whom all families of the earth shall be blessed.

The King is before the mind of the Spirit, Who hastens onward and with seven names covers the whole time from the creation to the deluge, a space computed to be nearly one thousand seven

hundred years. In all that time only two men are singled out for their faith till we come to Noah, Abel and Enoch of the old world; Noah links the old and the new, as it were, the last of the old and the first of the new, though that prime place he could not keep in honor. In Noah's sons we have the heads of the three great divisions of the human race, with characteristics so different as developed in this present day that infidels dare to deny their common blood (Acts 17:26). In Genesis, as here, the order is, Shem, Ham and Japheth; not that we can assume this to be the order of birth, for in Gen. 10:21, where Shem and Japheth are mentioned, Japheth is called the elder, and it is a question with some whether “younger son” in Genesis 9:24 refers to Ham or to his son Canaan. Be this as it may, another order than the natural is before us, for the natural order, i. e, priority of birth, is constantly departed from when it traverses the order of grace and of God's purpose of blessing; and if Japheth and his descendants are noticed first, it is but briefly and then dismissed. That which brings the children of Ham into prominence here is that they are so often in collision with the people of whom came The King.

From Gen. 10, we learn that the isles of the Gentiles are the portion of Japheth; but, if far from being prominent in the beginning, these names reappear in the prophetic record of the close of this world's history (see Ezekiel 27-39 and Revelation 20, where the names of Japheth's sons recur). They spread over their allotted portion of the earth noiselessly, hidden by their own insignificancy and in the darkness of their idolatry, unnoticed in the history of God's dealings with nations who at the first interfered with Israel (for that which makes any Gentile prominent is his having to do with Israel, whether with them or against them), but to come out in fearful prominence at the close, when the Son of David is about to make good His title to the sovereignty of the world. The sons of Ham have had their day of supremacy. The race of Japheth is now dominant, and will be a little longer. That of Shem is yet to come, when, in the person of the Jew, the glory of that race shall be manifest to all. But the Anointed of Israel must first come; for if the earth is to be blessed through the Jew, the Jew will owe his greatness to the presence of Him to Whom these genealogies lead. Until then the pride and haughtiness of Japheth will increase, and when it has reached its climax will be suddenly destroyed; for are not the first Beast, the future Emperor of the West, and the King of the North, all of the proud and domineering race of Japheth?

Then comes Ham, of whom was Nimrod. Worldly power is first seen in that line, which is now the most degraded. With him is the first mention of a kingdom (Gen. 10:10.); its beginning and its end was Babel-confusion. Man would be a power independent of God; if individually powerless, what would not combination do? Therefore they would make themselves a name and have a place of union lest they be scattered. The attempt to prevent scattering was the occasion of it. No scattering so complete and thorough, rendering intercourse impossible, as the confounding of their language: they could not “understand one another's speech.” Man away from God begins to build a city, his first city, but never finished it, “they left off to build the city, therefore is the name of it called Babel” (Gen. 11:8, 9.). Returning to Chronicles, we come to the familiar names of Canaan and his progeny. The Philistines were not of Canaan, but as descendants of Ham, were congeners; our attention is called to them that we may know the origin of these most troublesome enemies of Israel. The descendants of Canaan have special notice because it was their land that was destined for Israel.

Now we come (ver. 17) to Shem. One of his sons, Asshur, built Nineveh (Gen. 10:11), one of the cities prominent as an enemy of Israel, though the founder of the race of Shem. Thus, though

destroyed in judgment, it was nearer to Israel than Babylon, the city of Nimrod of the race of Ham. But the line of blessing did not run through Asshur, but through Arphaxad. Another event is related in connection with Shem's race, whose effects are of far wider range than the past greatness of Nineveh or of Babylon, however solemn and portentous their judgment and destruction may be. The names Shem and Arphaxad lead to Peleg, and in his days the earth was divided. Peleg lived in the time of Nimrod, when God scattered men by confounding their language. We may remark here that while in the cases of Japheth and of Ham, the Holy Spirit just records names, though Nimrod is called a mighty hunter, it is nothing but the mere fact without a word of praise or blame; when we come to Shem we are, as it were, in a higher atmosphere, we find that God is the Lord God of Shem, and the moral aspect, or character of things appears, and not merely names or history.

This dividing of the earth no doubt put an end to Nimrod's kingdom, but is not mentioned in connection with his name. The Lord God of Shem appeared in judgment upon man who was seeking to make a name in the earth. This intervention of God is in connection with the name of Peleg. The moral dealings of God are constantly seen in connection with the race of Shem, yet not with all his posterity, only with a chosen line. Joktan, Peleg's brother, has many sons to continue his line, but Peleg must wait for another occasion when his son shall appear in the renowned line that leads on to David. Besides this title to have his name recorded in this genealogy, it is associated with the judgment of God. The name of Peleg will be a continual reminder until the new heavens and the new earth of the judgment upon man through sin. Even the day of grace met the sin, and rose above the judgment in God's wise way, not by annulling the judgment, or obliterating the sin, but by giving power to the Apostles at the day of Pentecost to speak to men in their own tongues wherein they were born—to their amazement—thus proclaiming the grace of God amid the evidences of His judgment; yea, using the tokens of judgment as channels to proclaim His grace. Go where we may, the differences of tongues meet us, and proclaim God's rebuke of man's pride and ambition; and the unfinished Babel is a monument over the departed greatness—at least the potential greatness of man (Gen. 11:6).

So with Shem are connected both the judgment and the grace of God, Who is the Lord God of Shem. Previously there was but one language. Now the history of nations begins, and men soon learned to hate and fight. It is a solemn thought as we look round upon the many and diverse nations of the earth, that all these nationalities have their origin in sin and judgment. In the eternal state when the last trace of this moral ruin is effaced, the tabernacle of God will dwell not with nations but with men, nationalities will disappear.

A fresh start is made (ver. 24) and the Holy Spirit goes back again to Shem and from him direct to Abram—the same is Abraham. No collateral branches are noticed. And here is another dividing. Not of the earth as in Peleg's day but a dividing or separating from among the nations of a people by God for Himself. Judgment did the former, grace works now. The consequences of the former are wars and hatred among the nations, which will cease in the time soon to come, when “He shall judge an long many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Micah 4:3, Isa. 2:4) But the dividing which began with Abram has eternal results. The Gentiles surrounded Abraham though he lived apart from them. Israel was enclosed in a vineyard and forbidden to mingle with Gentiles. The church is by grace

separate from the world, though as to present circumstances in constant touch with it. But what will it be in heaven? no touch of evil there! And as between believers and the world we may perhaps say “between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.” Only grace is active in calling and saving.

But this re-commencement with Shem and going direct to Abram is one of the many indications that Christ—the Son of David—is the object of the Holy Spirit in this genealogy. Up to this point the chosen line has not been definitely distinguished from others. Now it is, and the call of Abram is given, the starting point of a new race in relationship with Jehovah-God, and all other nations outside.

Yet, not all his descendants are included in Abram's call. Outside the line of promise are many sons and they are noticed first. We see here a well-defined and established principle in God's ways with man, first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. The family of Ishmael, and the children of Keturah are given. Then Abraham is named again, of whom is Isaac, and from him Esau and Israel. Not Jacob, the name given at his birth, but Israel, the name afterward given when as prince he had power with God and with men, and had prevailed: the name points onward to the ultimate purpose of God. It was in his distress and fear that God gave him the name of “Israel,” a pledge to him that in no subsequent trouble would God fail to deliver him. Esau the first-born had no such title from God. He was a prosperous man; kings and dukes sprang from him. His family are given, and the place where he acquired his power. He was a descendant of the man who was called out from his kindred and country, to be separate from all peoples and to receive the promises. Esau returns to the people that Abraham left. Neither the call nor the promise was for him In his sons he rises to supreme power. This may be the reason why the sons of Seir are so abruptly brought in (see Gen. 14:6; 36:6-20, Deut. 2:12-22.) Seir was a Horite that inhabited the land and as a chief may have given his name to Mount Seir. The Horim were dispossessed by the children of Esau. “By thy sword shalt thou live,” said Isaac to his firstborn; and his became the dominant race. Yet soon the two races were blended in the persons of Eliphaz, son of Esau, and of Timna daughter of Seir: a union of one who could claim descent from Abraham with one of the race of Ham. What could the result of such a connection be but Amalek, the bitter and first enemy of Israel in the wilderness?

And where now do we see the greatest hostility to such as would be faithful to the heavenly call? Among those who, despising their birthright-separation and its privileges, have allied themselves with the world.

Chapter 3

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (3) 1-21

Amalek's hand as against the people of Jehovah is against the throne and kingdom of Jehovah. Therefore the LORD said “I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Exodus 17:14). The last phase of the world's hatred and opposition to the kingdom of Christ (before it is established in peace and power, and His throne is the throne of Jehovah) will be when the Assyrian leads his hosts to Jerusalem. But his overthrow will be complete and eternal. Amalek is the first enemy that opposes the establishment of the kingdom after the Lord has visibly led out a people for it; the Assyrian is the last before the millennium; afterward the final gathering of Gog and Magog, the host that comes against the camp or city of the saints but to be destroyed forever, their remembrance utterly put out. Do not the words “from generation to generation” include all who dare oppose Christ and His kingdom, thus stamping the name of “Amalek” upon all that is specially opposed to the kingdom of the Son of Man? Therefore the LORD hath sworn that He will have war with the generations of Amalek forever. Balaam's prophecy concerning Amalek may contain the thought that the Amalek spirit will be seen in the latest attempt of Satan against the dominion of Christ. “Amalek was the first of the nations [not in power, but in active opposition after redemption was known, typically] but his latter end shall be that he perish forever” (Numbers 24:20). If the “first of the nations” points to Satan's first attack against the people now visibly declared to be the people of God, and manifestly under His protection and guidance, may not the words “latter end” lead our thoughts to that future day when the last hostile gathering against the people of God, but gathered to meet their doom, shall be immediately followed by the casting of all enemies of Christ into the lake of fire? In both the past and the future (i. e. Israel in the wilderness, or the camp of the saints after the thousand years), it is the earthly people of God who are in view, not the church.

But we see another thing; the Lord is gathering His people for Himself, and at the same time noting their enemies. To touch them is to touch Him. And if the people are written up for blessing, so surely are their enemies marked for judgment. The adversary may escape for a time, but his day is coming; “seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” (2 Thessalonians 1:6). This may not be the highest motive to endurance during this present time, but it is one divinely given to those who with John are fellow-partakers “in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.”

Seir rose to power in the earth (verse 43) even as Nimrod, and the Horim had their dukes. Esau joined himself to them, and after a time his descendants rose apparently to greater power, for kings are named among his posterity. Violence seems to have characterized them, for not one king is succeeded by his son. As one faction prevailed over the other, so from different cities arose different kings, till (as it would appear) the kingly authority was abridged, and they were followed by dukes. And in this change of form of authority, not unseen in our day, there is a characteristic element—we might say flaw—in human power, viz., its instability. Man is unable to retain supreme and sole power in himself, and though there may be the semblance of it (as in some European countries of the present time), yet are there secret springs and influences possessing a power

which autocrats dare not disregard. At first the head may be gold, but authority becomes gradually diffused, decentralized (civilization, some say), and will until even the clay will not mingle with the iron, but dare to contend with it, and dispute its authority and power. The vox populi was never in accord with the vox Dei, and soon will be openly antagonistic. All popular commotions and combinations should be distrusted. Let Christians fear and beware.

From the fact that no son succeeded his father, some think the Edomite monarchy was elective. But this supposes sufficient power in the hands of the people to choose their own ruler—a democratic principle which we have no ground to suppose existed in those early days. Violence and lust of power were there, and bore fruit. The ambitious unscrupulous man will seek to sway the masses, and on them ride to power, but this is a different thing from an elective monarchy. What we do see in Esau's descendants, and what has characterized the world, is the contending of adverse factions for power, and where of course the strongest arm wins, God lets the world show itself, and its power, or rather lack of power, first. Then come His purpose and its firm foundation. For there were kings in Edom before any were found in Israel. The Edomite kings are gone, but God's King abideth forever. This special mention of Edom is because of their great hatred of Israel, not the least implacable of all the nations round about them, (Num. 20:14-21), which was seen long years after when the Edomite rejoiced at the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Psalm 137). On this very account they are remembered for judgment (Obadiah 1:10).

There is no name in this first chapter so prominent or so connected with the purposes of God as that of Abraham, neither that of Adam nor of Noah, standing as these do in solitary grandeur, each in his day, as the heads of the human race. Abraham is the head of a peculiar race. Only three generations are given here, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (mark, not Jacob) in the direct and chosen line (verse 34). Ishmael and Esau have been already noticed (verse 28, &c.). They are dismissed (save to notice Esau's rise to power, and connection with the Horim) and the Holy Spirit returns to Abraham (34) as the true starting-point of the peculiar race. In these three names, i.e. the names themselves as given to these three men, the promise of God is intimately interwoven. It is Abram who is called out from his country and kindred. The name “Abraham” is given, the pledge that he should be the father of many nations, and a witness of the covenant “between Me and thee and thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17). This covenant is repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26). In like manner the name “Israel” is bound up with the promise. God appeared to Jacob, and on two occasions changed his name to “Israel” (Genesis 32:28 and 35:10). Surely this genealogy is no unmeaning list of names, but where we may read the promise and the ultimate purpose of God.

Turning to the history of these men in Genesis there is a marked difference in the way God speaks of them, a difference indicative of their walk as saints. For God speaks of “Abraham” by his new name after it was once given; but of Jacob for the most part as “Jacob” not as “Israel.” Occasionally he is called Israel, and on each occasion to remind him that, notwithstanding his failures and crooked ways, God was mindful of him and faithful to His promise. Jacob trembles and fears on account of Esau. God appears, and trembling Jacob becomes Israel, a prevailing prince. Weeping Jacob sets a pillar over Rachel's grave, but as Israel pursues his journey. Jacob suffers from want of corn, but it is the sons of Israel who go into Egypt to buy. Jacob may need, but in the name of Israel lay God's pledge to supply all his need; and at the close of his life it is Israel that blesses the sons of Joseph and foretells that God will bring them all again into the land of their

fathers. In all these instances and every other, the Holy Spirit tells us, not of Jacob doing his own will, but of Israel the object of nod's care and the depositary of the promise.

May we pause to inquire why no new name is given to Isaac, as was to Isaac's father and to Isaac's son? Abraham was a faithful pilgrim on the earth, and Jacob for the greater portion of his life a failing pilgrim. But as pilgrims both had new names. Historically Isaac was a pilgrim even as they. But a higher truth was to be taught the church of God by means of Isaac. Typically Isaac is a child of resurrection; and teaches us what our place is as risen with Christ, and in Him seated in the heavenlies. No need of a new name there. But as pilgrims and children of God down here on the earth we have a new name given to each of us, that we might know how God sets a mark upon us and distinguishes us from the world, and that we may not forget that we belong to another country, even the heavenly. (Heb. 11:13-16).

Chapter 2—Esau with his kings and dukes are outside the chosen line. God's people are now in view. Not all Abraham's sons, not all Isaac's sons, but of Israel's, not one excepted. The offshoots of the elect stem Abraham, Isaac, Israel are lost in the common herd of Gentiles. Nay, even the people themselves are scarcely noticed till the KING is seen: hence the rapid run from Judah the son of Israel to David (verses 3-15). The king is presented with just enough of his line of descent to show that he is of the tribe of Judah, and he is presented in the person of David, who was chosen of God to be a type of the kingly power of Jesus the Messiah, hence for this reason, called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). The ancestry of David is the human ancestry of our Lord Jesus. Of the twelve sons of Israel, Judah takes the first place, not now to tell us of Judah, but of Him who sprang from Judah, the KING first, afterward the children of the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit hastens to present Him Who is and was ever the Object before God.

Only a list of names from Judah to David! But can we find in the whole book of God a similar space as brief as this which contains so much of grace and of God's unchangeableness in purpose on the one side, and of the vileness of man's nature on the other? For the names here given are inseparably connected with both. The crucifixion of the Lord goes infinitely beyond all in declaring the grace of God and the wickedness of man; but what do we find in this list? Names renowned in the world and honored among men? nay, but associated with the worst corruption and with disobedience to God and dishonor to His name. Like Judah himself married to a Canaanitess, take Er, Tamar, Pharez, what vileness and shame! There is a Hezron and a Boaz, and with them greatness and piety, but there is also an Achar [Achan] who is prominently marked as “the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed.”

Yet what line of the world's most glorious pedigree can be compared to this of divine choice? Their names are linked with God's purposes of glory. Ennobled by a connection with Him Whose Name alone will be exalted in the earth when the world's nobility and glory shall be forgotten, a thing of the past. But now, before the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, if we turn to Genesis 38 we see what Judah is, as he, the head of the tribe, there appears. Would not this dark but brief glimpse of Judah's domestic life have been suppressed if a good estimation of his character by man had been a necessary quality of the tribe, or at least of the head of it, from which the Lord was to come? Even the world would now cry shame upon such a man. But the Lord casts contempt upon the estimation of man.

Of no other son of Israel have we such a picture; and there is no reason to suppose Judah worse than his brethren. But the light is let in on his private life that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ when He humbled Himself to become a man might be more manifest. He chose this tribe of Judah, which is continued not through the honorable tie of marriage but through sin. Look at Pharez, the next link in the chain—a child of incest—the stream was polluted at its source. What honorable man of the world would boast of ancestry like this, with the bar sinister across his escutcheon? The heroes of paganism pretend descent from their gods. All fable and imagination, you say. Most true. But they did imagine even a celestial origin: not one would admit that he spring from the despised and the ignoble. The semi-civilized aborigines of Mexico claimed for their chiefs descent from the sun and the moon, the objects of their worship. The Brahmins claim Brahma—a sort of demi-god—as their ancestor; the Chinese boast of a quasi-celestial origin.

Nearer home we find those who having no honor of their own acquiring, claim it by inheritance. But this phase of pride so natural to man has its corrective (!) in the amazing discovery made by the wisdom of the nineteenth century that neither from the sun nor from the gods are we descended, but from an ape! And have we to choose between gods, or monkeys? Naturally one would prefer a descent from the gods and heroes of antiquity than from the grinning be-tailed ape. But such is this world's wisdom, either among the stars according to ancient fables, or from monkeys according to modern absurdities (and what did monkeys spring from?) Pride is the common source of both the ancient and the modern fable. The modern boasts of profounder wisdom which sweeps away the trash of ancient fable—a small matter—and denies the truth of God, but cannot sweep this away. The ancient fable is simply the pride of birth; the same criterion by which men estimate the value of racehorses and other cattle.

What did the Lord inherit from His human ancestry? But this is the glory of the Lord Jesus. He humbled Himself, made Himself of no reputation, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the likeness of the earth's most honorable would still have been sinful flesh, in the likeness of it. But He came in the line of Judah and Pharez, a tainted line even in the eyes of the world. What ineffable grace! Could the Son go lower? Was there a more degraded family to choose than that of Judah? And Judah is chosen! Truly He humbled Himself, and grace shines from the beginning.

Chapter 4

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (4) 1-21

With what care and precision the sons of Jesse are given, named and numbered in their order evidently to tell us that David is the seventh. He alone fills the mind of the inspired writer. The six are numbered only that David might appear the seventh, for with that is bound up the purpose of God; so that “David the seventh” has a meaning far beyond the mere numerical order that he was the seventh; and indeed, as a fact, David was the eighth son, not the seventh. Before God he was both; but in His book God is giving us His thoughts, and not here enumerating natural events.

Turn to 1 Samuel 16:10, & seqq. “Again Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.” And this one, unthought of and, in a manner, cast out from the family—for whom Samuel must pointedly ask when all the others were present—this lad keeping the sheep must be sent for, and lo! the neglected one is the chosen one. “And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” Not one of the previous seven are chosen: the youngest therefore must have been the eighth. Again we read (1 Samuel 17:12) “And he had eight sons.”

If, then, the seven are refused and the eighth chosen according to Samuel, why here in Chronicles is he numbered the seventh? Some have supposed that one of Jesse's sons died, and therefore David would be the seventh. Is this supposition satisfactory? Be that as it may, is there not a truth intimated in Samuel which is not necessary for the Holy Spirit's purpose in giving us the books of Chronicles? We know that “eight” is right in Samuel, and “seventh” in Chronicles: as divine in one as in the other; and each in perfect accordance with the truth God is there communicating. The numbers seven and eight have a symbolic significance in Scripture as well as a natural. Seven is clearly connected with rest in creation, and eight with rest in resurrection power and glory. David, being in Samuel the eighth, points to the true David who will restore all, and reign over Israel Himself as the risen Man. For rest in creation was impossible after sin came in. Eight signifies the intervention of God in grace when all is lost; Bathe coming kingdom, though it is for the earth, must have a link with resurrection, that it may be stable. That connecting link is the glorious risen Man as King. Man—Israel—could never have entered into the kingdom but for that grace, nor could the earth ever know its blessedness. The glory and the dominion will be centered in the risen Man, the eighth.

And is not the inspired account in Samuel in perfect accord with the symbolic significance of “eight?” Was it not as a resurrection from the dead when David, who for a little time was lost to Israel, hidden in the court of Achish, came into the scene of Israel's ruin? when Israel was crushed upon the mountains of Gilboa, and the Philistines triumphant? For the Israelites “forsook the cities... and the Philistines came and dwelt in them” (1 Samuel 31:7). Was he not as one risen from the dead, and, as it were, in resurrection power, leading Israel from Gilboa, the scene of ruin and death, to the possession of Mount Sion? And apart from the symbolic character of these

events, they are in themselves truly wonderful. Where in the world's history is the parallel of this so rapid rise from slavery and ruin to power and glory? And if unparalleled, is it not to convey to our minds a brief picture of a greater David who will triumph more completely over a greater enemy, and in a still more glorious fashion will redeem Israel out of all his troubles, and a nation shall be born in a day? The son of Jesse is but the type—marvelously fitted, with circumstances controlled, that the picture might be as near the future display as was consistent with God's government at the time—David was but the type of Christ, Who, as the risen Man, is the “eighth.”

But He is also God's rest in creation. And here, in connection with the earth and God's earthly people, Christ is the “seventh.” He is the Creator, and “God rested on the seventh day.” Chronicles does not give the wondrous quasi-resurrection power found in Samuel. David appears abruptly on the scene on the death of Saul, and the tribes gather to make him king; it is simply the earthly kingdom, and its establishment among men. And wonderful as this picture is, how immeasurably below the reality when the Lord shall reign in glory! What is the power of David or the splendor of Solomon compared with the millennial glory of Christ? How could it be otherwise, seeing that the honored types are only poor failing men? “Arise, O LORD, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.” “For the LORD hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it” (Psalm 132:8, 13, 14). David, the type of God's rest in His Son when He sits upon His earthly throne, is here numbered the seventh. It is God's rest in the renewed earth. But even this would not be but by One Who had passed through death, so that this seventh-day rest can only be by Christ in quality of Risen Man. How wondrously the “seventh” and the “eighth” are combined in the Person of Christ!

Satan, whose most subtle and destructive power is seen in his imitation of divine counsels, will soon bring in his man—the blasphemous parody of the purpose of God—and his man will be eighth, yet of the seven. “And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth and is of the seven and goeth into perdition” (Rev. 17). Satan's power in the world is a solemn fact even now, and will be greater then when He that letteth is gone out of the way. Now God has put bounds which the devil cannot pass, but the limit is far beyond the conception of mere man. There are some who ignore altogether the personality of the devil. But this denial of his personality is a proof of his power; he hides himself behind the proud ignorance of men (which they think wisdom) and thus blinds them, that he may the more easily ensnare and ruin them. “Devil,” they say, is a mythical and poetical personification of evil. As a necessary corollary the gospel is hid from them. “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not,” etc.. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). The mind of the unbeliever is blinded to what is plain to a believer. To hide, pervert, and deny the truth has been the aim of Satan from Eden downwards to the Jew that crucified the Lord of glory Whose words and works bore testimony that He was the Son of God, and that He was come to destroy the works of the devil. How could the Sadducees believe that He was manifested for this purpose when they did not believe in angel or spirit (Acts 23:8)? To the Sadducees of the present day, as to those of old, Satan is only a fable; but to God and the believer he is a reality, a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, a wolf that scatters (but cannot devour) the sheep of God. And if we ask why such power is permitted to him, the answer is, It is for the glory of Christ, that after Satan has done his utmost, Christ may be and must be displayed to the whole universe as the Conqueror of Satan's extremist power. He Who is now acting in grace, and giving eternal life to as many as the Father

gives Him, will soon appear in judgment. Satan will raise up a man the direct and personal antagonist of the Lord Jesus — even the Antichrist—but both he and his abettor, in whom is the power of this blinded world, will the Lord cast alive into the pit. The destruction of the enemy, as well as the salvation of believers, proclaim His glory and His power.

From Judah to David there is only a succession of names without any distinguishing mark with the exception of three, and two of these are prominent through their sin. Er, whom the Lord slew, Achar, the troubler of Israel, and Nahshon, the prince of the children of Judah. Having brought the line down to David, the Holy Spirit, as it were, pauses and notes the sons of Hezron (Esrom, Matt. 1) other than Ram (Aram, Matthew 1), i.e. to Jerahmeel, and to Chelubai, the same is called Caleb (see verses 9 and 18). The honored line passed through Ram, but his natural connections have a place in the archives of Judah. Doubtless every one named was prominent for some quality or excellence, or for some special blessing conferred which would confer still greater eminence. Hur is the son of Caleb. This is the Hur that with Aaron held up the hands of Moses when Israel fought and overcame Amalek, and was associated with Aaron in the care of the people when Moses went up the mount (Exodus 17:12). Bezaleel, grandson of Hur, was named of God and endowed with wisdom for a very special purpose, taught to make all the furniture for the tabernacle (Exodus 31). This gave greater eminence than all the riches of Jair, who had twenty-three cities, and took sixty more. But even Segub is named, though only half-brother to Ram. Is it not because of his connection with the ancestry of David, with that line which was always so choice with God that even the least affinity with it entitles to a place in these genealogies? Were not these named ones counted among God's elect ones? Would they be mentioned at all if among those who fell in the wilderness through unbelief? Unless such as Achar, whose sin brought such momentous consequences upon Israel, all whose names appear here, are among the worthies of that people. This special mention of Hezron's family and descendants is not a mere genealogical list from Judah to David where the evil take their place in successional order with the good; but these are men of renown, and while the book of God is read, their names will stand forth as of those whom God would honor.

Chapter 5

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (5) 5

" Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel." (chap. 5) As such he had a prominent place. For the firstborn, or he who stands in that place, takes precedence of the whole family, and through him the principal ancestral line is ordinarily traced. But Reuben is set aside, and the natural prominency of the birthright only sank him the lower when he lost it. When did the natural order ever maintain itself according to the righteous government of God? For so it is that the order of nature is not God's order, and nothing can meet the aberrance of nature but the sovereign mercy of God. And so it ever was since man fell. This mercy is seen in God's governmental ways; how much more in His ways of grace where as a fundamental principle, it is first "that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual"! God gave the birthright to Joseph. Yet even here, showing the sovereignty of grace, the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. Whose genealogy? Who so glorious, so exalted, as to set aside the honored line of him that had the birthright from God, and to choose another? Thus seemingly contempt is poured upon the things that men value, but, really, carrying out His own purpose.

It is the genealogy of the Chief Ruler. In the wisdom of God the birthright and the chief rule are for a brief space separated. And necessarily so for the purposes of redemption. The birthright was Christ's when He came into the world, it belongs to Him personally. But if He had assumed the chief rule then, which then could only have been in judgment—if the Lord Jesus had taken the supremacy then, which is His officially, where would be the cross? where the glory of God, the highest glory, the glory of His grace? where redemption? He came at the first to be cut off and have nothing, and withal to be hated and rejected by His own, and not to take the kingdom for when the people would have taken and carnally have made Him king, He departed from them. There was a prior, if not a deeper, question ere He could appear as Chief Ruler according to the counsels of God. It required a distinct type, such as Joseph is, to set forth the truth that the Chief Ruler, Whose was the birthright, should appear as One Whose birthright was denied. To three chosen witnesses He gave a glimpse of His own personal glory as the Only Begotten; and they have borne testimony, "and we beheld His glory, glory as of an Only-Begotten with Father" (John 1:14). But He the First Born, possessing every right in heaven and on earth, veiled His glory, for the fulfilling of the counsels of grace, and was cast out, rejected by His own people, as Joseph by his brethren.

These are the purposings of God's love and are shadowed forth from the beginning. This infinite love shines bright in the eternal counsels of God before the beginning when the Eternal Son said, "Lo I come to do Thy will, O God". And since sin came in, God in all His dealings and ways of old declares how great is His love, and how it could be righteously manifested to sinners.

Sacrifice and blood-shedding from the earliest time and all that was commanded under the law point to and have a link with the cross, without which nothing was possible for man but everlasting perdition. So necessary was the cross for the unlimited preaching of God's love to the world that even Jesus the Lord whose heart was overflowing with infinite and divine love—even He said

before He suffered, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” (Luke 12:50)—till the righteous foundation be laid.

Joseph as the ruler of Egypt is typical of the future rule and reign of Christ: how faint the type when compared with the glories revealed for the future! The power and might of the Chief Ruler and Conqueror was foretold in the same word that announced His sufferings; in Eden the Lord God said to the serpent, the great enemy, “He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel “; and before the hour of suffering came what instances of divine almighty power were seen! The triumph at the Red Sea, the victories of Joshua, of David; and the glory of Solomon, crowning all the previous triumphs and victories, present a vivid though brief picture of the future reign and dominion of the Chief Ruler, and how the serpent's head will be bruised.

But the final victory, thus assured and pledged by all these, must come after the suffering. The bruising of the heel of the Seed comes before the crushing of the Serpent's head. The cross is before the crown; the throne is set up in the shadow of the cross, and the glories of each shine out all the more. Yea, they cannot be separated, together so blended that they are one glory; even as the cherubim upon the mercy-seat gazing upon the blood-besprinkled cover were with it beaten out of the same piece of gold (Ex. 37:7). The truth is that all in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation have for their object the sufferings and glories of Christ, the rejected One but yet the Chief Ruler. And all these pictures and types are only shadows, not the very image of that divine and fullest love which had its most perfect expression in the cross, and in the glories that must follow. For all these taken separately could but faintly declare the grace and love (yea and the righteousness), which are now blended together and concentered in the person of Christ, the crucified One. We can trace their then shadowy, but now well defined, outlines in the bright light of accomplished redemption, in the cross, the staple truth of the N. T., and of the O. T. also; and with clearer eye behold the coming glory.

The first mention of birthright is in connection with one that despised it; and to his contempt for it the apostle alludes as a warning to believers “lest any man fail of the grace of God,” etc., etc. (Heb. 12:15, 16). For all in the church of God are firstborn ones, and the privileges of our birthright are inalienable, though we may if worldly minded here lose the joy, even the knowledge of them. Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage is called profane; it is as if a Christian would barter his heavenly position and character for some fancied earthly good, for present ease in this world, or to escape the reproach of Christ. Our privileges are for the present time joined with the reproach of the world; for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

“ Birthright” was one of God's landmarks for the support and maintenance of due authority and order amongst men. But the radical spirit of the present age is laboring to set this aside, as well as all else that God has given for government in this world. Esau despised and sold it. Reuben lost it. Jacob obtained it by taking advantage of Esau's necessities; but though he had given all the treasures of the world for it, something more was needed than buying it. That purchase was an empty form and of no value (did Esau know this?). Isaac was the depository of the birthright, not to do with it as he pleased, but according to God's will. All our gifts are deposits from God only to be held and used according to His will. By mean trickery and lying Jacob deceived his father, for he said “I am Esau thy firstborn”. Isaac was not deceived as to God's word; he knew that the elder was to serve the younger; but his will blinded him as to the personality of Jacob, though not

without misgiving. There is no more striking instance than this of the over-ruling hand of God: man's will seemingly successful, but God accomplishing His. To Joseph the birthright is a gift immediate from God, with no unrighteous attempt to obtain it. In dreams it was foreshadowed to him though he knew not their significance, and with a lad's wonder related them to his father and brethren. Jacob, whose experience (for he had had his dream at Bethel) saw deeper into the meaning of Joseph's dreams; yet like Isaac not obedient in heart, forgetting perhaps his own case, he, astonished, rebuked the lad but could not help pondering on them. His brethren, too, surmised the meaning and hated him. They resented the idea of Joseph being their chief. The birthright should not be his if they could prevent it; so they sold him as a slave into Egypt. It was there that the privileges and authority of the birthright were seen in him. The means they took to prevent were God's means to accomplish. Their sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to his sheaf (Gen. 42:6, etc.). Yet another dream foretells a wider sphere of dominion, for “the sun and the moon and the eleven stars” bowed to him.

So it will be in the coming day. Joseph takes rank in the family as firstborn, though not naturally so. And our Joseph is not the first man but the Second, not the first Adam but the Last. Yet is He the Firstborn, and when He appears, Israel as the sheaves of corn, the first-fruits of the earth, will make obeisance to Him.

Jacob's view of the prophetic dream seems limited to his own family. When he heard the sun and moon and eleven stars paid homage to Joseph, he said, “Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee on the earth”? The sun and the moon were, to Jacob, father and mother. But this dream goes far beyond Jacob's family, or the nation of Israel. In that bright day, Israel as the first of the nations on the earth will be to the subject Gentiles, whose honor it will be to serve the Israelites—Israel will be to them as the sun and moon and stars, the sources of power and authority. For Christ will rule from Zion, and Israel the chosen nation shall be princes in the earth, the channels of its millennial blessings.

Joseph was in actual possession of the honors of birthright when his brethren bowed to him, and when he superintended his father's burial. But his glory and honor extended beyond this, for Pharaoh commanded the Egyptians to bow the knee before him “Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only on the throne will I be greater than thou” (Gen. 41:40).

What wondrous truths are wrapped up in Joseph's dreams! For their fulfillment in his own person is but the type of a still more wonderful but blessed fulfillment in Him in Whom all the honors and glories of birthright and chief rule will be united. It was the will of God then to give the birthright to Joseph and the royalty to Judah. Therefore we read, “Judah prevailed above his brethren and of him came the chief ruler”. For a brief space both are seen in Joseph.

“ Judah prevailed.” What a gracious way of declaring God's pre-determined purpose! Historically, in what did Judah prevail so as to obtain this honor? He was one with his brethren in their hatred of Joseph. If he shrank from shedding his brother's blood, it was he who suggested his sale to the slave-dealing Midianites after Reuben had interposed to save his life. As to plotting against his birthright, they were all equally guilty, with perhaps the exception of Reuben who well knew the birthright was lost for him, and therefore would not consent to Joseph's death. Judah's prevailing is simply the will of God. Hence he prevailed, not by his goodness. The Holy Spirit has given a

sketch from his domestic, or private, life; and his character and sin are plainly told. (Gen. 38) No other of Jacob's sons is so brought out into the light. Moreover, from his evil connection sprang Pharez through whom the genealogy is traced.

Between Joseph's dreams and their fulfillment there was a period of suffering; cast out, hated by his brethren, sold as a slave to Gentiles, yet ruling over them before his brethren bow to him. There passes before our hearts One greater than Joseph; Who endured greater hatred from His own, and was by them delivered to Gentiles to be crucified; Who now is bowed to and worshipped by the called out Gentile (Acts 15:14), while the Jew is yet in the land of famine.

Chapter 6

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (6) 5

Jacob did not know the glories of Him Who was hidden under the symbols of Joseph and his dreams. He did not know that they pointed to One Who will not only be the First-born and Chief Ruler with regard to Israel, but also of all creation, One to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess. Whatever of authority there be on earth—sun, moon, stars, symbols of rule here below—must pay homage to the Supreme, the Chief Ruler, when He appears. Yea, as if earthly sphere were too limited for the extent of His dominion and the display of His glory, God saith, “Let all the angels of God worship Him”. All things in heaven, on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, must pay homage to God's great First-born.

Yet is there a birthright even higher than this, this which gives title to reign over all things above and below, the works of His hands. As First-born of creation He is necessarily “Chief Ruler”, and such the Lord Jesus was as soon as born in this world; but He was much more. Of that Child the prophet Isaiah (ix. 6) gives the glorious names, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Though to human eyes He only appeared as a helpless babe which would have fallen if His mother had not held Him, yet at that very time, apparently an unconscious babe, He was in communion with God. “Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts” (Psa. 22). And why wonder, why deny the divine Person of the Lord, whether presented to us in holy writ as the Babe in the manger, or as the wearied Man sitting on a well? Let us remember, as our heads are bowed before Him, that He is the Word that was God, and did not cease to be God when He became flesh. Were we humble in His presence, and bowed to the word which says, No man knoweth the Son but the Father, there would not be such unholy, not to say blasphemous questionings and assertions about Eternal Life. He was that all through, from His birth to His death, and could not be otherwise; for He was the Word, the eternal Word; in Him was life, i. e. the source of life, and that He might give eternal life to whomsoever came to Him, became flesh, died, and rose again. And John, who gives this wondrous fact at the beginning of his Gospel, closes his Epistle with the words, pointing (not to a “sphere,” but) to the Son, Jesus Christ, “This is the true God and Eternal Life”. He was and is the Eternal Son, and therefore personally the Eternal Life.

To return to the genealogy, He is presented as the Chief Ruler of the tribes of Israel. This was but a light thing in comparison with all the glories enwrapped in the title “Chief Ruler”. Though the title was His as born in this world, yet there was but one pathway to enter into the glory. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory” (Luke 24:26). He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9). Death was the path to these glories, but only the pathway, for He could not be holden of it.

And now as the risen Man He takes His place as the Chief Ruler over all things. But another name He has won, which crowns many other names and glories, He is the First-born from the dead. His name as the First-born of creation is merged—not lost—in that of being the First-born from the dead. And as such, the risen exalted Man, God gave Him to be Head to the church, a place more precious to Him than the throne of Israel, or of the world. Not as incarnate is He given to the church, but as the risen glorified Man, seated on the throne of God. How exalted is the church in her Head! Without death and resurrection there could be no church. Even for the stability of earthly blessing there was no other way. But the glories are distinct.

As Chief Ruler His human ancestry is given, and as the Son of David on the throne of Israel praise is waiting for Him in Zion (Psa. 65). It is the praise of millennial saints, who will worship Him in the full blaze of His official glory, when He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Herein is one distinction between millennial worship and that which the church now offers to God. They see His manifested glory, and praise. We believe His glory, and in faith worship Him before He takes the kingdom, while He is still hidden from the world, and on the throne of God. When He takes His own earthly throne, there will be worship suited to His manifested glory: not the inner court of the temple thrown open, and every believer as now entering through the rent veil. A sample (so to speak) is given of millennial worship, and a special tribe is chosen for it: the same tribe that was appointed by Moses—Levi; who in the future will stand in the same relation to the other tribes as in the time past. Only how faint the shadow, with all its splendor in Solomon's day, to that which shall be displayed when the great King is present, He Who is greater than Solomon.

In giving this genealogy, the throne and the temple are prominent before the mind of God. For both must be set up on the earth. Jesus the Lord, the Son of David, fills both. The throne is His proclaimed all through scripture. The temple is his declared as emphatically, if not so widely, in the word of God. The Psalms and the Prophets abundantly speak of the temple of the Lord, and in the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself said, “My Father's house”. We have had the throne, and Judah in connection with it. Next in promise —if not equally—is the temple, and Levi in connection with it. Not that the throne is separate from the temple, or the temple without the throne. For David—the throne—superintends the service of the temple, and arranges the order of it.

But before the tribe of Levi is given, there is a brief mention of those who were content to remain outside the promised land. They were attracted by the fertility of the land east of the Jordan, and regarded not the promise. It was not falling in the wilderness, but it was failing of the grace of God. The land of their choice might to their eyes possess every advantage, fertile and suitable for “much cattle”, but it was not the promised land. So far from laboring to enter into that rest, they pleaded to be left outside, outside that good land which Moses so longed for. As a whole Israel failed to enter; as a whole the nation came short of the glory of God, and then most of all.

Reuben and Gad (Num. 32) are the two tribes which seek an inheritance other than God had provided, and doubtless their influence drew half of Manasseh. So two and a half tribes choose independently of God. Moses rebuked them, thinking (as appears from his words) that they would not help their brethren in the war with the Canaanites. But when they assured him of their willingness to go fully armed to the war with the other tribes, Moses was pacified, and gave them the land they wished for. Nay, more, Moses said that if they went armed over Jordan, then afterward “ye shall return and be guiltless before the Lord”. Guiltless! So said Moses, but not the

Lord. On the contrary, here in 1 Chron. 5:25 the divine record is, “And they transgressed". The words of Moses convey no reproof for choosing possessions outside the promised land. But was not this their transgression? which the Holy Spirit emphatically marks. All Israel were transgressors; these are held up to view as having an evil prominence among transgressors. Even in the records of the returned captives who had themselves been carried away to Babylon on account of their own transgression, these two and a half tribes are called transgressors. “And they transgressed” points to their great sin in choosing for themselves when God had chosen for them. If these words refer only to the following: “went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land”, they were not worse in this than all the other tribes. But they are prominent here as despisers of God's gift, for evidently they thought they had chosen a better land than that which the Lord had chosen for them. Yet though they so transgressed, they are not omitted in this genealogy, for they are sons of Israel, a part of the chosen nation. But, because of this sin, only brief mention is made of them. God did not forget them while He noted their sin. He helped them in their wars because they trusted in Him. They cried to Him in their need, a sort of faith in God; but where was their obedience? where His honor?

God always hears those who put their trust in Him, and call upon Him in time of danger, even though they may be in a wrong position, and practically forget Him, when things around them seem prosperous. And is not this one of His gracious ways of rebuking our unfaithfulness?

These two and a half tribes did not cease to be Israelites; but as outside the promised land, the special privileges of the temple were lost to them, as also the consciousness, such as the other tribes might have had, that the manifested power of Jehovah in the battles with the Canaanite was for them. All their armed men went over the Jordan to help their brethren in the war, yet not to conquer an inheritance for themselves where God had chosen for them, but to return to their own choice where they made their home, not a temporary home, for there they built fenced cities for their children. As tribes, Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh did not enter the land. They became mere onlookers of the triumphs of Israel. The salutary lessons in connection with Ai, with Gibeon, &c., were only, so to say, second-hand to them. Not for them the mighty power was displayed at Jericho, which might have remained standing, so far as their possessions were concerned; not for them the victories over Adonizedek and Jabin. Not for them, as for the other tribes, did the sun and moon stand still, or the Lord send great hail-stones upon the army of the allied five kings (Josh. 10). Indirectly they partook of the resulting prosperity, for all the nations feared Israel. But God's purpose was—and is—to establish all the people of Israel in that land. This will yet be done, but, humanly speaking, these tribes frustrated that purpose in the past. God in grace rising above responsible man's failure will fulfill His purpose, and prove that, where sin abounded, grace yet more abounds.

Their beginning seemed fair; there were men of valor among them. Though renowned, there was this fatal charge against them, “And they transgressed.” They were shut out from the peculiar blessing of the land. How great their loss! Yet their loss is not the most solemn part of their disobedience, but their preference of their own liking to the goodness of God. The consequences are two-fold, moral and judicial. They went after the gods of the people of the land—they became idolaters. This was the moral consequence of their position. And the judicial is that the “God of Israel” brought upon them the king of Assyria, who carried them into captivity, far away from the land that they valued above God's land.

Perhaps it was the same time that the Assyrian overthrew the kingdom of Israel under Hoshea. Be that as it may, their tribal history is summed up in three prominent facts: they refused God's land; they went after other gods; they were carried away by Assyria. The first inevitably led to the second, and then came judgment. If their captivity be at the same time and by the same power that executed the Lord's judgment upon Israel in Hoshea's reign, why is their end so early brought before us, their beginning and their end contained in a few verses'? Of the other tribes we have the beginning, not the end—so distinctly told. The answer is found in the words, “And they transgressed”. They are dismissed seemingly before Levi is given, which had special charge of the temple, and to lead in the worship of God; as if being outside the promised land they had cut themselves off from the privileges of the temple and the protection of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of them. Sovereign grace will bring them back at the end, and Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh will stand in their lot with the other tribes, and in equal numbers (Rev. 7), at least.

From the moment of their choosing a possession, they were morally on different ground before God. To despise the promised land is a greater sin than failure in the land. This was the case of the remaining tribes, and brought down heavy judgments upon them; but the sin of despising God's land is over and above the sin of failure in the land. And God marks it, “they transgressed”.

When Joshua encouraged Israel to go and possess the land which the Lord gave them (Josh. 1), he has a different word for these transgressors; he speaks of their land as that which Moses gave them; and these go through the Jordan, that is, their warriors, for their wives and children remain behind, to fulfill their promise to Moses: the nine and half go to the war on the ground of God's promise to Israel. God's promise on the one hand, man's promise on the other. What a difference!

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (7) 5:25-26

The God of Israel stirred up the King of Assyria against them (ver. 26), “God of Israel” is significant. It is God in relationship with Israel. Israel's God resented Israel's choice of other lands than His own. It was a slight put upon His wisdom and His love, and was sure to bring judgment. The judgment might be delayed; there might even be blessing during the delay. Valiant men did arise, and their enemies were subdued. But when their cup was full, when they added idolatry to their transgression the God of Israel used the King of Assyria as His instrument of judgment.

The Lord has called His people now to a good land which is to believers what Canaan was to Israel. Canaan is not heaven by-and-by. In heaven there is rest, in Canaan there is fighting. Our Canaan is the knowledge and enjoyment of heaven's blessings while we are yet dwelling on earth. This enjoyment is inseparably bound up with practical separation from the world, and from the things of the world. The love of this world is incompatible with the love of the Father (1 John 2:15).

But to enjoy the blessings, the Jordan must be crossed. Passing through the Red sea is surely redemption. The power of the enemy was broken. Israel went through it, led by the miraculous power of God, under the efficacy of the sprinkled blood. It was the “salvation of God,” but it landed them in a desert, and there was no water. When passing through the sea they were as fugitives fleeing from the enemy, here in crossing the Jordan they are as a conquering army going to subdue and possess. But (symbolically) they are on holy ground, where all that is of the flesh must be judged as in the presence of God. Hence Gilgal. And here let us remark that circumcision is no preparation for going through the Jordan. Gilgal comes after. The knowledge that we are on the resurrection side of death ought to lead us to circumcise our hearts, that circumcision which is not made by hands, but the mortifying our members which are upon the earth. It was after Gilgal that they did eat the old corn of the land, and with believers now there must be the judgment of all that is of the flesh before we can rejoice ill heavenly blessings. Crossing the Jordan for us is complete separation practically from the world. The Lord Jesus said “they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.” This is true of every child of God now, as to his standing in Christ but to realize that position, so as to say with Paul “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” is to enter practically into that good land which is our possession, although living on the earth.

Alas, the “transgression” of the two and half tribes has been repeated by those who live in this present day, whose guilt is therefore greater, even as the spiritual blessings of the church of God are higher and greater than the earthly blessings of Israel. Do not similar consequences flow now? Then the disobedient ungrateful tribes fell into idolatry. Now not to speak of images, relics, saints so called, what of those who boast of deliverance from all these idols, but who are really enslaved by that far subtler phase of idolatry, loving and striving for the world's riches and honors, or its pleasant things? This brought these tribes into captivity to the Assyrian. And is not the world-church in captivity to the world? Are not its forms, ceremonies, ecclesiastical order, all controlled by the exigencies of the powers of the world? And the same judgment awaits it, yea a more fearful doom than overtook them. Let the predicted fall of Babylon the Great testify. But as

God raised up valiant men among these tribes, so has He raised up upright men among those who have followed in their steps. What a valiant man was Luther, and according to their light, Wesley and Whitfield, not to name others as valiant as they, to whom God gave victory.

Chapter 8

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (8) 6

Chap. 6.

The tribe of Levi is next in importance to Judah. Judah must have the first notice, for He Who came of Judah has the pre-eminence in all things. The well-being and happiness of Israel and of the whole earth depend upon His presence. Equally depends upon His presence the perfection of earthly praise and worship. It will not be then in the coming day, as it was in the wilderness, where a prophet and a priest are found; then there will be a temple, and for the temple there must be a King. And the Lord will come to His temple, and He is Prophet, Priest, and King in His own Person: as Prophet revealing God, as Priest the people's representative before God, as King providing for and appointing the order of worship according to God. And so David, as type, ordered all the temple service. The offerings upon the altar of burnt-offering, the altar of incense, the work of the most holy place and to make atonement for Israel. All this is the special function of Aaron, who has a prominence in Levi similar to David's in the tribe of Judah; and none could interfere with Aaron or his sons, or their appointed work. But each branch of the tribe of Levi had to look to David for the detail of their service, and always according to all that Moses, the servant of God, had commanded.

There is great care and minuteness discernible in the genealogy of the Levites. And this is what we might expect; for they had sole charge of the temple service. It was theirs to keep constantly before the eye of Israel the outward means of worship, to guard them from idols, for what is there of which God is more jealous than the purity of His worship? Before the Son was manifested, what was it that moved Jehovah to jealousy? What but Israel's forsaking Him and transferring their homage to idols? At the beginning of their course Jehovah declared Himself, “For thou shalt worship no other god; for Jehovah Whose name is jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14). The word is emphatic: not only is God a jealous God, but His name is Jealous. He takes this name in view of idols. If that was His name under law when commanding men to worship Him, can He be less, jealous now? Connected inseparably with the worship of God, is the worship of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Worship centers in Him; any other center makes false worship and is abomination to God. God the Father is now seeking worshippers, who are to worship Him in Spirit (? in the Spirit) and in truth. The praises of the past day were surrounded by types and shadows, God dwelling in the thick darkness, where all the value of these shadows was that they were only shadows having no light of their own. They pointed to a better thing.

Levi is dedicated to the service of God, and separated from common Israelites. No inheritance is given to them as to the other tribes. They are Jehovah's pensioners. He provides for them out of Israel's abundance. Each tribe gave a portion to the Levites, few cities from them that had less, many from those that had more.

But God's care for His holy things is manifest in His preserving thus the record of Levi's sons so minutely, and appointing to each his particular work (see Num. 3 and 4.) Of Levi's three sons. Kohath has the first place, from him Amram, then Aaron and Moses, and Miriam too is named; and

from Aaron the line of priests. These were prominent in the tribe of Levi, they were leaders of the people (Micah 6:4). Miriam led the first song, a remarkable position of honor. Aaron as high priest led the people in worship and stood before God for them. Moses the prophet led them in their journeys through the wilderness. And he stands alone in his peculiar place as prophet. Aaron had sons to succeed him in the priest's office, for that line of priesthood must continue until the appointed time. Moses looks far away into the then distant future, over the times of Samuel, and Isaiah, and of all the prophet band and sees the Prophet as his successor in the Lord Jesus Himself. Of Whom Moses by the Spirit of God says, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto Him shall ye hearken.” Yea, God Himself thus speaks, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee” (Deut. 18:15-19). “Like unto thee.” None like Moses till He came, but then how infinitely He surpassed the mediator of the old covenant!

We have Aaron's family down to the Babylonish captivity. His family was as distinct from ordinary Levites, as the Levites were from common Israelites. The priestly line is given without a break from Aaron to Jehozadak, who “went into captivity when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.” But there is in this list special mention of Azariah, “he it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem” (vi. 10). He was high priest when Uzziah was king. There were extraordinary circumstances in his day. In spite of the king's presumptuous interference, Azariah, firm and valiant for God's truth and order, resisted the king, who, censer in hand, was proceeding to burn incense. A mere time-server would have yielded to royalty. Not so Azariah: faithful and zealous for the maintenance of the established order, he went in after the king, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, valiant men, who could and would use force if necessary. There he fearlessly and as with authority says, “Not to thee, Uzziah, to burn incense... Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed.” In the list of priests Azariah stands prominent. It is honorable mention of his unflinching courage where others might have yielded. No other such instance is recorded, whether we look at the king's transgression or the priest's fidelity. God's order in His own temple must be maintained, though confusion be everywhere else. That sanctuary was a worldly one (Heb. 9:1), and is not now in existence; yet is there a heavenly sanctuary, a better tabernacle, in which God is as jealous of His order as in the past. There is order now, even when we are called to walk by faith, and not by sight. This to man is confusion, for all men have not faith. Walking by faith, unswayed by sight, constitutes the difference, truly immense, between the present time and the dispensation of law. It was necessary, and the law demanded a sacerdotal order, a tabernacle or temple, and a service to be performed in it, which would be unlawful elsewhere. All this is past for the present time; while the Lord is absent and unseen, we walk by faith which will only cease when we see Him. There is now no priestly order according to natural birth or of man's selecting, but the Lord Jesus as Master calling and appointing whom He will from among the lowly and poor as from the rich, the unlearned as from scholars. And He gave “some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” He divides among them the work, and bestows His gifts as it pleases Him. It would be inconsistent with the walk of faith if there were a caste known by birth or by outward garb who were in a nearer position to God, who had a call or place of nearness exclusive of other believers. There was such a place in Israel. No such exclusive place is now in the church of God. The believers are children of God, are priests of God, and have access to the Father, as they have the Holy Ghost.

The ruin of the professing church is not more apparent in anything than in men's going back to the old thing, turning again to the beggarly elements of the world (Gal. 4:9). To take up these is to reunite the torn veil which was rent in twain when Jesus our Lord accomplished redemption on the cross. The will of man ever contrary to God seeks to re-establish that which God has set aside, and places a barrier between God the Father and His own children. Where is access to the Father if a self-asserted priest must intervene? But this is Christendom, whether we look at one system or another, whether the autocratic, the oligarchic, or the democratic aspect prevail, it is the will and order of man, which is high treason against the Lord.

The church is not left without order, but it is God's; and the single-eyed believer may surely learn it from God's word. Alas! what we see advancing with rapid strides in the secular world, and in the religious, even attempts to show itself in the assembly of God. May all saints of God be preserved from the spirit of self-exaltation which is so closely connected with the spirit of infidelity. It is the sure precursor of ruin for that in which it is found. Like the raging waves which foam out their own shame. Human power and order may for a while force a calm, but it is the calm of the Dead Sea.

Chapter 9

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (9)

1 Chron. 6-9

The inspired writer begins again with the sons of Levi (chap. 6:16). The special line of the priesthood, the sons of Aaron, are as prominent in Levi, as the line of kings, the sons of David, are in Judah. Here (ver. 16) the three branches of the tribe, Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, the sons of each, and the appointment of one from each family to be a leader in the service of song.

The importance of song as part of the service to be rendered to God is seen in the particular care taken that the leaders in that choir should have a sort of double witness or attestation of their right to the name of Levi, and therefore of their qualification to be leaders of song, and to the privileges of the Levitical tribe. Of the sons of Kohath, Heman; of Gershom, Asaph; and of Merari, Ethan. These had been included in the general list of descendants (16-19) now the genealogy of each is traced backward to Levi (33-47). There is no such care manifested for any other branch of Levitical service. Why such particular care about the singers? Because none must be allowed to sing, but those who have the right. And who now have the right to sing? Redemption gives the right. Should there be songs for slaves? Whether to a willing or a groaning slave, deliverance must first come, and in that comes the appointment to sing. The care with which God by David assigns the service of song to these three leaders has a meaning for the church now, where all are, or should he, singers, making melody in the heart.

Song is the outward expression of melody in the heart, and could not be omitted in the order of temple worship. What melody there will be in the millennial temple, what a “joyful noise” from all lands when Messiah reigns, when the ark shall rest in its place prepared by the true David, Who will appoint the singers then, and set them over the service. The scene given in 1 Chronicles is but a transient glimpse of what the earth shall see and hear. The psalmist looks over the (to him) unknown gloom and darkness of intervening years to that brightness which will in Messiah's reign rest upon the temple and upon the land of God, and exclaims, “Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion” (Psa. 65). What a service of song will be then! Above will be the twenty-four elders, saying, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned” (Rev. 11:17). On earth will be the shouts of responsive joy; the courts of Zion will answer to the courts of heaven. Our hymn says, “Let earth and heaven agree “; and so they will then, when He Who is the joy of heaven is the object of praise on earth. No agreement till He reigns. What a wondrous thing to look forward to is this, angelic voices and human choirs blending together and singing the same song!

We hear now of “service of song,” where the mixed multitude join, where those who are not reconciled to God, whose hearts are at enmity against Him, pretend to sing His praise! It is mockery. Israel did not sing till they were redeemed. There is no song for this world before He comes Who will purge His kingdom from all things that offend. Then acceptable song will burst from all, a universal hallelujah from heaven and earth.

But is there no song now? Yea, truly the choicest of songs, which more than anticipates that to come. When that future song is heard, all the surroundings will be in harmony with it; now we sing surrounded with evil, by things out of tune, the discords of sin and sorrow and death. But our song is the melody of the heart that knows redemption, a present redemption through His blood. Song in the heart is what God now looks for, and without this, however sweet the song may be as mere fruit of the lips, it cannot be acceptable to Him. The melody which rises from the church of God is richer and sweeter than that from Israel in the future, even as faith is a closer link with God than the sight of the glory.

But was there no heart worship in these three chief singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, (Jeduthan, see 1 Chron. 16:41-42; 1 Chron. 25:6; 2 Chron. 29:14)? Let their psalms bear witness. There are twelve ascribed to Asaph, one to Heman, and one to Ethan.

The line of priests had been already given down to the captivity (4-15). Here (49) we have them again but only to Zadok and Ahimaaz, to the time of David, the period when authority in the things of God was transferred from the priest to the king. David takes the supremacy which had previously been vested in the priest, and the picture is complete of the time when Christ the true King is present; Who, when here in humiliation, rejected by His own people, gave a momentary glimpse of His authority and power when He drove out from the temple of God all those who had made it a den of thieves. Nothing human can account for this, that a crowd of sellers and buyers see their tables overturned, and yet all flee from One! He came as the prophet announced, “Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass” (Zech. 9:9), and so Matthew describes His entry into Jerusalem. But it was thy King Who was coming. And the first place in the city that the Lord goes to (Matt. 21) is the “temple of God.” And as King the crowd flee before Him. It was the power and authority of God's great King, and the throne and the temple are in accord. When the King came first, He was lowly, meek, no pomp of earthly glory, riding on an ass, and a crowd of humble followers. When He comes the second time, it will not be in humiliation, but in the brightness of the glory of God, and creation will flee before Him. Not on an ass but on the clouds of heaven He will ride; not then to cleanse the temple only, but to purge His kingdom, to take vengeance, and destroy His enemies.

Chapter 7. gives the remaining tribes with the chief men among them. The two divinely important things, the throne and the temple having been given with care and detail, all other tribes not so immediately connected with them as were Judah and Levi respectively are passed over with exceeding brevity. One event is recorded in connection with Ephraim which is not given elsewhere, namely, the disaster that befell some of the sons of Ephraim (ver. 2 l). The men of Gath slew them “because they came down to take away their cattle.” This happened during Ephraim's life, perhaps before that Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph. The land of Goshen bordered upon the land of Gath (the Philistine's land). And no doubt, the inhabitants of each land made inroads upon the other, and in one the sons of Ephraim were slain. The moral state of the children of Ephraim was no better than that of the Philistines. The law had not yet said, “Thou shalt not steal.” It is not probable that this could have happened when the Israelites were slaves under the last Pharaoh. A son was born to Ephraim after this, whose name, Beriah, was commemorative of their death, “because it went evil with his house.” And there was blessing in his daughter Sherah, and other sons were born to him. This was a healing of the breach.

Benjamin has a second notice in chapter 8, and stands next as to detail to Judah and Levi. What was there in, or connected with, Benjamin to make his tribe prominent in these genealogies? Judah is connected with the throne—the king; Levi with the priest and temple service, it was fitting that these two tribes should stand out prominent before the others. But what had Benjamin? It was from that tribe came Saul, the hater and persecutor of God's chosen man, and he has a fearful prominence among them. He was approved of men, but given of God in anger (Hos. 13:11). He brought the kingdom to ruin. It was right in the wisdom of God when He is presenting the true King in David that the enemy should also be seen (typically) in Saul. And even as Saul the man of the people ruled when David appeared, and as Cæsar ruled when Christ was born, so when the rightful King appears by-and-bye the usurper will still occupy the throne, but to be hurled thence into the abyss. All will be in arms against God's King then, as it was in time past.

From the opening of chapter 9, we learn that these genealogies were compiled after the return from Babylon, and “the first inhabitants of the land” are those who returned first, and the chief among them are named. There are the children of Judah and of Benjamin with remnants of Ephraim and Manasseh. The two tribes that slave to the house of David, and the representatives of the children of Joseph. So that in this comparatively small remnant, there are both the royalty and the birthright. And before they were driven out again, He appeared Who is both King and the Firstborn. Who alone is such before God. By rejecting Him, this favored remnant lost both. Grace will at the right time restore both, and bring all Israel, the ten lost tribes together with the Jewish remnant into the privileges and glory flowing from both.

We see that vers. 29-38 of chapter 8 are repeated in chapter 9:35-44. In the former it is as the sons of Benjamin, though on account of Saul the false king coming from that tribe, with more detail than in chap. vii. 6, &c. But in chap. 9 it is simply the false king's family and connections, his immediate ancestors. And they are joined with the ruin of the kingdom. The sacred penman leads from the enumeration of Saul's sons to the condition of Israel, utterly broken, and flying from the Philistines, compare chap. 8:38 and 9:44. The former part of chapter 9, 1-34, is a kind of parenthesis, stating those who returned from Babylon, and their employment; and we see that those who were necessary for the due temple service are carefully mentioned. We return to Saul's family (chap. 9:35) and plunge into Israel's ruin.

A remnant is brought back not for the sake of history, but that history may tell how sovereign grace interposed, and is yet to interpose when Christ comes: else irreparable ruin in common with the Gentile. But God was foreshadowing His great purpose of all Israel's restoration. The remnant's return is the pledge of the nation's return. The worship of Jehovah is (nominally and outwardly) re-established. The old men might weep at the diminished splendor and glory of the house, but there it was, an immense fact for this lost world, where idol temples abounded. One temple to Jehovah! It was the link then between God and His rebellious people, and through them with man. What is it now? Not the temple, but the cross.

All who are necessary for the service of the temple are there, priests, Levites, and porters. Of the priests it is said, “very able men for the work of the service of the house of God” (chap. 9:13). If Solomon's temple exceeded this in glory, so that old men wept when they thought of it, so and much more will the future temple exceed that of Solomon. There will be no old men to weep then.

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (10)

1 Chron.9-14

With the family of Saul (1 Chron. 9:35) a new section begins. The first terminating in a brief but prophetic glimpse of the future restoration of Israel as foreshadowed in the return of the captives from Babylon, and their settlement in the land (1 Chron. 9:1-34). Faint when compared with the future, but in itself a marvelous event. For their Gentile oppressors are by the overruling hand of God, made to aid and encourage them and to restrain their enemies, as Ezra and Nehemiah declare.

The going back to Saul after counting up the returned captives is confirmatory that the object of the Holy Spirit in the Chronicles is not history—save as subsidiary—but the bringing in of the Son Who is to reign over all; that the sin and failure of man, Satan's determined opposition, as seen in Saul, are but occasions for the display of sovereign grace and of Almighty power. That Christ the Son shall not only be the King of the Jews as Son of David, and the Inheritor of the promises as Son of Abraham, but shall as Son of man be King of kings and Lord of lords. Hence His genealogy down from Adam, that He the last Adam should win back the headship over the lower creation which the first Adam lost. Other names come in and shine among their fellows, and collateral purposes are accomplished, but the great purpose of God centers in His Son. The genealogy points to Him.

Saul slain, the Philistines triumphant, is the moment when David appears and drives back the Philistine, and the ruined kingdom rises in splendor never seen before. If the past shows how the kingdom was lost and won, much more the future when He Who is both Son and Lord of David shall come and restore all things.

Chapter 10. seems to come abruptly; we are brought at once into the closing scenes of Saul's life. No record of his life in Chronicles, only God's summary of it, but which comprehends in few words his life, death and judgment. “So Saul died for his transgressions which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it, and inquired not of the Lord; therefore He slew him and turned the kingdom unto David the Son of Jesse” (vers. 13, 14). Saul passes before us as a spectral vision, save for the reality of, God's judgment upon him. David is brought to view as abruptly as Saul, no record of his previous life; only his lineage, as that of Saul. And surely the reason is plain—not these men on their own account are so prominent personally, but the kingdom is in the mind of God, and the Holy Spirit hastens to present it.

The Lord turned the kingdom unto David. It was a marvelous turning. The hinderer is no sooner removed than all Israel seek David, and say, “Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh” (11:1, &c.), and the blessing comes. David takes his foreordained place, and a nation is born in a day. Brighter than this will be seen when Israel from a deeper fall shall rise to a higher position of glory. With what cleaving of heart will all Israel gather to the Son of David in the day of their deliverance. “Thy

people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps. 110:3).

Let us look for a moment at 1 Sam. 28:6. "And when Saul inquired of the Lord" and compare it with 1 Chron. 10:14. "And inquired not of the Lord." Samuel records the outward act, the Holy Spirit in Chronicles pronounces the judgment of God upon the inward condition of his soul. It was the pressure of despair which wrung out of his heart an unavailing cry to the Lord, but no real turning to Him Who never shuts out the most despairing cry from a soul truly contrite. All help was gone, and he in his fear inquires of the Lord Whom he had habitually disobeyed and neglected, as many others since, and like him have sunk deeper into the slough of despair. Bear the judgment of all such from the Lord Himself, "But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me but I will not answer, they shall seek Me early [diligently, R. V.] but they shall not find Me" (Prov. 1:25-28). The Lord would not listen to the cry of the persecutor and hater of His chosen man.

Saul remembers Samuel, his former friend. If Jehovah answered him not, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets, would Jehovah's servant help him out of his misery? And he invokes the aid of Satan to bring up Samuel! Wretched Saul—what darkness on his heart, as if Satan had power over the spirits of departed saints! What despair, to seek for one of those whom he had in outward zeal sought to destroy! What had brought him to this? Permitted of God the prophet appears, and the wretched king's doom is confirmed; it is near, imminent. But Saul's seeking help from one having a familiar spirit is a true index of the heart. He had no faith in God, but in the witch of Endor; therefore he inquired not of the Lord. He had in earlier days clothed himself with zeal as with a garment. Extreme danger strips him of his borrowed robe, and he appears in his own naked infidelity. God judges the heart. "Behold Thou desirest truth in the inwards" (Ps. 51:6.). The piercing eye of God saw no truth in Saul. Therefore the Holy Spirit in Chronicles says that "he inquired not of the Lord."

All Israel seek David. This turning to David as with one mind is marvelous. A greater marvel is yet to come. Not David, but the Son of David will appear; and when they see Him, all Israel will seek Him with a greater oneness of mind, and will know Him, and in gladness of heart will shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." The picture given by Matthew (21:9) is prophetic of the coming display of His glory, when He takes His own. It is in a smaller frame but in brighter colors, inasmuch as it is the King Himself personally present in the scene given in the Gospel; it is only His type in Chronicles.

God immediately surrounds David with mighty men of valor. And the tribes of Israel send their thousands, "men of war that could keep rank," or as we should say, well disciplined. Who had disciplined these men, that just before had forsaken their cities and hidden themselves through fear of the Philistines? God's chosen man was there, who was anointed to be king over Israel, and the kingdom was turned to him. This is the reason of their sudden endowment of valor and might, and some of the wonderful deeds of the renowned men whom the Holy Spirit names. Some of their astonishing deeds are told, yet not astonishing when we remember Whose kingdom is really before us. For this is not the striving together of the potsherds of the earth; these great acts are only the natural consequences of the presence of His power Who is giving samples (so to say) of

what the power and the glory will be when He personally takes the kingdom. Then greater deeds will be done.

The Lord of hosts is marshalling the strength and power of Israel. And the Holy Spirit gives a list of tried men of might. They are presented in the halo of their own prowess. The foremost of these worthies joined David while he was a fugitive and an outcast (12:1-22); their origin is given (22:2) and is an instance among many of God's taking up the despised of men and exalting them.

David is crowned, and there is great feasting in Hebron; for the neighboring tribes “brought bread on asses, on camels, on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel” (1 Chron. 12:40). But David thinks not of his rapid exaltation, and of the mighty hosts around him (not long before he was hiding from Saul in the court of Achish); his ardent desire is to bring up the ark of God. But Jerusalem as the chosen city is the right place for the ark, and that city is still in the possession of the Jebusite. The city taken (2 Sam. 5:6-7), (which is not given in Chronicles) David said unto all the congregation of Israel, “If it seem good unto you and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us; and let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul” (1 Chron. 13:2-3). David's thought was right, but there was levity in the act. He and all the people gathered from Shihor of Egypt to the entering in of Hamath, i.e., from the southern boundary to the northern. They unite to fetch the ark from Kirjath-Jearim. It was an occasion of great joy, but fleshly zeal meddled with the ark. And in these scenes, we behold David the responsible man, not David the type of the perfect One. The Holy Spirit shows us that however blessed and honored a man may be, yet he is only a man, and here his imperfection is seen. If his thought was right and acceptable unto God, it was God Who gave it. But their starting point was wrong. How could they expect to carry the ark to its place when, instead of the Levites carrying it upon their shoulders, according to the ordinance of God, they put it in a new cart? A “new” cart; but this could not condone their want of attention, and consequently their disobedience to God's commands.

If obedience be imperative in the common things of everyday life, how much more in the things which are special to the service of God?

David was responsible. His was the prerogative as king to regulate and order the right way of bringing home the ark, which must be according to God. The same forgetfulness of the ordinance of God, and what the ark symbolized, made Uzzah put forth his hand and touch the ark, and thus brought on himself instant judgment. His unauthorized interference completed the disobedience manifest from the first. Man might say the motive was good, but that could not be good which leads to the neglect of God's word. God must and will vindicate His own honor, and the authority of His own word. Uzzah's act was but the reflex of the want of care on David's part. There was much gladness with them all, but the joy of saints must not compromise the authority of God's word.

David was displeased. With whom? Alas, here is more than mere failure — it is disloyalty of heart. Fear succeeds his want of care. Carelessness in the things of God hinders communion, and so it was that David was afraid before God. For a time he loses the blessing; both the ark and its accompanying blessing are carried into the house of Obed-edom (1 Chron. 13:14; 2 Sam. 6:11).

If David is afraid of God, it does not turn aside God's purpose with regard to David. After the needed discipline in his soul and hearing how the ark brought blessing to Obed-edom, he regains faith and brings the ark to its place. Yet though he is seen here as a failing man, his typical position is not lost. For the truthfulness of the type takes precedence of the restoration of faith in the soul. This position was not contingent upon his faithfulness, but was the appointment of God's sovereign will, Who by David is unrolling the volume of the honors and dominion of the Only-Begotten when He shall be set upon the holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2). Then will be seen perfectly what can only be partially presented in these typical scenes. For apparently before the ark is brought to its place, the Gentile submits to him. If the natural hatred of the Gentile appears in the persistent attacks of the Philistine, the power of God compels the king of Tire to send “messengers, and timber of cedars with masons and carpenters to build him a house.” In David and Hiram are to be seen, as with a borrowed light, the glory of Christ's kingdom, the submission of all nations to Him. Into the millennial Jerusalem kings shall bring their glory and honor. So does the king of Tire own the greatness of David, and contribute to his glory. But the past is but as the first droppings; the rushing shower is yet to come.

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (11)

1 Chron. 14-16

Though the Philistines are smitten, they are not yet subdued; they were the most inveterate and persistent of all Israel's enemies. The reign of peace is not come, and David finds that there are other powerful foes to contend with. The Philistines had overcome Saul, and were doubtless astonished at the rapid recovery of the kingdom after the crushing defeat on the mountains of Gilboa. They were soon to learn that it was not with a Saul, a king disowned of the Lord, but with a David, a king specially chosen of him, with whom they would fight. And this chosen man was only the type and representative of One infinitely higher. As the representative of Him, David was bound to conquer, whatever his failure might be as a saint, or he would not be a type. The Philistines soon learned his might. “And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed, king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David” (1 Chron. 14:8). It is against David, Israel does not seem to count for anything, their strength is in him. The Philistines war against the anointed king, so when the true David comes to take the kingdom, it is against Him that the world's power will be arrayed. Against Him will “the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together.” Something like this combination was seen when Jesus was born, though then within a limited area. It was the same spirit of hatred and hostility that united Herod and the rulers in Jerusalem and which then proved itself murderous, which will show itself in its strength and be all but universal when He comes the second time in glory and power to sit upon His throne.

The Philistines are not enemies such as Assyria and Babylon, who were afterward executors of God's wrath on a nation of rebels. Assyria carried away the ten tribes, and Babylon the kingdom of Judah. At that time there were found in the armies of Israel no mighty men performing astonishing deeds of valor, but on all great dismay and terror, all fleeing from their enemies. These wars were the pouring out of God's wrath upon them after every remedy had been tried, and had been found ineffectual. In earlier years judgment and chastisement had been blended together, in their distress the people had cried to the Lord, and He had never failed to raise up a deliverer (see Judges), and even then we find Philistines, in the days of Shamgar, of Samson; notably in the days of Saul. Now in the days of David it is neither judgment nor disciplinary chastisement, but the bringing of the enemy to feel and own the power of the man God has placed upon the throne. For David is God's king, and Jerusalem is God's city; and the ark of God is about to be placed there, and all is in the sunshine of God's favor.

The very servants of David are mighty, wonderful men. All to prove the power and manifest the purpose of God, which if dimly seen then will soon shine in the glory of God, perfectly accomplished according to His good pleasure. But even what was seen then might well raise the feelings of wonder and awe, if of joy. For the Lord God Himself fights their battles and overthrows their enemies, so that Israel has to pursue rather than fight. On one occasion David is to turn away from his Philistine foe, and not to move till he heard a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees; then he would know that God was gone forth before him (1 Chron. 14:15). Did the Philistines

hear that sound? If they did, they could have no true intelligence as to its cause. No doubt it would excite superstitious fears, but even so it would be a proof to them that a mightier sword than David's was against them. David's fame is spread abroad, and Jehovah brings the fear of him upon all nations.

In his prosperity David does not forget the ark of God. The same earnestness of desire, but now obedience to the ordinance of God. With what carefulness he now brings it to the place prepared for it. “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites, for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto Him forever.” All is done according to the law. But the king directs, he takes the first place, not the priest. He assembles the priests' families, arranging their order. And besides this present carefulness there is a confession that on the former occasion “we sought Him not after due order.” Now the singers are duly appointed, it is a true and acceptable service to God, and a service of song to Him; for why indeed should they not sing? At the former time there was gladness of heart which perhaps vented itself in unintelligent and uproarious shouting, not the orderly and reverent joy of those who worship God; at that time David and all Israel played before God with all their might (1 Chron. 13:8). Now the singers are appointed; Haman, Asaph, and Ethan take the lead. Then, it was fleshly joy intruding into holy things, and God in vindication of His own order and majesty was compelled to judge them all in the person of Uzzah. This fleshly joy manifests itself in its own true character by its immediate reaction when rebuked; for David was displeased and afraid. The joyous procession never reached Jerusalem. Now it is holy joy, David's heart is bowed and laying aside his royal robe, he arrays himself in a priestly one, a robe of linen, as the Levites and the singers, as it were, humbling himself to take part in the song as one of the company, yet was he the true leader. Again, as constantly through these scenes, we are reminded of Him Who said, “In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

These outward expressions of praise (David in a linen robe and dancing) are not for the saints in the church of God now, whose melody is made in their hearts, and more acceptable to God than the best harmony of voice and instrument, even though the singers and the players, yea, the instruments be all appointed by Him, as they were at that feast of joy (1 Chron. 16:42). For the song of the church exceeds that song of Israel infinitely more than that song exceeded the perhaps disorderly singing and shouting which characterized the previous attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but which ended in failure.

David abased himself to be as one in that holy congregation, to join in that service so acceptable and well pleasing to God. But there was one looking upon it whose heart was not in unison with it, one who scorned the idea of laying aside kingly dignity on any occasion, not even to join in praise to the King of all the earth, and such an one could only feel contempt for a king who would be happy in being more vile, provided it was abasing himself before the Lord (see 2 Sam. 6:22). David's heart was overflowing with fullness of joy, Michal's was occupied with the thought of David's appearance. The ark of God has not the first place in her soul, and so she is here called not the wife of David, but Saul's daughter. In her father's time the ark was unthought of, and she, educated in that neglect, thinks not of the ark now. For though she loved David (1 Sam. 18:20), she had no heart for God, she was still Saul's daughter. The nearest of earthly ties with the saints of God cannot bring the unrenewed heart into communion with Him.

Now (1 Chron. 16) the king blesses the people in the name of Jehovah; all share in the joy. “To each one a loaf of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.” The king appoints certain Levites to minister before the ark, Asaph to sound with cymbals. They are to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. But the song itself is given by David; he is inspired of God to give thanks to Him in a psalm which, while boasting in a covenant already made with their fathers, embraces in its onward look the future wondrous actings of the mercy that endureth forever. This psalm is suited to the then time, for the ark is not yet in its final resting place. It was in a tent all through David's life. There were enemies to be subdued, more victories to be won, before the final aspect of triumph and peace could appear—the ark in the temple.

But this psalm while in keeping with the circumstance of the ark being yet in a tent, looks onward to the time when the heavens shall be glad and the earth rejoice, and when men shall say among the nations, “The Lord reigneth.” It has a prophetic character, it brings to the eye of faith what did not then appear. It opens with a burst of praise—Give thanks unto the Lord, etc., and then, which is an essential part of Israel's worship, looks back to the covenant with Abraham, made for a thousand generations. Made with Abraham, repeated with an oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant. Made when they were but few people and wanderers from one kingdom to another. But the covenant stood firm. Yea, He reproved kings for their sake, saying, “Touch not mine anointed and do My prophets no harm” (see Gen. 12:17; 20:7). Now, all the years of unfaithfulness and ruin passed over, he strikes at once the chords of praise at the future mighty intervention of God for His still beloved people. All the earth is summoned to sing unto the Lord; for the blessings of Israel as from a center will radiate over the whole earth. First it is the intelligent creation called to give the glory due to His name, let men say, “The Lord reigneth.” Then the heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice. We sometimes sing, “Let earth and heaven agree,” etc. But this can only be when the Lord reigneth. The time contemplated in this psalm seems not full millennial peace. But the Lord reigns, and both the heavens and the earth rejoice in the blissful change. The Lord will make His power felt before the ark is in the temple. Then we know how at His presence even the inanimate creation shall cease its groaning and there will be fullness of joy. The fields will rejoice and the trees of the wood sing. Yet these words have a deeper meaning than the blessedness of inanimate creation, figuratively expressed. Under this beautiful imagery is the joy and conscious security of saints while yet the sea—the world—is roaring; not yet the full millennial blessing. “Let the sea roar;” but “roaring” is not suggestive of peaceful rest. It may be with conscious power as when a lion roars over his prey (Isa. 31:4), or with a sense of impotency as the waters roar (Psa. 46)—the enemies of God against His saints. “Roaring” is in scripture connected with tumult, battle, war, vengeance, and wrath. Even the wrath of the Lord upon the heathen is His roaring. “The Lord shall roar out of Zion (Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2). It is used to express deepest distress of soul from temporal calamities, as Job 3:24. The burden of sin upon the conscience made the psalmist roar (Psa. 32:3; see also Psa. 38:8, which, if referring to our Lord, shows the disquieting pressure of our responsibilities which He in grace took upon Himself). Even the Lord Jesus Himself when on the cross suffering under the forsaking of God cries out, “Why art Thou so far from the words of my roaring” (Psa. 22:1). The millennium will be peace and rest. This verse (32) expresses the state of the world just before the reign of peace, but after the church has gone, and its testimony to the long-suffering and grace of God, passed away forever. There will be saints on the earth, but their rejoicing and testimony will be different from that of the church, then at that time in glory with the Lord but whose past

testimony on the earth was grace, not judgment. The saints at that time, under the emblem of rejoicing fields and singing trees, will rejoice because the Lord cometh to judge the earth. So when the Lord shall execute judgment and shall roar like a lion (Hos. 11:10) there will be also His chosen ones in conscious security, saying, “God is our refuge.” Nevertheless the fields will rejoice and the trees of the wood will sing. Mark the contrast between the turbulent roaring sea, and the calm quiet rest of joyful fields and singing trees. The blessedness of saints is given not infrequently in pictures of natural beauty. Sometimes the saints themselves personally are “trees of righteousness” as the righteous man in the first psalm. Or it may be their state of happiness, as “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters.” So also Balaam in prophetic vision as the future happiness of Israel passed before him, “As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lignaloes which the Lord hath planted, as cedar trees by the waters” (Num. 24:6). This psalm does not actually reach into the time of millennial rest though in near view of it. All enemies are not subdued, nor are all Israel yet gathered, for they say, “Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together and deliver us from the heathen that we may give thanks to Thy holy name and glory in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel forever and ever.” All the people say, “Amen,” and praise the Lord.

Portions of this psalm are found in others, but that does not make this to be mere quotations from them. This as a whole is most suited to the circumstances then—(1) the ark in a tent, (2) the sea roaring, and (3) the prayer for deliverance while praising God for His mercy. There will be a similar experience just before the Lord enters upon the Solomon character of His reign.

Chapter 12

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (12)

1 Chron. 15-19

David appoints those who are to minister before the ark, but he himself returns to bless his house. A daughter of Saul may be there, having no sympathy with the feelings of David, but that does not hinder his blessing it. His soul was filled with the thought of the ark of God being brought home, and, overflowing with thanksgiving, would have his house to share his joy.

Dancing in public before the ark may not have been a kingly act; but the dignity of the king was forgotten in the joy of the worshipper. And when twitted by Michal for demeaning himself as a vain fellow among his servants, his answer was, that he would yet be more vile, he would be base even in his own eyes when it was in praise to the Lord (2 Sam. 6:20). What a constraining power there is in joy and gladness; and when this joy is from God and with God, how unworthy earthly appearances and earthly considerations become. The church of God now has greater motive for joy than had David then.

But it occurs to David that it is unseemly, while that he himself dwells in a house of cedars the ark of the covenant should be under curtains. He purposes to build a house for it, and Nathan the prophet encourages him. But however pleasing to the Lord such a purpose is, He sends Nathan to forbid it. “Thou shalt not build Me a house to dwell in.” David was a man of war, and as such was not allowed to build the house; for only when the words are fulfilled “on earth peace” will the temple be built. The Lord is a man of war (Ex. 15), and when He comes to reign over the earth will be first known as such. When every knee bows and every tongue confesses, and everything that offends is taken out of the kingdom then peace shall dwell upon the earth. He, the Lord, is the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness, and puts down all evil; then He shines forth as King of peace. First is war and judgment, then peace and rest. These two periods differ in character, and two men are used respectively as types. Two kings set forth Messiah's glory and reign. Yet there is no break in their reign, as when one dies and then the accession of the other. Solomon is anointed king before David dies. The throne is not vacant for a moment. Typically David and Solomon are one. The Lord is the true David and the true Solomon.

But David's thought is pleasing to God, and God unfolds His purpose in a special revelation to him David had the thought to build a house for the Lord. God will be a debtor to no man and will build a house for David. In the days of Solomon both houses (typically) were built, the king's house and the temple; but when man's obedience and faithfulness came to be reckoned as a factor for their unbroken continuance, then all is lost; the temple is destroyed, and David's house is carried into captivity. But the inability of man to maintain the first condition of the temple, or of David's house, was known to Him Who made this promise. Therefore in God's message to David, or even in David's thanksgiving (led by the Holy Spirit) to God, there is much more indicated than the transient glories of Solomon's reign. For in God's message it is not man's responsibility, but His purpose.

To accomplish His purpose God took David from the sheepcote to be king of Israel, and to the shepherd boy gave a name like the name of the great men of the earth. But his faithfulness, or that of his children, as a condition, does not appear in the book of Chronicles. If we turn to 2 Sam. 7 all there seems to hang upon man's behavior. “If he commit iniquity,” &c., &c. Why is this omitted in Chronicles 17? Because a greater than Solomon is before the mind of God. It is Messiah's kingdom that shall be established forever, and there is no room for such a word as, “If he commit iniquity;” abundant reason for their utterance in view of Solomon. It has its right place in Samuel where man's responsibility runs side by side with the promises and the foreshadowing of the kingdom, as if all depended on him And so it did for its continued manifestation then. But for its ultimate and triumphant establishment it rests on God's unassailable purpose, far beyond the reach of man's failure. It may be that David did not intelligently apprehend the fullness of the promise; but God looked onward through the intervening dark clouds of sin and long years of judgment to the establishment of a greater throne than that of Solomon. Its glories were yet below the human horizon.

In his thanksgiving David praises God for what He is. “O Lord, there is none like Thee... Thy people Israel didst Thou make Thine own people forever, and Thou, Lord, becamest their God.” But it is the Lord's special promise to build him a house that brings him before the Lord. “For Thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that Thou wilt build him a house,” &c. God's promise is absolute and unconditional, yet David prays that his house may be before Him forever. It is the certainty of its accomplishment that brings David before the Lord. If there had not been such a sure foundation as the promise of God, it would have been presumption thus to pray; but with such word before him, his prayer becomes the expression of his faith. What can tell his experience better than his closing words, “For Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever.”

Let us learn from this that the certainty of God's blessings in no way obviates the necessity of prayer. Rather should we pray in faith, doubting nothing. We have the assurance of all things needful. Therefore it is that in making our requests to God, supplications and thanksgivings go hand in hand. God's word gives boldness—confidence—to draw near to the throne of grace.

The following chapter (18) is the record of David's triumphs and increasing glory. His enemies become his servants. Gentile kings become vassals. One infinitely beyond David is mirrored forth here, Whose glory shall fill the, whole earth. You, the king of Hamath, hearing of David's victory over Hadadrezer and the Syrians, congratulates him, and sends all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass. The Lord is bringing costly things for His temple. Once before He prepared gold and silver for His tabernacle in the wilderness, for Israel came out of Egypt laden with jewels of gold and of silver, “And they spoiled the Egyptians” (Ex. 12:35, 36). Now the Lord is spoiling the near Gentile nations. For all this is for the temple. Some are compelled by war, others give freely. All contribute.

God's picture of the coming kingdom is nearly complete, that is, its first phase, or Davidic period. Only a few more touches by the Master's hand to bring out in clearer prominence the enemy's malice, and how God overrules and turns aside his envenomed shafts. But David has now reached the place to which he was called. “So David reigned over all Israel, and executed righteousness and justice among all his people.” The prophet Isaiah says of the Branch out of Jesse's roots that righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His

reins. And if David executed judgment and justice, can a human type come nearer to Him?

The kingdom is established (in type), and David is king. Who seeks to overthrow him? Who thought to unfit him in past times for the honor to which he was called? He who was always the enemy of the Son of God, tried to dethrone David by three principles which he uses now to bring discredit upon the Christian, and dishonor on the Lord's name. The friendship of the world, the power of the flesh, and pride, are three potent things in the armory of Satan, and it is only the watchful and the prayerful that can escape their insinuating and deadly power.

Three events are given in which David's faults appear. Yet not to tell us of his faults, but to bring out to view the unchangeable counsel of God, Who, having led David through human enemies, yea, delivered him as a youth from the lion and the bear, now lets us see after a while the prime instigator of all the enemies of David. It is the glorious purpose of God rather than David's slips that the Holy Ghost has before Him. The first event is God's interposition to deliver David from the consequences of an unholy friendship. The second is the dreadful result of an unwatchful saint falling under the power of the flesh, and the third is vain glory, the pride of life.

This chapter (19) opens a fresh aspect of David. Hitherto prosperity has marked his course in which no false step is recorded, save his first attempt to bring home the ark; and then not the desire of it, but the manner of doing it was sin before God. The Lord still preserves. He had preserved him from his open enemies, now we see how He delivers from the consequences of his own errors. The occasion is the death of Nahash, and David's sending messengers to comfort his son. To receive presents and homage from the king of Hamath was according to God, but to carry on friendly intercourse with the Ammonite was contrary to His word. In the former it is the Gentile bringing presents; in the latter it is David seeking to comfort a natural enemy; not receiving homage but giving friendship. God interposes for His own name's sake, and the suspicions of Hanun and his princes rejecting the friendly offers of David become the occasion for the execution of God's judgment on Israel's enemies Kindness from the father leads to war with the son and well nigh to the extermination of the Ammonites. On mere human ground a righteous retribution for their shameful treatment of David's ambassadors. But there was a deeper thing than that. There was God's judgment, and the human occasion fades from view.

There is another point from which to look at this war. It is God teaching a saint the consequence of receiving kindness from the world when he should have had faith in God. Abraham refused the world's gifts (Gen. xvi. 22-24). To show kindness to the world—to sinners—in God's way is acceptable and pleasing; for He is sending His gospel and the promise of eternal life. Only let saints of the heavenly calling remember that showing true kindness to sinners is not friendship with the world.

David accepted kindness when he was (it would seem) a fugitive, he feels the consequence when he is a king. Slips and failures are sometimes far reaching in their effects, God in His wisdom may allow a long time to elapse before the results appear. Saints now fail and slip; but there is a gracious word for us if we discern and judge ourselves, for then we shall not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31, etc.). How important to bring all our circumstances into the light of God's word! There we have an unerring mark, “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). This word is a sharp sword for the Christian. How many friendships would be cut asunder, and how many prevented if we knew how to use it!

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (13)

The Ammonites fear the vengeance of David and combine with the Syrians and others against him This is the result of his well-meant kindness. It suggests a future combination of this world's rulers against Christ. Against Him Who has manifested such boundless love, but Whose mercy and kindness has been denied and spurned. He, the Lord, sent His ambassadors to men worse than the Ammonites; and how were they treated? And now Jew and Gentile are joined together in rejecting the kindness of God our Savior. But for these rejecters, as for the Ammonites then, a day of vengeance is coming; that day is fixed, known only to God. There is a tarrying, a delay; but there is a limit. David told the men to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown. The Lord is now waiting until the appointed time, and His long-suffering is salvation. But the judgment sore and certain is approaching, and that day will break up a wider confederacy with a more fearful overthrow.

David hears of their alliance and sends Joab against them; and with him all the host of mighty men. The Lord did not want Joab and his mighty men, He wanted David. He gave them victory, but not with such a visible manifestation of His presence and power as when David overcame the Philistines, and the tops of the mulberry trees proclaimed the presence of the Lord of hosts. Is there not in this absence of David a forgetfulness of the special place God had given him? He was anointed to be the leader of the people. Even Abner could say that by the hand of David God would save His people out of the hand of all their enemies (2 Sam. 3:18): “by the hand of David” is certainly more than sending Joab to lead Israel in the fight. It is David's presence that God requires, so that the victory might not be claimed by another. For here is not the type of Him Who by His own arm—Himself, personally—fights and overcomes—of Him of Whom the past hears record, and the future yet more wondrously will proclaim His mighty deeds.

It was a personal victory He gained over the foe for the church, though that victory was won by dying (for Israel too). But for them He will show His power in future not by being smitten, but in smiting, but not less personally in this than in His dying. And have not all His interpositions on Israel's behalf against their enemies been personal? Was it only a remarkable providence when the firstborn in Egypt were slain, when their enemies were drowned in the Red sea? In the destroying angel that went through the land of Egypt on the Passover night, in the pillar of fire that came between Israel and the foe, I see a personal interposition of the Lord for them.. And again, Who came as Captain of the Lord's host and as such appeared to Joshua at Jericho? (Josh. 5:13). And when David went to war, Who was, with Him whithersoever he went? And in the future crisis Who wins. the battle and destroys the enemy? Will not., the deliverance of the people depend on the personal presence of that same Captain of the Lord's host? What do the prophets say? “And He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor [none to come between Israel and the foe] therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him” (see Isa. 54:16; 63:1-6). And is David exalted to represent, though ever so faintly, this glorious mighty Conqueror? What forgetfulness of his high calling! He was as it were entrusted with Messiah's honor and glory, and he puts it into Joab's hands, who having no true faith in God exercises a little human foresight in

order to guard it.

But if we see forgetfulness in David, not less do we see in Joab a great assumption of piety mingled with the absence of faith; a condition not unknown in this day. God for His own name's sake gave victory to the armies of Israel; but there could be no sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees when the chosen leader was absent, and only a clever strategist leading the armies of Israel. The wisdom of the man is seen, human care and provision, contingencies provided for, yet not fully; he calculates upon help afforded by one brother to the other, but suppose both needed, where was the help? “And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then will I help thee.” And with this insufficient provision for all possible contingencies, there was the appearance of dependence upon God and of strengthening himself in God, and encouraging his brother. “Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God, and let the Lord do that which is good in His sight” (1 Chron. 19:12-13). How easy at times to imitate and repeat the words of faith and humble dependence on God! But the confidence of faith which can sing of victory before the fight begins is found only with real believers.

In the following chapter (20) we come to the second event in what we may call an appendix by the Holy Ghost to His account of David's succession to the throne of Israel. Led by a mightier hand than his own, in triumph he is seated on the throne through enemies, through failures which in Chronicles the Holy Spirit does not stop to relate till he is on the throne and executing judgment and justice (1 Chron. 18:14). Then the Spirit of God “after this” tells us of the death of Nahash and the results of David's receiving kindness from him which happened so many years before; yet even now not to notice David's failure, but to show that God would accept no kindness from an enemy, would suffer no interference with His purpose, nor permit any delay to its accomplishment, although in the righteous government of God David must feel the consequences of seeking protection from an enemy. Yet even in this the sovereignty of grace appears. Even here all things work together for good.

The account of David and Bathsheba which occupies in Samuel two chapters (2 Sam. 11 and 12) is here in Chronicles passed over, save the first step in that steep incline, “But David tarried at Jerusalem.” Sovereign grace passes on to David's taking the crown from off the head of the King of Rabbah, a crown of gold and set with precious stones, and it is set on David's head. Here is not the restoration of the soul of a failing saint, but God's restoring David to his official position as the type of Him Who is yet to come.

Why is the sin not recorded? Was it not heinous? (Job 26:9-11). Yea, verily, but the Holy Spirit is here showing how vain is the attempt of Satan by means of David's failure to ruin the kingdom through him. For David was to Satan the expression of the kingdom of God. Satan might wonder but could not tell whether David was the real king, or only a type. The counsels of God concerning Christ were not revealed to Satan however, for satanic wisdom might learn the purpose of God in the course of events on the earth. When he did meet the real King, though in a wilderness and not in a palace, he felt His power and fled. In the Chronicles it is Satan's opposition rather than David's faults.

Thoughts on 1 Chronicles (14)

" And it came to pass after this" (20: 4). Now that David is restored to his true position, such is the superabounding of grace that his servants become mighty men. Their valiant deeds do but proclaim who is on the throne. And we may note it is after David is firmly fixed on the throne and executing judgment and justice that the Spirit, as it were, turns to look upon the servants. Until that time it is only David that the Spirit speaks of, or in association with others necessary to exalt him yet more. Not so here (ch. 20). Apart from his typical position the Lord may be teaching David that the glory of His kingdom, and the renown of His faithful ones, cannot be put under a cloud, because the most honored among the Lord's servants has failed and yielded to selfish ease and its consequences. Be that as it may for David, it is a lesson that we may learn. The Lord uses, and honors men by using them as His servants now; but we are not necessary to His power. But David is more than an honored servant. As type he must be on the throne, and then there is no limit to the outflow of grace, and the servants are mighty because David is on the throne, and giants are slain by them.

We do not read here of giants among the Ammonites and Syrians; these rather represent the external forces of the Enemy—for us, the world, and its hatred, persecutions, slaughterings of the saints. But when brought to face the Philistines giants are found, and these are rather an internal enemy; for they immigrated into Palestine at different times, and as being somewhat within its borders, was an internal enemy, and were the most persistent of all; for the Israelites do not subdue them by one victory, not even do these noted warriors deter them. They may be defeated, again and again, and yet again there is war. And they come with increased power. There is a man of, great stature, abnormal; he has twenty-four fingers and toes. But he was the son of the giant, and the slaughter of Goliath is the pledge of his own. This man defied Israel like Goliath (1 Sam. 17:10). It was his death-warrant.

The flesh may not be inaptly set forth by this man of great stature. And though the world and the flesh are servants of the devil, yet does the flesh appear as more powerful than either, to the Christian an enemy more to be dreaded, more to be watched against, and the reason is because it has its rest in the old heart, and so terrible its onslaught that at times it appears as a giant "with six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot" respectively. But the faith that slew Goliath also gives us the victory over this man, however terrible in appearance. And because our David—the Lord Jesus—is exalted and on the throne, we conquer in His Name. The world and the flesh are brothers, we may say twin brothers, for both came into existence at the same moment, i.e. at the fall. At that awful moment man became "flesh," and this creation, before so good, became the "world."

Satan, knowing well David's sin with all its aggravations, might be astonished at the prowess of the king's mighty men. Would God uphold the kingdom when the sole link that held earth to heaven was found defective? David proved to be a transgressor, adulterer, murderer. Will not God now find another Moses and make a great nation of him, and consume this people and their king with

them? Nay, God is not man, His gifts are without change of mind. And now, if we may so reverently speak, persistence in His purpose is more than ever imperative: else what a boast for Satan that he had compelled God to annul His promise to Abraham! The Holy Spirit is still showing the glory of the kingdom, and these mighty deeds are not the cause, but the results of that glory which has its source in the King alone.

Satan has to learn that, however formidable his own servants might be, they were nothing before the mighty men of David. The sons of the giant are slain, and the kingdom becomes all the stronger through the war wherein the choice servants of each side are face to face.

Hitherto Satan has used instruments and persecuted David, perhaps before he knew for what purpose David was called and anointed. And the more distinct God's purpose became, the more intense and murderous the persecutions became. But these never weaken God's saints. It is the flesh that makes them weak as other men, and the crafty foe succeeds in his attempt, and David falls. But in His grace God comes in, which Satan did not count upon, and Satan is defeated upon the battle ground of his own choosing. “Yet again” he will attempt the destruction of God's kingdom; he has hitherto as it were worked behind the scenes. Now, no longer in secret, he “stands up” against Israel; and so plainly does he show himself that even his own servant Joab endeavors to dissuade David from his purpose. “And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel” (xxi. 1). Turn to Samuel, “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah” (2 Sam. 24:1). We might suppose that “he” refers to “Lord “; and if so, it is because His anger was kindled against Israel and the sin of numbering the people is the judicial consequence of previous sin which the Lord would now judge. Therefore the Lord permitted Satan to stand up against Israel and provoke David to number them.

How marvelous the ways of God! Here is David, originally a shepherd boy, called to be king over Israel, and as such to be the honored type of Him Who is to reign over Israel and all the earth. And in this typical place he is upheld by the mighty hand of God, and no enemy without or within, nor his own failures, can deprive him of that wondrous position; yet at the same time God remembers that he is but a man, and as such, though a greatly honored saint, needs correction and reproof. Doubtless there was sin among the people, for the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel. And such sin as made the king—the means of blessing—to be the means of judgment upon them as well as of bringing chastisement upon himself.

Another thing we do well to mark, that the unwatchful and unfaithful saint is, surely unwittingly, but not the less really, the tool of Satan. It may be that pride and vainglory found a lodging place in David's heart, and so Satan found it no difficult matter to provoke him to number Israel. Satan, himself, glad of the occasion, stood up against the kingdom. The cunning Serpent has learned by this time that all his mighty efforts by means of enemies without, or (mightier still) through enemies within, only end in bringing increased honor and renown to the king, and that the only way left to him is to destroy the kingdom (if possible) through the king himself. He has tried fleshly lusts and failed, now he turns to the lusts of the mind. If that which is common to man and to the brute has failed, he will try that which betokens affinity with himself, namely pride. For man's nature is now not only sensual, but also devilish. Satan allures David to think of his own greatness apart from God, and to number the people as if they were his people, and not the people of God.

Chapter 15

Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 13:14

The words “grace,” “peace,” and “love,” and such as these, as used by the inspired writers, are transfigured words, or, more correctly, the vehicles of transfigured ideas—ideas being here synonymous with divine realities. Conceptions, that in a kind of embryo stage were current among men, are widened, deepened, sanctified, or even entirely transformed. Occasionally, as is pointed out in one striking instance by the late Abp. Trench, a word had become so debased as to be unfitted for the conveyance of the divine meaning—even to be what we should now call “impossible.” Such are the classical Greek for “prophet” and “prophecy,” “soiled with all ignoble use,” and too deeply associated with corrupt mysteries to be taken into the service of the oracles of God. Hence a new word was adopted, signifying the precise opposite of a dark saying—plain and open declaration, from which indeed our own word “prophet” is derived. But “grace” and “peace” (as also “love,” of which presently) are freighted with vast and blessed Meaning by the Holy “grace” and “peace,” of which man knows so little by nature. It is true that “grace “was the dominant word in the Grecian salutation, as “peace” in the Hebrew one; but there is far more than the advantage of mere conjunction in the power with which they appeal to the renewed heart. In short we have grace and peace as measured by God Himself. With the Greeks it was a mere matter of outward courtesy, this greeting of “grace,” even as the word was largely used to denote physical beauty and elegance by a people who deified beauty; with the less volatile Hebrew, the depositary moreover of the ancient oracles, “peace” was rather the desideratum, and the form of salutation was accordingly of this nature.

But how full and how blessed are God's grace and God's peace as we hear them in the apostolic greeting, and absent from none of the inspired epistles. Whether there were much to praise as with the Philippians, or to blame as at Corinth or in Galatia, “grace” and “peace” are the invariable benison, with the additional prayer for mercy in the individual case as to Timothy and Titus. And the close of each epistle contains a word of still more striking beauty, for we have there, in every one, the “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.” But while lacking in none of the apostolic letters, the benediction is fullest in 2 Corinthians; for here coupled with “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” we have the “love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost.” It will be profitable to dwell briefly on each of these three beatitudes, as the Lord may enable the writer.

And first of all we have the “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” —the grace of Him, by Whom “grace and truth” came. Without controversy grace and truth as distinctly sum up Christianity, as monstrosity and corruption stamp oriental religions, as beauty and corruption marked the Hellenic world—vain dreams to which, alas, some are returning. How infinitely above both is Christianity, and this spite of the fragments of truth that, embedded in a mass of folly, bore testimony to man's primitive integrity, as well as to the dissemination (very slight it is true) of the Hebrew revelation. It is therefore the special personal grace of our blessed Lord that the apostles desired for the saints. It is a grace that combines the tenderest pity and the most unbounded love with the keen scrutiny of One Whose “eyes were as a flame of fire,” —of One Who loves too well to pass over what is inconsistent with Himself; the grace of One, in short, Who is light as well as love, Who is the

“ Light of men, that left the skies,

Light that looked thro' human eyes.”

Vast is the gap undoubtedly that practically separates the humblest and most spiritual saint from the Master; but at least we can “follow after.” I apprehend then that Paul wished this wondrous grace of the Savior to be ever present with believers, both for consolation and for example.

And this brings us to the second beatitude (if I may so call it)— “the love of God,” doubtless inseparable from the former one. For the eye that contemplates the surpassing grace of the Lord Jesus, the renewed mind “that covets the best gift,” even the gracious ways of the Savior, will surely be conscious of the overshadowing love of God. And here it may be well to remark that while we cannot be too much occupied with Christ personally, we do well to remember that “we worship Trinity in unity,” but we worship Trinity. It is most blessed to think of God the Father. “The Father Himself loveth you,” as our Lord reminded the disciples. It is also most blessed to address now the Father, now the Son, as the Holy Spirit leads. Nor may we forget that when worshipping God as God, we include Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Is this sometimes lost sight of?

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

Chapter 16

Thoughts on 2 Timothy 1:7

It is instructive to note how the Apostle Paul describes, if not defining, the Spirit we have received. It is not the spirit of fearfulness that characterized the heathen religions, which, where they ceased to be frivolous, appealed to human misgivings and apprehensions, making clear at any rate that man has a conscience. It need hardly be said that “reverence and godly fear” are another thing; nor can the attitude of the seraph, who, having six wings, used but two for flying and four for veiling his face and his feet, be forgotten by a child of God. Lowly reverence and self-abasement go hand in hand with the fullest confidence and repose in the Divine favor.

But if it is wholesome to be impressed with our own nothingness, it is necessary that we should rise to the dignity of Christian; position for the Spirit we have received is one “of power and of love and of a sound mind.” Mark the three distinct characteristics, truly potent for good when blended, but inadequate when one or other is absent. For everything is duly balanced in the ways of God. There is a series of checks and counter-checks. We may illustrate it by a consideration of the condition§ essential to the healthy condition of the human frame, viz., a due inter-subordination of the various functions. No intelligent person can deny that there are such analogies in God's methods in things natural and spiritual. They only but greatly err who from analogy would assert identity. So we have the conjunction of love with power, of a sound mind with both. For power and love without the concomitant of a wise judgment would be as a noble ship impelled by favoring wind and tide but bereft of helm. Power and a sound mind without the incentive of love will lack all that has value in God's eyes, and be as worthless as the “sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.” Lastly, love and a sound mind may and do fail of effect if there be a lack of energy and zeal. But with love (the love of God shed abroad in the heart) as the motive, with God-given energy as the more active principle, not without a weighing of all things in the balances of the sanctuary, surely then the “man of God” will be “thoroughly furnished unto every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

From the context with which this forcible verse is linked we learn that the apostle was treating of service, and urging his son in the faith to get the better of a diffidence which, if not carried to excess, is even seemly, especially in the young, but which might become a positive hindrance where boldness for the truth was imperative. Perhaps that is why power is put first, as the dominant tone in the harmony. It was evidently, of the three, the characteristic in which Timothy was most deficient. Undoubtedly there are but few in whom all three seem equally active; but that is only saying that we are uneven, that, if the great apostle of the Gentiles had all three traits in uncommon measure, still the Master alone was perfect.

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

R. B. Junr.

Acts 24:10-21

The defense of the apostle is characterized by straightforward truth and courteous dignity, as the accusation had been by servility to the governor and abuse of the accused. It is noticed, on the one hand, as the Jews joined in their venal advocate's assault, affirming that his falsehoods were fact (ver. 9), that, on the other (ver. 10), there was no haste to reply till the governor gave the sign to that effect.

"And when the governor beckoned him to speak, Paul answered, Knowing that since many years thou art judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense: as thou canst ascertain that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; and neither in the temple did they find me discoursing with any one or making a tumult of a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor throughout the city. Neither can they prove to thee the things of which they now accuse me. But this I confess to thee, that according to the way which they call a sect, so I serve the God of the fathers, believing all things that are according to the law and that are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that a resurrection is to be, both of just and unjust. Herein also do I exercise myself to have a conscience without offense toward God and men continually. Now after several years I arrived to bring alms unto my nation and offerings; in which they found me purified in the temple, not with crowd nor yet with tumult but certain Jews from Asia, who ought to have been present before thee, and to have accused, if they had aught against me. Or let these themselves say what wrong they found in me when I stood before the council, [other] than for this one voice that I cried out standing among them, Touching the resurrection of [the] dead I am judged this day before you" (Acts 24:10-21).

The length of time that Felix had passed in official relation to the Jews was a plain matter of fact, of which the apostle justly availed himself. Their feeling, habits, and prejudices were thus necessarily more familiar than to a new procurator. On this circumstance the apostle grounds his cheerfulness in making his plea. Flattery is wholly absent.

As to himself, it was so brief a space since he went up to Jerusalem that his course there could easily be traced. And when he did go, but twelve days before, it was "to worship," the very reverse of moving sedition or other pestilent conduct, least of all to profane the temple. On the contrary he brought forth alms to his nation, and offerings." Could anything be more opposed, either to riot, or to profanation? He was at liberty to discourse if he had judged meet; but in point of fact "neither in the temple did they find me discoursing with any one, or making a tumult of a crowd," common as this was in a people so zealous and so excitable, "nor in the synagogues," numerous as they were, "nor throughout the city." What could be less like an agitator? "Neither can they prove to thee things whereof they now accuse me." More than this distinct challenge, or at best denial, of the vague and general calumny the apostle does not allege. The facts stated, of which the evidence was easy and ample, refuted the talk of Tertullus.

But far from denying what was said of "the sect" (ver. 5), he avows it openly. "But this I confess to thee, that according to the way which they call sect, so I serve the [or our] fathers' God." This was

of moment for the governor. Tolerant as the Romans were toward the religions convictions of the nations they ruled, they were stern in disallowing innovations, especially such as tended to stir up civil discord. The apostle accordingly prefers here, as on two other occasions not quite similar, to depart from the usual phrase, and says πατρ■■ θε■ rather than τ■ν πατ■ρων ■μ■ν as K■hnφl and others have noticed. As the heathen without God themselves called the Christians godless or Atheists, because they had no idols, so the Jews called the church “a sect.” Yet was it the only institution on earth that could not be a sect while true to Christ. The apostle goes farther however, and confesses his faith in all things according to the law, and the things written in the prophets. There is no hesitation in declaring boldly his faith in all the ancient oracles before the high priest and the Sadducean party, who notoriously slighted the prophets, as they had no real reverence for the law. If any Pharisees were in alliance with them as “elders” of Israel, what a position in confederating with infidels against a more thorough believer than themselves!

Further, there is nothing left indistinct here. For the apostle adds, “having hope toward God, which they themselves also look for, that a resurrection is to be of both just and unjust.” This could hardly have been said if there had not been then present Pharisees who confessed the resurrection of the dead. They must therefore have made up their difference with the heterodox Sadducees in their eagerness to put down and punish Paul. The tendency among the Jews seems to have been to regard resurrection as the privilege of the righteous simply, which would be sure to degenerate into the reward of Israel in the kingdom of Messiah. But the apostle, guided of the Holy Spirit, shows its universal character, “of both just and unjust.” So it was to be inferred even from a book so ancient as that of Job, and of the deeper interest in this respect as evidence of the faith of Gentile believers before the law. Yet it is certain that in Job 14 Job speaks of man’s resurrection (that is, of man, as such), when the heavens are no more and eternity begins, contradistinguished from the rising of the righteous, like himself, to enjoy their hope when the Kinsman Redeemer shall stand on the earth, which is clearly for the kingdom. Naturally the resurrection of the just, the resurrection from among the dead, the better resurrection, and other kindred phrases, are more frequent as a cheer and incentive to saints in present suffering; but John 5 and Revelation 20 give doctrinally and prophetically the twofold resurrection, severed by a thousand years, to which Paul here alludes as that which had roused so much feeling on the part of his Sadducean adversaries.

Nor this only; for he lets them know by the way that on himself the hope of resurrection was most influential practically. “In this [Therefore, or accordingly] I also exercise myself to have a conscience without offense toward God and men continually.”

Here not only were the Jews, but Christians for the most part are, weak indeed, rising in faith but little beyond thoughtful heathen who reason on the immortality of the soul. No doubt the God-inbreathed soul, the inner man, is immortal; but as this is no security against sin, so neither does it involve immunity from judgment. Indeed it is rather the ground why sinful man, alone of beings on the earth, has moral responsibility, from which he cannot disengage himself; for, if he refuse life eternal in the Son, he must be judged by Him at the last, as Scripture abundantly testifies. The believer of course needs no such awful measure to vindicate the rights of Christ, but, what is far better, honors Him now in the day that follows His cross, honors Him not by that tremendous and irresistible constraint, but with a ready mind, as the One Who for him died and rose that he might live no longer to himself but to Him.

People may reason, as alas! not a few in Christendom have not been ashamed to do, that the blessing of the soul is of a more spiritual nature, and that any hope associated with the resurrection of the body is external. But they are beguiled of the enemy in thus preferring their own thoughts to God's word, which insists on the fullest blessing for the soul now, even salvation in the richest way, but on resurrection or change at Christ's coming as our proper hope. Then only shall we be like Him, when the body of humiliation is conformed to the body of His glory. It is this hope which gives power in the Spirit to mortify our members on the earth, instead of indulging the common dream of present ease and honor here before the soul goes to heaven for its glory. Never does Scripture so speak. It does declare the superior blessedness of departing to be with Christ, as compared with remaining here. But it never stops short of Christ's coming for our everlasting change as the true hope which purifies us meanwhile on the earth.

The apostle next states that after a lapse of several years he arrived bringing alms to his nation, and offerings. Was this the action of a seditious pestilent man "In which [business of the offerings] they found me purified in the temple, not with crowd nor yet with tumult." Was this again profaning the temple? "But certain Jews from Asia" — they were the true culprits in the matter. It was they whose guilty rashness imputed the false charge. For the four men under the vow were not Greeks but Jews; and with these only was Paul associated in the temple at the instance of James. Why were these Asiatic Jews not here face to face, as Roman law required? "Who ought," as the apostle here quietly adds, "to have been present before thee, and to have accused, if they had anything against me. Or let them themselves (the Jews then present) say what wrong they found in me when I stood before the council, [other] than for this one voice which I cried out among them, Touching the resurrection of [the] dead I am judged this day before you."

It was irrefragably and solely the Jews themselves who made the riot (stirred up by the blunder about those brethren from Asia), who were not there to be convicted that day, as Felix could not but see. Even though the witnesses were not present, those actually there were challenged to state any wrong whatever done by the apostle, unless it was his putting forward the great truth of the resurrection: as really embarrassing to the Pharisee elders now as before; for they assuredly would regard such a cry as true and right, and in no way a fault. But "evil communications corrupt good manners"; and those who at first felt sympathy for the truth at stake, now give their support to the enemy against the great representative of the gospel, even when they all were convicted of the grossest mistake, and of unfounded calumny. So hard is it for men engaged in a campaign, above all a religions one, to stop short of glaring injustice when arrayed on an evil side. When men are right, they can afford to be gracious. Wrong-doers and malicious men add turbulence also.

Acts 25:1-12

The new governor gave a fresh opportunity to the Jews. Morally more respectable than Felix, he knew not God, and therefore could not be trusted for man. Faith to him was quite unintelligible, an enthusiasm. But he soon learned enough of the Jews do make him guilty in his willingness to gratify them in the sacrifice of Paul. Policy is a sad destroyer of conscience.

“Festus therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they besought him, asking a favor that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait to kill him on the way. Howbeit Festus answered that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself was about to depart [there] shortly. Let them therefore, saith he, that are of power among you go down with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him” (Acts 25:1-5).

The providence of God is still in action. On the one hand the Jews sought under color of favor to have the apostle waylaid on the road to Jerusalem; on the other the governor stood to the dignity of his office, and would not have it lowered. As Paul had already been sent to Cæsarea, he declined moving him back to Jerusalem. It is possible that he knew little or nothing of their murderous designs. If so, it was the secret care of God for one unjustly assailed. But rumors would easily get currency as to any such plot. At this time the governor was not prepared to surrender a Roman citizen to the malice of his enemies, especially of a Jewish sort on a religious dispute. The Lord in any case watched over his servant. The accused was in Caesarea, and if anywhere in that land the supreme seat of judicature was there in Roman eyes. The governor by his decision hindered the execution of their plot. He was returning to Caesarea himself shortly: if therefore any wrong was in question, they had their opportunity to come down and accuse the prisoner.

“And when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and on the morrow he sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews that had come from Jerusalem stood round about and laid many and grievous charges which they could not prove; while Paul said in his defense, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I sinned at all” (Acts 25:6-8). The case was as plain as could be. The accusations were without proof; the defense was complete. The Jews were simply bitter enemies. The apostle had not transgressed as to any of the many serious charges they had laid to his account.

But Festus was really little better than Felix. The change of judge was only slightly in favor of justice. There was the same selfishness which had counteracted equity before. Impossible to expect the fear of God in a heathen man, though some may have been more depraved and unjust than others.

“But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me?” (Acts 25:9). So little can man be reckoned on. Festus had refused this very favor to the Jews in Jerusalem; he could scarcely be in

the dark as to the reason why Paul had been hurried down to Caesarea. His motive was to curry favor with the Jews. “But Paul said, I am standing before Cæsar’s judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest” (Acts 25:10).

The apostle must have had cause for speaking so plainly. “If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die. But if none of those things is [true] whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up [or grant me by favor] unto them. I appeal unto Caesar” (vs. 11). It is clear that all the righteousness of the case lay with Paul. He therefore avails himself of his title as a Roman citizen against those who would have infringed Roman law. He agitated no change of law, he sought nothing for himself, he employed no lawyer. The law had already ruled, and he pleaded it before one in office to administer it.

Thus so far the difficulty was terminated. The governor was bound by the appeal. “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Caesar: unto Caesar shalt thou go” (Acts 25:12). The king, or emperor, was to hear, no less than subordinate magistrates; and this not by fawning on, or seeking access to, the princes of this world, but as holy sufferers with Christ and for His name (Matt. 10:18).

Acts 25:13-22

It was Paul's purpose to visit Rome (Acts 19:21) after going to Jerusalem; and God gave effect to it, for it was God's purpose (Acts 23:11). But how different was the way under His hand from the apostle's expectation? He must go a prisoner to Rome. This befell him through his appeal to Caesar — all appeal by no means always granted, as it was evidently liable to abase. If the guilt were manifest, it was refused so also if the case were frivolous enough to be unworthy of the emperor's hearing. Paul, whose innocence was unquestionable, while the case was rendered in the highest degree serious through Jewish ill will, appealed when he saw the procurator trifling with justice to gratify the Jews. This decided matters for the present. But the Spirit of God saw further testimony needed by man, and this was brought about by a visit of distinguished visitors to the Roman governor soon after.

"Now when certain days passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Cæsarea to salute (or, having sainted) Festus. And as they were spending several days there, Festus set Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a certain man left prisoner by Felix; about whom when I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and the elders of the Jews filed information, asking for condemnation against him. Unto whom I answered, that it is no custom for Romans to give up any man before that the accused have the accusers face to face, and have had opportunity of defense concerning the complaint. When therefore they came together here, I made no delay but next day sat on the judgment-seat and commanded the man to be brought; concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they were bringing no charge of such evil things as I supposed, but had certain questions of their own religion, and of one Jesus dead as He is, Whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And I, being perplexed in the inquiry concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things. But when Paul appealed to be kept for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I should send him unto Caesar. And Agrippa [said] unto Festus, I also should wish to hear the man myself. To-morrow, saith he, thou shalt hear him" (Acts 25:13-22).

The royal personage here introduced was son of Herod Agrippa I, whose awful fate was described in Acts 12. Too young to reign at his father's death, he was by Claudius given Chalcis, the principality of his uncle, with certain privileges in Jerusalem; and Philip's old tetrarchy and more were added by the same emperor soon after, with the title of king. Bernice was his elder sister, Drusilla his younger, and each of them famous or infamous in that day with reason too grave. As Felix and Drusilla had a most solemn warning from the prisoner, so now were Agrippa and Bernice with Festus to hear an appeal which leaves no soul as it is found. The truth before the conscience carries with it a responsibility which eternity, not to say the judgment seat of Christ, will fully manifest. Yet the man involuntarily forced to feel its power can ask What is truth? and goes out hard and wretched from His presence Who alone can give the adequate answer. But wisdom is justified of all her children; as she learned. who had been till then a child of folly: Jesus was of God made to her wisdom and every other good she lacked. Why was it not so with these high estates?

The governor's motive for bringing Paul before Agrippa appears to have been his own doubt what to report to the emperor. Festus was just a man of the world. Of grace, of truth, he had no notion. The invisible and eternal realities were to him only imaginative ideas. Present things, changeable and fleeting as they are, were his life and all. God was in none of his thoughts; apart from the Lord Jesus He remains unknown.

There was another obstacle in his way, his good opinion of himself, and endeavor to claim from others the highest character for honesty and honor, energy and prudence. This runs through his speech, as we saw it pervading the self-applauding letter of Claudius Lysias in chap. 23. What is man to be accounted, whose breath is in his nostrils? One look at self in God's presence puts in dust and ashes, as in Job's case when approved of Him, for his three friends were not. How can ye believe, said our Lord, receiving as ye do glory one of another, and the glory that is from the only God ye seek not? Where there is no self-judgment, the Savior is but "one Jesus," like any child of man. He who so speaks is a sinner ripening for judgment.

What the sentiments of Festus were about the mythological reveries of the Greeks and Romans, bound up with their paganism, we know not. Skepticism, ever the fatal dissolvent of society and the body politic, as it is the reaction from idolatry, was then all but universal among the educated class. It is clear that, with the contempt usual in such men, they never conceived of the truth outside themselves. Above all appeared the strange tale and great stumbling block of unbelief, Jesus dead and risen, and this in the midst of the busy heedless world, among a despised and subject race. It is just named incidentally as a psychological phenomenon in Paul and as singularly rousing the animosity of the Jews, an ever-turbulent race. Unable to give the emperor any reasonable account of the prisoner who had appealed, he states the case to one whom current report declared to be, on the one hand well versed in all Jewish questions, and in some respects the more zealous religiously because he was not of Israelitish lineage, as on the other he was notoriously devoted to the Roman interest. So indeed he continued throughout the great war that demolished the Jewish polity, their "place and nation," and throughout a long reign to the first year of Trajan. To hear the case might gratify the curiosity of Herod Agrippa and perhaps relieve Festus of some perplexity.

The explanation to the king was not unskillful. It was in truth, as he intimated, a matter of Felix, left over for him. Paul was a prisoner when Festus entered on his province, who could not therefore be expected to know all from the first. Next, it was certain that the leading Jews were grievously incensed against him, which could not but weigh with a governor of little or no experience locally. Roman self-complacency breaks forth in the assertion of their policy of inflexible and impartial equity: an excellent principle by no means the rule in the provinces, any more than at home, but convenient to lay down by a governor as a check on flagrant injustice, which Felix and Festus surely saw in the actual prosecution. Who again could reproach himself with lack of zeal in the public cause? The Jews had been prompt enough in coming down from Jerusalem to accuse in Cæsarea; and the governor had lost not a day in sitting to judge the case, if there had been one according to Roman law. But there was nothing tangible before the court; no infraction of the public peace or propriety, any more than private wrong in violence or corruption. It was absurd to bring before a Roman tribunal such matters as occupied Paul's accusers. Facts there were none; only questions of a visionary nature.

It is improbable that even a Roman procurator of Judea would be so discourteous as to speak of the views in controversy as a “superstition,” especially in speaking to king Agrippa; any more than that Paul so characterized the Athenians, when he was setting before them Jesus and the resurrection. It seems better therefore to avail ourselves of the better, or at least colorless, sense which the word undoubtedly bears in authors of that day still extant. “Religion” is therefore here chosen, as “system of worship” has also been suggested in a similar sense.

But when one knows the infinite truth that the Son came to bring God into the world and put sin out of it, how shocking is the dark incredulity that slurs over facts so transcendent in the words, “one Jesus now dead, whom Paul asserted to be alive”! The vindication of God’s moral glory, and the display of His love, and the proof of coming judgment, all turn on it. Without it sin reigns in death, and destruction for sinners without exception or hope. There is no kingdom possible of righteousness and peace; only hell filled with the wicked and accursed. Jesus alive from the dead for evermore has changed all. Nor need we wait to see the glorious results. The Christian sees and walks by faith, not by sight. We rest, not only on a God that cannot lie, but on the fact already accomplished that Jesus died as propitiation for our sins; rose from the dead, and has taken His seat at God’s right hand in heaven. We rest on the accomplishment of God’s will in the one offering of Himself for sins; and now He sits as truly man on the Father’s throne, as He came down God to become man and bring in new and everlasting glory to God by His death. He therefore is made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; and we who believe are of God in Him, as once we were only in Adam, heirs of sin and ruin. When the Lord appears again, the results will appear before the universe; and the creation, all the creation, that now groans in bondage and corruption will be delivered: for He is the Second man and Last Adam, and we shall reign along with Him in glory.

But the wisdom of the world is folly, which slights the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, Who came to His own things, and they that were His own received Him not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. So Festus showed now, as did Agrippa afterward in the same blindness of unbelief which pervaded other princes of this age: for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And Christendom is returning to the darkness of heathenism. Never among the baptized did naturalism so govern men’s minds; never before did nominal Christians manifest such incredulity in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, or even in creation. If the dead Jesus is alive, He has the keys of death and hades; and where is then philosophy? Where is natural law? What has natural law to do with creating? Still less can it apply to grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But to return: when Festus mentions Paul’s declining to go to Jerusalem and appealing to Caesar, Agrippa expresses the wish himself to hear; and an audience is fixed for the morrow. This leads to a yet fuller testimony as we shall see, before not a governor only but a king.

Acts 25:23-27

The purposed hearing of the apostle wholly differed from that before Felix and Drusilla. This was private; and the apostle availed himself of it in divine love and holy courage to strip the guilty pair of their vain show, and to let them see themselves as God regarded them, as He will judge by-and-by through our Lord Jesus. Were men not insensate by the wily power of Satan, they would feel how gracious it is of God to send one faithful and able, willing and loving, to tell them the unerring truth, that, believing, they might be saved. But if they hug their sins, it cannot be. True repentance is the inseparable companion of true faith. From both the enemy finds plausible excuses to hold souls back. Conscience may tremble; but there is no repentance till self is judged before God, and faith alone produces this.

Here it was even more public than the indictment before Felix or Festus. And the appeal to the emperor, though it relieved Festus in the main, embarrassed him in that he had no tangible rational explanation of the case to lay before Nero. Hence when Agrippa expressed the desire in person to hear the accused, Festus gladly caught at it, and fixed the next day for the purpose. Agrippa's known familiarity with Jewish affairs was too good to be lost, besides gratifying the wish of so exalted a guest.

"Therefore on the morrow when Agrippa came, and Bernice, with great pomp, and they entered into the audience-chamber with the commanders and the distinguished men of the city, at the command of Festus Paul was brought. And saith Festus, King Agrippa, and all men that are here present with us, ye behold this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews applied to me both in Jerusalem and here, crying out that he ought not to live any longer. But as I found that he had done nothing worthy of death, and as he himself appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him, about whom I have nothing certain to write to my lord. Wherefore I brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, king Agrippa, so that, after examination had, I may have what I shall write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable in sending a prisoner not also to signify the charges against him" (Acts 25:23-27).

Our evangelist as usual presents the scene most graphically; for which reason probably tradition gave out in error that he was a painter, whereas Scripture is positive that he was a physician: a fact abundantly confirmed by evidence in both his Gospel and the Acts. The king and the queen are before us with great pomp; military chiefs add to the show, as well as the most distinguished civilians; the governor gives the word of command, and the prisoner is brought into the hall of audience. Festus opens the proceedings. It is hardly to be allowed that the courteous Roman meant to insinuate a slur on Bernice when he said, "King Agrippa, and all men that are here present with us." Undoubtedly the word is not the general ■νθρωποι but the precise ■νδρες, expressive of men as distinguished from women (γυνα■κες). The truth is however that ■νδρες is used regularly in addresses as more respectful, though women may be present (cf. Acts 1:16; 2:14; 3:12; 13:16; 15:1; 17:12); and in this sense only is it here employed. Out of courtesy the distinction is ignored for the time. That the queen's presence was implied to be improper is not the

thought.

Festus addresses himself directly to the point. “Ye behold this (person) about whom all the multitude of the Jews applied to me, both in Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.” There was no doubt of the general and vehement antipathy of the Jews to the noblest man of their stock and the most honored servant of the Lord. Their cry in the holy city and elsewhere was that he ought not to live longer. He, the governor, found that Paul had committed nothing which deserved death, but does not explain why he himself had occasioned the appeal to the emperor by the proposal that the prisoner should go to Jerusalem for judgment. Paul knew too that worldly religion is of all things least just and most cruel, and, declining such a change from Cζsar’s tribunal, appealed to Augustus. To this Festus agreed, as we know, and he repeats, “I decided to send him.”

But thereon arose a difficulty. What was he to write with the appellant? “About whom I have nothing certain to write to my lord.” This was his main motive for the hearing before Agrippa, versed as he was in Jewish customs and learning and prejudice. “Wherefore I brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, king Agrippa, so that, after examination had, I may know what I shall write.” The governor naturally considered it senseless, as he adds, to forward a prisoner without signifying the accusation laid to his charge. We shall find however that the issue was a true and fresh testimony to Christ far more than a solution of the governor’s perplexity.

Chapter 21

Acts 26:1-8

Luke sets the scene vividly before us. The king, whose opinion the governor sought, and who himself was desirous of hearing, gives courteous leave, and the prisoner enters on his defense with outstretched hand. Orators no doubt used the same action to engage the ear of their countrymen; rhetoricians in their schools; but his heart went out thus in desire over souls about to hear that message from God which, in whatever manner put, is the turning-point of salvation or perdition to all that hear it. No doubt the soul is beyond all price for every one in view of such everlasting issues. But it was no light thing even for the apostle to confront, without his seeking it but at their own desire, the great ones of the earth with all that swelled their train.

“And Agrippa said to Paul, it is permitted thee to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and entered on his defense. Touching all things of which I am accused by Jews, king Agrippa, I count myself happy that I am to make my defense before thee to-day; especially as thou art skilled in all customs and questions that are among Jews. Wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently” (Acts 26:1-3).

“My manner of life then from my youth which was from the beginning among my nation and at Jerusalem know all Jews, knowing me before from the outset, if they be willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which our twelve tribes earnestly serving night and day hope to arrive. And concerning this hope I am accused by Jews, O king. Why is it judged incredible with you, if God raiseth dead [men]?” (Acts 26:4-8).

It may be a small matter, yet it is well to avoid the mistake of confounding the apostle’s act here with what he did in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:16), or what Alexander did in the tumultuous assembly at Ephesus (Acts 19:33). This was “beckoning with the hand,” quite different in character and aim from stretching it forth, here too with a chain, What a witness of the world’s enmity to God’s infinite grace in Christ! For, to say nothing of his loving labors, wherein had His servant done wrong? He was sharing the sufferings of Christ.

It will be observed that the apostle graciously passes by the various calumnies of the Jews which had been put forward by their venal orator and the unscrupulous men who supported his charges. He expresses his satisfaction at having to speak before one so exceptionally competent as the king in all the ways and controversies of Jews, as he does not fail even in this acknowledgment to preface it with an allusion to such accusations coming from Jews, not “the” Jews. In this connection there is no article in the text of verse 2, 3, as there should be none in verse 4 and 7, though in verse 4 there is much conflict among the MSS. (even the best uncials), and only Lachmann, and Alford, Tregelles, with Westcott and Hort, following B E, and others, against the rest. Nor is it to be wondered at that Tischendorf, who had dropt it in his later editions up to the seventh, went back in his eighth to that of his earlier issues in 1841 and both of 1842. The fact is that the sense required in this phrase here seems without example in the N. T., where in other cases π■ντες ο■ ‘I, is the correct form, and the article, as far as I have noticed, could not be

omitted without damage. Here there is a distinct and unusual peculiarity; for “all the Jews” are not meant, but all Jews knowing Paul before from the outset. This accordingly requires π■ντες ■ προγιν■σκοντ■ς με ■νωθεν.

All Gr. T. students know of course the late Dean Alford’s note on verse 2, which seems a long-standing reproach to scholars and ought to have been repudiated far and wide: for I cannot doubt there must be not a few besides the late Bp. of Durham, who are aware of the fallacy. “There is no force in Meyer’s observation that by the art before ■ουδα■ων, Paul wishes to express that the charges were made by some, not by all of the Jews. That omission is the one so often overlooked by the German critics (for example, Stier, here), after a preposition. See Middl. ch. 6. § 1, and compare κατ■ ■ουδαι■υς in the next verse, of which the above cannot be said” (Greek Test. ii. 276, fifth ed. 1865.

Now it is admitted that the celebrated German expositor’s remark is imperfect, even though in many cases true. The omission of the article is due here and every where to presenting the word or combination of words characteristically, whilst the use of the article presents it as an object before the mind. There may be a very few exceptions, but these only prove the otherwise universality of the rule. And prepositions are in no way an exception, though they admit freely of serving to define the characteristic design of the anarthrous construction, which has been overlooked by English scholars quite as much perhaps as German. This is exactly one of the great defects of Bp. Middleton’s able treatise, which has for effect the making imaginary exceptions as numerous as the rule. This of itself ought to have indicated failure in generalization. John 4:9 is a plain illustration of the principle: not only π■ς σ■ ■ουδα■ος ■ν which every one sees, but ■ουδα■οι Σαμαρε■ταις, where the article for either would be out of place if the object were, as it certainly is, to mark both characteristically.

It is no question of “some” no doubt. And the article might have been with truth prefixed to both; but the meaning would have been altered. The two peoples would then stand contrasted as objects, not characteristically as they now are. Compare for this a selection from the book of the Acts — Acts 2:5,7,9-11; 11:19; 14:1,5,19; 18:4; 19:10,17; 20:21; 25:10. Again, any intelligent examination of the Greek T. cannot fail to convince that the preposition makes no difference whatever. The article is or is not used with the word in question like every other, in accordance with its principle of insertion or omission.

Thus in Matthew 28:15 character is the point and therefore it is παρ■ Ιουδα■οις. In John 4:22 the Jews are the object, and hence it is ■κ τ■ν ‘I.: so in Acts 10:19 and Acts 11:54, ■ν το■ς ‘I., in Acts 11:19, ■κ τ■ν ‘I.; in Acts 18:38, πρ■ς το■ς ‘I. It is really a total oversight of the nice shades of thought in the Greek language to conceive that there is the least laxity or exception after prepositions. Perhaps the notion is due to the difficulty of always representing the distinction in English, which sometimes compels us to use our definite article where there is none in Greek. But this is no right reason to deny that there is invariably an intended difference. Weigh Acts 23:8 where we have Σαδδ. and Φαρ. without the article, though there is no preposition. If ο■, had been prefixed to each, it would have been true; but the absence of the article makes them characteristic, however hard it may be to express it in English.

And there is an analogous difference in the cases before us, alike when with or without prepositions. “I am accused by Jews” in verses 2 and 7 is far more forcible than if the article had

been inserted. It was not lost on Agrippa or Festus or the Jews that heard it. Of all men Jews were the last to have accused Paul for proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection that is from among the dead. Sadduceanism had alas! withered up their old faith. As a fact too, which may have weighed with Meyer and Stier, the Pharisees diverged in Acts 23 from the dominant faction which persecuted Paul. The preposition clearly gives no license, (Inni) Jews, not the Jews, being meant. Nor is it otherwise with κατ■ ‘I., however confidently urged. Doubtless “according to the Jews” would have been true in fact; but it is stated characteristically; and here again as “Jews,” not “the Jews,” is the force intended, so it is evident once more that the preposition does not really affect the question. The article is inserted or omitted with prepositions on its own principle. Lastly, to be correct, π. ο■ ‘I. would require ο■ προγιν qualifying the subject, π. ‘I. προγιν is correct as it is given; for it means only all such Jews as previously knew Paul from the outset. In a word, it is characteristic and therefore anarthrous. Not only is π. ο■ ‘I. the more usual expression, but quite distinct in sense; for it means the whole Jewish people as a known, definite, and complete object, whereas the phrase here means all Jews qualified by the peculiar and described knowledge of Paul.

Returning from this digression, we may note that the apostle begs for a patient hearing from one so skilled as Agrippa, and dwells (Acts 26:4-5) on his known early life under strict Pharisaic belief and discipline “among my nation and at Jerusalem,” as all Jews cognizant from its outset could testify if willing.

But the question; he insists, for which he stood for judgment was the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers (Acts 26:6), onto which our twelve tribes earnestly serving day and night hope to arrive (vs. 7). How strange and flagrant that, of all men, Jews should lay accusation against him for that hope! Certainly his testimony to the risen Jesus did not weaken faith in the promise of the Messiah or in the resurrection of the dead. Yet the whole nation in their public and earnest service of God night and day bore witness of their hope of attaining to that promise. Why is it judged incredible if God raises dead men? The prisoner assuredly did believe what the service of the chosen nation confessed night and day. Were Jews then gainsayers of their own boasted faith?

Acts 26:9-15

The apostle returns from argument to the account of his own life, from which he had turned aside for a moment.

“I therefore thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus the Nazarene; which things I also did in Jerusalem; and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received the authority from the chief priests, and I railed against [them] when they were put to death; and throughout all the synagogues, often punishing I was compelling them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them I was pursuing them even as far as to the outside cities” (Acts 26: 9-11).

We have repeated allusions in the Epistles to his life before conversion. Thus to the Galatians he wrote, “For ye have heard of my manner of life at one time in Judaism that beyond bounds I was persecuting the church and ravaging it, and was advancing in Judaism beyond many of mine own age in my race, being more exceedingly a zealot of my ancestral traditions (Acts 26:13-14). To the Philippians his language is, “As to law a Pharisee, as to zeal persecuting the church, as to righteousness that is in law found blameless” (Phil. 3:5-6). Lastly to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:13) he says, “Though formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insulter; but I obtained mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.”

Here he lets us see how unsafe a guide conscience is for the natural man, no matter what may be his religious helps. He considered it his duty to oppose the name of Jesus and zealously persecute all who called on Him. Nor does God accept such a plea. He had sent His Son with adequate proof of His Messiahship for all who would compare His written word with the facts of Jesus the Nazarene: prophecy accomplished; miracles wrought not only by Himself but by His servants, and of a character quite peculiar, yet harmonizing with a teaching altogether unexampled; and a moral power of holy life ending in a death of deepest shame on the cross, which He ever held out as not man’s sin only, but God’s grace as the ransom for sinners, to the reality of which all sacrifices pointed from Abel downward. Paul therefore had acted ignorantly in unbelief, as do others who refuse all revelation or misuse one part to reject another still faller and more glorious.

The greater the religious zeal in such a state of unbelief, the farther it carries the devotee from the present testimony of God. Hence it was that Paul gave himself up with all his soul to opposing the faith of Jesus as the Christ in Jerusalem, which he would feel outraged by His claims. Here before Agrippa he does not hesitate to confess to his own shame that he shut up “many of the saints” in prisons. To the Jews he had employed the more vague expression “this way” (Acts 22:4); as Luke in the history spoke of “the disciples of the Lord” (Luke 9:1). How little he so thought when he received the requisite authority from the chief priests! Nor was it only imprisoning. When it was a question of putting them to death, had he not given an adverse vote? Notably it was so in Stephen’s case, as this book records. Had he not visited all the synagogues, often punishing souls and forcing out blasphemy if possible? And had he not in his excessive madness pursued them even into cities outside the land?

But a mighty change was at hand. Not a hint of relenting appears here or elsewhere, not one emotion of pity for the victims, not a trace of self-judgment or hesitation in his own course. Who verified so conspicuously the Lord's own words? "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor Me" (John 16:2, 3). This is the new revelation of the Messiah come and rejected; and on that rejection bringing to light the Father and the Son, wholly unknown to those who in their zeal for the law broke out into hatred and persecution of what was beyond them and condemned their unbelief.

"On which [business] when proceeding unto Damascus with authority and commission of the chief-priests, at mid-day on the road I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun shining round me and those that were proceeding with me. And when we all fell to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest then Me? [It is] hard for thee to kick against goads. And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest" (Acts 26:12-15).

Never was sovereign grace so signally demonstrated. I do not speak of the wonder. But now evidently the Lord was giving a typical case, in the letter it would seem for the Jews by and by, in spirit for the Christian now. For what could more completely prove that Christ is all to him that believes? To a man up to that moment blinded by his legal zeal against the grace of God in Christ, that very Christ reveals Himself, sweeping into nothingness all that a Jew boasted of and rested in, and identifying himself in the glory of God with the One Who died, between two crucified robbers, the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

On earth Messiah is to be set God's King on His holy hill of Zion. This is the decree. Judgment will surely silence all that oppose, be they kings or nations, rulers or peoples. Their rage is as vain as all their imaginations to the contrary. Execution of judgment will make all plain to every eye. Then will Messiah ask and receive the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Then will He break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It will be no longer as now grace preached, but the kingdom established by divine power seen and felt beyond question; and the kings of the earth will be wise, and the judges instructed, serving Jehovah with fear and rejoicing with trembling.

Now Christ sits in heaven on the Father's throne, and has a new object of love and a new testimony carried on here below by the Holy Spirit suited to His glory on high and that object, even the church which is His body. This mystery is great, as it must be, for we speak about Christ and about the church; concurrently with which goes forth the gospel of God's grace to every creature under heaven, all distinctions of Jew and Gentile vanishing meanwhile.

Paul was called to be a minister, both of the church and of the gospel, as he says himself in Colossians 1:23-25. And the special manner of his conversion was exactly suited to it in the wisdom and goodness of God. For it was not only unmistakable grace in its deepest character, but from heavenly glory entirely above the distinctions so important on earth. And Paul alone was there personally favored, though the truth of it was to act most powerfully on souls all over the earth. This may help to show the immense importance of what the apostle recounted that day, in substance recorded now for the third time in the brief book of the Acts.

Impossible to doubt that a divine person speaks out from the brightness beyond that of the sun at mid-day. If all were prostrate and heard but a sound, Paul could not mistake the voice of His lips, saying to him (and in the Hebrew language), “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me” How overwhelming, yet how blessed, to hear in answer to his question of astonishment, “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest!” Thus even from the starting-point he heard the truth that the saints are one with Him. To persecute them is to persecute Jesus.

Doubtless the blessed apostle had revelations of the Lord, and from Him, not a few afterward; and the bearings of the mystery, as well as its consequences were made known to him by the Spirit. It is, however, full of interest to learn that the germ of all was planted in him, as we see here, from the moment that grace wrought in his soul and brought him into God’s marvelous light. He obeyed the truth immediately. It is hard to kick against goads, on the one hand; and on the other the Lord had drawn his heart into the love of the truth, whatever it might cost. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, which thenceforth gave its impress to his life, his faith and his testimony. “And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God.” He was Messiah, but far more; eternally the Son; now exalted and given to be Head to the church in the heavenly places; universal Lord to the glory of God the Father, in virtue of Whose name all things shall bow; as indeed He is our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Henceforth Saul could say, “For me to live is Christ.”

Acts 26:16-23

The decisive words were uttered, “I am Jesus,” to one who could not doubt the utterer was the Lord; nor this only, but “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest,” the germ of that mystery (and it is a great one) which the astonished hearer was to develop beyond all others, even of the apostles. Thereon follows what is of the deepest interest.

“But rise up and stand on thy feet; for to this end I appeared to thee, to appoint thee a servant and a witness both of what thou hast seen and of those things wherein I shall appear to thee, taking thee out from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness unto light and the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whence, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but reported both to those in Damascus first, and in Jerusalem, and through all the country of Judaea and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance On account of these things the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to slay me. Having therefore obtained help that is from God I stand unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said should come, whether Christ should suffer, whether He first by resurrection of [the] dead should announce light both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:16-23).

Such a vision to such an end stamped on Paul the apostolic title in its highest character. It was from heaven in the power of resurrection life and ascension glory; and this not only by one determining act, but with the guarantee of all that was to be made known from Him personally in the future. We should not know from this account that he was blind for three days and that Ananias was sent directly by the Lord to heal as well as baptize him. Nor have we particulars of his testimony either in Damascus on in Jerusalem, any more than of his going away into Arabia. Each fact is set forth where it was called for; all was stated not only with truthfulness but according to holy and divine design, as is invariably the case in scripture. The Lord led either Luke or Paul according to His will to say what was fitting. Here the apostle gives summarily what was of moment for his audience, and for all that should read and weigh the words afterward.

It was not only to convert and save him that the Lord had spoken to Saul of Tarsus. He was to arise and stand on his feet; for the Lord had appeared to him to appoint him a servant (■πηρ■την) and a witness both of what he then saw and of those things in which He was to appear to him. A work lay before him of immense magnitude and unprecedented character. And the Lord’s revelations then and afterward were of all moment. He was to be a typical servant too, though his own calling might be unique; for no such appearing of the Lord was to be the portion of those who should follow in the faith and footsteps of Paul.

Acts 26:17 is not well given by either the Revisers or the A.V. Though the word may bear “delivering,” as it often signified, its simpler meaning of “taking out” is far more suitable to the context and the truth intended and verified in the apostle’s career. It is admitted on all hands that the Lord’s taking Saul out from the people (or the Jews) is suitable; but De Wette and Meyer allege

that it does not chime in with the Gentiles. This seems quite a mistake. Separation from both is most appropriate to characterize his position; and there is no need to extend “unto whom I send thee” beyond the latter. He was to be apostle of Gentiles or uncircumcision, and as such magnifies his function in Romans 11. The “I” is emphatic, and the adverb “now” only added by inferior witnesses. The difficulty these scholars feel is owing to their ignorance of Christian position, and even of Christianity according to scripture. For the Jew believing in Christ is not leveled down to a Gentile, nor yet is the believing Gentile raised up to that of the Jew; but the Holy Spirit unites both to Christ in heavenly glory, while at the same the gospel of grace goes forth indiscriminately, but to the Gentile practically, as the once favored nation is given up to temporary blindness in God’s just judgment. Never was there a more striking representative of both than the apostle, minister of the church, and minister of the gospel (Col. 1). Stier has only noticed half the beauty of the contrast; for if Peter declares himself “a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed,” Paul was a witness of the glory of Christ and a partaker of His sufferings; and it is him we are called to imitate, though we only by faith see Him glorified. To share His sufferings is the Christian’s and the believer’s moral glory.

Then follows in verse 18 a vivid description of his works among the Gentiles: “to open their eyes, that they may tarn from darkness unto light and the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith that is in Me.” Doubtless Jews needed these operations of grace no less really than the nations; but in the latter case the necessity was far more conspicuous, besotted as they were not only in shameless immorality but by gross superstitions which darkened and demoralized them more than if they had had no religion at all. If, as the Jews say, it was reserved for the Messiah to open the eyes of the blind literally, here we see how He sent His apostle to do the work, not physically alone but morally. And this was manifested by Gentiles, when they heard the call of the Lord, turning from darkness into light, and (defining yet more their sources) the power of Satan unto God, followed by the great characteristic privileges of the gospel, the reception of remission of sins and allotment among the sanctified by faith in Christ. For there was now a new, deeper, fuller sanctification, not fleshly or by ordinance merely as Israel’s was, but living and genuine by believing on Christ, the permanent result of an accomplished separation to God from the Christian’s starting-point.

The effect of such an announcement of sovereign grace, not only for Paul himself but in his mission, was immediate and immense. “Whence, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but reported both to those in Damascus first and in Jerusalem and through all the country of Judea and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance” (Acts 26:20-21). Undoubtedly it had been not only rebellion, but madness and destruction to have slighted such a vision and call; but this voucher the apostle gave which nothing but self-willed folly could evade or escape, a life of unequaled sufferings as well! as labors in bearing witness of its truth — truth so all-important to every child of man. Hence his burning zeal in reporting to all near or far off that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. For as the ground of the gospel consists of a person revealed and facts accomplished (not merely a promise as of old), no call to believe can be agreeable to man’s heart, and grace only can effect aught vital or acceptable, the conscience being bad and the will estranged from God, yea enmity against Him. There are doctrines infinitely deeper than elsewhere, and beyond comparison nearer to man’s heart, to say nothing of their essential furtherance of God’s glory. But

all the doctrines flow from Christ and His work; and a renewed child can rest confidingly in both and be drawn out in wonder, love, and praise, as well as in a life of devotedness and self-sacrifice. This, however, never can be apart from repentance and turning to God. As surely as there is the faith of God's elect there is a divinely wrought repentance, which through the confidence which Christ inspires wins the soul to God in self-abhorrence and earnest pursuit of His will, doing works worthy of repentance.

It would be incredible if it were not the most certain fact that a faith and life so formed are abominable in Jewish eyes. "On account of these things the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to slay me" (vs. 21). But none of these things swerved or even moved the blessed apostle, save to sorrow over them. "Having therefore obtained help that is from God, I stand unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying nothing but what Moses and the prophets said should come, whether Christ should suffer, whether he first by resurrection of [the] dead should announce light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23).

It is not that the Jews erred in looking for a glorious kingdom of Messiah, of which Israel should be the center on earth, but that the law and the prophets were clear that the Messiah should suffer and die as a sacrifice, as well as in rejection by man and even Israel, and thus risen from the dead bring in blessing of grace and mercy to faith, before the glory be revealed publicly. For it needs no reasoning to prove that the suffering and death cannot be after the glory; "but first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" So Christ, beginning from Moses and all the prophets, interpreted in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Acts 26:24-32

The truth was fairly before the king. The prophets and Moses had told out what was now accomplished in the Christ that Paul preached. If their testimony was divine, He who had suffered and risen from the dead is their sure fulfillment, however much may remain. The question whether the Christ should suffer, and whether He first by rising front death should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles, can admit of no answer but the most distinct affirmation. The Messiah to suffer, die, rise, and so shed light on man universally is the surest force of the law and the prophets. This alone gives meaning to sacrifices, this explains the cleansing of the defiled. No doubt there is the kingdom to come, and the judgment of the world, as well as of the dead; but the basis even of all the rest lay in the dead and risen Messiah, the object of faith for salvation to every believer, Jew or Gentile. Here, however, the apostle does not go beyond present facts.

“And as he thus defended himself, Festus saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad: much learning doth turn thee to madness. But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness. For the king is cognizant of these things, unto whom also I speak with openness; for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him, for this hath not been done in a corner. Believest thou, king Agrippa, the prophets? I know that thou believest. And Agrippa [said] unto Paul, With little [pains] thou art persuading to make me a Christian. And Paul [said], I would to God that both with little and with great [pains] not thou only but also all that hear me this day should become as I too am, except these bonds. And the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them; and when they had retired, they spoke one to another, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or bonds. And Agrippa said to Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar” (Acts 26:24-32).

Festus, ignorant of God and His word and bewildered to the highest degree by the assertion of Messiah’s resurrection, forgot the gravity of the occasion and of his own office, and branded the apostle as a madman, though softening the term by imputing it to his much reading. Calm in the sense of God’s presence and of the truth which alone gives true freedom, Paul shows the only moral elevation discernible in that splendid throng, and so with real courtesy rebuts the senseless charge with words bearing the stamp of the “truth” he testified and of the “sobriety” in which he laid all before others.

Love gives a single eye. With that keen discernment which characterized him, he turns from the benighted heathen who saw nothing beyond the present life and therefore saw it only as a question of power and pleasure and fame, an utter degradation for the undying soul, consistent only in shutting out the light of the true and even the warning of conscience not wholly ignorant of sin — from the heathen he turns to the Jewish king, who, immoral though he was, knew what altogether condemned himself, as well as the glorious visions of which Messiah is the center in Holy Writ. “For the king,” said he, “is cognizant of these things, unto whom also I speak with openness; for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been

done in a corner." It was notorious that no man living was more interested in or familiar with all that affected the Jews than the younger Herod Agrippa. But how little such acquaintance with facts avails, unless the Holy Spirit bring the word of God home to an exercised conscience! unless a soul bow to God in the overwhelming sense of its own sin and ruin, yet clinging to the hope of mercy in Him! Still to one that owned scripture as divine the apostle could speak as he could not with the same degree of freedom to another who denied and scorned it.

Therefore he turns in the most unexpected way with an appeal to the king's conscience. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Surprised out of his imperturbable self-complacency, and endeavoring to cover his confusion by a jest, the king replies, for it is no answer, "With little pains thou art persuading to make me a Christian." This appears to be the sense if we take into account the critical reading μεγ■λ■ in what follows. Were the Received Text justified which gives π■λλ■, "much," this rendering could hardly stand; for the more natural force would then be "in a little while," distinguished from "much time."

It is plain that Agrippa had no answer to what had been shown from scripture and the gospel facts. It is equally plain that the conclusion was irresistible, which he strove to parry. The truth is no question of reasoning but of faith in the testimony of God: only there is no root save in the conscience that owns sin and looks to God's grace in spite of it. And Christ and His work on the cross give the troubled soul confidence; because God sent His Son into the world for the twofold blessing, blessings equally needed by the sinner and flowing from God Himself, that we should live through Christ, and that He should die a propitiation for us. Faith in God's testimony of His love who therefore gave His Son receives these infinite blessings in Christ. But it is not mere mind that makes the discovery; and if it were, it could avail nothing. It is only to the babe, to the broken in heart, to the consciously ruined sinner, that the truth comes from God. For He is calling souls to the knowledge of Himself, not training theologians It is salvation made known in Christ, not religious science which the world builds up for itself out of it.

So the apostle takes up the king's word to escape further parley, and takes it up with a love and dignity suited to the Holy Spirit that dwelt in him. It is the simple but deep utterance of a heart supremely happy in the Savior, and in the assurance of grace in Him that could embrace not Agrippa only but all that composed his audience that day. What mercy to man! What goodness of God! What inexhaustible power and fullness in the name of Jesus! Even in the most general form such an ardent wish of blessing had been much. But the more clearly we regard his words the wonder grows. "I would to God that both with little and with great pains not thou only but also all that hear me this day should become as I too am, except these bonds." The largeness of heart suits admirably him who made known God's righteousness unto all, and upon all those that believe. The readiness to take all pains is in keeping with the debtor both to Greeks and barbarians, both in wise and to foolish, who working night and day not to burden any, preached the gospel to all. But the perfect happiness of his soul flows over when he wishes to God for them that they might be as he too was. What! the man who had been beaten for dead, and in prison for years, known to be innocent by successive governors, yet chained to a soldier night and day to please a people whom these governors despised and hated. Yes, this is the man who wishes for them all, by little pains and by great as the case might be, that they might not be forgiven or saved only, good a wish as this is, but far, far more, that they might become even as he, filled with the conscious joy of being blessed with Christ and enjoying the present cloudless favor of God. Indeed

nothing less is normal Christianity. Yet he adds, except these bonds: “this he could not, did not, wish for one of them. Truly it was a soul that kept itself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Was there one heart that responded, one conscience pierced? We know not, but only that forthwith the court retired, yet owned that the prisoner’s course deserved neither death nor bonds. Agrippa especially, and he was the most competent to speak, declared that he might have been set at liberty but for his appeal to Caesar. How little the king knew God’s purpose or ways! Paul, as he suffered with Christ, was called in due time to suffer for Him. In due time he was to have his wish, to become conformed to His death (Phil 3:9-11).

Acts 27:1-13

Thereon follows the voyage of the apostle to Rome, a narrative full of interest in every way. What believer can fail to find refreshment and cheer, as he ponders its details and sees the prisoner as perfectly master of the situation on board ship in a storm and wreck, as before in the presence of judges and a king who attested his guiltlessness? But what reader of any version even if believing could anticipate, what every scholar ought to know, that there is more of real information about an ancient merchant ship, quite simply and incidentally conveyed, than is found perhaps in all the extant remains of Greek and Roman authors? So the late Dean Howson owns in Smith's Bible Dictionary, as indeed the soundness of the judgment is notorious.

"And when it was determined that we should sail away for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius of an Augustan cohort. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium about to sail to the places along Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus of Macedonia a Thessalonian being with us. And the next day we arrived at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and permitted [him] to go unto the (or, his) friends and receive attention. And thence putting to sea we sailed under the lee of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. And having sailed across the sea that is along Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came unto Myra [a city] of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on board. And sailing slowly many days and coming with difficulty abreast of Cnidus, as the wind did not farther suffer us, we sailed under the lee of Crete abreast of Salmone, and coasting it with difficulty, we came unto a certain place called Fair Havens, near to which was [the] city of Lasea. And much time being spent and the voyage being already dangerous because the Fast was already past, Paul admonished them saying, Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship but also of our lives. But the centurion believed the master and the ship-owner rather than the things said by Paul. And the harbor being ill-suited to winter in, the most gave counsel to put to sea thence, if by any means they might arrive at Phoenix to winter in, a harbor of Crete, looking north-east and south-east. And when a south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and coasted close by Crete" (Acts 27:1-13).

We see at once that Luke is with the apostle on his voyage, and Aristarchus also. "One" in this case is quite uncalled for, as in all the Protestant English Versions from Tyndale. The fact is that he has been before us in this book from time to time as the companion of the apostle. See Acts 19:29; 20:4; as he is afterward named in Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:24. Neither appears to have been at this time a prisoner. Both became partakers with the one that was so used. Love led these to join him in the face of shame and danger. They did not therefore cast away their boldness which has great recompense of reward. Of Julius the centurion nothing more is certainly known than what is here recorded: but we are enabled to see at least his amiability, and the moral respect inspired by the apostle from first to last, hindered one may say perhaps, at one point which must in the sequel have increased it more and more as we shall observe. It would seem that there was no special Augustan cohort; nor does the text say more than that he commanded a cohort which bore that designation. It is known that the emperor Nero had a body-guard organized at this very date,

consisting of veterans specially called out for service. Julius may have been an officer among them. They were called Augustani (Tac. 14. 15). Why he was in Palestine does not appear: if there, we can readily understand the prisoners and soldiers under his charge on his return to Rome.

It seems amazing that there should be the least doubt about “Asia” in verse 2. Neither the continent, nor even Asia Minor is meant, but the Roman province, which was but the western seaboard of the latter according to the usage of the book.

“The (or his) friends” were the believers in Sidon, a mode of speech which we find in the Third Epistle of John. Evil times made them manifest: false brethren turned aside, ashamed of the cross. What the “attention” was that is meant is conjectural, and may be expressly left so to meet any case in future.

The lee of Cyprus was in this instance to the north of the island, the winds being contrary. Hence they coasted along the south of Cilicia and Pamphylia. Otherwise the direct course must have been south of Cyprus. But it would seem that the ship had to touch at places (vs. 2) which called them north. Myra lay due north of Alexandria; so that the ship from this port met the one of Adramyttium in that Mysian harbor. Both ships were in their right course according to the winds then blowing. Where the first was bound we are not told. But the centurion avails himself of that from Alexandria, which had a cargo for Italy, and transferred all his company accordingly (Acts 27:6).

Greater difficulties speedily follow; but disciples need not be agitated if the Lord seem not to heed. “Scarce” as in the A. V. (vs. 7) does not give the thought intended, but “with difficulty.” The wind being about N.W., as Mr. Smith shows in his interesting “Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul,” made it slow and hard work to bring up the ship from Myra and Cnidus, even though with the advantage of a weather shore and a westerly current. The wind did not allow them to go on (not to put in); so that their course lay under the lee of Crete, and this time its south side, after sailing abreast of its eastern point, Salmone (called Sammonium by Pliny the elder, as by Strabo Σαμ■νιον). And it may be mentioned that Fair Havens to this day bears the same name corrupted—Kalolimounias, five miles W. of Cape Leonda, in the immediate neighborhood of which, inland, lie the ruins of Lasma, as distinctly identified by our countrymen lately.

The insurmountable delay from adverse winds and other circumstances brought them to a season of no small peril in that sea (vs. 9); and the apostle gave counsel on which events soon after, but too late, impressed the seal of indisputable value. Nevertheless he seems not to claim divinely given foresight for his warning: the terms employed in verse 10 are rather his own judgment simply, in apparent contradistinction from the prophetic intimation announced in Acts 27:21-26. “I perceive,” introducing a general admonition of danger, differs widely from “I believe God” with a precise assurance of the loss of the ship but of no life among the passengers and crew, which last he was unable to guarantee when he first spoke out. But the shipmates and the shipowner were opposed to the warning words of the apostle; and we can easily understand why the centurion paid more heed to the opinion of men accustomed to the sea (vs. 11), themselves no doubt disposed to regard cheaply what a landsman might think or say. Then again, whatever its title promised, Fair Havens was beyond doubt inconvenient for wintering in, as the bay is open to almost one-half of the compass; and as all could see this, the majority advised to put to sea also

from there, as from other places before (vs. 12): not that they meant to pursue the voyage to Italy in such weather and at such a time, but hoping to reach the unquestionably better port of Phoenix, now identified as Lutro, though well aware of their risk in attempting it.

It may interest some to know that competent men declare Fair Havens to be a better harbor than its exposed look conveys at first sight. Mr. Smith, who studied the whole question on the spot with minute care and professional skill, pronounced it to be “so well protected by islands and reefs, that though, not equal to Lutro, it must be a very fair winter harbor; and that considering the suddenness, the frequency, and the violence with which gales of northerly wind spring up, and the certainty that, if such a gale sprung up in the passage from Fair Havens to Lutro, the ship must be driven off to sea, the prudence of the advice given by the master and owner was extremely questionable” (Smith’s Voyage,. 35c, p. 88, second edn.). Hence we may learn that there is such a thing as divine guidance in the ordinary things of life, short of inspiration no doubt, but superior to man’s experience and wisdom. Are we so unbelieving as to deny its reality save in an apostle? Blind indeed must we be, if we do, to the facts of every day among God’s children.

The value of a close adherence to the text is remarkably shown by the numerous mistranslations of this chapter, which had introduced confusion and insuperable difficulty for exposition. A striking instance occurs at the end of verse 12, where the A.V. represents this haven of Crete, Phoenix or Lutro, as lying “toward the south-west and north-west.” What the clause says is that the harbor looks “down” (κατ■) south-west and down north-west. But looking down a wind means along or with the direction in which it blows, and not to the quarter whence it came. The meaning therefore is that the port of Phoenix looks north-east, and south-east, the points precisely opposite to those which have been understood. Now this (says Mr. Smith) is exactly the position of Lutro, which “looks” or is open to the east; but, having an island in front which shelters it, it has two entrances, one looking to the north-east, which is κατ■ Λ■βα, and the other to the south-east, κατ■ Χ■ρον. Hackett who does not think it safe to give up the common interpretation objects to this view of Mr. S. that it involves two inconsistencies. First, it assigns opposite senses to the same term, viz., south-west as the name of a wind and north-east as the name of a quarter of the heavens. Secondly, it destroys the force of βλ■ποντα, which implies that the wind and the harbor confronted each other, and not that they were turned from each other. But the reasoning is faulty, because the fact is misunderstood. The harbor in question does look with the wind in each case, so that the force of “looking” is preserved intact; and again the winds in question are preserved in their exact force and not confounded with aught else.

Only looking down, south-west wind and down, north-west wind means in fact looking north-east and south-east. The A.V. confounds κατ■ with πρ■ζον ε■ς. The direction toward the source of the wind is expressed by the latter; whereas the nautical phrase of down the wind means whither it blows. Hence Phoenix looked north-east and south-east. The look of the harbor signifies the direction to which — not from which — these winds blow. The harbor looked down the S.W. and down the N.W. winds, that is, in both directions; and hence to the N. E. and S.E. quarters, as the resulting force. The winds are only to mark the outlook definitely. Nautical phrases abound in the chapter. Josephus uses κατ■ λ■βα just as it is here (Antt. Judges 15:9. 6). See Liddell & Scott on κατ■ B.I.I.

But appearances often deceive, as they did here. For when a south wind blew softly, they thought to gain their purpose, and weighing anchor (“lifting” is the technical phrase), they coasted close by Crete. Here the Vulgate misled Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer to give the imaginary port of Assos (the true place was away in Mysia, compare Acts 20:13-14), instead of “close,” rectified in the Geneva V. after Beza who refuted the proper name with ability, and proved the necessity of understanding the adverb.

Acts 27:14-26

The result justified the apostle's advice notwithstanding a fair start. But seamen ought to have remembered how apt a mild southerly breeze, in those seas especially, is to shift to a violent northerly wind. So it was now.

"But not long after there beat down it a tempestuous wind that is called Euraquilo; and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave up and were driven. And running under the lee of a certain small island called Clauda, we were able with difficulty to secure the boat: and when they hoisted it, they used helps, frapping the ship and fearing less they should be cast upon the Syrtis, they lowered the gear and so were driven. But as we were exceedingly pressed by the storm, the next day they began a clearance overboard; and the third [day] they cast out with their own hands the gear {or furniture] of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm lay on, at last every hope that wished us saved was taken away. And when they had been long without food, then Paul stood forth in their midst and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened to me, and not have put to sea from Crete and have gained this injury and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. For an angel of the God Whose I am and whom I serve stood by me this night saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Caesar; and, behold, God hath granted thee all that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good courage; for I believe God that it shall be as it hath been spoken to me. But we must be cast upon a certain island" (Acts 27:14-26).

The hurricane that caught the ship beat down from Crete, which appears to be the true force of κατ α■τ■ς not "arose against it," that is, the ship as in the A.V. This is confirmed by Luke 8:23, though ■βαλε κατ■ is a far more forcible expression than κατ■βη...eis as indeed the case here demanded. Compare also, as Mr. Smith suggested, κατ■ το■ κρημνο■ in Luke 8:33. Other ways of taking the words are unnatural in the extreme. Tyndale, after Luther probably, refers "it" to "their purpose" in verse 13. The version of Geneva (1557) should be noticed: "But anone after, there arose agaynst Candie, a stormye wynd out of the north-east." Now this was not the fact. The wind blew down from Crete, not against Crete, which it could not do. Besides the accusative not the genetive would have been employed in that case. The A. V. with most understood the ship, which however is in the context always πλο■ον, and so ungrammatical. Only in verse 41 is να■ς employed. The beating of the tornado down the highlands of Crete seems a far more graphic account than its striking against the ship, which was a matter of course in that sea when exposed to a rushing S. N. E. wind. And here it may be remarked that Euroclydon is no known appellation, nor is there any satisfactory source of the word. The more ancient ε■ρακ■λων is to be preferred, testified by the best MSS. and Vv. J. Bryant's objections to the compound are not well grounded. Earo-Auster is a similar hybrid. A north-easterly wind fully accounts for the course of the ship. "Bear up into" is more literally to "face," a term often applied to the collisions of warfare and of common life. Some have attributed it to the practice of painting an "eye" on each side of the prow, so common of old and not unknown still in the Levant.

The small island to the leeward of which they drove before the wind is now called Gozzo. Chlavda they say on the spot, which is the Romaic pronunciation of Clauda; so that the identification is certain. It was under this lee that they got the boat on board, though with difficulty (vs. 16). When ■ρανυες was used absolutely as in verse 13 (cf. Thuc. 2. 15), it meant weighing anchor; here in verse 17 it has its ordinary force of lifting or taking up. The "helps" in question were means to counteract the violence of the gale, rather than the aid of the passengers as some have thought. "Frapping" is the technical English expressed by "under girding." It is done by passing a large cable four or five times round the ship's hull. It was common of old, but has been practiced in recent times and on British ships, mercantile and naval. The precariousness of mere scholarship in explaining such a thing may be seen in the learned A. Bockh's notion that the cable was applied horizontally. Indeed on his authority Dr. L. Schmitz so gave it in the art. Ships in Dr. W. Smith's Diet. of Greek and Roman Antiquities.

What is rendered in the A. V. "the quicksands" ought really to be "the Syrtis." Two Syrtes are spoken of. This was the greater or eastern, now the Gulf of Sidra, which Admiral Smyth was the first to survey adequately, as shown in his "Memoirs on the Mediterranean ": an object of great and natural dread to ancient seamen. In this same verse occurs one of the most serious of the many mistakes in the older versions, even Meyer and other moderns perpetuating them. Had they "struck sail," the ship must inevitably have been driven directly into the Syrtis. "It is not easy (says Mr. Smith) to imagine a more erroneous translation than that of our A. V. 'Fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, they strake sail, and so were driven.' It is in fact equivalent to saying that, fearing a certain danger, they deprived themselves of the only possible means of avoiding it." Some sail, as the authorities lay down and as common sense feels, is absolutely requisite to keep the ship steady, and hinder her from pitching about and rolling so deeply as to strain and work herself to pieces. Hence the measures necessary were that storm-sails should be set and the ship go on the starboard tack. "Lowering the gear" is the right translation. Kypke, who was a sensible man and sound scholar, is surprisingly loose in his annotations here. He will have it to be "letting down the anchor"! as βλ. κατ■ in verse 12, and so forth, he illustrates βλ πρ■ς. It is singular that Kuhnol, De Wette, and Meyer followed in this wake, so inconsistent with the context.

In verse 18 we see them reduced to the very frequently adopted resource of getting rid of cargo, ■κβ. ποτ. being the proper terms employed, as we may see in the Onom. of Julius Pollux. In verse 19 they go farther, and "with their own hands" the seamen threw away — what they would not have done save in imminent danger — the ship's furniture, spare gear, and so forth. The inability to see sun or stars added to their danger, and the violence of the weather so prolonged.

But now leaving the details of the voyage, interesting though they are in the decisive proof they afford at every turn of the absolute reliableness of the divine word, and its incomparable superiority to all the versions and the commentaries of the learned and pious, let us turn to the devoted servant of the Lord, who stands forth in the hour of need and danger and darkness. If he gently recalls their former slight of his counsel, it is neither to pain them nor to exalt himself. Dwelling in love, he dwelt in God and God in him, as every Christian should; and thus he is enabled to use wisely what grace gave. He confesses openly the secret of favor from on high, a favor that extended to them; for the true God despises not any, while He loves perfectly those Whom He adopts as sons to Himself by Jesus our Lord. Yet He does not overlook His offspring, as the same apostle once preached to the Athenians, idolatrous though they were. It is of no small moment that

we too should remember this; for evangelical men are apt to think only of the relations of grace. These are of all importance, and only too feebly held by the saints in general. We can scarcely exaggerate what sovereign grace has given us in Christ. But we do not well to slight what scripture reveals of the place man has, as man, and sinner though he be, in the divine mind and compassion. It is the more to be remembered in these days when infidel dreams of development or evolution entice and defile real believers. Truth ignored or neglected by the faithful is the constant resource of Satan for those who know not God and His Son.

Man has a relationship to God which be alone of earthly beings possesses. Other creatures here below began to live when they were organized. Not so man, till Jehovah Elohim breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, the ground of his immortal soul and of his immediate responsibility to God. Therefore, when for him death came in through sin, he alone is to rise again and to give account to God.

Undoubtedly another than Adam was in the counsels of God, the Second Man and Last Adam, infinitely higher than man, even the Son of God no less than the Father, in due time to become the new Head of divine blessing to God's glory, far, far more than retrieving in obedience unto death what the old head had lost through disobedience; so that mercy might rejoice over judgment, and grace to the sinner be a display of God's righteousness in virtue of the blood of Jesus.

There are three considerations of no little moment to hold intact and without con fusion. First, the moral nature of God abides in its invisible purity and honor. He loves good and hates evil. His will alone is entitled to guide and govern. The creature is responsible to obey Him. Secondly, the race being alien and sinful (for Adam innocent had no child), grace in Christ alone produces what suits God's nature according to His word and by His Spirit; as grace alone provided an adequate and everlasting redemption in Christ's blood and gave that life in Him which is ever holy, dependent, obedient, as He — Himself was in all perfection. But, thirdly, God does not for all this give up His place as "a faithful Creator." He is the Savior (that is, Preserver) of all men, especially of those that believe. Not a sparrow falls on the ground without our Father, yea, the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Surely there is no reason to fear those that kill the body but are unable to kill the soul. He only is to be feared who is able to kill both body and soul in hell. Not only are others not to be feared, but as the children and servants of God, we are in a position and ought to have the heart to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings for all men; for kings and all that are in high places, no less than for the wretched, and suffering, and degraded, whom their fellows avoid and despise. Grace not only elevates above all the present glory of the world by uniting us to Christ at God's right hand, but sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God through the Holy Spirit given to us.

All these elements we may see here full and active and in harmony. Christ before the heart delivers from mere and barren theory as well as one sidedness. Not only is there the union of humbleness and dignity, but faith and love with the unflinching confession of Him whose he was and whom he served. There is no seeking to please or win men as his aim. He abides the Lord's bondman. He testifies a direct revelation sent at that very time. He declares the witness it bore to God's compassion toward them all, united to His special favor to His servant; and all this in the midst of this busy, blind, selfish, ungodly world.

Two things are to be noticed in that divine message to the apostle, while a prisoner in the hands of the Gentiles through the malice of the Jews. First, he can speak of all his fellow-voyagers given him by God, not of course for eternal life, but for present security. Secondly, he predicts that they must be on a certain island, without pretending to know more. God had not disclosed its name; and he faithfully follows. Revelation was given to exalt not man but God.

Acts 27:27-44

“But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven to and fro in the Adriatic, about midnight the sailors surmised that they were drawing near to some country, and on sounding, found twenty fathoms, and after going a little farther and again sounding, found ten fathoms; and fearing that haply we should be cast off on rough places, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished that day were come. And as the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship and had lowered the boat into the sea, under pretext as though they would lay out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, Ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall off. And while daylight was about to come on, Paul exhorted them all to partake of food, saying, [The] fourteenth day to-day ye wait and continue without food, having taken nothing. Wherefore I exhort you to partake of food, for this is for your safety; for not a hair from the head of any of you shall perish. And when he said this, he took bread, and gave thanks to God before all, and having broken, he began to eat. And all were of good cheer, and themselves also took food. And we were in the ship, all the souls, two hundred [and] seventy six. And being satisfied with food, they lightened the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but perceived a certain bay with a beach, on which they took counsel, if they could, to drive the ship. And casting off, they left the anchors in the sea, at the same time loosening the lashings of the rudder and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the bow stuck and remained immovable; but the stern began to break up by the violence [of the waves]. And the soldiers’ counsel was that they should kill the prisoners, lest they should swim out and escape; but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, hindered them from their purpose, and commanded those able to swim to cast themselves off first and go to land; and the rest, some on planks and some on things from the ship. And it came to pass that all got safe to land” (Acts 27:27-44).

A fortnight’s drifting under such a storm brought the end near, which is set as clearly before us as their previous course and efforts. The sounding of the lead indicated the approach of land, and no small danger imminent, which the night made more felt. There is no real difficulty in the Adriatic (vs. 27); because it was often used in a much wider application than to the sea between Greece and Italy, as has been shown in Ptolemy and in Pausanias. Modern usage confines the Adriatic to the gulf only. There is no ground, therefore, on this score to conceive of another Melita (that is, Meleda) instead of Malta, as generally understood. The breakers (which are characteristic of the point of Koura, near St. Paul’s Bay, as Mr. Smith has shown from Smyth’s view of the headland) gave occasion, probably, to the surmise of the sailors, confirmed as it was by their repeated soundings (vs. 28). Anchoring from the stern (vs. 29) was the safer course under such circumstances; and ancient ships had many anchors. It is shown from the sailing directions that the ground is exceptionally good there; so that there is no danger as long as the cables hold.

The unworthy design of the sailors was defeated by Paul. It was not exactly “casting out anchors,” which would not require the use of a boat. Under pretense of extending anchors from the prow,

which was no unusual measure, they meant to desert the ship (vs. 30); but his word of warning to the centurion and the soldiers sufficed: “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (vs. 31). With the promptitude of their class, they cut off the ropes and let the boat fall off (vs. 32). God had given His word to save all; but it must be in His way; and He Who promised the end insists on His own means. We have only to be subject and obey.

Nor was the apostle only thus vigilant; he seeks, and not in vain, to comfort all and animate them with courage and confidence in God on the eve of the utmost apparent peril. He besought all to partake of food after their long abstinence, assuring them absolutely of preservation (verses 33, 34); and set the example himself after thanking God before all (vs. 35). There is no ground for the observation of Olshausen that it was, for the Christians, the celebration of the Lord’s supper or of an agape. For though the terms are just such as were so employed, they are no less expressly applied to an ordinary meal in Luke 24:30, and elsewhere. Indeed there is no small superstition in the some too often attached to them. It is the object of the Eucharist winch gives it its character; and this was quite out of place here. But the most ordinary food should be sanctified by the word of God and prayer, and the apostle here acts on his own instructions tonTimothy. No wonder that all became cheerful and took food (vs. 36), after long dejection and disinclination, with death before their eyes! Their number (vs. 37) is carefully added as two hundred and seventy-six, and then the lightening of the ship (a fresh nautical expression) by casting out the corn (vs. 38). They had eaten their last meal before the wreck, which is minutely described in the closing verses.

Wonder has been expressed that none of the sailors knew the land (vs. 39); but we are told by those competent to judge, that, remote from the well-known harbor of Valetta, this spot possesses no marked feature by which it might be recognized.

The A. V. here (vs. 40) is far from accurate. They did not take up the anchors, but cast them away (lit. round), and abandoned them (not “themselves”) into the sea. The loosing of the bands of the rudders, attached to the stern on each quarter, was a necessary act; for when a ship was anchored by the stern, the rudders had to be lifted out of the water and secured by lashings, which again were loosed when the ship got under way. Further, it was not the “mainsail,” but the foresail which they raised to the wind. Possibly the French term misled here; but the weight of practical or circumstantial evidence, as in Smith’s Dissertation, seems decisive. In this sense ■ρτεμ■ν occurs in no ancient Greek author. We see a foresail in an old painting of Pompeii. Luke alone designates it here. It is remarkable how the master and the pilot vanish from notice at all these times of danger, and for wise measures. The apostle really guides at the crisis; the sailors are only mentioned as meditating ineffectual treachery; the centurion takes action, with the soldiers on one occasion, on another preventing a cruel deed to secure themselves from risk as to the prisoners.

For now the supreme moment had arrived. The ship must be stranded, as it was impossible to save it any more than its lading. Making for the beach they fell into a place where two seas met, apparently through the island now called Salmonetta, in St. Paul’s Bay; and there they drove the ship aground (vs. 41). In few spots, save there, could the fact have been as here described, owing to a deep deposit of mud, where the bow stuck and remained fast, whilst the stern began to break up, exposed as it was to the force of the waves.

The soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners (vs. 42). They were responsible under the severest penalties not to let them go, as even this book itself shows on more occasions than one. But the

centurion, not so much out of pity for the rest as through regard for Paul, interfered to save him at all cost (vs. 43). “Wishing” is the force, not merely “willing.” His order was for such as could swim to cast off and to get to land; as the rest did, some on boards, and some on parts of the ship now going to pieces. They all got safe ashore, as verse 44 tells us. The promise was made good, to God’s glory, as a living God and faithful Creator.

Acts 28:1-15

The land to which they escaped they subsequently learned to be Malta. This ought to be beyond controversy. Yet has it been contested even to our own day. The first who argued for the islet in the Gulf of Venice called Meleda seems to be Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who hazarded this opinion in his work on the Administration of the Empire, one of the Byzantine historians and of weight in what he personally knew. But he, like the few who adopted his view of the scene of the apostle's shipwreck, had not duly considered the revealed account, any more than the actual facts of the two places as fitting in with that account. The direction of the wind favors Malta, as it blew them from Crete and Glands, toward the dreaded Syrtis. This could not have driven toward the north of the Gulf. Nor is there any need to narrow the Adriatic to that Gulf; for it is well known, that in ancient usage, and by such careful writers as Cl. Ptolemy, the famous geographer, it comprehended the open sea where the ship really drifted to Malta, and considerably farther. Then again there is nothing in the local features, soundings, anchorings, "rough" or rocky places, creek with a beach, place with two seas, which can apply to Meleda as to Malta. And the argument founded on "the barbarians" is quite invalid; for the Romans like the Greeks applied the term to those who were, not savages, but speakers of a language strange to themselves. Nor am I aware of any proof, even if the word meant "savages," that this then applied to the inhabitants of Meleda more than to those of Malta, though it is difficult to suppose that insignificant isle would have such residents as Publius, his father, and those that honored Paul and his friends with many honors and kind supplies, to say nothing of the universal kindness to the soldiers and ship's company. Malta, from its position and value from of old to this day, has been an important island, never Meleda.

Scaliger and Bochart with their usual discernment and massive learning had no hesitation in refuting the medieval mistake, and vindicating the claim of "St. Paul's Bay" in Malta as the true scene of the wreck and the escape. Bryant's reasoning, and later still S. T. Coleridge's pleas in behalf of Meleda against Malta, have no real groundwork.

"And when got safe we then ascertained that the island was called Melita. And the barbarians [or natives] showed us no common kindness; for they kindled a fire-heap and took us all in because of the then rain and because of the cold. But when Paul gathered a certain quantity of sticks and laid [it] on the fire-heap, a viper came out through the heat and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the beast hanging from his hand, they said one to another, Certainly a murderer is this man, whom though got safe from the sea, justice refused to let live. He however shook off the beast into the fire and suffered no harm. And they expected that he would be inflamed or fall down dead suddenly; but when they were long expecting and beheld nothing amiss happen, they, changing their mind, said that he was a god" (Acts 28:1-6).

Mr. Smith has well explained that there is no difficulty in understanding how the crew and the officers failed to make out the locality, even if ever so familiar in a general way as an Alexandrian ship with the great harbor of the island. They had drifted there in the dark, and there is no such definite landmark on the adjacent coast as to make identification easy; and, whatever peculiarity

may be there, they only discovered when they got close in before the ship ran aground. But the barbarians or men of a foreign tongue behaved with unusual philanthropy, which puts to shame what has too often been experienced on British shores and other coasts alas! since Christianity. They lit not a “fire” merely, but one so large that the term employed is one usually applied to a funeral pyre (πυρ■); as indeed would be needed to meet the urgent need of such a dripping crowd, with rain falling heavily, and severe cold.

This gave occasion to the incident related so graphically in verses 3-6. The apostle, with his usual earnestness and lowly love, gathers a fagot of sticks near the spot and laid it on the fire-heap, when a viper, no doubt before this dormant in the neglected wood, was roused as well as irritated by the heat and seized on the hand of Paul. It was ordered of God to verify the promise of the Lord Jesus (Mark 16:18), and as a sign to the kind heathen, and so much the more as they quite mistook its import at first, by leaving out God as unbelief habitually does. For when they saw the noxious creature hanging from his hand, they were assured he must be a murderer, escaped from the sea, only to meet a just retribution. But when he shook off the serpent into the fire without suffering anything out of the way, and they looked long in vain for either virulent inflammation or sudden falling dead, all was changed, and they called him a god. Such is the worth of human opinion outside its own sphere. Little could they conceive that he was a man of God, a prisoner in heathen hands because of the deadly hatred of God’s people, the Jews; and this really because of the good news of Christ he preached to the Gentiles. But moral enigmas in this world are more surprising than the greatest of intellectual difficulties. Of one thing we may be sure, that the natural man is here invariably astray.

Nor was this all. The signs of Christianity are characteristically beneficent, samples of that power which in the age to come will banish the evil one and chase away the dire effects of sin, when mankind as a whole and pre-eminently Israel shall sing, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases” (Psa. 103:2-3). That day has not yet dawned on Israel and the nations; but meanwhile for the inauguration of the gospel and in honor of Him Who was crucified by men but now exalted of God in heaven, there was, wherever it seemed fitting, a display of the powers of the coming age, not only over a vanquished enemy, but in pity for his poor victim, suffering man. Thus another of the signs to follow those that believed was soon after added: “they shall lay hands on sick persons, and they shall be well” (Mark 16:18).

“Now in the country surrounding that place were lands belonging to the chief of the island, by name Publius, who received and entertained us three days courteously. And so it was that the father of Publius lay ill of a fever and dysentery; unto whom Paul came in and laid his hands on him with prayer, and healed him. This then being done, others also that had sicknesses in the island came and were cured; who also honored us with many honors, and on sailing put on board [or, laded us with] things for our need” (Acts 28:7-10). Here then we have the gracious healing power attached to the Lord’s name, but no pretentiousness on the apostle’s part. He prayed and laid his hands on the sick man. The healing of one so prominent arrested attention. Many others in the island came with their sicknesses and were cured; for grace is no respecter of persons. Nor did Paul or Luke decline their attentions and kind offerings, though assuredly they sought nothing at their hands. Indeed it is of all consequence that the Christian, while valuing as our Father does even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, should render a simple and true

testimony that the gospel, the grace and truth of Christ, has everything to give; it is never to gain what self seeks in this world. God is a Giver Himself, the Giver of the best and indeed of all good, and loves that His own keep up the family character in this respect as in all others (2 Cor. 9:7). On the other hand, it is very far from the ways of Christ to cherish a narrow, hard, and unappreciative heart where kindness is meant, especially because of His word and work. It is only the Holy Spirit keeping Christ before the eye of faith that can enable us to discern the path in the midst of difficulties and dangers on all sides.

“And after three months we sailed in a ship of Alexandria after having wintered in the island, with Dioscuri for a sign. And landing at Syracuse we tarried three days; and thence having gone round we arrived at Rhegium, and after one day when! a south wind sprung up we came on the second-day unto Puteoli, where we found brethren and were besought to tarry with them seven days; and so we came unto Rome. And thence the brethren having heard about us came out to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage” (Acts 28:11-15).

We have seen how the Lord attracted hearts by His gracious power to that truth which is for heaven and eternity, but received only here by faith and here productive of good and holy and godly fruits to His praise, the comfort of love among His own, and no small testimony to His name among those that are not His, if peradventure they might be won and called out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In the early spring they took ship again, this time also of Alexandria that had escaped the storm, which had wrecked their former ship because the master and crew had slighted the warning of the apostle. We do not hear of preaching, though we may be sure that the grace of Christ and the love of souls did not slumber in the hearts of His servants. But we see the place given to them and to Paul in particular by their past experience rising more and more as God saw fit to use each occasion where man’s wisdom or power was unavailing.

Syracuse, a famous city of Sicily, was soon reached but after a stay of three days they compassed the coast and came to Rhegium and the next day to Puteoli. The former was in the south west extremity of Italy, a port of Bruttium on the sea. The latter, in the Bay of Naples, was celebrated for its thirty-three mineral wells which indeed gave it its name, as well as for its earth valued for its uses even to this day. Here brethren were found who entreated that the apostle and the rest should remain with them seven days, the old term of a visit so natural among Christians who valued above all the joy of fellowship on the Lord’s day and at His supper, along with the manifold opportunities of edification, prayer and the word, meanwhile. “Then we went unto Rome.” What a contrast with the great ones of the earth, victor or vanquished, who had so often taken the same road! “His be the Victor’s name” was their life-song and brightest triumph — His Who “Trod all His foes beneath His feet, By being trodden down.” His servants tread in His footsteps, though it was His alone to suffer for sins.

But ere they reached the metropolis of the world, a fresh witness of love greeted the apostle and his company, how refreshing to his spirit! From Rome, when the brethren heard of their arrival in Italy, “they came out to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae.” The former was less than forty miles; the latter more than thirty miles from the great city. Neither place enjoyed a good repute even in heathen eyes. A classic poet has left a lively record of his passing through the more

distant of the two with its low yet extortionate taverns and squabbling bargemen. How different the meeting of the apostle of the Gentiles with those saints of Rome to whom he wrote not long before he was taken prisoner! He was nearing brethren he had longed to see that he might impart some spiritual gift for their establishment, or as he humbly and beautifully put the matter, that he with them might be comforted in them, each by the other's faith, both theirs and his. And now two companies had come forth to welcome him; for this is made plain by the mention of places distant by a few miles, but both no short way from Rome in days when traveling was far from as easy as it is now. None of these was troubled by the badness of the water, nor complained of mosquitoes or marsh-frogs or bantering slaves or lazy boatmen; no elation in the company, great friends or good cheer, still less by the wordy wars of buffoons while they dined. But debtor to Jew and Greek he that prayed for fruit to God's glory through Christ the Lord gave Him thanks and took courage when he saw those whom love in the truth had brought from Rome to welcome him. And what a joy for men delivered from the false glitter of the world and their selfish profit from its grinding tyrant, the many-headed Beast, to recognize by grace in Paul the prisoner the most honored servant of the Lord, the inspired writer to them of an Epistle yielding to none in depth and comprehensiveness of treating and enforcing the foundations of a saint's relationship with God, and the walk and service proper to it now!

It will be noticed that there is not a trace of Peter either now or subsequently, any more than in the Epistle more full of personal notices in its last chapter than any other in the New Testament. How unaccountable if the great apostle of the circumcision were then at Rome in any capacity whatever, still more if he there held the position assigned by some tradition-mongers! And if Peter did not found the church in Rome, certainly no other apostle had a hand in it. Indeed Paul near the beginning and before the end of his Epistle to the Romans gives us two statements irreconcilable with that ancient fable. In Romans 1:13, he evidently regards the head of Gentiledom as falling within his province, no less than heathen lands east of it, whilst the Epistle itself from the first chapter to the last is the fullest proof of a large number of saints already there, even both Jews and Gentiles. Then again in the chapter before the last he lays down what was the regular and constant aim of his ministry, his labors where Christ was not named and avoidance of building upon another man's foundation. For, as already noticed, there was a lack in Rome of what an apostle could best supply (Rom. 1:11), which it is inconceivable to suppose asserted if Peter or any other apostle had visited the city before he wrote or went. We may therefore dismiss absolutely what Eusebius states in the Armenian text of the Chronicon, followed as it is in the main by Jerome (Catal. 1) and by heaps of Romanists, that Peter visited Rome as early as A. D. 42! and stayed there twenty years! (Jerome and others, say twenty-five years); a statement as impossible to stand with what scripture tells of Peter as with what we learn there of Paul.

Yet do we see him needing to take courage, as he drew near the city he had so longed to visit in the Lord. He seems as deeply conscious of weakness and fear and trembling as when preaching at Corinth years before. His experience of the Lord's gracious care on the last perilous voyage and wreck, the proofs of His power accompanying him with their effects on all at Malta, did not hinder this. Indeed it is in weakness that the Lord proves the sufficiency of His grace, as he had taught the Corinthians after no less real experience of delivering power in Ephesus (2 Cor. 1:12). And here the Lord works not by such a vision as had sustained Paul when in danger of yielding to depression (Acts 23:11) but by the faith and affection of the brethren from Rome. For it would

seem that the delay at Puteoli, due to brethren there who would have him stay a week in their midst, gave occasion to the tidings of his arrival in Italy reaching the saints in Rome and of their coming to meet him. And no difficulty, it is clear, was interposed by the authorities who held him a prisoner: such was the moral respect inspired among the Roman officials, and not least in the centurion who had witnessed his ways and words all the journey from the east to the west.

But how sweet and wondrous the dealings of grace to know from indisputable authority that the saints he was going to help so mightily were used of the Lord for the cheer of the apostle himself on the road: the best comment on his own words written to them beforehand — his desire to have mutual comfort among them, each by the faith that was in the other, both theirs and his! How practical is the truth that the body of Christ is one and has many members set each one in the body even as it pleased God! And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those parts of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness, whereas our comely parts have no need. But God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Such is the church called to be on earth the answer to Christ in heaven. Oh! how soon the declension, how far the departure, and how universal the ruin. Do we feel it, judge ourselves, and seek His will?

Acts 28:16-31

Thus the apostle comes to the metropolis of the world a prisoner. Such was the will of God. There were saints in it there, as we know from the Epistle written to them from Corinth (Acts 20:3). Many assemblies were apostolically founded, not that in Rome. So did God anticipate by condemning the pride of man which later on indulged in this tradition, as groundless as most others. The chief city of the Gentiles, which lay within Paul's province, not Peter's (Galatians 2), could boast truthfully of no apostle as its founder. But, more, there the greatest witness of the gospel came in bonds. So was the gospel to fare even more bitterly in the torture and at the stake when the pagan Babylon became the mystery of impiety, the papal Babylon. Yet the word of God was not bound, any more than crueller fiats consumed it later, even when a pseudo-Christian priest sat on the throne of the Caesars, and men masqueraded in the garb of the Lamb's followers who were ravening wolves, and really heathen in heart and unbelief.

"And when he came to Rome [the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the praetorian guard, but] Paul was allowed to remain with the soldier who guarded him. And it came to pass that after three days he called together those that were chief of the Jews; and when they were come together he said unto them, [Men] Brethren, I, though having done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; who, after examination, wished to release me because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spoke against [it], I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar, not having anything to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore did I call for you to see and to speak with, for on account of the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judæma concerning thee, neither did any of the brethren on arriving report or speak anything evil concerning thee. But we beg [or, think well] of thee to hear what thou thinkest; for concerning this sect it is known to us that it is everywhere spoken against" (Acts 28:16-22).

Two things appear in the apostle: entire superiority to the rancor that had hitherto pursued him from the Jews, and untiring zeal to seek that they should hear the truth, and not judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Nor was there the least underhand work. He invited their chief men, not the less informed; and he explained that, without wrong to the Jews or to their hereditary customs, he was a prisoner from Jerusalem among the Romans; who after examination were minded to acquit him but for the opposition of the Jews, which forced his appeal to the Emperor. But he points out the real offense — his stand for the hope of Israel. He might have exposed their conspiracy to murder him when in Roman hands, a fact which, if published in Rome, would have as completely served himself as blasted the Jews. But not a word escapes him, save of unselfish love, that he had no charge against those that had so persistently sought his death. It was truly for the hope of Israel he wore the chain — for the Messiah fraught with blessings of every kind, never to wane, for Israel. And if the servant's love were thus faithful, what must be the Master's which had reproduced it in Paul's heart in his measure? And if Jews turned a deaf ear, those sure mercies (before which Israel one day will melt in true repentance) must find suited objects, if not in

the favored land, in the barren wilderness where open outcasts now live to God's glory, the objects of the grace of Jesus.

Of this grace to Gentiles, however, which had roused the hate of Jews elsewhere, the apostle does not yet speak, but simply of the fact that it was for the Christ, the hope of Israel, he was a prisoner.

The fact is that the Jews, having failed with successive governors, and even King Agrippa, were shrewd enough to apprehend the folly of carrying their complaints of Paul to Caesar. They had no true criminal charge. And what would a Roman Emperor care for their religious accusation? The Jews therefore replied that neither letters nor visitors had laid any formal complaint before them against Paul, but that they wished to hear what he had to say of the sect so universally spoken against as Christians. This was precisely what the apostle's heart desired.

"And having appointed him a day, many came unto him into the lodging, to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, from both the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning till evening. And some assented to the things that were said, and some disbelieved. And being disagreed one with another they left, Paul having said one word, Well spoke the Holy Spirit through Isaiah unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, With hearing ye shall hear and in no wise understand, with seeing ye shall see and in no wise perceive. For the heart of this people became gross, and with [their] ears they became dull of hearing, and [their] eyes they closed, lest they should see with [their] eyes and hear with [their] ears and understand with the heart, and return, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you that this salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles: they also will hear" (Acts 28:23-28). Verse 29 in the Text. Rec. as represented in the A. V. is not found in the ancient Greek MSS. To cast out an innovation is the reverse of innovating.

Thus God gave His servant an open door to the very people whom he loved so well and whose brethren's malice made him a prisoner, and so much the longer because there was no one to lay a definite charge. It was a moment of exceeding solemnity to the apostle's spirit, as there in Rome he laid bare the truth of God's kingdom and of the Person of Jesus from the law and the prophets for one long day; and with the result that some were persuaded of the things that were said, while others disbelieved, a stronger expression than their simply not believing. The word of God in the light of Jesus comes to put them to the proof, as it does and is intended to do. But if disagreeing among themselves they took their leave, Paul reiterated the long suspended sentence, already pronounced by the Judge Himself in John 12 seven centuries and more after Isaiah was inspired to utter it from the vision in the temple in the year when King Uzziah died (Isaiah 6). What a witness of divine patience as well as of sure judgment on His own people! Jehovah, the God of Israel, sent His prophet with the message originally. Then Jehovah-Jesus toward the close of His rejected testimony of love and light in their midst departed and hid Himself, after having done so many signs which manifested the Father and the Son at work in grace. Yet they believed not in Him according to Isaiah 53; yea more, they could not believe, for the judicial spell was taking effect, fruit of despising every word and proof of God Himself, the Son, on earth. "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His (Christ's) glory, and he spake of Him." Such is the comment of the inspired Evangelist. Now the word is again cited by Paul, only with this emphatic reference — "Well spoke the Holy Spirit." He Who of old gave the prophet to see, hear, and write, was now sent

down from heaven to make good Christ's glory, and is declared to be the One Who then and thus spoke. He had been rejected by the Jews as the witness of the glorified Son of Man, as truly as the Son on earth had been, and Jehovah as such of old. On the ground of responsibility all was over with the chosen people, who, having failed in righteousness, abhorred sovereign grace in the gospel. But the mercy they despised will be their only ground in the latter day, when the last empire of the Gentile rises up to oppose the returning Lord at His appearing in glory, in alliance with the Antichrist in the land of Israel. These are the Beast and the False Prophet of the Revelation.

Meanwhile the Jew is finally cut off, and before the apostasy is come and the Man of Sin revealed, the gospel goes forth on its errand of heavenly mercy to the Gentiles. "They also will hear," said the messenger from his bonds in Rome. And so it has been; so it is; though the shadows deepen as the end of the age draws near. Then an ungrateful Christendom will cast off the faith, and more and more return to naturalism, in love not only of present things but of idolatry, and in man set up as true God, that wrath may come to the uttermost on all, whether Jew or Gentile, who spurn grace and bow down to the creature lifted up to destruction by Satan in the despite and denial of the Father and the Son. But meanwhile "this salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles." For the grace of God goes down to the lowest when the light of the knowledge of His glory shines, as now in the gospel, in the face of Jesus at His right hand. Thus Israel is cast off, the Gentiles hear, but the apostle was in bonds. So the history ends. But the apostle, a prisoner in Rome, sent thence to the Jews the deepest message they over received from God, as also to the saints at Ephesus and Colosse the fullest words, on the body and its Head, on Christian experience to the Philippians, and personally to Philemon: so fertilizing the stream that flowed through him in his captivity.

"And he remained two whole years in his own hired lodging, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness unhinderedly" (Acts 28:30-31).

Such is the simple, solemn, and dignified close of inspired ecclesiastical history. Some speak of it as abrupt, because it does not tell us of the subsequent imprisonment of the apostle, and his death. It is the same spirit of unbelief which complains of the two Gospels that do not set before us the ascension scene; as if God did not know best how to re: veal His own truth. Paul is a prisoner, yet not so as to hinder the going forth of the truth even in Rome. To know more of the apostle we must read closely the word; yet even so there is nothing to encourage curiosity, superstition, or hero-worship, that God in all things may be glorified by Jesus Christ.

Chapter 30

All in John 12:32

My dear friend,

When Christ says “all,” depend upon it He means all. He makes no mistakes. True, there is here and there a word which has been badly translated by man; but that is not your difficulty. However, I venture to say that as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, and the full assurance of it, I have never yet seen, in our Authorized Version of the Bible, a single word but that left this clear enough. So when by grace I have received the truth, the gospel of my salvation, and therefore know that I am safe now and for eternity, I can, after this, afford to meet with difficulties by the way. The knowledge that Christ is mine and I am His, forever and ever, makes me, in comparison think little of unsolved problems. I can afford to wait the Lord's time to open my eyes. If this be His time now, I trust He may help you through these few lines. But I would remind you again, that no true progress can possibly be made until the foundation be first made sure, i.e., until your own eternal salvation is once for all settled and sure. If it be not so with you, I beg of you not to be enticed to try and settle any other question first. No other is of any value to you in comparison with this. But the enemy is well satisfied, even if you ponder spiritual problems, so long as you leave your soul's salvation a thing uncertain.

I repeat then, that when God says “all,” He means all. But to whom the “all” applies depends upon the context, just as it does in your conversation and mine. Suppose I said to you, “I have just been to a sale and bought ten cows: they are very fine cattle—all black.” You would not think that I meant all the cows in the world were black; but you would clearly see from the connection in which it was used to what the “all” referred. On the other hand I might say, “Cows are very useful cattle, they all give milk,” and you would clearly see that “all” here refers to the cows of the whole world. Of course, if my object be to pick holes in the word of God, I shall be mightily helped of the devil to “wrest it to my own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). But if my desire he humbly to ascertain what God means, He will honor me by opening my understanding (1 Sam. 2:30). When you get a letter from a friend, you do not settle down to try what you can make his words mean, but, even though he express himself badly, you try to arrive at the meaning which the words conveyed to him that wrote them. Now God expresses Himself perfectly, but still in a way that unstable men may wrest, if they choose to do so. This spirit was in man when Christ was on earth. They went to hear Him, not to learn of Him, but “to catch Him in His words” (Mark 12:13). Dear friend, beware of men who quibble about words to no profit.

As to the verse you refer to (John 12:32). Read ver. 31 with it. “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me.” The devil will be “cast out” of heaven “into the earth” (Rev. 12:9) before the world will be rid of him, temporarily, by his being cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2-3); finally and eternally, by his being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). It is evident from the context that the “casting out” in John 12:31 is in relation to the words “this world” in the same verse. The word “men” is in italics in the Authorized Version, i.e., to signify that it is not in the

original, but put in by the translators to help the meaning. I see no reason to object to its being put in here, if it be used legitimately.

Looking at the two verses just quoted, I gather Christ's meaning. All from Adam down had been his slaves; but now, the death of Christ, in the perpetration of which the world and its prince joined together, settled the doom of both (although the judgment passed is not yet executed). So Christ goes on to say that as all had been drawn aside by and to the devil, so He (Christ) here says that He will draw all unto Himself. But it is evident that all are not drawn to Christ at present, because, although his sentence is passed, the devil has not yet been cast out. Judgment is passed on a murderer days or weeks before its execution. So in this verse, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out,” you see the judgment was a present thing; the casting out was a future thing. Between the verdict and its execution there is this present day of grace, which the word “now” embraces, as in 2 Cor. 6:2, God in His long-suffering delaying the execution of judgment.

But the day of God's wrath will come. The prince of this world will be cast out. Then Christ (in virtue of His lifting up on the cross) will draw all unto Him.

The mistake commonly made is to think that all scripture points to the present time; whereas such a scripture as we have been considering, relating to what will follow the casting out of the devil, necessarily cannot refer to present time (excepting indeed in the limited sense to those who by grace, through faith, have had anticipated the execution of their judgment in Christ on the cross; as likewise these await not the actual casting out of the devil, but being now, through faith, delivered from His dominion by being translated into another kingdom (Col. 1:13), anticipate through faith the sequence of the devil's casting out. These even now are all drawn unto Christ).

All, however, are not drawn unto Christ now; but it is just as true that all upon the face of the whole earth will be drawn unto Him. We who now are drawn to Him have “fore-trusted in Him” (Eph. 1:12), being “a kind of first-fruits of His creatures” (James 1:11).

Just a few words as to your remark on “whosoever.” Acknowledging there may at first be difficulty in understanding the bearing of the word “all” in the portion we have been considering, I entirely fail to see how any ambiguity of meaning can be attached to “whosoever.” Suppose a class of twelve boys, and I said to them one day when they were all together, “I am going to have a Bible reading on Monday at my house. Whosoever of you would like to come will be welcome.” Surely nobody could say that the invitation was addressed more to one than the other, although all might not come. And again I might know beforehand that there were some shy boys in the class who would not come. But who could, with any truth, say that these shy ones were not asked? And who could, judging by the invitation, doubt their welcome?

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Is there anyone, whosoever, whatsoever, wheresoever he be, who has the desire, the will, to take the water of life? Then let him take it freely. How simple God's words are to those of humble heart! May we have the simple mind that takes God at His word. Men who wait to prove God's word before they believe it, must remain in the dark until they, take things in their right order, first believing and then proving. Before I conclude I would again beg of you, dear friend, to “cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils.” You seem very prone to two things: to have your faith shaken by what some men say or

do; and, again, to seek to have your faith strengthened by what others say or do. You remember that the foolish virgins wanted the wise to give them of their oil (Matt. 25:8-9). Note what the wise said, “Go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.” Take their advice; and if the idea of buying such be new to you, let the word direct you: “Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). Christ Jesus paid the ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19). So we are invited to buy without money and without price. D. T.

Chapter 31

All Things to All Men

I have noticed of late what I am forced to consider a misuse of 1 Cor. 9:19-22, which, although perhaps not very new, is none the less important. The argument is, “If Paul became as a Jew to the Jews, we ought to become as Wesleyans to the Wesleyans,” &c. I think a careful perusal of the passage will show the fallacy of this deduction. Such a statement contradicts the apostle's teaching concerning the church of God. The mistake consists in this, that those who profess the name of the Lord are put in the same category with those who may deny Him Surely to belong to a kingdom and to join in divisions within it is not the same as to have always belonged to the ranks of the enemy! There is a sophism too: that if Paul went to open enemies, much more should we to these bodies of friends; whereas the truth is that faithless friends are worse than open enemies. Have not “sects,” or “heresies,” put a taunt into the mouth of the scoffer? Hear the Lord's prayer, “That they all may be one that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:21). All the severest judgments come upon those who in the place of nearness are really unfaithful (1 Peter 4:17; Ezek. 9:6; Amos 3:1, 2).

On referring to the passage, we find the apostle's object was to save (ver. 22), but he builds them, being saved, upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10); gathers them to one name (1 Cor. 5:4); teaches them they have one Lord (1 Cor. 8:6); and that they are one body, by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This body he writes to at Corinth as the church of God. But now quite another thing occurs—they begin to divide first in, then from, the church, as followers of different teachers. Does Paul say he will become as a follower of Apollos or Cephas? Surely not, any more than he would allow them to become followers of Paul. The apostle is indignant at such a thought. “Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. i. 13.) But he asks, “Is Christ divided?” They were united to the one Christ in the unity of the one Spirit. It was carnality! Would Paul become as “carnal”? Certainly not. All things were theirs, and they were Christ's (1 Cor. 3:22, 23). Could he say this to those to whom he was made all things, that he might by all means save some? They could not be a testimony to a divided Christ: were they truly his, or did they hold up his name? There were divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:10): Paul said there would be “heresies” (sects) (1 Cor. 11:19). Divisions were sects in the bud; have they improved by becoming full-blown? Have they ceased to be the false testimony, that Christ is divided? You cannot reform a sect: its very existence contradicts the unity of the body. (It should be clearly understood, that I am not speaking of the condition of individuals, but of the testimony of their association.)

I remember a pamphlet headed—"Why do we meet separate from other Christians?” There is a fallacy in the question. We do not separate from Christians, known to us as such, and not guilty of any sin requiring discipline; but we do separate from sects, which is a very different thing. How could we be unsectarian if we did not? We should be careful not to allow toward others in our hearts any sectarian feelings under the fairest show; for we know there were those who said, “I of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:12) in opposition to those who said, “I of Paul, and I of Apollos.” Some say sectarianism began at Corinth; but it is more correct to say it began in the heart (Gal. 5:20, Matt.

15:19). Every godly-walking one of the children of God should attract us; while the party to which he belongs may rightly repel. Not all those who say they are unsectarian are really so. It is very easy for a body of Christians, in a carnal state, to drift into a sect; yet I believe there is some special warning, where this departure takes place, some act, which constitutes them such, and makes the fact clear to those who really wish to do His will (John 7:17), and look into the matter believingly for that purpose. Further, we know that the Lord generally allows false doctrines &c., to enter in such cases; because He permits sects, “that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). That the blessed Lord may keep us, not only unsectarian but devoted to His name and glory in this difficult time, is the prayer of

Yours affectionately in Him, C. O. A.

Chapter 32

And Who It Is That Saith to Thee

John 4:10

It is not only that God reveals Himself now as a Giver, but a Giver of what the sinner needs for earth and heaven, for time and eternity; and He reveals Himself in His Son. The glad tidings He sends are concerning His Son; but His Son became man on behalf of man, His Son Jesus Christ a propitiation for our sins, that there might be a perfectly righteous ground for God to justify the believer, however evil and guilty he might have been before.

And so the Lord Jesus, the lowliest of men, could not disguise the all-importance of His person, when speaking to the woman of Samaria. She wondered that a Jew would condescend to ask a favor of a Samaritan. She was at an immeasurable distance from suspecting that in the humble Jew the Creator was before her eyes; and this too that you or any other might “hear and live.”

But so it was, and so it must be, if God was to be glorified in the salvation of sinners. Of this she had as yet not the remotest conception, any more than the natural mind in Israel, or even in Christendom. The truth no doubt is confessed in the ordinary creeds; but people in general assent without heart or conscience. They repeat what their forefathers repeated; they believe what the church believes. So the Jews believed in Jesus when they saw the signs He wrought in Jerusalem at the first passover of which the fourth Gospel speaks (John 2); they believed on evidences as much as, or more than, the mass of the christened in our land or any other. But it is written that “Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.” He knew that man in his best estate is altogether vanity; for all is said when he is pronounced a sinner, as all are. Now Jesus, God Himself, cannot trust sinful man. The real question is, will sinful man trust Jesus? Man is best—indeed is only aright—trusting God by believing in Jesus, in Jesus come, not merely to work signs but to save sinners at all cost to Himself, a sacrifice to God for them.

Therefore does the Lord present to the Samaritan this great truth, without a miracle, and far beyond miracles. “If thou knewest... Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink.” This she was as far as possible from knowing, any more than the grace of God. But He was there to make known the truth; and He is Himself the truth, and became man that it might come in divine love to man Could there be asked a better proof that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” than the one here afforded to her, and through her to any needy, guilty, soul on earth? For as creation throughout has divine design, and not a single thing happens day by day without our Father, so is scripture written with divine adaptation to every soul that reads or hears; that they may know what God is to a sinner, which can only be known perfectly in Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

Oh! have you weighed these words for your own soul? If you despise them now, learn from His lips that he who rejects Him and receives not His sayings “hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). You know that you are a sinner, utterly unfit to sit down with Jesus in the presence of God. Where then must your portion be if you

reject the Savior Son of God? Whose sayings are comparable to His for light and love, for God and man? Very likely you think yourself far better than the poor Samaritan He was addressing, in order to reveal God and win her to God, that she might not perish but have everlasting life. You will scarcely say that you are so much worse that His grace to her has no voice for your soul. She was at that moment living out of all moral relationship, indifferent to God's known will. If grace did not produce what it can never find in a single sinner, it would indeed be all over with every one of us. If we are all guilty and lost, as scripture declares, it is in vain and unwise comparing ourselves among ourselves. We need a Savior, and we find the only adequate Savior in Him Who, as the Jews with murderous hatred said, made Himself equal with God (for He was God); Who became flesh-man; Whom, absolutely free of sin, God made sin on the cross that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

And Him, in this mystery of His person, we believe in and confess, to have the blessing. “If thou knewest... Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink.” If thou knewest that He, the Eternal no less than the Father Who sent Him, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death—yea, even the death of the cross. All this the Samaritan could not yet know; but He was on the way to death, come to do God's will. For without the offering of Christ sacrificially His will was not done and no soul could be saved. His asking of such a one as the Samaritan was no small, no obscure, sample of that humiliation which culminated in His cross. Hence the bearing of His words to her, “If thou knewest... Who it is (there is the glory of His person) that saith to thee, Give Me to drink” (there is the grace of His humiliation, as far as could be then).

On Him thus revealing God, her soul, in due time learning the wonderful wisdom of His ways, rested that day. How is it with you who have heard more of His glory and of His grace than she then could? May you believe, as she believed. If you despise Him and refuse His words, you must see Him on the great white throne of eternal judgment and prove God's truth in your perdition.

Chapter 33

Angels

The creation of angels is not recorded historically, but that of this visible universe. Then they already created as a separate body of beings, show their interest in the works of God; “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

When their public delight in God's ways; and with unjealous delight in them, they declare that God's good pleasure is in man. It is the heavenly aspect of it. They see God's hand in it, not the conscience part or man's evil. They chant glory to God, for His love is here; grace on this ruined earth, the place of their service; and good pleasure in men.

When Christ enters on His ministry, they are His servants in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. The gospel revelation, which has not them for its object, they desire to look into. The sufferings of Christ, and the glories that follow, bring a more solemn apprehension to their minds. It is not simple joy like creation, or Incarnation and its natural fruits. Over every sinner that repents they rejoice; it is joy to them. In the shut oh they learn, as in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God. They had seen the glory of God's revelation on earth. They are to us in love ministering spirits. They praise in a circle outside the redeemed in the Apocalypse. Yet in our state [of resurrection] we are but ■σ■γγελοι (Luke 20:36), united to Christ, and all the saints, His redeemed. J. N. D.

Chapter 34

Baptism of Fire

Q. What is the baptism of fire, spoken of in. Matt. 3:11 and Luke 3:16? L.R.

A. I understand it to be that unsparing divine judgment which the Lord at His appearing is to execute on fill evil, from which the righteous are forever separated. John the Baptist presented the work of Messiah as a whole. The cross severed the two baptisms: that which followed His first advent when He ascended on high, baptizing in the power of the Spirit; and that which awaits His second advent, as detailed in the verse that follows in both Gospels. The Gospels of Mark and John speak only of that power which in virtue of the cross. severs the Christian from the evil condemned therein. So in the Acts, we hear nothing of baptism in fire: this is to be when the Lord returns.

Chapter 35

The Believer Entering Into God's Rest: Part 1

That which is specially set before us in this chapter is the comparison of the state of Israel in the wilderness and the believers entering into God's rest.

We are apt continually to be referring something to ourselves, even when we acknowledge that it is grace that begins to work. We are still making ourselves the center of our thoughts; and in thinking of heaven, it is the thought of our getting there. The rest is ours, no doubt, just as the salvation is ours; but then we know its value much better when we know that it is God's salvation. It is so with the rest; and the more we can bring our souls to lean upon God, whether as it respects salvation, sanctification, or the rest of heaven, or glory to come—regarding it as God's rest, God's heaven, God's glory, as much as it is God's salvation and God's sanctification—the more shall we understand our full blessing.

We never get a blessing in its true value until we see that it all is God's. If I am thinking about my rest, I shall be thinking of my toil and my labor. This is true, but this is not the measure. In order to get the full measure, it must be God's—something so good and so blessed, that it can be God's own rest. It is mine because He has brought me into it; but I never learn the full power of it until I learn that it is what God has wrought for His glory, according to the perfections of God, and not according to the wants of him who needs it. This truth of God's being in the thing enters also into all my thoughts of that into which God is bringing me. God is the first leading thought of all that I hold precious in Christ.

He acts in grace by our wants, and toward our wants: but He does, by and through our wants, lead us to know what the God is to Whom we are brought. He does not say simply, Ye ought to be holy; but He chastens us that we may be made partakers of His holiness. Why so? Because God is acting from Himself toward us. His great delight is to act simply from His own love. This is true grace: and I never know the spring of blessing, of joy, of happiness, of peace to my soul, until I know God acting from Himself in grace.

In all God's dealings with His creatures there are two great principles, responsibility, and the source of life. Even in the garden of Eden there was the tree of knowledge of good and evil (here was man's responsibility); and also the tree of life. This is true also to us. Man, as a sinner, has his responsibility to God; and likewise as a saint, though the latter in grace. Angels are responsible to do His pleasure. All are responsible to God: but if the creature is to be blessed, he must have God's grace as the spring of life to his soul.

That is the grand difference which God has brought out between law and grace. The law dealt with man's responsibility. The law said, “Do this, and thou shalt live.” But though given as a rule, it really came to be the test of man's estate, and as much as says, “There you are, and that is what you are responsible for;” and therefore it never could give rest or make perfect. God gave law as the measure of man's responsibility; but that responsibility could not be the allowance of sin. Its measure as given of God must be according to what man ought to be before God: God could give

no other. And hence, though ordained to life, the sinner found it to be unto death; because it brought to light the sin, and the law of sin, which could not be subject to the law of God. It never was a guide to man. You cannot guide a will opposed to God. You can never guide a sinner by all righteousness. It is the perfect rule of man's responsibility; but it gave nothing, while it required everything. You cannot talk of requiring from a sinner: for a sinner is in principle bad, and the requisition becomes the proof of it. What use, save for condemnation, to say, “Thou shalt not lust,” to a man who has lust in his nature? You cannot guide a will opposed to God. The effect of the law was to discover man's condition. The law of sin in his members was what he was: the law of God was what he ought to be. Paul was not guilty of immorality; but when it said, “Thou shalt not lust,” there was no hope for him: it was all over with him, because there was the detection of what he was. The law could not be a guide for man, who had lust in his nature. It was but the means of discovering that all he could produce was sin, making the law the minister of condemnation. The ten commandments were the prohibition of man's natural state: the last saying, “Thou shalt not lust.” The law, therefore, was not condemning merely what I had done, but my nature. It prohibited that which the sinner really was; and found him even in that state which it came to prohibit. You can give no rule to a man's sinful state. It only acts to detect the lust and sinful wanderings of the will in his nature.

Chapter 36

The Believer Entering Into God's Rest: Part 2

Then we come to another thing. We learn that God is the source of grace and life to those in this condition; and what in grace He does for man in this condition. Here we must begin altogether with God.

In Romans, God discovers man as a sinner, shows what he is, Jew and Gentile, and then presents the blood of Jesus. And there again he takes up man's righteousness, contrasts it with His own, and shows its nothingness. As it regards man's glory, it was all gone; all that was wasted and destroyed by sin. Of God's glory he was altogether short; but God brings in Christ's glory—His own glory in Christ. Christ is God's man set up in perfect righteousness to be the head of a new creation. God becomes the source of life in this new creation. He brings in glory when all was spoiled by sin. It is His rest after all. If it is life, glory, righteousness, it is the life of God, the glory of God, the righteousness of God. There is no rest worthy of those who possess the life, and the glory, and the righteousness of God, but the rest of God. God makes us partakers of His holiness: He does not demand it (though in another and practical sense this might be said); so likewise He makes us partakers of His rest.

The labor of a saint is of God, not that of a sinner; the sinner labors of man—he is seeking to work so as to satisfy God. He may be honest and sincere in that: but it is all based on this thought—man must work up to God. The end of it all is, he finds a law in his members that he can never satisfy God. That which man does under the law is laboring up to God. “O wretched man that I am!” is its end, even where the desire and understanding are right concerning it. There is the saint's labor in Christ in 1 Thess. 1, the labor of love. Christ's labor (while faithful under the law indeed) was not up to God, but from God. It all came from God—flowed from Him as the source and spring of it all; and such is the labor of the saint. Persons suppose that when a believer labors, it must be to get up to God; and if not, of what use is it to labor? But it is the sort of labor which was in Christ, when He came from God to work the works of God. Still, this is not rest—labor is not rest. We have not ceased from our works. We have rest of conscience, it is true; but not rest from the labor of love.

The Hebrews were in danger of slipping back into the law, like the Galatians; and of ending in the flesh, having begun in the Spirit. The laboring up to God is a very different thing from laboring from God. The laboring from God has the consciousness first of being in God (Heb. 3:6). “Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end.” Here is the labor of love—holding the treasure committed to them, being in bodies of flesh. And also there is conflict with principalities, powers, and spiritual wickednesses, like the children of Israel walking through the wilderness. There is nothing in this world, nor of this world, which could refresh the new man, any more than there is in heaven to satisfy the old man. We are in danger, as the children of Israel, of getting weary of the way.

When Joshua got into the land, there were fleshly enemies in the land of Canaan. We also have spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places to contend with. We do not obtain any promise without a spiritual victory. This is not rest. What, then, is the rest of God? In order to have God's rest, we

must have God's mind, that we may delight in what He delights in. If so, I never can have complete rest until things are in accordance with God's mind. God may act in grace in and toward things as they are now; but He cannot take His rest in them; therefore the Lord says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). God has no sabbath now, so to speak. I see the consequences of sin weighing down the hearts of sinners, and I cannot rest.

There is one preliminary to all this. If you are at war with God, and uncertain whether it is a question of judgment against you, or if under the law, there is not rest.

The first thing is to have the great question—your acceptance with God—settled; and then the conscience gets rest. If I am uncertain whether God will save me, I cannot speak of rest: the conscience must first have rest. And here be it observed, that when God deals with man as to rest of conscience, it is not what man is to do, but what he is: not what is the fruit merely, but what is the tree. Man may bring many offerings, but God dashes them all away, and says, “I have to do with you, and you with Me: the condition of your soul is what I have to do with;” and then all question of man's working is set aside (see Mic. 6:7). The fountain is foul. Things are traced up to the fountain, and this is unclean. Something may be introduced into the stream to make the water more sweet, but itself is ever foul; this cannot satisfy God. But God has settled the question by putting sin out of the way by the blood of Jesus.

When the grace of the gospel is presented, it may be received very sincerely, and yet often without the full practical discovery of the evil within, or of the law of sin in the members, to the extent that is afterward discovered; and the result is that, in measure, the knowledge of the grace of God is superficial and the soul often gets alarmed. But whenever the soul has been really brought to the practical knowledge of the law of sin working in the members, and the grace of God in Christ Jesus putting away sin thus known, then it knows that God is for us, thus evil as we were, and so ceases to be harassed by the workings of the law. God's grace has judged the condition of the sinner, thus fully shown, and put away the sin by Christ; and we have only to adore and praise Him for what He has done. The sin has been imputed to Christ, and He has put it away, and that is all, and the conscience has peace. The soul knows God, not as under law, but under grace. This being settled, we have altogether ceased from our own works, as it regards the conscience (ver. 10). We have peace then through the blood of Christ.

To return to the subject of God's rest—the rest is like the first rest. When God had made everything, He ceased from His works. Sin has destroyed His rest. It may be modified by a number of things, but there is nothing which God rests in, for evil is all around; and where we have Satan's power to contend with, there can be no rest to the saints. Not that we have any uncertainty of the rest; but by virtue of the joy, through the Holy Ghost, of entering into this rest, we groan on account of all around. God cannot rest in the corruption of sin, in the world as it now is, and therefore He is bringing in the new man to rest in a new state of things, which He creates for Himself. But it is not in rest yet, while in the midst of evil; therefore there remains a rest (ver. 9). The believer does not grieve because he is not accepted. He does not keep groaning, “O wretched man that I am!” but, as he gets further discoveries of God, he longs to be with Him. The heart of the renewed man rests in the rest which God has accomplished in the Lord Jesus Christ, as to judgment, for there is God's rest; and it looks for the rest which He is about to fulfill in Christ.

As God satisfied Himself with mere creation blessedness before the fall (placing man in the midst of it), He likewise will be so satisfied in the new creation as to plant the Second Man there. This never will be spoiled; and He cannot rest until He has accomplished all His purposes, and brought the Lord Jesus Christ into all that scene of blessedness; and this is God's rest. And such is the rest into which we are to be brought: a rest fit for the risen man Christ. The more I look at the Lord Jesus as God has accepted Him, the more my desires flow after this rest.

When rest of conscience is obtained, I find there is a work to be done in the meanwhile, by the Spirit working in love and in energy in the new nature. I have joy in God looking up; I serve God looking down. There is a work going on, in the patience of hope and labor of love. Moreover, the saint finds within him that which is contrary to this life of faith—something that hinders him in his life of service. Besides the opposition from without, there is that in him which tends to mar his undivided purity of service. Just so Paul found a tendency to be puffed up. The flesh would say to him nobody had been in the third heavens but himself; when he went about that blessed work, his having been in the third heavens would give the flesh an occasion for abusing this grace; and therefore he had the thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. This was very profitable, but it was not rest; it was not sin, the thorn he had to contend with; it was rather what checked the tendency to sin. We are in the conflict, and in the work of faith and labor of love we make the discovery, not of that which is imputed to us as sin, but of that which hinders us from fully glorifying God in the work and service of love.

Many a saint considers himself in Egypt because he finds himself in conflict. This is wrong. If Israel had not been redeemed out of Egypt, they never would have had to contend with the Canaanites. We must not confound bondage to Pharaoh with conflict against the Amalekites and Canaanites.

All through this conflict, what is the standard of the path of the saint who has got this hope (ver. 12)? Why talk of falling—"lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (ver. 11)? Because the constant tendency of the flesh in the saint is to that to which it would bring the unrenewed professor, and would bring us, were we not kept of God. It is the working of my will: I get away from the strength of God; and therefore this allusion to the falling in the wilderness. How does God work in this? He sends His word, which detects the things which lead to his fall. “For 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.” The word is the light which shows him that which is in his heart, which would tend to his fall. The thing which produces the danger is detected by the searching light of the word (ver. 12). Now it is that the soul does not shrink from the light, but, as in Psa. 139, says, “Search me, O God.” But, oh, what confidence that is, what amazing confidence! Is there anything that can prove such confidence in grace as that? Could any who thought God would impute the sin say, “Look well if there be any way of wickedness within me”? The moment he knows that God has wrought salvation and quickened him. in the grace of Christ, he can say that. But God detects the evil, and chastens His saints to prevent their stumbling in the way. He looks well to see if there is any evil in their hearts, in order to strip them from evil and prevent their falling. And this brings the one who has tasted of the rest to go on; and God never rests until He brings us into what satisfies His desire. “He shall rest in His love.” God's love never rests until He has brought us into that which completes His desires, not our desires. Where shall we find the measure of His love? Even in what God has done in glorifying His Son, and putting everything into His hands, and bringing us

into the same measure of blessing. He meets us in His love, and brings us with Him into life, glory, and blessedness. When He has redeemed us, He puts us through trial and conflict, that the old man may be completely judged, and that we may be delivered from the power and works of the old man.

All along through this conflict we have the sustaining power of Christ our High Priest, Who intercedes for us, and watches over us, while passing through it. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (ver. 14).

The first thing is to be brought into this great place of service for God. There must be the realization that redemption has been accomplished and settled—that we are altogether accepted in Christ Jesus.

The grace which has blotted out every sin will impute none at all. If a tittle of sin could be imputed to man, it would be all over with him. In order to stand in the presence of God, there must be no sin between us and God. Then there is the thorough and complete searching of the old man, in order to the enjoyment of all blessing by the new man. J. N. D. (Concluded from page 57.)

Chapter 37

Biblical Criticism of the Old Testament

MY DEAR —,

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

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

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

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

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

It is agreed that we cannot understand how the human and divine could be indissolubly blended in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is just the mystery of His person. He reveals the Father, but the Father is not said to reveal the Son. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. 11). There the Lord stops. Those passages you quote refer most significantly to His wondrous humiliation—that deep descent (comp. Eph. 4:9, 10; Psa. 68:18), His partaking of all human conditions apart from sin. The perfect child became perfect man. He could be hungry, thirsty, weary, though, as you say, He could fast for forty days, and afterward He hungered. Nay, in Mark (as you quote) we read that the Son knew not "that day" (13:32). Do you not think, by the way, that there is a peculiar appropriateness where it occurs, and in the fact that it occurs here only? Our Lord takes the place of the servant in this Gospel, and as such, fulfilling His service, He knew not. But whenever He did speak, surely He spoke "with authority" (1:27; 2:10; 4:41; 6:2; 11:18). Thus even as a dependent man, a perfect servant, all He said was "with authority." Again, "He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (John 3:34). If, when our Lord speaks, He is not to be trusted in one instance, how do we know that He is to be trusted in another? Is one to wait and see what the next budget of higher criticism will allow us to believe?

This is rather rambling, but you will excuse it. In short, the position is, Positively, we must accept the words of Christ, and that absolutely, or we embark on a shoreless sea; negatively, why should we believe all that the scientific men tell us about dates, &c.? Nor am I the more disposed to it because certain professed Christians are characterized more by "bated breath and whispering humbleness" in the presence of destructive criticism than avowed skeptics, whose trade is to

destroy.

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

Very sincerely yours,

R. B., Jun.

Chapter 38

The Burden of the Cross: Part 1

The Lord announced more than once that the badge of His followers must he the cross. It characterized Him from Nazareth (Luke 4:28, 20), (may we not even say from Bethlehem, Luke 2:7?) to Golgotha; therefore must it of necessity characterize those who profess allegiance to His person (John 15:20). Now on the very face of it, cross-bearing implies a stern and serious undertaking. For it is well known that crucifixion was reserved for the vilest criminals, and carrying a cross through the execrations and derision of a brutal and passionate mob was the terrible prelude to that ignominious and torturing death. Yet this was divinely chosen to be the figure describing the discipleship of Christ. Clearly then such a calling would never suit mere dreamers and theorists who worship a set of ideas which they have jealously espoused as their own, and whose heaviest cross is the chagrin they suffer at the overthrow of a pet notion. In mere vision or sentiment there is absolutely nothing capable of enduring the peculiar vicissitudes attaching to the cross of Christ, any more than there is in martial prowess, mental excellence, or any other quality in which man is but too ready to boast. For the cross does not consist in the mere ordinary vexations common to outraged human susceptibilities, over which it is by no means uncommon for men to triumph. But it is of a character beyond the conception, as it is (apart from Christ) beyond the endurance, of man. So far is the burden of the cross from being a philosophic attainment that the wisdom of man has repeatedly pronounced, not without sneers, that suffering and servitude are synonymous with weakness and misery. The life, however, of our Lord exemplifies what His words also teach, that the perfection of human nature is to obey (Phil. 2:5, 8; Heb. 5:8; 1 Peter 2:2; John 15:10), while its glory, is to endure even the cross, despising the shame (Heb. 12:2; Matt. 16:24; Gal. 6:14). This lesson was learned by New Testament saints from John the Baptist in the dungeon of Herod to John the Beloved in the isle of Patmos. Though even in that day there were those, the progenitors of a numerous race, who gilded the rough cross of Calvary (1 Cor. 4:8-14), making an ornament of that which was meant to be a stigma, seeking position and fame where they should have expected persecution and shame. There was also Demas (2 Tim. 4:10) who preferred the friendship of the world, which is enmity against God (James 4:4), to that of Paul, the prisoner of the Lord (2 Tim. 1:8). And there was one, as now there are many, who doffed the Master's livery when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and, warming himself at the butcher's fire (John 18:18), falsified his boasted fidelity (Mark 14:31) with oaths and curses. May the Lord look on such enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18, 19) as He looked on Peter, and recall them to a more faithful adherence to the principles of the Master Whom they profess to serve.

The first intimations of our Lord to His disciples with regard to bearing the cross were in no wise ambiguous or equivocal. “He that taketh not his cross,” says He, “and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:38). This is emphatic and significant, and moreover not a mere isolated statement, though, if it were, its truth and force would not be weakened thereby in the slightest; but we find from the 16th verse of the chapter to the end the tenor of the whole scripture is concerning the persecution which should befall His faithful witnesses. He, the Lord of the harvest, was sending forth His laborers into the harvest; and He forewarns them of the tremendous opposition

they would encounter, not only from those who oppose every new thing on the principle of obstinacy, but from the powers that be—governors and kings—and, hardest to bear, from their nearest kindred—fathers, mothers, and children. Did they murmur at such a cheerless prospect? Surely it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord When the Pharisees saw diseases, demons, and death itself all flee even at the word of the Master of the house, they forthwith called Him Beelzebub (Matt. 9:34). Would they then pick words for those of His household? Our Lord, far from softening the stern character of His call, plainly and solemnly calls for the uncompromising disowning of even the very closest of earthly ties, where they would interfere with faithful discipleship to Himself. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” And this is immediately followed by the weighty warning to all mere triflers whose devotion would be stifled by the first appearance of suffering for the truth's sake. “He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me.” These words plainly show that cross-bearing and Christ-following are two things joined together by the Lord; and therefore let none dare to sunder them.

It was in view of this fact that the apostle gloried in the Thessalonian saints, because of the patience and faith they exhibited in the persecutions and tribulations they were enduring for the kingdom of God's sake. By this means their allegiance was tested and their worthiness made manifest. “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess. 1:4-5). Not that this worthiness, here or in Matthew, refers to standing before God; for the ground of forgiveness of sins and of acceptance with God is grace exclusively, never merit of any kind (Eph. 2:8). The point is not relationship but discipleship. And it is insisted that suffering for Christ's sake is a prime characteristic of a true follower of our Lord. To shirk the cross is to forfeit the title of a worthy witness in the world for the Lord Jesus, just as much as to display patient fortitude under fiery trials for the name of Christ is to proclaim the unswerving loyalty which marks one worthy of the devotion he professes to his Master.

Few have the hardihood to deny that the cross colors the language and sentiment of the N. T. from the beginning to the end. But the religious age that accepts as “Christian science” the theory which sees in a Locke or a Newton only the natural development of a structureless cell, boldly teaches a progress on similar lines in the church of Christ. So that instead of the secular power of the world dominating the church as of old, the secular power of the Laodicean church now almost dominates the world. And instead of believers being considered the filth and offscouring of the world as in an early and unappreciative age, the tide of public opinion has changed and the world is now considered the filth and offscouring of believers. The cross of Christ is this reduced to an empty sign or modified to suit the convenient notions of a self-indulgent and self-complacent Christendom.

It may therefore be instructive to seek the light of holy scripture as to the true significance of the cross and as to whether its original character is lost in our day.

Chapter 39

The Burden of the Cross: Part 2

In this paper it is proposed to consult the words of our Lord in Matt. 16:24 on cross-bearing.

And it should be observed in the first place that this condition of discipleship was laid down by our adorable Lord at a most important juncture in the history of His presentation to Israel as their Messiah. It was, in fact, the hour when His claims were definitely refused by His chosen people, and when He began to commune with His disciples concerning the death He must accomplish at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost in the Gospel of Matthew traces very minutely the growth of the spirit of opposition to the Christ, commencing with the unuttered but malicious thoughts of some bigoted scribes, at the healing of the sick of the palsy in Capernaum. (“This man blasphemeth” is their wicked though inward comment, 10:3.) Such evil thoughts grew and multiplied exceedingly, until the chapter before us shows that men generally had entirely disavowed the true character of His person. For instance, after a double proof was given (14:15-21; 15:32-39) that Jehovah, according to the promise of old (Psa. 132:15), was in the midst of His people, abundantly blessing their provision, and satisfying their poor with bread, the Pharisees and Scribes, forgetting their mutual animosities, unite in tempting the Lord to display a sign from heaven, presumably for their own especial benefit (16:1-6). As if, forsooth, the unmistakeable signs of power and grace wrought again and again before their eyes were not from above but from beneath. To this horrid suggestion of hypocrisy and unbelief, the Lord replies only by exposing their determination to remain in unbelief, which underlay this action; and then He significantly left them in the hardness of their hearts.

But surely the hearts of His chosen witnesses, who were admitted into the intimacies of His private as well as public life, were proof against every suggestion of unbelief! Alas! the next scene shows the exact contrary (16:7-12). These men who were associated with the Lord in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves to feed the five and the four thousand, were so destitute of faith as to attribute to the Lord an anxious concern because there was no bread in the boat. If this was not sheer perversity, as in the previous ease, it was at any rate the densest and most inexcusable ignorance. And while unbelief was thus swaying His followers, as well as His foes, the opinion of the multitude at large was that He was anybody but the Person He really claimed to be (16:13-14). So that this chapter indicates in a threefold form the pregnant fact that the judgment of flesh and blood had pronounced that Jesus was not the Lord from heaven. Immediately after, however, Simon Barjona, specially illuminated by a revelation of the Father, testified that He was the Son of the living God (16:15-17). And at this same point also the Lord, after referring to the future church, began to speak of His coming death at Jerusalem. Here He entered as it were the shadow of the cross; for “from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day” (16:21). And if the Master's life on earth was thus to terminate in a climax of suffering from the hand of man, were the disciples to expect to be entirely exempt from sharing such a painful path? Indeed, when the Lord found the religious parties of men allied in unbelief against Him, He at once looked onward to the church He was going to build, to bear His

name in the world (John 17:18), to suffer with Him here, and finally to reign with Him in glory (1 Tim. 2:12). In fact if such a spiritual edifice was to be reared, against which the gates of Hades should not prevail, He, the ever living Founder and the immutable Foundation, must necessarily be crucified as a victim to the spite and envy of the chief priests and scribes. This prospect, foreign as it is to all human notions, passed the comprehension of Peter—that the way of the Son of the living God to glory and victory should be through suffering and defeat was more than he could receive even from divine lips. And, in an excess of ignorant zeal, he put forth his hand like Uzzah of old to steady the tottering ark of God (2 Sam. 6:6). But the Lord at once unmasks the true character of this rebuke of Peter, which savored of human things, and not divine. Though coming as it did in the form of a disciple's solicitude for his master, it was none the less a distinct attempt on the part of Satan to bar the progress of the Lord to the cross, where the power of darkness was to be overthrown.

The Lord however avoided the stumbling-block, and proceeded to state definitely to His disciples, and indeed to “all” (Luke 9:23), for it was a general principle, “If any man will come after Me, let him, deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” See also chap. xiv. 27.

Can it be possible to mistake the meaning of “taking up the cross,” when so closely connected as it is with self-denial, and the following of Jesus? For it is plainly manifest from the passage, that there can be no true discipleship without denying one's self, and following the Lord. But self-mortification, whipping, and other monkish habits, though they may be a species of self-denial, certainly are not the cross-bearing of the gospel. And on the other hand the cross worn by the Crusaders of old, far from being coupled with the self-denial of the text, was actually opposed to the true cross of Christ, serving only as a cloak for the indulgence of the worst and most selfish of human passions. As a matter of fact, the true character of the cross, as well as of self-denial, is sufficiently determined by the Lord's injunction, “Follow Me.” For whatever interferes with consistent discipleship is to be given up in order to follow Him. And whatever burden of obloquy falls upon one faithful to Christ constitutes the cross to be taken up for His sake.

In the Gospel of Mark a case in point is given. The virtuous youth, who earnestly sought to know from our Lord how to inherit eternal life, was a most commendable example of human morality, so much so, that “Jesus, beholding him, loved him” Surely then he would make an admirable recruit for the ranks of the disciples! Not so; for though he did not lack zeal, obedience to the, law, or appreciation of the Lord as a teacher, he lacked that which would make him a follower of Jesus. “Go thy way,” said the Lord to test him, “sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” But we are told “he was sad at that saying and went away grieved; for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:21-22). Self-denial, the first requisite of a disciple, was lacking; for at any rate he loved his riches too well to discard them at the bidding of a prophet of Nazareth. Nor is it at all necessary to suppose he was a miserly man, yet, it is quite clear he did not find sufficient attraction in the person of Jesus, or sufficient authority in His words, to counter-balance his regard for his store of earthly treasure. And at this point it is important to observe that “taking up the cross” was not covered by parting with the whole of his possessions for charitable purposes. After yielding up that which men learn to love next to (if. not as well as) life, he was then to take up his cross and follow Jesus. For philanthropy is in no sense, even when extended to its utmost limits as in this case, synonymous with carrying the cross of Christ. Besides foregoing his abundance and luxury, he was called to

associate himself with One Who was a reproach among men, and despised of the people (Psa. 22:6), Who was a butt and a byword for those that sat in authority, as well as the song of the drunkard (Psa. 69:12). By following such a One, he would utterly lose his position of honor and esteem in the eyes of his religious patrons and teachers. Socially, politically, and religiously, he would be regarded as a leprous outcast, whose love and good works would be rewarded, like his Master's, with hatred without a cause (Psa. 109:5; 69:4). He would be reviled, persecuted, and maligned for Christ's sake (Matt. 5:11). In short, he would become the focus of general scorn and contempt, and that simply and solely because he followed this despised and rejected Nazarene. All this and more was implied in the words “Take up the cross and follow Me.” The heart of the young man shrank from such a prospect. And who indeed could bear a cross so galling to man's nature without knowing the attractive glories of the Person Who demanded endurance of such a kind? Little wonder that he departed in sadness.

The instance however makes it very clear that the burden of the cross is inseparably connected with following Jesus, yet quite distinct from the renunciation of personal property. In fact the cross-laden disciple is he who is repudiated by the world as his Master was. (Continued from page 330.)

Chapter 40

The Burden of the Cross: Part 3

It has already been pointed out in the previous papers that the cross became the indispensable characteristic of the immediate followers of Jesus, in consequence of His rejection by those to whom He presented Himself. For the same spirit of envy and cruel malice roused by the ministry of our Lord would be roused by the faithful ministry of His disciples. As He Himself forewarned them, “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). And every reference to the cross in the Gospels implies that its meaning is suffering for Christ's sake, and that it comprehends all the odium of every kind falling on those who represent Christ in the world.

It should be remarked however that a clear and definite distinction is made in scripture between coming unto Christ and corning after Him. The Lord Jesus freely invites any one in want to come to Him; but He carefully warns everyone who, desires (θ■λγ) to come after Him of the burden of the cross. The condition of coming to Christ was only to have a need, bodily or spiritual: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink” (John 7:37). On the other hand, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). Where it is a question of eternal salvation, “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37); but where it is a question of following Christ, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (John 14:27). All who labor and who are heavy laden are unconditionally bidden to come to Him and receive rest from the burden of sin. Thereupon however they are to take up another burden, even the yoke of Jesus, in order to find that soul-rest which is the reward of implicit obedience to the divine mind (Matt. 11:28-30).

For after all His yoke is easy, His burden is light, and His cross is not a disgrace but a glory. The testimony of the good and pious Samuel Rutherford, who suffered not a little for Christ's sake, was, “The cross of Christ is the sweetest burden that ever I bare: it is such a burden as wings are to a bird or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbor.” The secret of such bitter water tasting so sweet lies in the attractive and superabundant glory of the Person of the Christ. For who could endure the cross, were it not to follow Him? Who could bear to suffer wrongfully, were it not for Christ's sake? And it is noticeable that the Lord, directly after warning His followers of their painful portion in this world, unveils before His chief disciples in the mount of transfiguration the majesty of His Person and the glories that were to follow (Matt. 17:1-8; 2 Peter 1:16-18). They were to tell the vision to no man. It was for them, not for those who had rejected Him. It was given to strengthen and confirm their souls in a due appreciation of the worth of the Master for Whom they were called to suffer; so that the remembrance of His excellent glory might stay them in the darkest hour. For the Lord did not call upon His disciples to take a morbid pleasure in suffering for its own sake, as if persecution were synonymous with piety. The cross was not the occasion for mere stoical indifference to pain or heroic fortitude in the presence of severe calamities. Such virtues were exhibited by many who never heard even of the name of Christ, and yet who welcomed privation and grief as opportunities to display how mental discipline had rendered them superior to distresses which otherwise would have bowed them to the ground. But such opportunities, for the practice of self-control did not constitute the cross of Christ, any more than

an iron will was the power of enduring it.

It was the thought of suffering for and with Christ that effectually sustained the soul of the Christian, not philosophical abstractions showing the purely subjective nature of sorrow and woe, or sentimental aphorisms as to the temporary character of anxiety and grief. And scripture plainly declares the cross to be the outward, as eternal life is the inward, link with Christ. On this account alone believers are bidden even to rejoice in tribulation. There is no hint of such a thing as a grim delight in increasing one's burden of sorrow; but there is the command to “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye he reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you... But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or as an evildoer or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed” (1 Peter 4:13-16).

Statements similar to this abound in the New Testament, and examples too, showing that the glory of heaven is inseparably connected with that which the world least esteems and most despises. See the signal triumph of the man of faith in Acts 7. The placid joy of Stephen's spirit as he gazed on the glorified Son of man was wholly undisturbed by the missiles of religions hatred which crushed out the life of his frail body. Also, when the apostles were flogged by order of the council of canonical wisdom at Jerusalem, it served only as an occasion for their exultation that they should have been counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40-41). The apostle of the Gentiles, too, reiterates the same intense devotion to the cross in his epistle to the Galatians: “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

Thus it is evident that bearing the cross after Christ was a precious privilege of which the early disciples rejoiced to avail themselves. But is it to be supposed that such a privilege no longer exists? From the first to the last of the New Testament not so much as a single trace of such a thought appears. On the contrary the world and its prince are seen arrayed in deadly warfare against the saints of God to the very end (Rev. 20:9). Indeed how can we expect to find wolves making a compact of peace with the sheep of the flock, unless it he with some treacherous motive? Yet we do find, as a matter of secular history, that at the commencement of the fourth century Rome, the mistress of the world, adopted the cross to supplement the eagle as a military ensign. And Constantine sought to honor the cross to which he ascribed the success of his arms and the attainment of his ambition by putting a spear in that form into the hand of the statue erected for him at Rome. A most baleful sign indeed! The spear and the cross had met before but under totally different circumstances (John 19.14). But now a worldly policy had practically made the cross of Christ of none effect by taking it under its patronage in the most public manner. This unnatural alliance of light and darkness has not ceased even in this day. For we may still see the cross and the scepter abortively united where the divine will has not decreed them to be. See Phil. 2:5-11.

If then the world and professing Christendom aid and abet each other in the accomplishment of their own selfish aims, by a policy of mutual accommodation what is the path of the faithful disciple? Is he to vainly sigh for Diocletian persecutions and Inquisitorial tortures? Nay: let him only follow Christ, and the burden will come. For proximity to the Person, and conformity to the

character, of the Lord Jesus can never be gained without shouldering the cross. Let the word and will of God be sought and obeyed in its minutest detail. Let everything compromising His name in the slightest degree he abandoned at whatever cost. Let the lowly meekness and the self-renunciation of our Lord he displayed in measure before a scoffing world. Then shall the cross be known in all its austerity. Yet he who knows most sorrow for Christ's sake shall know most glory when the Lord comes to be glorified in His saints (2 Thess. 1:10). Though joy is by no means confined to a future day: even now we glory in tribulations (Rom. 5:3). And if in the world we have tribulation, in Him we have peace (John 16:33).

But not only from the world does the faithful disciple receive a cross. The lukewarm generation of professing Christians, which has a name to live but is dead, avoids with lofty scorn and persecutes with the most refined cruelty the humble believer who by his consistency reminds them of their inconsistency. And the child of God who prefers the simple but infallible word of scripture to the diversified but bewildering creeds of his fallible fellows, bolstered up, as they are, by custom, tradition, or convenience, must expect the isolation that invariably accompanies faithfulness in a degenerate age. For certainly the church has not improved since all deserted no less a one than the apostle Paul, leaving him to stand alone in his first defense at Rome. Nevertheless the Lord stood with him (2 Tim. 4:16-17), as He will with every true-hearted follower, to give sufficient grace for the heaviest burden that may have to be borne for His sake.

Chapter 41

Cain and Abel

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.” Heb. 11:4.

The question, how a sinner can approach to a holy God, is all-important. It was then by bringing in his hand an acceptable offering; and it is here most clearly solved and very early in man's history. For sin God drove the man outside the garden which the “Lord God had planted” for him, when all came from His hand” very good.” Although justly turned outside into a world where toil and sorrow were found in consequence of sin, God did not refuse intercourse with man—nay, He desired it; as is proved by His seeking Adam, who was hidden away from Him amidst the trees of the garden. So we read (Gen. 4:3) “In process of time, Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the LORD.” The firstborn of sinful parents, grown up to manhood, comes before the LORD with his offering, but was grievously disappointed when “The LORD had not respect to his offering.” Why was this? Cain had tilled the ground, and brings the fruit of it as an offering to the LORD. Why could not the Loan accept it? Doubtless it was of the very best, and it seemed hard to Cain that the LORD had not respect to his fruit. His disappointment was such, that his countenance fell, and himself was very angry with the LORD. The LORD gently expostulates with him; asking why he was angry, and why his countenance was fallen. It was simply a question of what was right or wrong. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” And who was to judge of this? The LORD or Cain? Surely the LORD, as it is written: “Let God be true, and every man a liar, that Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged” (Rom. 3:4). But what was doing well? Did the LORD mean that the fruit which Cain had brought was inferior in quality; and thus disqualified. Was Cain to go and try again by his toil (the sweat of his brow) to produce a better sample? Certainly not. The LORD points out to him that a “sin offering” was required. Cain's fruit, however good of its kind, could not meet and settle the question of sin; and this was ignored in the offering that he brought: his state as a sinner was not taken into account by himself. It could not be overlooked by the LORD; and this He points out to Cain. Was there not a sin offering at the door? Why not bring that being a sinner? If he had no sin offering in his hand, by which he could be accepted, his sin remained. Where was faith? Where repentance?

Alas! for Cain! This did not meet his views, nor accord with the feelings of his heart. He, the first Pharisee, must stand upon the merit of his own works; and reject the sin offering, and so be himself rejected; as himself and his offering were identified. He ought not to have been, and could not be but by hardness of heart and unbelief, in ignorance of this. For the LORD had Himself, when sin came in, taken life, and clothed our parents with coats of skins out of death.

This was the real issue between the LORD and Cain. It still remains the great question between God and man; yet man in his indifference and willfulness, neglects, and rejects the great salvation. So Cain leaves the presence of the LORD, and prefers to live in the world without Him, being not

only angry with the LORD, but the murderer of his own brother. This casts light upon Abel's offering, both by comparison, and by contrast. “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” In what did its excellency consist?

It was entirely different in principle, and suited to the character, and relationship, in which man then stood before God. Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, owned the need of blood-shedding, as a propitiation for his sin. He had faith in that which could atone for sin, and by which he a sinner could meet God in truth, and be accepted for the sake of his offering. Thus he secured glory to God, and free blessing to himself, a sinner; for surely Abel was such, as was his brother Cain. His pastoral occupation, as “keeper of sheep,” did not make his moral state better than that of Cain, as a tiller of the ground. In the sight of God there was no difference; they both were sinners. Abel owned it in the offering which he brought to the LORD, Cain in effect denied his sin, and the holy demands of a sin-hating God, but withal a God Who would accept a sin offering, as He did at the hand of Abel.

Abel brought no fruit which his own hands had produced; no weary labor, no toil of his, had resulted in the offering which he brought to the LORD. It was a victim, whose life must be taken for his sin. “For without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” It is shown from the beginning.

Abel by faith saw it, and received an immediate response from Him in Whose eyes it was excellent, God testifying of his gifts, and counting him righteous. The believer is counted righteous by a holy God, for the sake of the sin offering, which he by faith brings to God. As it was, so it is, and must ever be. “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” So the one then counted righteous, “being dead, yet speaketh.” G. R.

Chapter 42

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 13. Doctrine – Christ’s Second Coming

If it were a question of setting out Irvingite doctrine in the order of relative gravity, it would be necessary to present in the first place their views of Christ's person. The Epistles of John, as indeed the N.T. word generally, makes us feel that no truth is of equal moment in itself or as a test of divine teaching. But it is proposed here to examine their chief dogmas historically, and therefore to begin rather with that which they themselves now as ever put forward zealously and notoriously through their evangelists wherever they essay to catch the public ear in Christendom and particularly among the English-speaking races. There is some skill in this; for as a rule the denominations, great and small, are dumb for the most part on the Savior's return in glory; while undeniably Scripture, especially the N.T., everywhere insists on its preciousness as our hope and its practical value for every day. On the face of things therefore the Irvingite emissary comes before the public to render a service which is in general painfully neglected. Thus are not a few drawn speciously into their net of error.

It would be strange, however, if those who have been shown to be the victims of extraordinary and dangerous delusion of the worst kind proclaimed “that blessed hope” in its purity. Error as to fundamentals is apt to weave a web of vast extent, and in no case is this more conspicuous than in Irvingism, especially as it developed after his death who was its only great man. Not that error will be found really consistent with itself; for consistency is only found in Christ, and blessed are they who, in the face of deceivable appearances which is Satan's work, cleave only to Him in the unity of His body, and with whole-hearted subjection to His word by the Holy Spirit.

The fact is that the truth of the Lord's coming again, though asserted prominently, is misused in almost every possible way, being made subservient to the sect without shame, instead of held in the bridal spirit of faith and love and holy liberty, so as to exalt Christ, fit in with His work, will, and word, and minister a hope as heavenly as is the relationship of the Christian and the church.

No one can intelligently read their writings, even the most fully considered and authoritative, without perceiving how much they are under the influence of passing circumstances. The spirit of the age, as shown in the various French revolutions, and the growing democracy of Great Britain and elsewhere, fire their minds as antagonistic champions. It is quite true that the principles now at work, not only in the world but religiously, are alien and opposed to God's word. But the Christian is not of the world; and if he enter the political arena, all must suffer proportionately, his faith, hope, service, and walk. Such a position is radically false, and must lower and darken and pervert all who are drawn aside by it, most of all those who assume that God has spoken to them exclusively by His prophets, and has restored to them apostles who sanction such heart-occupation with the world whilst boasting of their separateness. When they do testify of. Christ's coming indeed, who does not know that the real aim at the close (for as ever “The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail") is to insinuate if not inculcate “the restored apostles” (or “apostolate”) as the grand resource in these last days and in view of the Advent? The favorite weapon is, as the originating idea was,

terror from present and imminent circumstances in Christendom, supplemented by the Zoar they offer all who seek sealing at their hands.

How different is all this from the heavenly peace and holy power of the Christian hope! Our Lord Himself represents it in far other guise. Take the virgins in the first Gospel. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1, etc). It was the original call from first to last, the only faithful and ever responsible attitude, due to Christ's love and word, which His own were meant to cherish. It was inexcusable to be found otherwise. What had it to do with distant predicted events, with French anarchy or British liberalism? The true apostles were set in this place, even before the church was formed at Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Spirit Who gave energy to the words of the Lord; and fresh communications of the N.T. demonstrate and apply as well as confirm all; for the truth is one, no less than the head and the body. Spurious profession is anticipated. The Lord would not have His own surprised. If five were wise, five were to be foolish; and their folly was to be shown in going forth “without oil.” The gift δωρ■α (not necessarily gifts, χαρ■σματα) of the Spirit essentially distinguishes the true confession of the Lord from the false. “The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps:” in them only did the Holy Spirit dwell, not special energies but His unction. Alas! they gave up going forth to meet the Bridegroom, wise as well as foolish; and perhaps the wise mainly through the foolish, though the flesh be ever evil even in the regenerate. Certain it is, as the Lord adds, that while the Bridegroom tarried, they all grew heavy and slept. But grace intervenes: God raises indeed a testimony. “At midnight there was a cry, Behold the bridegroom! Go forth to meet Him.” They could not have slept had they adhered to their first call. They, wise and foolish, had gone in here or there to sleep. What a picture of the departure of Christendom! and how true! Decay in the hope practically dissolved the bond, and flesh and world gained the mastery. Nor is unity of value if not in the Spirit. But the cry aroused: “Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.” Even the foolish were excited and busy. The wise possessed of the oil alone could resume the first and only right portion—going forth to meet the Bridegroom. The foolish seek the divine reality, which they have not. The wise do not pretend or dare to give of their oil. As their lamps were going out (for wick without oil could not last) the foolish repair “to them that sell.” Vain hope to buy for themselves! And while they went away to buy (exactly what the foolish are doing now throughout Christendom—a time almost unequaled in financial effort and human energy), “the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him unto the marriage feast; and the door was shut.” The other virgins were left without. They might cry loud, “Lord, Lord, open to us:” but the answer was, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” They are so much the more guilty, and surely lost, because they had no more than an empty profession, baptized with water but not of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Luke 12:35, 36: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” The Christian hope is quite independent of times and seasons. It is Christ coming in person, and precisely the same now as when the first disciples waited for Him from heaven. Prophecy may confirm our hope, but is quite distinct in its nature. Hence a Christian ignorant of prophecy might be abounding in hope by the power of the Spirit. He waits for Christ, like a true servant his master's return, to open the door immediately when the knock is heard. Such is the right moral state, which Luke gives more than any other.

John 14 presents the hope as ever from the elevation of Christ's person and love and glory. The Son was going to the Father's house on high, no longer to be visible as Messiah on earth, but an object of faith as God always is. This is proper Christian faith. But He is coming as surely as He goes, having prepared a place for us in those many mansions; “I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also.” Meanwhile as loving Him we keep His word, and have the Paraclete with and in us forever. Christ was all, His love perfect as proved in His death, His provision of the word and Spirit complete, His “coming” for us sure. It is in no way bringing on the accomplishment of this awful change or that; but those events on earth are connected closely with His “day,” which is to execute judgment on the beast, and the kings of the earth, on “the king” or Antichrist in the land and temple, as well as on his enemy “the king of the north.” But these are the details of prophecy. The hope of the Christian is quite distinct in character as in source, and depends on His loving promise, so as to be always fresh and firm to faith till He comes to receive us to Himself and His heavenly home. Can contrast be more decided with the excited watching of events and dates, renewed and disappointed again and again, to say nothing of the vanities of a modern apostolate (as presumptuous officially as the true twelve were lowly), and of the ravings of prophets so called which practically supplant scripture?

It is all well to study every prophet, and above all the great prophetic book of the N.T., which stands to Christendom similarly related as the book of Daniel to the Jewish nation. They reveal the result of each of these failures respectively. It is certainly for no Christian to neglect the Revelation; but the Revelation guards against the error which blinds Irvingism even more grievously than most of the Christian sects. The hope has nothing to do with dates or earthly events: it is the confusion of the hope with prophecy, which has everything to do with them. How could we have such words of assured promise as are found in the conclusion after the visions of judgment, the constant hope to the faithful, if we had to wait for the accomplishment of seals, trumpets, and vials, as so many signs? Revelation is perfectly consistent with the rest of the N.T., which discriminates them, as Peter formally does at the end of chap. 1. in his Second Epistle. We do well to take heed to the lamp of prophecy. But daylight dawning with the Day-star arising in the heart is a better light and the proper Christian hope, quite distinct from the lamp of prophecy shining on events in a dark squalid world.

Thus the apostolic teaching, the written word from the beginning, is as sober, sound, and sure, as God could make it; and abides the special resource for the faithful in the last days of self-will and pretentiousness and form without the power of godliness. Irvingism as to the Second Advent, like Millerism in America, is only another form of excitement through prophecy misunderstood, as was found when “the new-prophets” —mania broke out in the early part of the eighteenth century, or earlier still when the Cromwellian rebellion let loose mind, will, and imagination in religion hardly less than in politics. The Reformation was comparatively free from that excitement, because more urgent wants craved and found utterance, save perhaps among the Anabaptist fanatics of Munster. But even in times when Rome had almost all its own way in Western Europe there were two grand eruptions, as is commonly known, about 1,000 A.D. and some four hundred years before.

Yet one great error there was which characterized them all, if they took the ground of Christianity and the church—the dread of the Judge appalled them, instead of “going forth to meet the bridegroom.” This, and this alone, becomes him who rests on redemption and is sealed with the

Spirit. It was not hope founded on the known grace and truth of Christ; it was alarm and extreme agitation, such as the false teachers sought to infuse among the Thessalonian converts, young in the faith. And therefore is it now ignorant and unbelieving not to profit by the apostle's correction of that early error. For he takes pains to beseech them by reason, or for the sake (■π■ρ), of that bright hope of Christ's coming and our gathering together unto Him, not to be “quickly shaken in mind, nor yet troubled, neither by spirit or by word or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present.” Next, after having thus shown the hope, he explains that that “day” cannot come in judgment till the evils are fully manifested which it is to judge. The “day” of the Lord is quite distinct, and full of what is most tremendous to man on earth. The hope of being gathered to the Lord at His “coming” is the motive alleged against the disquietude caused by the rumor that His “day” was come. It is not said that His presence must be before the development of the predicted evils, but that His day could not be before the horrors it is to judge. We must distinguish between His “coming” (ver. 1) and “the manifestation or epiphany of His coming” (ver. 8), which last corresponds with His “day,” as it naturally ought; and we must not invert their relative order.

Chapter 43

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 14. Doctrine – The Revelation Misused

What has been already said as to Christ's Second Coming is greatly confirmed by a fuller consideration of the misuse of the Apocalypse which is alike prevalent in, and characteristic of, this society. To state the truth it enunciates is in itself the best disproof of the wrong done, partly in ignorance, partly by party spirit. In the great book of N. T. prophecy there are well-defined landmarks which afford the most seasonable help and yet demand no sustained attention or study, but he may run that reads them. The first and very essential distinction for all right understanding of it as a whole is that laid down by our Lord Himself in chap. i. 19, “the things which are, and the things which shall be after these,” not a vague “hereafter,” but what next follows. There are in fact three divisions; “the things which thou rawest,” namely, the Lord Jesus as presented after a new sort in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands (chap. 1.); “the things which are,” or the seven churches shown out in the seven letters respectively (chaps. 2.,; “and the things which shall be after these,” that is, after the church-state closes (chaps. 4-22.). The bearing of this on the application of the prophecy, simple as it seems, is immediate and immense, neglected by none more than by Irvingite interpreters. This is the more regrettable as they are among the few exceptional communities that really ponder the Book. For the most part in Christendom only individuals here and there appear to pay it any marked attention. As the Catholic Apostolics must be pretty familiar with its contents, they ought to have noted well the divinely registered postponement of the strictly prophetic visions to “the things that are"; especially as their ablest leader, Mr. Irving, devoted the greater portion of his Exposition of the Book (4 vols. 12 mo, 1831) to the seven Epistles, and with no small measure of truth. They constitute the mystery of the church-condition, or “the things which are,” from the days of the prophet till it vanishes from the earth, the faithful to meet the coming Lord in the air, the faithless to sink into the corrupt or apostate evils that await His day. Of the church, as a recognized object on earth, we never hear again in the Revelation, till the visions of the future are closed (chap. 22: 6). In ver. 16 of the last chapter John is instructed to testify “these things,” that is, the sum of these inspired communications, in or for the churches. Also in ver. 17 the church symbolically is shown longing for Christ. But this leaves the fact untouched in all its force, that the outwardly prophetic visions follow the seven-fold picture of the church, till it is no more seen or heard of on earth.

This again is corroborated by the opening vision of “the things that must come to pass after these” in Rev. 4; 5 The scene is transferred from earth to heaven, where the prophet in the Spirit sees a throne set, and One sitting on it, Who is celebrated as Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come—the Eternal. But an absolutely new element appears. Around the rainbow-encircled throne were four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting arrayed in white, and on their heads crowns of gold. Now, without going into debatable and delicate questions, these elders are admitted, with or without the four living creatures, to represent the heavenly redeemed. It was a new sight for Stephen to see at God's right hand the Son of man. Now in heaven John looks on the symbol of the glorified saints

as the chiefs or heads of the royal and heavenly priesthood. Never before had man even in the Spirit beheld them there. Their number is complete, twenty-four elders answering to the four and twenty courses of the Levitical priesthood. Others are called on earth to suffer and blessed subsequently, as we learn (Rev. 6 to chap. 18.); some are seen to go up to heaven (chap. 11.); many sufferers are raised at the last moment, earlier or later in the Book (Rev. 20:4) priests of God and of Christ, to share in His reign for a thousand years; but not one is ever added to the twenty-four elders, or chief priests.

The inference is irresistible. There can be no fall complement of the glorified Old and New Testament saints, as we see in the symbol of Rev. 4, till the Lord comes and gathers them to Himself on high. For though the O. T. saints could have none added after Christ's first advent, they are but disembodied till He comes again. Then alone the church His body will also be complete, both being changed in a moment, the dead and the living, into the likeness of His glory, as these demonstrably are here. For separate souls no more sit on thrones than angels do. Here the saints are crowned and glorified, which can only be after He comes for them. They re-appear expressly in Rev. 7; 11; 14, and in the early part of chap. 19. taking the deepest interest in what is done to God's glory; but they are to the last mention “the four and twenty elders,” whatever and wherever the blessing of others; for the book lets us also into no small variety of blessing to Come in God's mercy. But the blessed are others, after the church is taken to heaven, and presented separately.

Be it observed again, “out of the throne proceed lightnings, and voices and thunders” (ver. 5). It is not a throne of grace as in Heb. 4 to which the Christian approaches boldly now; nor yet is it the throne of millennial glory on high (Rev. 22:1), out of which proceeds a river of water of life, bright as crystal. Most commentators interpret Rev. 4; 5 of the present period, whereas it is only applicable in reality to a transition yet future. The throne expresses such providential inflictions as fill the hour of temptation that is coming, after the church goes to meet the Lord before the appearing. So too the Spirit of God assumes henceforth from Rev. 4 a judicial character (“seven lamps of fire burning before the throne”); for it is no longer sovereign grace gathering into one, the body of Christ. Further, the sea before the throne is as it were “of glass” like unto crystal; for the elders no longer is the washing of water by the word needed, as once necessarily to have a part with Christ, whatever Peter foolishly thought. Theirs is now, not a purifying process, but fixed purity and in its highest form, “like unto crystal.” The difference of Rev. 15 makes the meaning all the more striking; for there also we see another company of saints at the close who come off victors over the Beast and over his image and over the number of his name, not by any means characterized as the elders, yet singularly honored, standing upon the sea of glass, and having harps of gold. But in their case the sea is as it were glass “mingled with fire.” These do pass through the fiery tribulation at the end of the age, whereas the saints symbolized by the elders were caught up before; even as the Lord had promised the faithful who were awaiting His advent, to keep them out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world (Rev. 3).

Certainly Irving was behind few and not more negligent than most Christian teachers, who allow in word the meaning of the elders and living creatures, and yet fail to hold it fast when they proceed to interpret the visions that follow. The consequence is the inevitable confusion which prevails. They almost all overlook that, instead of churches, Jewish or Gentile saints, no longer forming one body, are seen as the object of divine care but of the world's hatred throughout the external

predictive visions of the Revelation. Hence in Rev. 6 the cry of the martyrs of the fifth seal takes us back from the grace of Stephen and the church of God as seen in the N. T. to the cry of the righteous in the Psalms and the O.T The reason is evident. The church must already be caught up, in order that the vision of Rev. 4; 5 should be verified. Hence the saints subsequently called in that hour of trial which succeeds have a relationship, and therefore experience and affections, according to those that preceded the actual heavenly parenthesis of grace, whilst Jews and Gentiles are gathered in unity. Beyond controversy the holy sufferers, that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, are represented as crying aloud, “How long, O Sovereign Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge, and avenge our blood on those that dwell on the earth?” They are in unison with a God Who will then be dealing judicially; as we ought to be with His grace Who is now not only longsuffering but saving and blessing the lost gratuitously to the uttermost. It is a day of salvation; by-and-by it will be one of solemn judgments. Why confound them?

Rev. 7 affords ample and distinct evidence of the change which then will follow, anticipative though it is, as being an evident parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals, answering to a similar case in the trumpets and the vials. Therein first is pledged a numbered company from each of the twelve tribes of Israel; as next the prophet sees a countless crowd from out of the Gentiles, both blessed, but quite distinct, and declared (of the latter at least) to come out of the great tribulation: in neither case the church, but by one of the elders explained, as far as the Gentile multitude is concerned (for the twelve tribes are so expressly described as to need no explanation), to be a special class of that still future period. The promised blessing snits, not heaven but the millennial earth, where the sealed of Israel are also to be. The church is exalted far beyond either.

In Rev. 8:3-5 farther proof appears, indicating that all the saints then on earth are witnesses, not of heavenly grace, but of God's intervention in judgment. For the effect of their prayers is that the angelic high-priest cast from the altar fire on the earth; “and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake:” the premonitions, not of the gospel of the grace of God, but of His displeasure and ways that express it unmistakably; and the trumpets follow without further delay.

The only allusion bearing on this in chap. ix. is the negative one of ver. 4. The men not sealed on their foreheads are to be smitten. There is not a trace of the church on earth. Other witnesses follow.

So in Rev. 10 it is God's prophetic testimony as to many peoples and nations and tongues and kings, but neither the gospel nor the church as now.

More than this is made plain in Rev. 11, where the witnesses of that day, clothed in sackcloth, have power to inflict judgments such as those of Moses and Elijah, till their brief term of testimony is completed when the Beast kills them. What can be more in contrast with the apostolic witnesses or of the true men in their day who heard God's beloved Son rather than the law and the prophets, however truly they believed both?

Rev. 12 opens what may be called the second volume of the prophecy, and shows a retrogressive vision. For assuredly we err if we fail to see that the seventh trumpet brings us in a general way to the end. Momentous matters which take us back in time had to be particularized; and the birth of the Man-child Who is to shepherd the nations with a rod of iron is mystically before us, in order to

link on with God's future designs and ways in Israel. Hence it is not the bride, but the mother here, the clear symbol of Israel according to God before the day of deliverance shines. The remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony, as it is here, are clearly Jewish, and not what we now know as Christian. This book is admirable not only to clear the eyes as to the future, but to enlarge hearts. The church, incomparably blessed as it is, does not cover all the plans that are before God or revealed in His word.

In Rev. 13 those who have their tabernacle in heaven are definitely distinguished (6, 7) from the saints on earth with whom the Beast makes war. Cf. ver. 8, 9, 10. Not a word hints at the assembly, Christ's body; but there are saints Jewish and Gentile, and separately viewed.

This is palpable in Rev. 14 where we hear of 144,000 with the Lamb on mount Zion, a remnant of Judah, yet more honored and more closely associated with the earth-rejected Christ than the sealed company out of all Israel in chap. 7. After this scene, the everlasting gospel goes out to those settled down on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, but no hint of baptism into one body as now in the church. We have afterward (12) the endurance of the saints noted who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus—this is indispensable, but the church nowhere on earth; and no wonder if caught up to heaven before the accomplishment of Rev. 4; 5 The blessedness from henceforth of those who die in the Lord is proclaimed (13); and immediately after the Son of man's appearing to judge, whether discriminatively, or unsparingly.

Then comes in Rev. 15 the vision of those who overcome the Beast and sing the song of Moses as well as of the Lamb, owning the King (not of saints but) of nations, as in Jer. 10:6. That these follow on earth the church gathered already to heaven has been fully shown.

In Rev. 16 the vials contemplate the awful hour of man's and Satan's worst evil with God's last judgments, before He sends the Lord in person to inflict vengeance, and then introduce the reign of righteousness and peace. Hence the Lord comes as a thief, unwelcome and unexpected; but blessed will he be who then watches, even if it be not the bridal joy of those caught up before.

Rev. 17 is a description which strictly has nothing to do with the three great series of judgments in the book to occupy the book from chap. 6. and onward, though we may gather from Rev. 14:8 and 16. 18 its relative place in the last of these dealings of God. But being descriptive it can show us Rome's corruption all through her lofty and false history, as Rev. 12 connected Christ in the past with God's purposes about Israel in the future. The blood of the saints and that of the witnesses of Jesus (6) seems purposely general, as we see most pointedly in Rev. 18:24. But it is certain that the one chapter speaks of the glorified saints coming with the Lord Jesus when He overcomes the Beast and the kings; and that the other gives a final call of God to His people, true in spirit ever since the Roman pseudo-Christian Babylon persecuted, but pointedly to the Israel of the future before judgment destroys. “My people” properly designates (not Christians but) the elect nation, and the execution of external widespread judgment is the purpose of the warning as usual. The heavenly redeemed have been already caught up and come with the Lamb.

Chap. 19. is another evidence of the same truth; and it is plain, full, and precious. Here the symbols of the twenty-four elders and of the four living creatures appear for the last time after the judgment of the great harlot, the corrupt pretender to that place of holy privilege which belonged to

God's church Immediately follows the announcement of the Lamb's marriage-supper, and His wife has made herself ready, and the guests are called blessed, even if they have not her relationship, the O. T. saints, in glory as well as the church; to both of whom answers the uniting symbol of “the armies which were in heaven” that follow our Lord when He is seen, not as the Bridegroom though ever so, but for the while as the Warrior in righteousness. To this we must add the weighty fact that the martyred remnants of the earlier and later persecutions during the Apocalyptic hour of temptation are seen raised from the dead in time for the millennial reign in chap. 20: 4: “the souls of those that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God (cf. 6: 8); and such as worshipped not the Beast nor his image, and received not the mark on their forehead and on their hand.” The O.T saints and the church had been already raised or changed, and had followed the Lord out of heaven in the glorified state. Indeed this state was made true ever since Rev. 4 showed them crowned and enthroned. Now they are seen on the millennial thrones, before those slain under the Apocalyptic visions join them in resurrection bodies for the reign with Christ.

If all this evidence be justly weighed, the Irvingite application of the Revelation is seen to be thus far a tissue of mistake. The sealed on their foreheads in chap. 7. are the “Israel of God” at a future epoch after the translation to the Father's house of the church as well as of the O.T. saints; when the same chapter next reveals an innumerable throng of saved Gentiles unmistakably distinct. This is enough to put to the root the allegorizing view of the twelve tribes in the preceding vision. But what they teach is worse than mere error of interpretation; it is a “strange doctrine,” which upsets a cardinal truth and standing privilege of God's church. For every member of Christ is and has been sealed of the Holy Ghost since Pentecost. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “If then God gave unto them (Gentiles) the like gift (δωρ■αν) as unto us (Jews), on our having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” “By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink into one Spirit.” These scriptures suffice to prove the indispensable and universal character of that great gift for every Christian: without it one cannot be a member of Christ's body. To allow a constant line of such members since the twelve died, and to aver that sealing can only be by the imposition of apostolic hands, such as they and they only have in the Irvingite community, is obviously and unanswerably to contradict themselves.

Here their system is inexcusably astray. It is scriptural to affirm that the gift of the Spirit, and also gifts, were conferred for special ends by the imposition of apostolic hands. It is the grossest ignorance of scripture to overlook the fact that on still greater occasions the Spirit was given, even where an apostle was present, or all the apostles, without any such laying on of hands, as we have already shown; how much more where apostles were not present and could not be? How has so serious a heterodoxy pervaded these men? A snare of the enemy working on the pride or vanity of would-be apostles designated by modern false prophets. These apostles forsooth can seal, they only now: what follows logically, but that none are sealed outside Irvingism? none since the apostles till these men? That there is no mistake about their arrogant pretensions, built on a total misconception of the Scriptural doctrine and facts, will be plain to any upright Christian on reading the following statements from their most authoritative document, “The Great Testimony,” given in a footnote.

Chapter 44

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 15. Doctrine – The Revelation Misused

That the entire groundwork is fictitious is shown by another sure consideration. The “sealing” of Rev. 7 is not employed as we find it in the Pauline Epistles, but a symbolic form of this prophecy, which therefore is said to be “upon the foreheads” of those selected from the twelve tribes of Israel. It is an astounding blunder to confound the sign of a divine exemption from outward judgments, as this will be, with that richest inward privilege which God makes true of every believer in Christ since Pentecost. Its essence is the indwelling Holy Spirit, of which not a trace appears in Rev. 7. Indeed the effusion of the Spirit appears from the Prophets and the Psalms quite inconsistent with the revealed condition of God's ancient people during their future crisis: even the godly, though born of the Spirit, will not have the gift of the Spirit till the Lord appears in glory; just as the disciples, though born again, only received the Holy Ghost after Christ was glorified.

As Rev. 7 did not speak of the Lamb nor of mount Zion, so Rev. 14 says not a word about sealing on their foreheads. There indeed a different lot appears to await a different company of 144,000 from Judah: not protection from the awful tempests of that judicial period, but the Lamb on mount Zion associated with holy sufferers, having His name and His Father's written on their foreheads. It is not here a living God's seal of immunity from hurt, but undefiled ones that refuse idolatrous corruption and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. Hence another and higher class, though clearly not the church, nor even heavenly; for they, and they only, learn the song chanted before the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, i. e., those who symbolize the church and the O.T. saints in glory. They follow, and are associated (in God's mind at least) with the Lamb on mount Zion; no doubt anticipatively, for the Lord has not yet appeared, as we see from the closing visions of this chapter; just as in chapter 7. the 144,000 out of the twelve tribes of Israel are merely marked out and assured by a living God of the general Messianic portion of Israel, the day-spring that will dawn on them foreshown before the dark apostasy at the end of the age. But the elect of Judah who tread in the footsteps of the Lamb stand with Him on Zion where He will sit as King soon, and are near enough to catch the “as it were new song before the throne.” This is the highest place on earth and quite distinct from the ordinary blessing of Israel; it was such as had David's companions in sorrow and prowess compared with the people at large. Both visions give the intervention of God earlier and later, for His ways of goodness toward the seed of Abraham; the confusion of which indicates total ignorance of the structure of the Apocalypse, as if chap. 14. were a mere repetition or at best supplement of what was revealed in chap. 7. In fact they are just as distinct as those slain under the fifth seal are from their brethren that were about to be killed (further on) as they were, who are distinguished even when raised to reign with Christ (chap. 20:4).

The two chapters therefore do not treat of the same subjects, but of different at distinct epochs and of evidently varied character. The first chapter speaks expressly of those sealed out of the twelve

tribes of Israel, in contrast with a still larger complement from among the Gentiles; and both companies wholly apart from the known and acknowledged symbol of the O.T. saints and the church presented in the same chapter. The second chapter does not speak of the twelve tribes, but from the context it is implied to be rather from the Jews proper, mount Zion being the keynote; and here again is the symbol of the heavenly redeemed quite distinct, the four living creatures and the elders (ver. 3).

There is no doubt that those “sealed” in Rev. 7 are supposed to have an appropriate blessing thereby. To apply this to a special time for some of the church, which no Christians had enjoyed for ages previously, nor yet do the great mass at that very time (and such is the Irvingite interpretation), is not only infatuation and arrogant self-complacency, but such a subversion of every Christian's most essential privilege as could not be entertained for a moment by any soul that understood what the church of God is. For this reason, as for others already given, a living God's seal as in the prophecy cannot be here meant of the church at all, still less at a specific season, and yet less of a mere part. Such notions are incompatible with the seal of the Spirit which is the inalienable mark and joy of the Christian (2 Cor. 1:22, Gal. 4:6, Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30).

On the whole then, and in every point of view, their accepted and uniform interpretation of the Revelation is unintelligent and unsound; whilst their doctrinal use of sealing is a denial of God's church, of whose unity, catholicity, and apostolicity they falsely claim to be champions, whereas their teaching overthrows each and all. Now the book rightly understood carefully guards from all these errors, confirming the truth elsewhere revealed, instead of undermining anything and confusing all. Mr. Irving was quite right, with Vitringa, Sir I. Newton and others, in giving (besides the mere historical application) a larger and protracted view of the Seven Apocalyptic Epistles, as long as churches exist on earth. The very terms employed by our Lord, “the things which are,” might have suggested a continuous sense, especially as the internal contents indicate, and the cessation afterward of any church-condition clenched the fact. But this being so, where is the consistency of interpolating Christians and churches into “the things which should be after these?” The visions of prophecy from chap. 6. to 18. concern not the church, but the world; and accordingly Jews and Gentiles come before us, not the body of Christ where such differences are effaced. Even those blessed are expressly or by adequate implication Jews or Gentiles, in no case do they rise up to church or Christian relationships.

With this concurs the all-importance of Rev. 4; 5 as indicating beyond just question the presence above of the complete company of the heavenly redeemed, risen and glorified as they can only have been by Christ's coming Who introduced them there. His presentation of the saints on high at once makes the way clear for God's ways in putting Christ into actual possession of His inheritance by providential judgments, in the midst of which those to be blessed on earth are gradually prepared; as the heavenly ones from chap. 4. were already in their place. And these heavenly saints are distinguished by the clearest marks from the earthly, however favored (with differences too) the latter may be. They are enthroned assessors round God's throne, in the intimacy of His counsels, and worshipping with full spiritual intelligence. Further, they have not only a royal but a chief-priestly function altogether peculiar. And when this symbol founded on the heads of the twenty-four priestly elders comes to an end, it is merged for the church in the unity of the Lamb's wife (chap. 19.), with the O.T. saints as the guests or “they that are bidden” at the marriage. Accordingly both these classes of heavenly saints soon after follow our Lord out of

heaven, and, when the thousand years' reign comes (chap. 20.), sit at once on thrones for judgment, resurrection not being then predicated of them, the first general class, as they were changed before they were caught up long before; whereas it is said of the two classes of saints subsequently martyred in the Apocalyptic period, “that they lived,” being just before seen as “souls” in the separate state till then (ver. 4). Compare Rev. 6:11.

The raising up of these two classes of what may be called Apocalyptic martyrs is a beautiful sample of God's compensating grace. For they only come into the rank of holy witnesses after the Lord will have received the saints at His coming. They do not escape persecution unto death, as others will who are to be delivered when He appears in judgment. Hence they might seem to have lost much. But not so: dying for Christ, even though they may have known very little of the truth, they are destined of God exceptionally to a far higher place than their fellows who survive. For they are raised at the last moment, so to speak, in order to have their blessed and holy part in the first resurrection; whereas those that escaped death are “the people of the saints of the Most High” (or heavenly places). Those dead and risen are “the saints of the Most High” themselves, and reign; whereas “the people” are reigned over. Only we must carefully notice that the first part of Rev. 20:4 sets out the great bulk of the saints in general from the beginning till the Lord comes to change and translate them to heaven. The later clauses embrace the twofold martyrs who only come forward after those symbolized by the twenty-four elders are glorified.

Be it noticed here that the critical form of Rev. 5:9, 10, as approved by the best editors, helps and is helped by seeing this. For the new song celebrates the Lamb because He was slain and did purchase to God with His blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made “them” to our God a kingdom and priests, and “they” shall reign over the earth. It is not thanksgiving for their own portion. It is the joy of divine love that others are to be blessed highly even in face of that dismal day. It is true that these are not to be made elders or chief priests in the heavenly hierarchy; but they are to be royal priests when the time comes to reign over the earth. In Rev. 20:4 the time is come, and their anticipation is fulfilled. The singers of the new song followed the Lord out of heaven (Rev. 19) as “the hosts that were in heaven,” where they had been as the twenty-four elders, ever since the church-state closed, and “the things which must be after these began as shown to John (Rev. 4). All this while they had been changed; and therefore we read, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.” They were in a glorified condition already; whereas those who had suffered for the testimony and for the word of God, before the Beast had developed, and such as worshipped not the Beast but refused every shade of the evil after it was full-blown and in highest power, and were killed even as their earlier brethren were, are now alike raised to reign with Christ a thousand years. So consistently does the word of God shine, and so much the more as it is searched in faith, and as attested by the best ancient evidence.

How the visions of the book fall in with and justify the distinction pointed out between the Christian hope and prophecy needs no elucidation. Our hope belongs to “the things that are” or church-period; the lamp of prophecy deals with the judgments, times, seasons, &c., or “the things that shall be after these.” The coming of the Lord to gather the heavenly redeemed to Himself is the mystery fully revealed in 1 Cor. 15, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and elsewhere, which it did not fall within the scope of the Revelation (as being characteristically judicial) to describe; but it is necessarily implied after Rev. 3 and before Rev. 4 As no one pretends that it is portrayed

anywhere in the prophecy, there must be a space more suitable than any other for that wondrous event; and what so proper as that which immediately precedes the presence of the crowned and enthroned elders in their completeness on high? The Revelation does predict and describe the emerging out of heaven (chaps. 16:14, 19:14); but this is prophecy: not properly our hope of the Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself in the Father's house. The epiphany or appearing of His coming naturally follows His coming; for the measure of the interval between them we are dependent on scripture, mainly the Apocalypse, to decide. In a general way at least this, we have seen, is not difficult.

It may be well to add that the Revelation may be regarded from another point of view, which has its importance and may be here briefly stated. If we look at the seven churches as they existed historically and only so in the apostle's day, “the things which most come to pass after these,” or the prophetic scenes that follow, must be allowed their place from that time onward. According to this aspect of the book, Rev. 4; 5 would be the anticipation of the heavenly saints gathered on high, before the revelation of God's dealings with the world in the seven seals, which announce His unveiling of the great changes in the Roman world from the days of the prophet till the downfall of heathenism, which made way for a vast influx of men from Judaism and the nations, as seen prophetically in the parenthetical chapter vii.

Then as introduced by the seventh seal the seven trumpets proclaim successive judgments first on the Western Empire (Rev. 8), next woes on the Eastern Empire and from the east (Rev. 9), with another great parenthesis (chap. 10. 11.) which brings before as a mighty cloud-clothed angel, with symbols of supreme power and judicial setting his right foot on the sea and his left on the land, and the full expression of divine majesty, swearing that there should be no more delay but that the seventh trumpet should see the mystery of God finished according to. the prophets. Sackcloth prophesying follows, sustained by power like that of Moses and Elijah; and the blast of the seventh trumpet ushers in the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ. Now in the shadowy application of the book, which the Protestant school labors to treat as complete and final, it is admitted that this may foreshow in a vague way the providential work of God in the Reformation. It is not the Lamb or holy earth-rejected Sufferer, as in Rev. 5-7, any more than it is yet the Son of man actually invested with and coming in the kingdom as later on. It is angelic or providential, whether in priestly action first, or in the prophetic announcement of the end of man's day and the coming kingdom of God over the world; in the course of which we see a little open book, not the sealed one as at the first, and prophecy resumes its course before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. But when we seek the real and minute interpretation of what is said, there is total failure in predicating the two witnesses, and indeed all other details, of pre-reformation times culminating in that great event; and none more forcibly disproves its adequate fulfillment than such an able and intelligent advocate as the late E. B. Elliott. To allow a general application to the past history is the utmost possible. In this vague point of view the seventh trumpet prefigures the closing scene, when God will intervene to reward His own and destroy the destroyers of the earth: a state of things clearly not yet arrived.

Then from Rev. 12 (or rather including chap. 11:19) we are taken back for a second survey of what is coming, in order to give more special facts not particularized in the visions which compose what we may call the first volume of the prophetic vision.

Here God's purpose in Israel comes out, with a mystic view, not only of Christ the center and supreme object of His glorious counsels, but of the translation of those identified with Him to heaven apart from all dates, circumstances, and times, followed when His dealings with the earthly people begin to be developed. The church is the body and bride of Christ, not His mother, which is alone true of Israel, whatever tradition may blunder about it. Every Christian moderately acquainted with the more pious commentators on the prophecy knows how they apply the vision to the vindication of Christ's glory against Arianism and the uprising of Satan's antagonism in that Roman empire which had given up paganism and outwardly acknowledged Christianity. And this is followed in ch. 13. by the gigantic instruments of Satan in hostile powers, whether external or ecclesiastical according to the Protestant theory, with the intervention of God's ways in recent times.

The Lamb, it will be noticed, reappears (14.) with suited followers, testimony unprecedentedly active to the nations, warnings of Babylon's fall and of the Beast's doom for all his party, the blessedness henceforth of those that die in the Lord, and the Son of man's judicial coming for the harvest of the earth, with unsparing vengeance on the vine of the earth. These visions may in the earlier part be applied to what God has wrought, as we are awaiting the later part ripening into its tremendous accomplishment we know not how soon. And so may be regarded the detailed vision of the vials (chaps. 15. & 16.), with that of Babylon's sad story and fall (chaps. 17. & 18), before the Lord appears from heaven (chap 19.) followed by the glorified saints, both to execute the closing judgment and to bring in the millennial reign over the earth (Rev. 20), and eternity as the sequel (Rev. 21), with a retrogressive vision in Rev. 21:9-22:5, and the conclusory appeals for present profit or warning.

If the protracted or historical application of the Revelation be sound, which may be allowed without enfeebling the rapid and exact fulfillment of the book in the future crisis after the church state terminates, and the question of Christ's actual assumption of the inheritance ensues, with the preparation of Jews and Gentiles as His earthly objects, it is plain that the Irvingites err as decidedly in the one view as in the other. It may be said no doubt that too many companions are involved in error among the godly both now and in the past. But they have the unenviable peculiarity of perverting the Apocalypse, as they do almost all the scriptures, to exalt themselves and exclude true members of Christ from their sure and blessed privileges to the deep dishonor of the Lord, the grief of the Holy Spirit, the perplexing of weak ones who differ from them, and their own hurt and shame. If this were not the inevitable effect of their false application of the Revelation, as well as of the divine word generally, it would hardly become a believer to occupy time in the investigation here pursued. But assured that so it is, I am bound in the love of Christ and by His truth to help souls, either within or without their bounds, against that which presents appearances sufficiently attractive to many in a day of increasing confusion and self-will. We have already seen that according to the fulfillment in the future crisis, which is the only accurate and exhaustive accomplishment of the book, there is not the smallest room for their reveries as to Rev. 7 or 14.

Chapter 45

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 16. Doctrine – Prophets, and Apostles, &c

The next subject calling for examination is as distinctive a doctrine of the community as any that could be named: their view of prophets and apostles, and pretension to them. The restored apostolate is the unfailing claim in their books and pamphlets, their teaching and conversation. The very posters of their evangelists keep it up before all eyes.

It is remarkable that one is obliged in dealing with this matter to depart from the order of scripture, where on every ground we hear of “apostles and prophets.” Such was the order in fact as in position. It is not that these modern claimants fail in crying up the superiority of their apostles; but beyond doubt prophets in their case preceded apostles and also designated them. Even their first actual apostle, J. B. Cardale, was named by prophecy; and so were others, not only such as served in that office, but Mr. D. Dow, who refused in the face of all remonstrance—himself a man who spoke “in the power.”

Thus the doctrine in the Great Testimony is contradicted by the facts of their history. Their first designated apostle was Mr. R. Baxter, who had been also fully acknowledged as a prophet, like Messrs. Cardale and Drummond afterward. Of this there is the amplest evidence. But Mr. B., alarmed at the failure of his own prophecies (to say nothing of others), got his eyes opened to the power of evil at work; as he also stood firm in refusing the name without the signs of an apostle. Others were less scrupulous and more ambitions. And Mr. B. discerned in a measure the fatal heterodoxy as to Christ, which lay at the root, and perverted the truth in many ways.

Here is their own statement to the patriarchs, &c., and to emperors, kings, etc., in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Daring men some certainly were, with weaklings carried along for a while. “Without apostles, it is not difficult to understand that prophets should have ceased; for the laying on of apostles' hands is God's ordinary way of bestowing the Holy Ghost, whether in gifts, in administrations, or in operations. Apostles are His gift, direct and immediate; but prophets and other ministries ordinarily are His gifts, mediate and through apostles,” &c. On the face of their history the reverse is true. For prophets preceded in point of time, and named each at least of the early apostles, as well as Messrs. Baxter and D. Dow, the last declining, the first utterly rejecting.

The truth is that in scripture the gift of a prophet is no less direct and immediate from Christ than that of an apostle, though they have not the same degree of dignity. Where is there revealed a single case of a prophet mediate and through apostles? They contradict God's word in this, as we have seen they do their own history when they lay down doctrine. No doubt the cautious man of strong will, the bold and energetic pillar of the apostles, saw it needful to put his foot down, after that prophecy had done its part in elevating him. This alone seems to account for his monstrous departure from scripture in ordaining Mr. Taplin as prophet. The N.T. knows of no such thing as ordaining a prophet, or yet evangelists, or pastors and teachers. They were alike “gifts.” Apostles

no doubt were officers, as well as gifts; and they did choose or ordain elders, and lay hands on deacons, both of which were local officers. But apostles as gifts, prophets, and the rest in Eph. 4, were not only alike direct from Christ, but alike in the unity of His body, not local; though some might hold local office also, as we see in Stephen and Philip, who had gifts quite independent of the diaconal office they exercised in Jerusalem.

Scripturally judged, therefore, all is confusion in the Catholic Apostolic theory of prophets and apostles, and the antagonism to scripture is as evident as complete. The facts and principles are certain as laid down in God's word. The Messiah on earth chose the Twelve in plain relation to the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28); and when one by transgression fell, the son of perdition, another was in the Jewish way (as the Holy Ghost was not yet given) shown to be chosen of the Lord. Not one was designated by a prophet. But the Lord had further purposes, and expressly acted outside and beyond the Twelve by the extraordinary and heavenly call of Paul in sovereign grace. He declares himself apostle, not from men nor through man Those who construe Acts 13:2-4 as either his call or nomination or ordination to the apostolate contradict God's word and play the part of the many adversaries of his ministry. It was solely a separation of him (and Barnabas) to a special work, after being already called and laboring for years. Do men argue that his inferiors ordained him? It was repeated in Acts 15:40; which compare with Acts 13:2-4. His was to be, and in fact was, the apostleship of the uncircumcision, as theirs of circumcision: so it was settled between him and them (Gal. 2). The break with Jerusalem order was no less distinct and intended; so that Popery and all tradition-mongers are not more baseless in tracing up the succession to Peter than the Catholic Apostolics are in seeking and claiming another Twelve. Paul was not one of the Twelve; and it is from him that those called out from the Gentiles ought to derive, if derivative succession were true; as he (not Peter and his fellows) gives the special type of that development which is bound up with the revelation of the body of Christ, which is the true principle with which we have to do ever since. To point to the Twelve, and pretend to reproduce another batch in any measure, is unintelligent and retrograde; it is to abandon the fuller, special, and standing instruction given us through the great apostle of the nations.

Again, according to scripture (Eph. 2:20) we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone.” Of this (unless the foundation were ill laid, which will not be said by believers) account must rightly be taken in applying the further word of Eph. 4. 11-16. “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers,” &c. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit abstains from language implying such a stay for the church on earth as would defer the constant hope of Christ's coming; but on the other adequate provision is assured, whether by the gospel to call souls in, or by guidance and teaching to feed and guard those called. The continuance or restoration of apostles and prophets is therefore in no way implied or admissible, unless we are deceived by him who could wrest “It is written” from its context and learn not from Him Who safeguards us by “It is written again.”

As the Catholic Apostolics have not a word in the N.T. even to suggest, still less to warrant, this their favorite but most unfounded and presumptuous hobby (rather have we seen, from comparing Eph. 2 and 4., its exclusion) they are driven here, as almost everywhere, to the wildest falling back on the O.T. to eke out what fails utterly. How absurd for the details of a strictly N.T. institution! Hence their recourse to Isa. 1:26, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at

the beginning." What deplorable ignorance and unspiritual perversion of God's word! Every word of the chapter concerns the Jew only, their moral judgment, and the execution of divine wrath on the impenitent, but their glorious restoration when they repent and Jehovah avenges Himself of His enemies. It is the same Jerusalem (morally Sodom and Gomorrah) that gave up fidelity to become a harlot, which afterward, when the Lord Jesus appears and we with Him in glory, shall be called Town of Righteousness, Faithful City. But this is not at all under the gospel or the church, but when Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her penitents with righteousness. It is not at all “this evil age,” but the age to come.

It is evidently the most extreme form of that misapplication, especially of the promises to Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, &c., which since the so-called fathers has been the bane of Christendom, and, even before that, of the Judaizing against which the apostle strove mightily in his testimony. Mr. Irving indeed had light on at least the essential difference between Israel and the church; but Messrs. Taplin and Car-dale and Drummond “in the power” seem to have most contributed to lead away the society into more fatal depths of this ruinous amalgam than was found then in any sect, though others have followed since still more heterodox. And one of the most mischievous results was the assumption that the promise to Zion of restoring its judges and counselors in pristine purity, which awaits its fulfillment “in the regeneration,” is the adequate scriptural ground for expecting a fresh dozen of Gentile! apostles to put in order what is confessedly Babylon, and prepare the bride to meet the Bridegroom.

Now the N.T. continually sets before us the anticipation of coming ruin in Christendom, as surely as it had been in Israel (Lake 17:26-37; 2 Thess. 3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:3, 4; 2 Peter 2; 3; 1 John 2:18-26; 4:1-6; Jude; to say nothing of the solemnities in the book of Revelation). There is no restoration for corrupt Babylon or Gentilism that bore the Lord's name faithlessly; there will be for poor guilty Israel, beloved for the fathers' sake. This is taught authoritatively in Rom. 11 “Toward thee [the professing Gentile] goodness, if thou continue in goodness: otherwise thou also [no less than the Jew in the past] shalt be cut off;” and not one word intimates restoration, as pledged positively in divine mercy to Israel (ver. 25-32). For the far more favored Gentile the rain is irreparable, whatever grace may work meanwhile for individuals and a remnant.

Granted that on the death of the apostles the evils kept in check by their holy vigilance came in like a flood ever-growing. So Paul warned; so Peter, Jude, and John, as we have seen. “I know that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29, 30). Here surely was the fitting place to have directed attention to any provision of God, if such there were either in the shape of apostolic succession or of a restored apostolate, to meet the imminent ruin. But neither here nor anywhere does the apostle drop one word; nor does any other of the apostles in speaking of the deepening gloom hold out the smallest hint of any such expedients. The word of God's grace, scripture, is the resource and safeguard in the difficult times before them; as they already knew an ever-abiding Paraclete, the witness and energy for enjoying the presence and power of the Lord Jesus. A revived apostolate is a far more daring invention than apostolic succession in Episcopacy. They are alike unscriptural vanities. It is remarkable that even the brothers Macdonald of Port Glasgow, who seem to have been pious men, did not accept the apostolic claims set up in England but mourned “for their very great blindness,” and “dared not receive them as apostles.” So we are told in their “Lives,” pp. 212 and

215. They charged the Catholic Apostolics, even in early days, with “giving the Lordship to the Spirit, and not to Christ” (p. 220).

Of the Irvingite prophets there is no need to say much, though (if one wished to criticize) scarce a subject could be found more inviting or provocative. But this is far from my aim. Immortal souls, yea, children of God are concerned, not to speak of what is due to Christ and the truth. In the early history of the movement a good deal has already come before the reader in the personal experience and excellent testimony of Mr. R. Baxter; and the darkest page of all is yet to be written in tracing the relation of prophecy to that fatal departure from the faith of Christ's person which has exercised so malignant an influence on Christendom, as well as of course still more nearly on the Catholic Apostolic body.

Mrs. Cardale (wife of Mr. J. B. C.) is said to have been the first to open her mouth in what they called a tongue and in prophesying. But as usual the utterance was only remarkable for its strange mannerism. “The Lord will speak to His people. The Lord hasteneth His coming. The Lord cometh.” This was on the last day of April, 18.31.

Mr. Taplin followed, as has been stated already, some time afterward in public; nor was anyone more remarkable for crash of sound, whether in a tongue or in English. But “Jehovah, hear us!” gives no sign of the Holy Spirit in a Christian; nor can one accept as of God his next utterance, “It is thou, O Britain: thou art the anointed cherub.” What sort of interpretation or even application is that? Again, is it to be believed that the Holy Ghost led to say on the following day, “The Lord hath come down”? “He is in the midst of you. His eye hath seen,” &c. What now is any possibly true sense of “The Lord hath come down”? Never does scripture warrant such language among Christians.

We may say little of Miss Hall, who, though she took full part and was recognized by all, at length owned she was not genuine and eventually left the body. But amidst those scenes Mr. Taplin towered over all, with little or nothing in it save what was Jewish and not Christian. For the utterances were beyond mistake denunciatory. Grace and truth there was none, as the rule. Miss E. Cardalo came into great prominence and the highest account with Mr. Irving and others. All the gifted recognized Mr. Baxter as having the same spirit as themselves, but refused his solemn warning that it was a lying spirit of evil.

But why crowd these pages with the crude and vehement inanities thundered or shrieked out even in Mr. Irving's presence, and taken up by him to clothe with his impassioned thought and feeling in beautiful forms of speech? Even Mr. Drummond, vigorous as a man, was utterly vapid as a prophet, save in an utterance out of all ordinary human experience. Now what has such unearthly loudness to do with true prophesying? It did characterize the raving prophets or prophetesses of the heathen. Prophecy in scripture revealed new truth from God, or laid bare the secrets of man's heart. It would be strange if any sober unbiased Christian could so testify of these uncouth ejaculatory cries of Irvingite men and women.

Miss E. C. did indeed rebuke Mr. Taplin in the power, and brought him on another occasion to confess evil against the Lord. After Mr. Irving's death, when Mr. Ryerson in Newman Street was thought to be preaching at the same Mr. T. for gift without grace, Miss C. in an “appalling” way, says Mr. Baxter (Irvingism, 41-44), followed this up in power with “he never had it; he never knew

it; yet Mr. T. remained as he was the chief among the prophets till the end. The same Mr. T. prophesied of one from America that he was to be a prophet to gather men there into God's church. But the man was soon proved an impostor.—Equally false was the prophecy about an American Indian, who, spite of grand predictions, returned unconverted. The intimation of a great work to be wrought in Scotland by Mr. Irving himself was notoriously falsified by his death. The baptism of fire too never had the semblance of a fulfillment in any, though promised to all. Was not the second Napoleon said “in the power” to be the coming Antichrist?

But enough. It is painful to be compelled to speak of the details of such wholesale error. He who desires to know the truth of things has already sufficient evidence.

Chapter 46

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 17. Doctrine – The Incarnation

The subject which now calls for consideration is most solemn, and demands the clearest evidence, not only because one is bound to beware of exaggeration, but because the society concerned are here extremely unwilling to face the facts which condemn them. They refer to the opening words of Mr. Irving's preface to the Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature (London, 1830). “It is necessary to inform the reader, that whenever I attribute sinful properties and dispositions and inclinations to our Lord's human nature, I am speaking of it considered as apart from Him, in itself; I am defining the qualities of that nature which He took upon Him, and demonstrating it to be the very same substance with that which we possess. To understand the work which He did, you must understand the materials with which He did it. The work which He did was, to reconcile, sanctify, quicken, and glorify this nature of ours,” &c.

Now no one subject to God's word could agree to this, but must reject it as wholly unscriptural. For we read of “reconciling the world,” “you... hath He reconciled,” “we were reconciled,” “reconcile both unto God.” We read also of “reconciling all things,” looking onward to the day of glory; but never, nowhere, and in no sense of reconciling human nature. Mr. I.'s idea is unknown to scripture, and the source of manifold error. If sinful flesh were in Christ, clearly it had to be reconciled to God; and this accordingly Mr. I. teaches habitually and resolutely.

Clearly therefore it is not humanity apart from Christ that is in question, as to which no sober Christian could hesitate. The horror inspired by this able but misguided man, and not least in the treatise to which we are referred, and by his sermons on Incarnation and in short all his writings on the subject to the last, was through his doctrine on the human nature in Christ's person here below.

Some extracts, spread over the work, will prove it distinctly to a believer or even an upright man. “If then Christ was made under the law, He must serving Jehovah. Lastly, in ver. 23, 24, He spreads before Jehovah His own strength weakened and His days shortened, and begs not to be taken away in the midst of them, while owning that Jehovah's years are throughout all generations. Thereon follows the glorious answer to the self-emptied and suffering Son: “Of old didst Thou lay the foundation,” &c. “They shall be changed, but Thou art the same,” &c.

It is Jehovah from above Who thus answers Jehovah below in the midst of His entire submission to sorrow and humiliation, “crucified in weakness.” Jehovah will arise and build up Zion; and when He does, He will appear in His glory; but Zion shall not be without her humbled and afflicted Messiah, whatever the weakness He bowed under for the glory of God and the deliverance of His people; for the Son is as truly Jehovah as the Father. “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah thy Elohim is one Jehovah.” Such is the meaning of Psa. 102, as interpreted by one no less inspired than he who wrote the Psalm. Without Heb. 1 we might not have found it out; with it we at once see that no other interpretation gives adequate meaning to the Psalm. But what a proof of Christ's supreme

deity, and this grounded on His possession of the ineffable Name from Him Who has it confessedly! The divine glory of Christ is the answer to all appearances and every dilemma.

If it be argued that the word, “Lord” (κ■πιε) in the LXX., has no counterpart in the Hebrew, the answer is that the truth meant in no way depends on the insertion of that word, but on the attributes of creative and judicial glory, as well as divine unchangeableness in His changing all creation, ascribed to the Messiah by Jehovah. He was man, and crushed to the uttermost, as must be if He made good the errand of grace on which He came—righteously vindicating God in the face of sin and delivering the people on whom lay indignation and wrath; and this He did in suffering weakness, not in power, but is owned in that suffering as ever the same, the Eternal: not only as having an everlasting kingdom, but as the One Who was and Who is and Who is to come, the Ancient of days albeit Son of man, as John testifies in Rev. 1.

The contrast of perishable creation with the permanence of Christ (really Jehovah) deserves to be weighed. For the assumed perpetuity of the world is a root principle of infidelity, and never more than in the matter worship of modern philosophers, the revival of ancient heathenism. Scripture on the contrary insists on the certainty of a God of judgment, and not less physically than morally. All depends on His sovereign and holy will. It is not only that science is obliged to confess divine intervention in creating and destroying (I say not annihilating, for this is false) the earth many times and through many periods, ever so long between its original call into being and its being made the dwelling of man. But since Adam's children lived on it, a judgment both moral and physical has borne witness, however scorners may be willingly ignorant, that God is not indifferent to wickedness breaking through creature bounds; for the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; as it will surely meet with a more signal doom, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Now all judgment is committed to the Son. He has executed it, as He will execute it.

Nor is it only that these or those subordinate parts of creation shall perish. But as the earth and the heavens were the works of the Son's hands (John 1:3), so they all shall wax old as a garment. Nor is it from creature's defectibility but from the Creator's righteous will: “as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up.” The unchangeableness of the heavens and of all that is visible or invisible in them is no more true than that of the earth and of all in it that men aver to continue as they were. The astronomers, the geologists, the chemists, the physicists, the physiologists, to speak of no more, are apt to swamp all recognition of the true God in sole occupation with His works, and thus sink into an atheism so much the more guilty, because it is apostasy from the only true Light that revealed Him. Yet not more truly are they to die than they must rise. For the resurrection of Christ gives the pledge of clearance from judgment, yea, of present justification to His own, and of sure judgment to follow for all who despise him. Christ's resurrection proves the succession of cause and effect to be in fact under God's absolute control; as is true of every real miracle: There will be a grand change to inaugurate Christ's coming; a complete and final one as the result when the kingdom gives place to all things made new for eternity.

This series of quotations closes with words taken from the opening of Psa. 110, which is again Jehovah's utterance to Messiah on His rejection.

“But unto which of the angels hath He said at any time, Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool of thy feet? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the

sake of those that shall inherit salvation?" (ver. 13, 14.)

Psa. 110 is the more striking as immediately following the Psalm which describes the son of perdition, Messiah's betrayer. Here the rejected of Israel and of man is bid to take His seat at God's right hand, a fact alluded to or quoted throughout the N. T. perhaps more than any other O.T. statement, unless it be to His sacrifice or His kingdom. Nor need we wonder at this. Christ's present glory is asserted therein. it gives occasion to the bringing in of "the mystery of Christ." It is the starting-point of the gospel in its heavenly character. It explains the enigma of Christ exalted above, whilst rejected outwardly and having nothing of His rights as yet here below. It equally falls in with the mystery of Israel's eclipse while unbelieving.

No angel was ever invited as He is to sit on that throne. Indeed, though the saints are to sit with have been made by His human nature liable to, yea, and inclined to all those things which the law interdicted" (p. 10)! It is vain to attempt unsaying this by the plea that he speaks of His human nature in itself. No one charges Mr. I. with meaning that Christ yielded to sin. It is not humanity in the abstract. He means, as he continually speaks of, His fallen or sinful humanity. Hence this fundamental error drove him from the truth of atonement to the falsehood of atonement. For Irving like other heterodox men confounded it with reconciliation and poured contempt even to blasphemy on the cross and sufferings of Christ for our sins. This consequence of sinful humanity was inevitable; for how could a blemished creature be a sacrifice to God? and what could be more so than fallen manhood, even by Mr. I.'s own description as we shall see?

"And in the face of all these certainties, if a man will say that His flesh was not sinful flesh as ours is, with the same dispositions and propensities and wants and afflictions, then, I say, God hath sent that man strong delusion that he should believe a lie" (p. 23)! "Now if there had not been in Christ's nature appetites, ambition, and spiritual darkenings, how, I ask, could the devil have addressed these several temptations to His will?" (p. 24.) It is sorrowful to report such enormities, but truth must be vindicated.

"If His human nature differed, by however little, from ours, in its alienation and guiltiness, then the work of reducing it into eternal harmony with God hath no bearing whatever upon our nature, with which it is not the same" (p. 88). Here again it is the evident consequence of a false start—that atonement means a fallen nature brought into reconciliation with God, by overcoming all its inherent propensities: a different gospel, which is not another, and what is worse, not the Christ of God, but an antichrist.

"Was He conscious, then, to the motions of the flesh, and of the fleshly mind? In so far as any regenerate man, when under the operation of the Holy Ghost, is conscious of them (!). Yea, verily, He knew the evil law of that nature He was clothed with (O; He knew every point and passage of it (!), and at every point and passage of it He met it with the Spirit, and drave it back and put bonds upon it, and let it forth again tamed and reclaimed(!); a servant, of itself an unwilling servant, and still in all things a servant of God. I hold it to be the surrender of the whole question to say that He was not conscious of, engaged with, and troubled by, every evil disposition which inhereth in the fallen manhood (!), which overpowereth every man that is not born of God; which overpowered not Christ, only because He was born or generated of God; the Son of God that day begotten in flesh when He was conceived of the Virgin" (p. 111). This is bold speaking. Three words of God put it all to shame: He "knew no sin."

There is if possible worse and more blasphemous still. “This is the human nature which every man is clothed upon withal, which the Son of man was clothed upon withal, bristling thick and strong with sin like the hairs of the porcupine. . . I stand forth and say that the teeming fountain of the heart's vileness was opened on Him; and the Augean stable of human wickedness was given Him to cleanse, and the furious wild beasts of human passions were appointed Him to tame. . . I believe it to be most orthodox, and of the substance and essence of the orthodox faith, to hold that Christ could say until His resurrection, Not, I, but sin that tempteth Me in My flesh(!); just as after the resurrection He could say, ‘I am separate from sinners‘“ (pp. 126, 127).

It is unnecessary, after such copious and varied extracts from the later treatise to do more than refer briefly to Mr. Irving's earlier sermons in 1828, the first vol. of the three being devoted to the Incarnation. But there too, though not yet so developed, is the same plague-spot. “I shall proceed to open, in the second part of this sermon, how God by uniting the person of His Son to fallen flesh doth thereby reconcile the whole lump of fallen humanity into Himself,” &c., (140) i. “That the Son of God...should join Himself unto fallen creation, and take up into His own eternal personality the human nature, after it had fallen, and become obnoxious to all the powers of sin and infirmity and rebellion. . . That Christ took our fallen nature is most manifest, because there was no other in existence to take...I believe therefore...that Christ took unto Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and that the flesh of Christ, like my flesh was in its proper nature mortal and corruptible,” &c., 2. (160) 3. At the same time his testimony to Christ's vicarious sufferings was far simpler and clearer than afterward, though even here atonement was confounded with reconciliation, and both with Incarnation, which last is misunderstood and perverted, being made a question of human reasoning instead of faith in the word of God. “The human nature is thoroughly fallen; and without a thorough communication, inhabitation, and empowering of a divine substance, it cannot again be brought. up pure and holy. The mere apprehension of it by the Son does not make it holy” (140) 13.

Every simple and sound believer will own that this denies the Incarnation of scripture, yea of the creed of Christendom, inferior as this is and must be to God's word. For there it is owing to the action of the Holy Ghost, and to the power of the Highest, that the Holy thing was to be born of the Virgin and as such called the Son of God. The anointing of the Spirit of God afterward was for power in service. He was the Holy One even in His humanity from first to last: there could be no question of the divine nature. Had there been sin (no one says sins) in His humanity, Immanuel as to flesh would have been no longer holy. Thus the evil doctrine divides as well as defiles the person necessarily; and the flesh of the Lord Jesus was represented, not as so united as to form one person, but as a fallen thing surrounding Him like a garment or a pit (Mr. I.'s own illustrations), from which flesh His life was one series of conflicts to liberate itself victoriously, as an example to us who are really what is here falsely said of Christ. It will be seen too that, as Christ's person is overthrown by unbelief in the true Incarnation, so atonement according to God is denied; and Mr. I. goes so far as to say that “atonement and redemption have no reference to God (1); they are the names for the bearing of Christ's work on the sinner!! and have no respect to its bearing upon the Godhead”!!! This would satisfy an Arian or even a Unitarian. There are statements quite inconsistent with this fundamental falsehood. But there it is; and no lie is of the truth.

In the preliminary discourse to Ben-Ezra (the copy now before me being a gift to an elder of the Caledonian church “with the tender affections of Edward Irving”) Mr. I. spoke after a far more

orthodox sort. “Between Him and His people there is no difference in respect to that which is observable; while there is the utmost difference in respect to the principle and cause: in the Son of man the cause was the imputation of the sins of the people, in our case it is indwelling sin, and the sin which is around us” (p. 114.). So (in p. 126.) he says “the Word of God took flesh of the Virgin Mary, passive humanity He took, obnoxious to every temptation, and begirt with every sinless infirmity.” One need not insinuate a fault; but the statement would have been correct, had he predicated sinlessness of every temptation as well as of everything else. This at any rate is done with emphasis and jealousy in Heb. 4:15, Christ apart from sin, 10. χ. ■μ.: in Him, not only by Him, was none. But Mr. I. probably so believed at that time (1826) without a jibe at “imputation,” or contempt for “stock-jobbing theology": this followed his heterodoxy. As yet Christ's person and work were unassailed.

No unsophisticated child of God could read such statements without both rejecting and resenting them as an insult to Christ and the truth. The Incarnation is subverted, the person of Christ belied. What room is left by this unholy and destructive system for the wondrous message, “That holy thing which shall be born [of thee] shall be called the Son of God”? What has the new birth in our case to do with the wholly exceptional action of the Godhead in the birth of Christ? Beyond doubt the believer is quickened by faith; he has life in the Son. What has this in common with the Son's taking humanity into union with His Deity, That Holy Thing by the power of the Holy Spirit to be born of Mary? When a man is born of God, is his human nature born again? The Irvingite fabric is shattered by the merest touch of scripture. The language about Christ's birth is wholly inapplicable to any other. How could it be otherwise if He is the Savior and we the saved, He a divine person, however truly deigning to become man and by redemption bring glory to God even where sin was and abounded, impossible in any other way?

In keeping with this defamation of Christ, it is not Irvingites only who misapprehend temptation as spoken of the Christ of God. Mr. I. repeatedly in this treatise misquotes Heb. 4:15 by leaving out the last words, which are essential to the truth. He and all who judge of Christ from themselves, from human nature as it is in us, did not understand its bearing. Christ has been tempted in all things in like manner with us, sin excepted. The sense is not merely that He never sinned when tempted, but that He had been thus similarly tempted in all points “apart from sin,” and not merely without sinning. In Him was no sin; in us there is. This characteristic and peculiar difference is here pointed out as an exception of the utmost magnitude qualifying His temptations in contrast with ours. In Him even what was born of His mother was holy, whilst we, the regenerate, no less than others, were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. He therefore did not know sin, and never had a lust or passion from fallen humanity. His temptations were exclusively those of a holy being, and full of suffering to Him, because He felt always according to God when the enemy thus tried but found nothing in Him—alas! how much in us, even in the regenerate. Flesh yields to evil temptation and is gratified, instead of suffering.

They talk indeed as if it was necessary to sympathy with us, that Christ should know our unholy temptations, as in Jam. 1:14, 15. But this is most superficial as well as false. He sympathizes with us so much the more, because we have an inward traitor which He had not, while He suffering perfectly in keeping out the enemy is undistractedly and perfectly free to feel for us in every trial. In fact, if their principle were at all sound, it ought to go farther; for it would involve His failing under temptation, in order to comfort adequately those bitterly conscious of their failures. But the

principle is false and evil. The believer abhors the notion of Christ's sympathy with his evil thoughts, feelings or ways. He hates them all and judges himself for them, and finds the true answer to sin in Christ a sacrifice for it. He seeks and obtains Christ's sympathy with the new man in loathing every evil within, and comes not in vain and even with boldness to the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help. What he needs for his sins, I repeat, is that propitiation and substitution of Christ which Mr. L's heterodoxy taught him to despise. Christ died for our sins. This was what was required by God for us—not sympathy, but infinite suffering in atonement; and by that one offering they are effaced, and we are purged for God's presence, condemnation having already been executed on their root, sin in the flesh, when He became a sacrifice for sin (Rom. 8:2, 3).

To this end God sent His Son, not in “flesh of sin” as this horrible doctrine presumes, but “in the likeness” of it, being born of woman, and thus more fully man than Adam unfallen, but by the power of the Highest born “holy,” as no man ever was. Born in sin would have unfitted Him for communion as well as for sacrifice. Likeness of flesh would have been unavailing and useless; but “in the likeness of flesh of sin” was just what was wanted for the divine glory, as well as for our salvation. And thus in the cross was God glorified even as to sin, as Christ had glorified the Father as the obedient man, most holy alike in life and death, holy from first to last in all His being, as in all He did and suffered, He only.

It will be argued, however, that in all this dark antagonism to the truth of Christ's person and atonement it is a question of Mr. Irving, rather than of the Catholic Apostolic body. But these are facts: that Mr. I. was incomparably the most influential teacher they ever had; that no tenet is more characteristic of their one joint organ (the Morning Watch) throughout its seven volumes and by many if not all its contributors; and nowhere more acrimoniously than in the last vol. Thus it is in vain to represent their first angel as an exception instead of being the most prominent and active leader in doctrine. Indeed it is to his credit that none can impute underhandedness or bringing in things privily, the almost unfailing reproach of false prophets. He at least was outspoken; which did not please more prudent men well aware of the umbrage given far and wide to Christians by language on this subject so vehement, unmeasured, and profane. Incarnation was not at all that action which works in the regenerate, as he alleged, but peculiar to Christ; while no one doubts the power of the Spirit in which He invariably walked.

Another plea, by no means candid, is that Irving preached the sinful humanity of Christ before the ordinances, as they call the setting up of apostles, &c. They all know he preached it no less when he was ordained angel by the pillar of the apostles.

But the truth is, as another has acutely observed, that his preaching that Christ took flesh of sin has so much the greater weight because it preceded the gifts and authorities. For, as they alleged, “the power” sealed its truth. No fact is more certain. Mr. Irving himself wrote on April 21st, 1832, to Mr. Baxter, who had testified his unsoundness on the Lord's humanity, on imputing righteousness, and on holiness in the flesh (for the same error asserted sin in Christ's flesh and the possibility of its absence from ours). In that letter Mr. I. adhered to the evil, and distinctly reported that the spirit in Miss. E. C. laid down that Mr. B. “had been snared by departing from the word and the testimony,” and that L had maintained the truth, and the Lord was well pleased with him for it; that in some words he had erred, and that the word by the spirit in B. was therefore true; that if I. waited

on the Lord, He would show this by His Spirit, but that He had forgiven it, because He knew his heart was right before Him; that I. had maintained the truth and must not draw back from maintaining it. They then joined in prayer, among the rest for Mr. Baxter's deliverance from the snare concerning the flesh of Christ and the holiness of the believer. Mrs. I. advised leaving it to the Lord, but Mrs. C. gave an utterance in power that Mr. B. had stumbled greatly, dwelling most on the doctrine of perfect holiness. A third utterance from Miss E. C. taught Mr. Irving that Satan sought to overthrow his confidence in the truth, and to bring him into a snare, but that he was called upon to maintain it more firmly than ever.

In the same letter Mr. I. warns Mr. B. that now he is “brought to oppose that very doctrine which alone can bring the chosen to be meet for her Bridegroom—that as He was holy in the flesh, so are we, through the grace of regeneration, brought to be holy—planted in a holy standing—the flesh dead to sin, as His flesh was dead to sin—and that by the baptism of the Holy Ghost we are brought into the fellowship of His power and fullness, to do the works which He also did, and greater works than these.” Mr. I. read his report to his wife, as well as to the two prophetesses, who said it was a full and exact account. He also reiterated that not the motions of the flesh but the law of the flesh was all present in Christ, only in Him by a holy life put down; and that thus ought we to be and shall be, when the flesh becometh the sackcloth covering. (Mrs. C. had prophesied that the baptism by fire would burn out the carnal mind.) Narrative, pp. 103-108.

Who can wonder that on this rose a doubt in Mr. B.'s mind whether the whole work were not of Satan (Narrative, pp. 116, 117). And it is perfectly clear that it was not only the heterodoxy of Mr. Irving before the alleged restoration of the Comforter, but the spirit, which built up the entire Catholic-Apostolic structure, stands fully committed to Mr. I.'s doctrine in substance, save some unguarded expressions. Just so Mr. I. stated. previously that “The way for the coming of the Comforter had to be prepared by the preaching of the full coming of Christ in our flesh and His coming again in glory, the two great divisions of Christian doctrine which had gone down in the earth, out of sight and out of mind, and which must be revived by preaching, before the Holy Spirit could have anything to witness unto.”

We have now amply seen by his own words what Mr. I. meant by the coming of Christ in “our” flesh; and the spirit which the Catholic Apostolics acknowledged as the voice of God sealed that lie against the Lord, contrary to the faith of God's elect in every age, land and tongue, contrary to every creed of Greek, Oriental or Roman, as well as the articles of faith of all Protestants. But one rests, as all ought, on the unfailing standard of God's word, and cannot but pronounce it an antichrist. On this evil foundation rests the Irvingite body, as surely as the witnesses produced are irrefragable. Nor can they purge themselves from their original error, any more than Papists, who adhere to their dogma of infallibility. So no less but rather more are the Catholic Apostolic adherents bound by most unhappy lot to the sanction of that spirit they own as divine. To judge it a lying spirit means their dissolution; and hence every effort to hide, evade, and explain away, so characteristic of the party.

Chapter 47

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 18. Doctrine – The Atonement

Necessarily, as the person of Christ is the truth, if His person is defamed, the very core is corrupted. And such we have seen to be the fact with Irvingism. They are unsound, not on this or that side merely, but in the heart and center of all revealed truth. The spirit which built up their system throughout, which they accepted as the voice of God, affirmed the doctrine of Christ's fallen humanity. It is therefore an impossibility for the society to purge itself from this root of error as for Popery, when once committed; because it would be to own that their boast of infallible guidance is false and a delusion of the enemy. They are bound, wrapt up, and blinded by this spurious self-security, to persevere in every evil thought into which the spirit of error can drag them.

And so in fact it is found. For, whilst they have a vast deal of truth with which they are occupied beyond the various denominations of Christendom, they are steeped in error beyond ordinary example. What they hold of truth is, so far as I have observed, invariably tainted, so as to exceed in malignity the traditional creeds even of those most mistaken. Again, their pretension to what not even Popery or the Greek system, still less any Protestant body claims, exposes them both to the setting up of lifeless forms and to the snare of a reality of power from beneath which distinguishes them most painfully.

The proof of what is here stated will be apparent from a few citations out of the “Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature.”

“ Now that Christ is a sinless person we all admit, and how then could He reach death? He could not reach it by coming in a sinless and unfallen nature, such as Adam's for such a nature, not having sinned, could not die, without making death void as the great sign of God's holiness. To reach death there is no other way but by coming in the nature of a sinful creature; in that nature which, having sinned, did underlie the curse of death. with His holy person He inform this nature, He may die; nay He must die: for when human nature was sentenced in the person of Adam to death, it was all sentenced, every particle of it whatever; and the death of it is the grand demonstration of God's holy hatred and final judgment against sin. And therefore, agreeing that the death of the clean and innocent Lamb of God is the means unto our redemption or atonement, I say it could not be otherwise reached but through His taking humanity, fallen, sinful, and under sentence of death” (p. 91). Any believer ought to see through this poor human reasoning, which disproves itself because it destroys the grace of Christ's death. For if He must die, His death was only at most a little before its time. But to pursue from page 95. “How, it may be said, is this an atonement for me? It seems to be no more than a bearing of the infirmities of His own human nature; it seems to be no more than a righteousness wrought in His own human nature for it. I answer, There is but one human nature: it is not mine, it is not thine, it is not His; it is the common unity of our being. Bare He the infirmities of human nature? He bare the sins of all men. Bare He the infirmities of human nature? He bare the infirmities of all men. Overcame He the enemies of

human nature, sin, death, and the devil? He overcame the enemies of all men. Took He them captive? They are at large no more; they are impotent, they are as nothing, and ought so to be preached of. He hath abolished death; He hath taken away sin; 'He hath judged the prince of this world.' Whether this be new doctrine or not, I appeal to the Epistles of Paul; whether it be new in the reformed church, I appeal to the writings of Martin Luther.

“I know how far wide of the mark these views of Christ's act in the flesh will be viewed by those who are working with the stockjobbing theology of the religious world—that God wanted punishment, and an infinite amount of it; which Christ gave for so many; and so He is satisfied, and they escape from His anger, which flames as hot as ever against all beyond this pale. And this you call preaching the free grace of God, the justice of God, the work of Christ, the doctrine of election, atonement, &c.! Yet one word as to suffering. The atonement, upon this popular scheme, is made to consist in suffering; and the amount of suffering is cried up to infinity. Now I utterly deny that anything suffered but the human nature of Christ; and that could only suffer according to the measure of a man: more, no doubt, than unholy men like us suffer, because He was perfectly holy, and so. His soul felt the smart of every pang manifold of what we do; but still it was only according to the measure of a holy man. If more, whence came it? From the divine nature? But this is contrary to all sound doctrine that the Godhead should be capable of passions. Well, let these preachers—for I will not call them divines or theologians—broker-like, cry up their article, it will not do: it is but the sufferings of a perfectly holy man, treated by God and by men as if He were a transgressor.” Here every moderately taught Christian will feel into what ignorance and contempt of the truth Irving was plunged by his idol dogma, to say nothing of the grossest dividing of Christ's person.

But take another specimen from p. 98, which ought to alarm some too sure of their own soundness: “very poor wit have they, and a most barbarous idea of God, who will represent this sublime, stupendous action of Godhead as taking place to appease the wrath of Godhead, which verily takes place to manifest the love and grace and mercy of Godhead.

Why, what mean they? It is God Who doth the thing. And why doth He it, but because it is godly so to do? Love and grace are in Him; of His essence, of His ancient eternal essence, which is unchangeable. If they are of Him and in Him now, they have been of Him and in Him forever. And out of the fountain of His love cometh that stream, hiding its head in darkness for a while, that it may wash the very foundations of the base world, and appear in light and glory unpolluted, the life, the beauty, of this redeemed world. But what a system of theology is that which representeth God as in Himself implacable to the sinner, until His Son, by bearing the sinner's strokes, doth draw off the revenge of God? Then God is changed in His being with respect to a few; but with respect to the many His implacable nature worketh on in its natural course. Such a God cannot be the object of love; and upon such a system an object of love He never is. And all this they represent as needful for the glory of His holiness and justice.” It is needless to say that this grievous misrepresentation of the truth springs simply from Irving's heterodoxy which made him caricature the divine judgment of sin and cleave to his own exaggeration and one-sidedness.

An extract from p. 99 may be well. “In whatever light these remarks may appear to others, to myself they have brought this solid conviction, That while the present views of atonement continue to be doted on by the church, it is in vain to attempt to carry any point of sound doctrine.” This

witness is true, though in an opposite direction. So vital is the doctrine of atonement, that all else is sure to be shaken where it is false, and established where it is true. As the person of Christ is bound up with it, so all the communion, walk, and worship depend on it. In what follows the reader will observe that the same fundamental error re-appears as in our day. “Atonement and redemption are the names for the bearing of Christ's work upon the sinner! and have no respect to its bearing upon the Godhead!, nor upon Christ, the God-man!! and on that account, instead of occupying the first and highest place in theology, they should occupy the third only, being preceded by the glory of God, and the glory of Christ.”

One more from p. 116 must suffice. “The man who will put a fiction [this is the way imputation of sin is treated], whether legal or theological, a make-believe into his idea of God, I have done with; he who will make God consider a person to be that which he is not, I have done with.” Compare what the apostle lays down in Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13. It is evident not only that atonement and reconciliation are confounded, but that atonement is nullified, and that reconciliation is wholly misunderstood and depraved.

The bearing of their fundamental heterodoxy as to Christ's person on His atoning work is absolutely destructive of its truth. Propitiation is lost as well as substitution, the two essential sides of the truth adumbrated by the great Day of Atonement in Israel. It is in vain to say that Mr. Irving or others did not mean this. The question is, what the enemy meant who beguiled them. They were carried utterly away by a vain dream which shut them out from the healthful workings of the word of God, and committed to a torrent of error which can readily find appearances to sanction every wild imagination, and ingeniously bound over the firmest obstacle. The Holy Spirit gives subjection to scripture by keeping the soul in self-distrust looking only to Christ and His glory. But here the essential difference of Christ is ignored. His being personally in the Father, and the Father in Him, they confound with what we may enjoy in the Spirit by faith. So that in general we may say that their system debases the Second man as it exalts the first, and is thus at perpetual and incurable issue with God's mind. In fact, it is the old quarrel of Satan with God. In the last paper we saw that their doctrinal basis is the Son's assumption of fallen or sinful humanity, and His work victory over it in the Spirit, thereby rendering it holy and acceptable to God. They may say other things which sound fair and good; but this which the spirit among them expressly sanctioned as the truth overthrows both the person and the work of Christ. No doubt some of them learned to speak more guardedly and condemned more or less the outspoken language of Mr. Irving; but the doctrine characterized them as distinctly as the claim of the restored apostolate, prophets, and other gifts in their ecclesiastical polity, notwithstanding their desperate efforts after secrecy save with the initiated. Hence the, infinite sufferings of the cross are ignored or even decried; hence the railing and ridicule heaped on the substitution of Christ, on the imputation of righteousness to the believer, in short on all that the Christian elect of God have found most solemn and precious in and through the Savior's death. Even if His death or blood be referred to, it is to put all the race upon one, level of redemption and forgiveness: as to this the special blessings of the faithful are nowhere. How could it be other wise if the Son of God took fallen sinful humanity into union with Himself? Its reconciliation must then supplant propitiation, and reconciliation itself be confounded with atonement; as is verbally done indeed by unhappy errors of the A.V. in both the Old Testament and the New. And their fatal result is that reconciliation is thus rendered altogether vague and impersonal, the reconciliation of humanity, instead of its being the enjoyed and

exclusive portion of those who actually believe. Finally, holiness is as much lost by this misbelieving scheme as righteousness; for it takes as into the falsehood of improving and perfecting by the power of the Holy Spirit that old man which, according to scripture, is irreparably evil, the mind of which is enmity against God and is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. Now whatever the moral perfection of our Lord in the days of His flesh, it is in resurrection only that He becomes Head of the new creation. Till He died atoningly, He abode alone. Only after sin was judged in the cross is He “the beginning,” and bears much fruit. His living relationship is with the sanctified, not with the race.

Chapter 48

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 19. Doctrine – Justification, Sanctification, &c

No spiritual mind that sees the antichristian character of the Irvingite community, as tested by the person and the work of Christ, can look for truth in its application. For the center of all is false and evil; yet it may not be amiss to prove their wanderings from the word of God here also. And the work of Mr. Sitwell, the apostle of Spain and Portugal (or in their strange dialect, of the tribe of Naphtali), “Creation and Redemption,” the third edition of which lies before me, furnishes the means of ascertaining their views authoritatively.

The treatment of justification is characteristic of the body, for he professes to combine the disjointed fragments of doctrine, and to put each in its place, as well as to repudiate the falsehoods that have been added to it. Thus he hopes to show how needlessly the high churchman is divided from the low, justification being not only imputed at first but imparted at last. Here is this “end of controversy.” “There are seven ways mentioned in scripture, or which can be fairly deduced from it, whereby a man is justified. These are—1, Faith. 2, Blood of Jesus Christ. 3, Righteousness of Christ. 4, Word of Christ, by means of the ministers of the church. 5, Sacraments of the church. 6, Works. 7, Resurrection. In each of these seven the double sense and power of justification, viz., imputation and impartation, will be found in operation” (p. 231).

To any intelligent Christian this suffices. It is pretentious and deplorable confusion, the effect of which is to darken the truth and perplex every one heeding it. “What saith the scripture?” There is but one way or principle in which a soul is justified. It is by faith (■κ π. Rom. 5:1), as the apostle had expressly laid down before, apart from works of law, the only other way conceivable—the very way whereby he had said no flesh shall be justified in God's sight, Rom. 3:20, 28. The blood of Jesus is not another way, but the efficacious ground (Rom. 3:25; 5:9), for it cleanses from every sin; and His resurrection is the proof and living witness of its acceptance (Rom. 4:24, 25). Undoubtedly it is. God reckoning faith for righteousness, as in Abram's case (Rom. 4), for the soul believing on God that justifies the ungodly (ver. 5), as David also testifies. If we ask the source therefore, it is grace—God's grace (Titus 3:7), and no desert of man whatever. The gospel meets him as a lost sinner: therein is God's righteousness revealed, for all is over with man's. But so glorified is God with Christ's work on the cross that He can be and is just and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. To say, “Yet the justifier,” &c., shows God's righteousness to be unknown.

Nor is this all. The salvation of the gospel embraces God's dealing in the cross with sin, as well as our sins, the root no less than the fruit. What he is troubles the renewed soul as much or more than past evil deeds. Has this been overlooked of God? In no wise. As Adam is the fallen head, Jesus is the living one; for without dying He had abode alone. It is not only that Christ died for us: we who believe are entitled to say that we died with Him. This if we were dumb is the expression of our baptism. We were baptized unto His death; that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. Accordingly this we know, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer

be slaves to sin. For he that died (the Christian) has been and is justified from sin. It is our abiding status since redemption. Nevertheless, as Galatians enables each to say, “I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me” —Christ risen our life. Ours is, as Rom. 5 calls it, a “justification of life.” Baptism however is the sign of our death with Christ, the sole efficacy being His work, on which faith rests before God; and as 1 Corinthians 10 warns, all is ruin where there is not life. But life is only by the faith of Christ, and therefore through the word and Spirit (John 3:3, 5, 6; James 1:18 Peter 1:23-25; 1 John 5:1, 4, 5). Indeed this is necessarily implied in faith which cannot be without God's revealed word (Rom. 10 l 7), of which Christ is the object and center, and now for the Christian His accomplished work also.

What then does James 2 mean? Not at all the justifying of a sinner before God, but that of a true professor as distinguished from a false one before men. Hence says he, “Show me thy faith apart from works, and I by my works will show thee my faith.” And this is strikingly confirmed by the samples alleged; for faith alone gave true character to Abram's offering up of Isaac or Rahab's receiving the spies: without it, what had either work been? Murder, or treason, as is clear.

And this entirely falls in with the Epistle of James, which does not, like most of Paul's, bring out the wonders of Christ's blood, death, and resurrection, and ascension. His object is to insist on practical reality in those who professed the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory. Hence he speaks in his first chapter not only of faith and enduring temptation, but of that intrinsic life which grace gives to those otherwise dead. “Of His own will He begat us by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” A Christian walk is the effect, and ought to be the expression, of the life we have in Christ. It is, as the apostle says, faith working by love, the only faith of value in the sight of God. It would seem that there was excessive danger for Israel (a danger now so long prevalent in Christendom) of a merely sentimental or intellectual faith, not insincere but without a real work of the Spirit of God's word in the conscience, a faith resting on evidence or tradition, to which our Lord did not trust Himself (John 2). Man “must be born again.” This only produces reality. “He that believeth hath everlasting life.” This therefore is what James throughout insists on, rather than Christ's blood, however indispensable this may be for cleansing us from all sin. But even the acknowledgment of Christ's blood might be without living faith, as we see in Hebrews 10. Those were not wanting even in early days, who after being thus set apart had given it up and sinned willfully, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Good reason there was then for insisting on a new nature in Christ as the basis of practical holiness.

No believer doubts what the portion of the saints will be when changed at Christ's coming. But it will only be the displayed perfection of what grace has now given us, and given us to know by the Spirit. We shall be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Yet are we not waiting for righteousness then; but, as the same apostle tells us, we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness (that is, heavenly glory). The righteousness we have already in Christ entitles us by God's word to look for nothing less, even as Christ is already entered in personally; and we shall be with Him and like Him.

Mr. S. confounds (p. 236) baptism with water, important as it is outwardly, with baptism in virtue of the Spirit, which scripture strongly distinguishes; he surpasses a Jew in his idolatry of the sacraments, but in this hardly worse than millions outside Irvingism. Only it is to be remarked here

that the fatal virus peculiar to their company reappears in p. 251: “So our Lord, having come into flesh, always laid down His life as a sacrifice to God While our Lord died daily, and we are called to imitate Him in this,” &c. Now this is not only misconception in every way, and false, but most evil. Death, death with Christ in His death, is the necessary way of life for us, sinful as we are, even though a new creation in Christ: to make it so for Christ is blasphemy. These statements betray the old heterodoxy as to our Lord's person. What else is the meaning of His always laying down His life and dying daily?

But the truth of revelation is that we died with Christ. So elsewhere we are called to “mortify our members,” that is, to put them to death, but never to die, as the mystics think and teach, ignorant of what grace gives us in Christ dead and risen. Our old man was crucified with Him. Therefore are we to reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. But that Christ had anything to die to daily is the worst of slanders. Our comfort of faith is that we died with Him when He died. When the apostle speaks of dying daily, he refers to his constant exposure to literal death, and not at all to the Christian doctrine which Mr. S. misunderstands, not only for us but, alas! for the Lord, the Holy One of God. They may strive to conceal this deadly wound to the truth and to His glory; but it cannot be hid. The leveling down of Christ and the leveling up of ourselves naturally go together, both wholly in opposition to God's word.

The idolatry of ordinances accompanies both, evil enough in a Jew ignorant of the Messiah: how much more terrible is the unbelief, now that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ!

Of sanctification personally, that first action of the Spirit which sets us apart to God in new birth, before peace and liberty, Mr. S. knows nothing. It is clearly laid down in 1 Peter 1:2, as well as in 1 Corinthians 6:11, &c. He only speaks of it, and even so speaks feebly and imperfectly, as one seeing no more than is seen in Christendom generally. He had not learned that the Holy Spirit invariably works by keeping the eye on Christ. See 2 Corinthians 3 and the N. T. as a whole. We are Christ's epistle in the world, and can only reflect Him aright by walking in the Spirit, as we live in the Spirit, Who is here to glorify Christ.

This is strikingly shown in John 17 “Sanctify them by (or, in) the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by truth” (ver. 17-19). There are thus in His mind two especial means of Christian sanctification: the Father's word, the truth: and Christ set apart on high as the glorified man Who forms, as the personal model before our faith.

It is accordingly no question now of the law, grave as its function is when used lawfully; nor yet of prophecy unveiling the government of the world. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Father sent Him into the world that we might know His word—know it in Him that is true. And now sent into the world by Him Whose death has severed His own from the world, they behold Him in heaven, as the further power of fashioning them spiritually. Both are needed, and both are given. Christ was infinitely more than the obedient man under law; He was the manifestation of God in man. He that had seen Him had seen the Father. The only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, alone did, alone could, reveal Him; He manifested the truth about every one and everything, and this in grace—in a love superior to evil.

But while this was the essential and first want which only He, the Son of God yet a man in the world, could supply, ver. 19 adds more and differently—Christ as man glorified according to divine counsel and perfection in heaven before the Father. In the one case it was Christ as the Lord come down and on the earth revealing God the Father; in the other it is the same Christ as man setting Himself apart in glory, and the truth revealed then and there. Both were new and unique, that the truth might be known and work effectively; and the believing Jew no less than the besotted pagan needed to be sanctified practically according to both principles, distinct as they are, yet united in the person of the Lord. It is the revelation of the Father in the Son in grace, and of the Son as glorified man in righteousness, that the mission of His servants might be according to the truth which separated them from the world according to God's nature and the relationship of His children, though nothing be so foreign and distasteful and hateful to the world as His grace and the objects of it.

But the book commented on scarce rises above the measure of Israel, and is quite short of the truth of that sanctification which the N. T. presents, as we have seen its total deficiency and indeed error about, justification. It proves what the new apostolate is worth.

Is it not passing strange that men who have studied scriptural figures and symbols should have failed to see the use made of “water” as compared with “blood” in this very connection? “But ye are washed “; “The washing of water by the word” “This is He that came by water and blood,” &c., are samples; and the types of the O.T. answer to the figures of the New. We all know that in Christendom such things are passed over for the most part without serious thought, perhaps without a word: sometimes they are confounded, oftener all is vague. The difference is that the action of the blood of Christ is once and forever, as the Epistle to the Hebrews pointedly and repeatedly says, whereas that of the water is not only the dealing with the soul at the start, but whenever need arises throughout the walk (John 13). Thus the propitiation abides in its unchanging value before God for the believer; but the impurities of daily walk need the application of the word and Spirit continually. To be washed or loosed from our sins by blood is once for all; but, if bathed in water ever so truly, the soiled feet call for fresh washing. It is the answer of the Spirit by the word to Christ's advocacy. Expressly and evidently the notion of repeated application of the blood overthrows the truth of the unity of Christ's sacrifice and of its efficacy on our behalf. On the other hand the teaching of the constant need of the washing of water by the word is bound up with practical holiness. It is just because we are brought nigh to God by Christ's blood that we are called to habitual self-judgment lest we grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby we were sealed unto the day of redemption. Yet more should we humble ourselves on actual failure.

The propriety of the figure is obvious. Water among other uses is to cleanse. For this the Holy Spirit employs God's word. We are begotten by the word of truth (James 1 Peter 1; 1 Corinthians 4), and cleansed by reason of the word (John 15:3). So deep is the original uncleanness that nothing short of death, Christ's death, can avail us. Therefore He came by water and by blood. He purifies as well as atones by His death; and purifies our hearts consequently by faith (Acts 15:9 Peter 1:22), as scripture declares. Only the washing of the water by the word applies through our entire earthly path, exposed as we are to defilement continually. Not so the cleansing by blood, which takes place once for all. For the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all, from every sin. If He needed to be offered often, He must suffer often, whereas it is but once, once for all, as Heb. 9; 10 insists. But the communion, interrupted by sin, must be holily restored. Hence the need of the

water for purification for defilement by the way. Compare Numbers 19—and so the Jews by-and-by. It is not enough to look on Messiah-Jehovah pierced (Zechariah 12): a fountain also is opened for sin and for uncleanness, a fountain not of blood, pace Cowper, but of water. See Zechariah 13:1.

Thus all Christians must allow progressive holiness as a matter of growth through the truth and that self-judgment which is the more incumbent on us because we enjoy not only the word and prayer, but the remembrance of Christ in His supper regularly. There is such a thing as deliverance when the soul after toiling under law is brought to give up self and condemn the flesh as utterly and incurably evil. This however is simply the normal state of the believer, no longer striving in vain to improve what God has condemned in the cross (Rom. 8:3), but, resting on that work of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, sees himself in Christ henceforth; so that he is now to live by the faith of Him dead and risen, and to abhor in himself what he finds not in Christ. This some call sanctification or perfection, and consequently turn it to error by making it a matter of feeling, instead of owning it true of all who submit to the righteousness of God.

Plainly therefore according to scripture we are personally “sanctified” or set apart livingly to God when born of Him by faith of the truth, sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Thereon follows the practical call to holiness, because God, our God and Father, is holy, as we see later on in the same chap. 1 of 1 Peter. Holiness in spirit and ways is a duty flowing from the relationship of saints and children already formed by sovereign grace—not in order to become, but because we are, His and in the nearest way through Christ our Lord.

Chapter 49

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 20. Doctrine – Priesthood and Sacraments

We may now take up a pertinacious system of priestly ordinances which Irvingites share with all the bodies which claim to be Catholic. This assumes a more than ordinarily virulent character in the modern society, just because they after their manner own N. T. truth and power wholly inconsistent with those “old bottles.” In their hands it is no mere confusion, as with some Protestants, but a deliberate and radical error which undermines and destroys fundamental and distinctive privileges which the gospel of God confers on the Christian.

There is no question about their views, which they love (in this case at least) to state hi bold and open terms. Take the preface to Mr. Drummond's “Abstract Principles of Revealed Religion,” p. v. “That without priesthood there can be no sacraments, and without sacraments no spiritual life can be rightly imparted or adequately sustained; that the due worship of God can be carried on only by priests appointed by Himself; that all its parts are definite; forms of buildings in which it is carried on; rites therein performed; furniture appropriate to that end; vestments of those who officiate; hours of celebration, &c.; and that the single act which constitutes Christian worship, and distinguishes true from false worship in Christendom, is the offering up of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, without the eating and drinking of which no one can have part in Him.”

Were this a true standard, it would soon and certainly appear that the church of God as built on the foundation of His holy apostles and prophets must be pronounced by this self-constituted judge to have never been conformable to the mind of God! But believing the N.T. history and Epistles, we see that professing Christendom only adopted it as it fell into Babylonish corruption. For scripture demonstrates that, in principle as in fact, the assumption of the party as expressed by one whom they honor as alike apostle, prophet, and angel, is wholly and in every particular opposed to the revealed word as regards the church. One might venture fearlessly to say that the enemy could not forge an invention more antagonistic to the truth.

The testimony of the N. T. is plain, sure, and decisive. It tells us of Jewish and of heathen priests. But for the circle of the faithful there is a great High-priest, passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; and none whatever on earth over the saints, for the very blessed and conclusive reason that the Christians themselves compose His house and are exhorted to draw near to the throne of grace (Heb. 4), as the old priestly house, the sons of Aaron, could not, and even with confident boldness, which was impossible for Aaron himself who only entered once in the year with atoning blood and incense lest he die (Lev. 16). They are not to be admired nor even endured who speak of a casual expression in scripture. The truth is uniform. It is the same doctrine, only if possible more emphatically enforced in Heb. x. 19 et seqq. after the one offering as well as the high-priesthood of Christ had been fully taught. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He dedicated for as through the vail, that is, His flesh, and [having] a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” &c. This is unmistakable. The inspired writer

couples the brethren as such with himself in equal and perfect liberty of access to God within the rent vail. Such is the habitual title of nearness which the gospel confers now on the believer. An intermediate class of priests on earth is not only unknown but quite excluded. Its assertion is an inexcusable slight of scripture, and a shameless ignorance of the grace of God to us, in answer to Christ's death which for us has brought in eternal reality of acceptance with God, Jewish shadows being now superseded and gone. The notion of intermediate priests between Christ and the Christian is apostasy from the gospel and return to Judaism. So bright is the truth in the scriptures that the simplest believer is responsible to see and hold fast his priestly privilege; so inevitable the inference that the subtlest disputer of this age essays in vain to deny it honestly. And Heb. 13:15, 16 cannot be evaded as further proof that the functions of priests are looked for in the offering up sacrifices, whether of praise or of well-doing and communication; not by priests for them, but by themselves as the only true priesthood on earth. He that opposes this is rebelling against the N.T.

But what of other scriptures? Peter is express to the same effect in his First Epistle, chap. ii. 5, 9. Christians are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and a royal priesthood to show forth the virtues of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. How wretched, how wicked, to imagine a fictitious order of priests in presence of such words of God!

The Revelation of John (the divine so-called) has no other voice, and this not merely in parts that speak of the future, like chaps. v. 10, xx. 6, but in what unequivocally bears on our present relations to God as in i. 5, 6: “Unto Him that loveth us, and washed [or, loosed] us from our sins in His blood; and He made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.” This is the sole priesthood (besides Christ's) which the gospel owns. There is not a hint of an earthly priest for these priests, as the error assumes. The very idea is incompatible with Christian principles. To confound presbyter with priest is a fraud.

Nor is this all though such a three-fold cord cannot be broken, save to the self-will which blindly fights for superstition against God's word thus widely in evidence and harmony. For every scripture, which since redemption speaks of its results to the believer, implies a similar standing for the Christian. Thus in Rom. 5:2 through Christ we also have obtained and possess (■σχηκαμεν) access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. In 1 Cor. 6 not only washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God, but our body the Holy Ghost's temple; and in chapter 12 ourselves members of Christ, which is yet more intimate and high than priests. So in Gal. 3 we are all one in Christ and sons with the Spirit of God's Son sent forth into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Of Ephesians one might cite a vast deal more and from perhaps every chapter; for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from the first is said to have blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Suffice it to quote for those not familiar with scripture, not only that we are Christ's body, but words so distinct as chap. 2:13: “Now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh by [or, in] the blood of Jesus;” and again verse 18, “Through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father;” and again 3:12, “In Whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith of Him.” Further, Col. 1:12 gives thanks to the Father Who made us meet [an accomplished fact] to be partakers of the saints in light, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. What need of more? Of old the greatest privilege of a priest was the right to enter God's sanctuary. This is everywhere now the standing title of every Christian, in a measure wholly transcending the degree of a Jewish priest. And this it is which is necessarily undermined

by the pretension of a priest on earth between the Christian and Christ or God. But it is a baseless figment; whereas the priesthood of all Christians, the antitype of Aaron's house (only far surpassed), is the clear and certain truth of God, and of the utmost practical value for every believer every day, of which the fiction would rob him to the deepest dishonor of His grace.

Indeed it is a solemn consideration, for those professedly Christian ministers who claim a sacerdotal place, to weigh the warning of Jude 11, lest they perish in the gainsaying of Korah. For his sin, so ruinous to himself and his followers, was proud discontent with Levitical service, and an impious pretension to the priesthood. It was rebellion against Moses and Aaron, types of Christ in this. Christian ministry is the exercise of a gift from the Lord, some, for the good of all, given and sent by Him. But all saints are priests made free equally of the true sanctuary. For some to usurp this nearness to God beyond and in denial of what grace has given to all the saints is without knowing it to misconceive and do away a prime blessing of Christianity. It is to deny the grace of Christ and the efficacy of His work and the anointing of His Spirit.

But next the oracle declares that as without priesthood there can be no sacraments (an utter absurdity), so “without sacraments no spiritual life can be rightly imparted or adequately sustained.” On this we join issue. They are alike dregs from the cup of “the great whore,” and the latter as irreconcilable with God's word as the former has been proved to be null and void. It is the careful object of the apostle Paul, in an epistle devoted to church questions more than any other, to warn unwary souls that the so-called sacraments, far from really imparting or adequately sustaining spiritual life, may be possessed and rested on and gloried in where there is no such life but mere profession. Such is the divinely given admonition of 1 Cor. 10. These institutions of our Lord, Baptism and His Supper, have their weighty place, one as the initiatory mark of the Christian, the other as the constantly recurring and corporate feast of the communion of Christ's body and blood. But to erect them into the channel and the sustainer of spiritual life is altogether to misunderstand (not these sacraments only but) Christianity itself, and to prove that those who thus pervert them are rather Jews or even heathen in their thought than Christians. These worshippers of ordinances ignore and resist and reverse the Spirit's warning. “I would not, brethren, have you ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples (or types)” (1 Cor. 10:1-6).

The theory of these men, Irvingites, Papists, Tractarians, &c., is that the sacraments are, as the most philosophical of such theologians taught, “extensions of the Incarnation.” But first what has baptism to do with the Incarnation? The element is water, which in no way figures Christ's body, as the eucharistic bread does. Yet baptism, they insist, conveys life and is therefore the spring or basis of all! The theory therefore fails fundamentally at the outset. Baptism is not even a sign of the communication of Christ's humanity. There is no semblance of His sacramental presence in it. The truth of scripture is that baptism is burial to Christ's death, the manifest reverse of conveying His life. See Rom. 6; Col. 2; 1 Peter 3. Hence in the Acts baptism in His name is for the remission of sins (ch. ii.) and washing away of sins (ch. xxii.), never for quickening, as these false teachers always assume.

So in the Lord's Sapper we proclaim the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26), and hence in remembrance of Him we eat His body and drink His blood. Both are therefore sacraments of His death, not of Incarnation, as they wrongly say, wholly departing from God's mind. It is His body given (even if “broken” be rejected), His blood shed. This is not life, but death. And the difference is immense. For till Christ's death there was no bearing of our sins, no glorification of God about our evil, no redemption of the slaves of Satan. Both these divine institutions are grounded on that death of the Savior which alone has brought us to God and reconciled us by a perfect atonement. The self-styled Catholic idea is essentially false, for it expresses no more than Incarnation at best, when the only work which could blot out our sins righteously was not done, but only in hope. And such is the spiritual experience generated by the error. They do not possess the joy of accomplished redemption. They have, as they say, a humble hope. But this is Jewish, not Christian quite right when our Lord v as simply incarnate, and under the law; utterly and unbelievingly wrong now that He has died for our sins and is raised for our justification, having by one offering perfected forever—without an interruption, ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς—those that are sanctified, which all believers are. It is not the open hostile skepticism that denies the Incarnate Word; but it is real incredulity as to our present resting-place on His work as well as person, as set forth in both sacraments.

The fact is that even real Christians feebly believe in the true gift to them of eternal life in Christ the Son of God. They lower it for the most part to an action by the Spirit on the mind and affections of man; so that he who was once indifferent, immoral, or hostile, now loves the Lord and devotes himself in repentance and faith to do His will. But this leaves out the all-important truth that we are truly born of God, and so are brought into the relation of His children by believing on Christ's name. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Whatever the value of ordinances (and he who despises them despises His authority Who gave them), they are never in scripture treated as channels of life, but, as we have seen, as symbolic Is His death.

Faith alone gives life to the soul that hears God's word. Hence all the O. T. saints were spiritually quickened as truly as we who now believe the gospel. And our Lord lays down in John 3 the necessity of new birth (born of water and Spirit) as the indispensable condition of seeing or entering the kingdom of God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will surely be there, no less than we. There may be the unintelligent plea of circumcision, as in their case answering to baptism. But it is express that Abraham was justified in Gen. 15 before circumcision was instituted in Gen. 17, and the apostle as a certainty reasons on the importance of this fact in Rom. 4. Circumcision was but a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had whilst uncircumcised. The blessing was neither of the ordinance nor of the law which came in long afterward, but of the promise, and thus of faith that it might be according to grace—God's grace, not man's merit. And so it is now. It is judaizing and worse to substitute an institution, however precious, for the Son of God and faith in Him and His work, which both quickens and justifies.

But this school always slights faith. It may be that some of them have no experience of it as a true work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Others who perhaps are believers have heeded the fond dream of succession and priesthood and saving ordinances, which can never mix with the truth of the gospel, and hence in their blindness disparage faith as well as the power of redemption, though, thank God, they may still cleave to the glory of Christ's person. Solifidianism is an idle slur on those who possess Christ as life and righteousness.

And as John 3 is totally misunderstood, so is John 6 where the Lord sets forth, not an ordinance but His own person, first as the bread of God coming down from heaven, and giving life not to Israel only but to the world (32-50); next, giving His flesh for the life of the world, so that there was no life in themselves without eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood. It is not His incarnation only but His death; it is communion by faith with that precious death. Over and over again He shows that this is not a rite but to believe on Him and have eternal life. It is not the Lord's Supper, but the infinite truth itself of which the Supper is the sign. Hence, only understood thus, the words are absolutely true; whereas applied to eating and drinking sacramentally they become false every way. On the other hand we who believe in the Incarnate Word rejoice with solemn joy in His death, without which neither God could be vindicated nor our sins be effaced; and assuredly one has life and looks for the Lord to raise him at the last day, as he meanwhile abides in Christ and Christ in him. On the other, who can be so infatuated as to say either that it is impossible to have life without the eucharist? or that a man, eating the eucharist, has necessarily eternal life and must be raised for the resurrection of those that are Christ's? The fourth Gospel does not occupy itself with external forms, but what is characteristically vital and bound up with the Father's grace and the Son's glory. Whereas these false teachers, knowing neither the scriptures nor the power of God, still less His sovereign grace and glorious counsels, are blind to the truth and pervert what they can in His word to exalt man, especially their own vain, self-assumed, priestly orders, and the superstitions they have picked up and espoused from the most corrupt streets of “the great city.”

It may be added that while the Lord's Supper is in the strictest sense and fullest way the calling of Christ to mind, there is much more to the faithful than a sign or symbol. He vouchsafes His presence to be enjoyed there and then as nowhere else. Call this a real presence if you will; but it is not the grossness of a presence in the bread and wine, a dream worthy of a heathen. Consubstantiation is only less heinous than transubstantiation. There is simply “blessing” or thanksgiving—terms equally used when the Lord gave the bread and fish to the hungry multitudes. Consecration, as a sacerdotal act, is a mere superstition, a prelude to the mass.

There is another antichristian doctrine, common (it is true) to the sacerdotal system of all ritualists, on which it may be well to say a little—the notion of offering up Christ's body and blood to God in the eucharist. No doubt Popery goes farther in the deadly evil both by the fable of transubstantiation (which naturally if not necessarily leads to direct idolatry) and by claiming for the offering the character of a true propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. But, even in the most modified shape, any offering to God of the sacrament is not only opposed to all scripture but destroys the truth of its proper nature and aim. The appeal to the original of 1 Cor. 11:24 and Matt. 26:28 ("now” broken and “now” shed) is mere ignorance in Mr. Cardale (Readings upon the Liturgy, p. 32). It is the present participle, not of time, but of character, whenever the time might be, like John 1:29 and crowds of instances. He Whom God made sin for us sits at God's right hand, Who needs no memorial of that perfect and accepted propitiation for our sins. This memorial He has made His Supper to be to us and our forgetful hearts. It is not for a moment to be doubted too that He is in the midst of His own when gathered to His name, and in the happiest way for this holy feast. Such is His true and only real presence. That it is in the bread and the wine is a baseless and base idea, not worthy of a Jew or even a pagan. We are there invited to eat and to drink. It is in no way an offering of His body and blood, but communion with both: just as Jews partook of what had been sacrificed, and Gentiles too in their dark way. But our God is love as well as light,

and gives us to sit at a feast on the great sacrifice of Christ's redemption. Thereupon Christ sits on high, because it is done once for all, as its efficacy endures forever, and even its application. There is no repetition. If there were renewed offering, there must be renewed suffering (Heb. 9:26). But it is finished; and we feast with thanksgiving and praise, doing this in remembrance of Him, and showing forth His death till He come. Presentation before God is a vain addition which spoils the revealed intent; and so does the mixing up our worship with Christ's priestly intercession, which has another and wholly distinct object.

Never in scripture is either the Lord's baptism or Supper treated as a mystery, “the great spiritual mystery” as these men say of the latter. There are mysteries in abundance, once hidden, now made plain, precious, practical. Sacraments are not included in that category. One initiatory, the other constant, they had their wise and good place as His institutions; but, being external forms, they afforded a handle to religious imagination; and Christendom has made them into calves of gold to worship its own handiwork. If divine order is prized by believers, how can they depart from the holy and beautiful simplicity of that feast Christ bequeathed to us, and took care to give in three Gospels, and to reveal afresh to and by the apostle Paul? A more systematic and chilling departure can hardly be conceived than these “Readings” disclose to one imbued with the unworldly order of the scripture accounts. Are we not to believe His will therein reflected for us to follow? Let us hold fast the traditions as Paul delivered them to us.

On the theory put forth to justify as well as explain the sacramental system, insuperable difficulties confront these superficial theologians. They are self-deceived in their thought of effectively opposing rationalism by the truth. They ignore divine grace and scripture. Their own scheme is no better than religions rationalism, as opposed to that of profane skeptics who deny even a mediator, and especially the one Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus a man. No believer contests that blessed and cardinal truth, the all-importance for God and man of the Incarnate Word. But the sacramentalists reason on the Incarnation simply, and reason wrongly, instead of believing that the Incarnation only presents the Savior in that condition which was essential to effect redemption, but which in itself by no means did or could effect it. On the contrary the manifestation of God as light and love in Christ was more and more hateful to man, to Israel in particular; because it condemned their dark selfishness and utter insubjection to God, the end of which was the cross. Therein God laid the sole, adequate, perfect, and everlasting ground of deliverance for all that believe. The blood shedding of Christ vindicated God's long forbearance, and made it righteous, not only to go out with the gospel to every soul, but to justify him that has faith in Jesus. This is certainly not man's righteousness (which was just then proved wholly wanting in Jew or Greek) but God's. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the divinely given and standing expressions of the Savior's death, not merely of His Incarnation. Judaism ends with that cross which is the basis of Christianity. The initiatory sign as truly sets before the soul the death of Christ, as does that central feast of thanksgiving which the Christian observes, on the Lord's day especially, till He come. Apart from His death the signs have no meaning but a false one. They are founded on His finished work and proclaim His death. Till then the full trial of man was not a fact; nor the complete proof of divine love shown; nor God glorified to the uttermost, any more than man's wickedness consummated; nor sin judged before God and borne away to faith by the only availing sacrifice. Only in the cross was this done and more.

Hence it is evident and certain that the sacramental system stops short of Christianity, by its own avowal that the sacraments are extensions of the Incarnation; because, if so, all these essential truths of Christianity are not the ground, but only the hope as under the legal system. These men abide on the Jewish side of the cross, not on the Christian. They are still under law, and priesthood, and offerings. By their own showing, if the sacraments are but the continuation of the Incarnation, they cannot express the privileges of accomplished redemption. They retrograde. Such is sacramentalism in principle. It is not Christianity, but a mongrel superstition.

The whole doctrinal basis, essential to keep up earthly priesthood and worldly sanctuary, stops short of the saving grace of God. that characterized the gospel; according to which baptism and the Lord's Supper have their true place and right meaning as expressions of that death which delivers alike from sin and the law and the world by the dead and risen Savior.

Even on their own ground of religious speculation, which is blind to the force of the rent veil, and shrinks back unbelievingly from that one sacrifice that purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, the theory fails at the threshold. For how is baptism an extension of the Incarnation? Whatever appearance there may be in the eucharist, here is none in the water. Again, the theory is that, while Baptism gives life, the Supper sustains it. But this does not agree with John 6; for the eating there is not sustenance but quickening without the smallest reference to baptism. “For the bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world” (ver. 33). This contradicts the theory. Still plainer is ver. 51, and ver. 53 most conclusive, where all else is excluded, and eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking the blood are said to be such, that otherwise “ye have no life in you.” In every respect the sacramental theory breaks down at the touch of scripture.

Popery alone can boast complete consistency of error; for to make good the refusal of the cup, they tall back on eating all without drinking; that is, the theory is that the blood is still in the body. Theirs therefore is, with fatal unconsciousness, a sacrament of non-redemption, as another has well shown. How true the Savior's decision: “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"!

Chapter 50

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 21. Doctrine – Tithes, Etc

With an earthly priesthood naturally goes the provision of tithes. No one doubts that it was obligatory on Israel under the law, and that it was paid in patriarchal times (Gen. 14:28). It is a religious debt from man to God on earth.

But the redemption that is in Christ Jesus changes all things, or, as is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of law. For the Christian there is no priest but Christ Himself in God's presence on high. In another and real point of view all Christians are themselves priests. Every other notion of priesthood as now subsisting is false. And so for the Christian, for the church of God, any such provision is ignored in the N. T. Nor is this casual, but goes essentially with our heavenly relationship, even while we are personally here below. We are not of the world even as Christ is not. Temple, priesthood, victims, incense, rites, etc., were all alike earthly. The Christian is heavenly though on earth for the present.

Hence it may be observed that all who contend for tithes are wholly ignorant of the true and heavenly nature of the church, and for the most part fall back for support on what was said of old before the Son of God came and brought in all that now characterizes His own. If we are subject to the suited revelations of the Holy Spirit, we understand at once that it could not be otherwise without the grossest confusion. For we, believers now, are all members of Christ, and of Christ when exalted and glorified at God's right hand. As such is our privilege, of this nature is our responsibility. The sacrifice of Christ has blotted out our sins, and brought us nigh to God perfectly and therefore equally. A human or earthly priesthood is necessarily excluded, and evidently so, save where the efficacy of His death is clouded. Again, the Holy Ghost, on the ground of that accepted work, was sent down to baptize into the one body of Christ. This in no way sets aside the differences of place it pleased God to establish in the assembly. There are those whom He set first, and others in inferior position. There is all variety of gift; and this in exercise constitutes ministry. Nor is scripture silent that whether in the gospel or among the saints such are entitled to support and honor in the name of the Lord. But that one Christian should act as priest for others has no place save in the unauthorized tradition of man. The mere idea offends against the absolute nearness which Christ's work imparts, and the oneness of the body through the Spirit's presence and action. Consistently with this we hear no more of tithes. Any such earthly due to a religious caste nearer to God disappears.

The principle they lay down shows how far they are even from the perception of living Christianity. For they distinguish as Jews from voluntary offerings the tithes as due to God in right to dispose of as He thinks good. Now the gospel overturns all this through the surpassing grace of Christ and His fully revealed truth. For we are bought with a price, not our possessions only but ourselves, and are called to glorify God with our body, not merely with tithe and a freewill offering to boot. The Christian slave even is Christ's freedman; the Christian master is His bondman. Christ is all; and as He elevates the lowest into liberty of the truest and most enduring kind, so he makes the highest that know Him to be His willing slaves. And as to what self would call its possessions, the

Lord has ruled (Luke 16) that we are but stewards now in what men view as ours. We do well to follow what was commended in the Unjust Steward. If faithful now in what is Another's, He will in the day of glory give us what He is pleased to call our own, even the true riches which have no wings and where is no thief. Hence the wisdom from above is to make to ourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when it shall fail, we may be received into the everlasting tabernacles.

We are waiting for the appearing of our Lord. When Christ receives His own things, so shall we. As to all in our hands now, faith makes us disown the title of sense or reason, waiting for the day when with Him God will freely give us all things. For we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and are meanwhile to walk by faith, not by sight. Along with this it is of the essence of the gospel that we were called for freedom, only not for the flesh (which we own condemned irremediably and by divine judgment in the cross), but through love servants one to another, because we are His. It is, or it ought to be, clear therefore that the Catholic Apostolic society is so much the more guilty in all this, because they profess to see what the church of God is, as they at any rate know that, and others in general do not see it; and again, because they claim the action of the Holy Spirit whose ministration is in Scripture set in the strongest contrast with that of the law which could only gender bondage, condemnation, and death. How distressing then to find that no dark traditional system of human thought and will exceeds, if it equal theirs, in turning back to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto they desire to be in servitude over again!

The following extract from the Regulations for the distribution of tithe (as given in Mr. Miller's Vol. ii. Appendix 9) will show, without argument, how far Irvingism is removed from Christian institutions and in principle Jewish, with all sorts of additions devised like Jeroboam's out of their own heart. The hand of lawyers is too plain in all.

“ 1. Every ordained priest, being a fixed and regular Minister in a Church, and giving up his whole time to his spiritual duties, receives some proportionate part of the Tithe of the Church. Such proportion (that is, the ratio, not the amount) to be the same in all Churches, and to be subject to arrangement by the elders of the Church Universal in such manner as circumstances may from time to time require. Supernumerary priests do not receive any fixed proportion of tithe, but may receive support from tithe in the manner thereinafter appointed.”

2. Every called priest, giving up his time to preparation for his spiritual duties, and to such subordinate offices as may be required of him, and every deacon giving up his time to his duties, may lawfully receive support from the tithe of the Church in which he is serving, after providing for the Angel and those already ordained to the priesthood.”

“3. In every Church the number of fixed and regular priests who, under Regulations, are to receive proportionate parts of tithe, is not to exceed the following: namely, one Angel, one Angel's Coadjutor, and such a number of priests as with the Angel and Angel's Coadjutor shall not exceed one to every fifty of the regular communicants. Nor in any Church is the number of fixed and regular priests to exceed the following: namely, Angel and Angel's Coadjutor, six Elders, six assistant Elders, and thirty-six other priests, of whom at least one-third should be Prophets and Evangelists. Any other priests employed in the service of the Church are to be considered supernumerary, and not entitled to fixed portions of tithe.”

“4. The precise number and class of fixed and regular priests who are to receive tithe in any Church within the above mentioned limits, will from time to time be decided by the Apostle in charge of the Church (i. e. of Tribe), whose sanction is also necessary of all supernumerary priests.”

What need of more, unless it be the opening of the Regulations in 1858, nine years after those cited? “God having given the Tithe of our Increase to be the endowment of His altar, He has placed the particular application of the same under the direction of the Apostles"!! Did it never occur to these persons that we have the Lord preparing the way for Christianity and the church in the Four Gospels, but not a hint of Christian tithe! We have a precise and comprehensive history of the gospel and the church, and the chief servants of the Lord for about thirty most eventful and instructive years, written by an inspired hand; but not a hint even here! We have Epistles written by the most honored in various ways of the apostles, expressly providing divine light, didactic, exhortatory, ecclesiastical, and pastoral; but not a hint in one of them!

We all ought to know how solemnly the apostles spoke of the departure at hand for the Christian profession. So it was, as the Spirit predicted.

Even during the earliest generation the testimony of the apostle Paul was very largely a series of conflicts with the inroads of Judaism even more than of Gentile philosophy. When his work closed, the ruin became as rapid as complete; but no one erred so grossly as to advocate tithe any more than priesthood among Christians. No doubt these mistakes and worse evils which defaced Christianity too soon followed.

Nor have any pushed to greater lengths the corruption from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ, cloaked under the plea of development. Scripture clearly warrants the use of water in baptism, of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. How does either give license to bring in the use of lights, incense, vestments, and the like, to say nothing of holy water? It is an impeachment of the fullness of divine wisdom in the written word of God, a presumptuous uprising of the church, instead of that single-eyed obedience which is of all price in God's sight. No doubt, the O. T. is also invoked to eke out the desired end. But this is unintelligent abuse, in the face of our authoritative instruction in the N. T. which gives the key of Christ to explain the spiritual meaning of these Levitical symbols, closed for the Christian in His work and offices, as the Epistle to the Hebrews shows us. To introduce them outwardly into the Church is to Judaize in fact. When God tried by law, man rebelled and violated it; when God proved its impotence and nailed it to the cross, man cleaves to it and makes it his idol, consistent only in his antagonism to God's will and glory.

The theory is a return to what was annulled in the cross as God made evident when the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. What was this but God desecrating what once was holy? As He of old set aside Shiloh, so He did then with His house in Jerusalem, a yet more solemn and evident proof: only that He means to take it up again when the Lord returns to reign over the earth. Meanwhile all is gone for any such thing on earth. The sanctuary which the Lord pitches, and not man, is exclusively in heaven; and the true light which now shines makes manifest to the believing Jew (and of course to all others) that the sanctuary of the law was essentially worldly (Heb. 9:1), as its sacrifices, ritual, and priesthood were but carnal ordinances.

This is what the Catholic Apostolic body, more guilty than others, would resuscitate from the grave of Christ, instead of holding fast the faith of Him dead, risen, and glorified, and drawing near to Him within the Holiest where He is. For this, and nothing less, we are exhorted to do now, though and while we are on earth. And therefore in the Epistle to the Hebrews faith is insisted on, not here so much to get life and righteousness and peace, as to worship and walk in it as a practical principle covering and influencing all our conversation here below. Therefore are those addressed so earnestly warned against craving after sensible objects and palpable helps, to which they had been accustomed in Judaism. On the face of it too all the church in Apostolic days met in the humblest way. It was not for lack of means or of liberality. There was no compulsion, no iron bond of law; but as many as were possessed of houses and lands sold them, and brought (not tithes, but) the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each, according as any one had need. It was a bright outshining of devotedness as they looked for the return of the Lord, the grace of Whom made earthly things of no account save to use them in love to each other.

But it never occurred to these saints, still less to the inspired apostles, to use their substance in purchasing or erecting fine buildings, or in departing from the original simplicity of the Lord's supper by the adornments of gold and silver, of pearls and gems, of purple and fine linen. They were as far as could he from borrowing the rhetoric of the schools to set off the truth, or from imitating in honor of the Father and the Son the musical attractions of Jews or Heathen in their defunct or dark systems respectively. We belong to Him Who is not here but risen and on high.

The ground of this radical difference is as obvious as it is all-important. In Christianity all that is justly boasted is the grace and truth that came by our Lord, and is now enjoyed by the power of the Spirit in the written word. It is no longer the mountain, nor even Jerusalem. As true worshippers we worship the Father. It must be, to be acceptable, in spirit and in truth. God and the Lamb are before the heart, which is led by the Holy Ghost to look on the unseen and eternal, the heavenly things, not the earthly.

As this bright reality faded for the saints of old, they lapsed more and more into Jewish thought and feeling; and natural resources were called in as faith grew feeble and low. Then the O. T. prophecies got misapplied, as the true and heavenly and earth-rejected character of the church was lost; so that baptized men began to dream that Israel was forever blotted out to make room for the Christian profession to enjoy earthly blessing, honor, and power. Thus was all the characteristic testimony of the church swamped; and the mystery of iniquity wrought into the mystery of Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

There indeed earthly splendor is essential, for grace is unknown and truth is perverted and corrupted, if Babylon is to commit fornication with the kings of the earth and to intoxicate those that dwell on the earth. How sad to see those who used to profess the truth which judges this enormous imposture and unblushing worldliness now fallen in principle and practice into a similar dark pit! Yet who can wonder that, having lost the truth of the cross, they mind earthly things even more than the mass of Protestants?

Chapter 51

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 22. Doctrine—Symbolism

It remains now to examine the system of symbols, in the sense not of confession of faith, but of sensible forms before the eye, which Irvingites have elaborated in their late history. It is known that this development is due to the prophets so called, notably to their first pillar, Mr. Taplin. Here again we have distinct, undeniable, departure from the inspired authority of the true apostles and prophets to Judaizing. The divine institution of Baptism and the Eucharist gives no warrant for the least addition, still less for wholesale invention, unrecognized in the N. T. for the church of God. Wherever introduced by man, it is essentially an alien, as it is a supplanter of faith. Now we walk by faith, not by sight. There is no legitimate adoption of it beyond divine authority. New objects of the kind are but idols; and well it is, if superstition degrade not what the Lord instituted into kindred evil. It is for Him to command, for the church to obey. It is not for us to initiate but to follow. All else is but presumption and indeed rebellion.

But let us hear what these men plead as cited from “Symbols used in worship.” “A type is that which is something absent and future; as for example Adam was a type of Christ; the sacrifices of the law were types of the sacrifice of Christ. A symbol, on the contrary, is something used to set forth and signify things really present, but unappreciable by the senses. It may also present a visible memorial of additional important truth. For instance the light which is kept burning before the altar, when the holy sacrament is there, symbolizes to us the Lord's invisible presence; but it is also from its very nature a memorial to us that He who is our life is our light also; and not ours only but the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.... Symbolism is in fact the science of exhibiting invisible truth by visible and appropriate signs, in order that our senses may be made the helps and handmaids of our spirits, and we may be the better able to worship God. If this end be not attained, symbols are useless.” Then the brass, the silver, and the gold of the Jewish Tabernacle are referred to, “a gradual increase of costliness from the court to the holy place, and from thence to the most holy. Doubtless these things typified different degrees of spiritual worship; but they also symbolized the truth that the more sacred the place and service the more costly should be the means employed. A palace is not furnished like a cottage; a drawing room is not furnished like a kitchen. We do not appear before a king in mean raiment.... It is barely possible for purity of heart to co-exist with voluntary impurity, either of our dwellings or of our persons.” To read such effusions of naturalism is painful coming from men professing Christ; but alas! Christendom is so fallen from faith that not a few outside this party accept the sentiment as just in the main and apposite.

John 4 overthrows the system; as does the Epistle to the Hebrews expressly. The hour has come when the ritual of Jerusalem, divinely appointed though it was, is passed away. The rival way of Samaria or of aught else is vain. It is a question of worshipping the Father: His children alone are competent, having received the Spirit of adoption by which they cry Abba, Father. The hour now is, when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. The Lord had previously spoken of His giving the Holy Spirit (verse 14), without which Christian

worship cannot be. Then, as we have seen, He contrasts it even with Levitical service, and intimates that it alone is now acceptable. For God is no longer hidden as in Judaism, but revealed in His Son which changes all and brings in what is new and eternal; and as God is seeking in fullness of love as a Father, so He can only be worshipped in spirit and truth as suits His nature. It is no longer man tested by law on the ground of what he ought to do. Rejecting the Messiah, the Son, they are proved to be lost and dead, like the poor Samaritan, till Jesus quickens them, and gives the Holy Ghost; and the Father's grace is thus known as seeking even such and making them His own, thenceforth true worshippers.

The Epistle to the Hebrews indicates a similar result in connection with the purifying of the conscience by the blood of Christ and His entrance into heavenly glory, before which the earthly ordinances of Israel fade into nothingness. Yet are they beautiful types if rightly apprehended as shadowing the “better thing” now come in Christ. But it is a retreat from the true light which now shines to set up under the gospel symbols of our own or borrowed from the law. This is to go back to type or symbol where God has given us the blessed anti-types. We are no longer babes needing such pictures. The Christian is of age, as Gal. 4 insists to counteract an analogous turning back to rudiments now discarded, and pernicious when thus misused.

Apostolic practice entirely falls in with this, if we allow for the gracious patience of God in gradually weaning those who had been Jews from the temple and its connected observances. But even from the beginning of the church nothing can be plainer or more certain than the simple and unworldly character of all that was found in “their own company” (Acts 4:23). They broke bread “at home” (Acts 2:46). Years after Pentecost we never hear of grand or beautiful buildings, which assuredly, if in any way an object, they had heart and means to erect. The utmost we hear of is “the upper chamber” to break bread in (Acts 20:7, 8), or of the school of Tyrannus where the apostle daily discoursed, or lectured (chap. xix. 9). Not a trace in the inspired record, not a hint, of the earthly splendor of the Jewish temple sought to be imitated or exceeded in the church of God. On the contrary, all the evidence of the N. T. points to a total change of principle, because God was calling out and forming a body on earth to walk and worship by the power of the Holy Spirit in the faith and enjoyment of a Savior enthroned in heaven, Who gave them each and all to draw near boldly to the throne of grace. Without doubt we are thus as believers, in presence of a glory revealed to us but not to the world, which pales all the pretentious efforts of architecture, or music, or eloquence in Christendom; yea, which is expressly compared with the law given by Moses, (even though this had unequivocally divine sanction for the time and the end then in view), in order to assert its immeasurable superiority.

Christ risen and exalted on high, in virtue not only of His person but of His work on the cross, is the center of the surpassing glory, a glory with which we have the fullest association assured to us now, and of which the Holy Spirit Who has anointed us is the seal, as He is the earnest in our hearts. No Christian questions that “the annulled” system, the law, was with glory when and as introduced by God; but how much more does the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness, “that which abides,” exceed as it subsists in glory! There is one thing however absolutely needful for appreciating this truth, faith (alas! how rare) in holding fast our present heavenly relationship to Christ, as simply as the burdened conscience looks to Him dead and risen, and finds justification and peace with God. How could brass or silver or gold or precious stones, how could fine linen or blue or scarlet or purple, mingle with such worship? The thought of severing the members of the

one body by a greater or less nearness answering to the court and the Holy place and the Holiest demonstrates the blankest ignorance of Christian standing and worship, as well as of the true meaning of their instructive shadows.

So does the argument founded on the symbols of social position, or of the distinctions in a household. It is a return to man and nature under divine government, out of which the gospel now takes even Israelites to give a new and unheard-of intimacy by union with Christ, and this to Gentile no less than to Jewish believers. It is, to frame a human analogy, pleasing to the flesh and essentially of the world, when God calls to a heavenly reality even while we are on earth, which is the proper testimony of our faith in an unbelieving and hostile world.

It is the remark of one who wrote before me on this subject, and more forcibly than the author himself knew, that the incarnation is bound up with symbolism. But he ought not to have degraded it by pointing as examples to the Buddhist, or the Moslem, or the Quaker. For we have shown already, that however precious a truth Incarnation is, to stop short there is to stop short of Christianity. “For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves but to Him Who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no one after the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know [Him so] no more. Wherefore if any one is in Christ [there is] a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold they are become new and all things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” This is Christianity. Christ, the Incarnate Word, was still minister of circumcision till He died for our sins and rose and ascended to become Head of the Church by divine counsels. Eph. 1, Col. 1. How few look on the unseen and heavenly objects which give character to worship!

Professed teachers are not entitled to ignore the characteristic truths of Christianity. Hence the doctrinal care in the N. T. to call away from earthly temple, officials, and rites, to the one sacrifice of infinite efficacy, to the one Priest after the Melchisedec order but Aaronic exercise, only far beyond either type, and to the heavenly and the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. To see the accomplishment of all in Him is the real honor of the ancient types; to reproduce them on earth and by men is the darkness of unbelief. And amazing it is that any bearing the Lord's name can so trifle with such scriptures as Heb. 7:12, 18, 19; 8:6-13; to refer to no more, though one might well press chapter ix. and the first half of chapter 10.

What can be more overwhelming than the condemnation poured on symbolism among not only Irvingites but Romanists of every shade (for they differ almost as much as Dissenters, and to talk of their unity is the merest self-deception) by the apostle's word in Heb. 9:1, in speaking of God's house in Israel where the symbolism was divine throughout. In the light of Christ at God's right hand, the sanctuary is pronounced “a worldly one.” How much more all imitations, under the direction of Mr. Taplin or any other man since! This is the irrevocable decision of the Holy Spirit for the Christian. So in verse 24, Christ is said to have entered, not into holy places made with hands (like Aaron or his sons): these were but figures of the true. The heavenly things which Moses saw were really the originals which the tabernacle reflected. And now the true assume their place and moment; and Christ, having obtained everlasting redemption is gone into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us. The way into the true holies is now made manifest; and we

are invited and exhorted to draw near within, for the veil is rent. Not incarnation, but Christ's shed blood alone makes us free by faith to approach boldly. Symbolism in effect denies the cross and leads us hack to Judaism. Let every believer take warning: it is an enemy of Christ and a snare to souls, however fair a show in the flesh. Nothing can excuse rebellion against the Lord as He is now revealed in heavenly glory.

Chapter 52

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites: 23. Conclusion

What judgment (we think) ought to be formed of the Irvingite movement is not doubtful to anyone who has followed the notices now drawing to an end.

It is not meant that they have not much truth of an important kind, and of truth neglected if not wholly ignored by Protestants (of Romanists we need not speak now). They have a vivid notion, not the reality, of the church of God, and consequently make a great deal of its unity as a principle and fact to he made good on earth before the Lord comes to receive us to Himself and present us in the Father's house. They accordingly and justly insist on His coming to receive us as the one and divinely given object of hope, and discard as false the vain dream of Christendom in general that all the earth is to be gradually brought to His feet by Christian measures, still less by human mixture of a more palatable kind, or even by the operations of God's providential hand. They duly recognize that it is an honor reserved not for a fallen church, but for Christ, yet not in this or in aught else without the work of the Holy Spirit also, but Himself personally present in manifested power to establish the kingdom under the whole heaven, while the risen saints reign over the whole earth with Him; though in this last, as was pointed out, not even their apostles were clear.

Again, they are not blind to the prevalent unbelief that thwarts the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, while owning that grace has not failed to work, spite of the multiplying hindrances from man's self-sufficiency, in an age characterized more and more by that self-exalting spirit in the fatal error of progress and the growing license of self-will, the revolutionism often peaceful, always onward, of today. They confess that all that is for good and God's glory in man must be of the Spirit sent down from heaven to glorify Christ Jesus, the Second Man.

Further, the revived hope of the church, and the new interest in prophetic inquiry, drew attention not only to the church's future glory, but to the splendid prospects of Israel and the out-spreading of blessedness for all nations under the reign of the Son of Man. And the earth at any rate was seen to be the destined theater of the magnificent dealings of God, beyond whatever has been, for the exaltation of His Son and the holy peace, joy, and righteousness of the race, to God's glory.

This could not be without bringing into just prominence the King as well as the kingdom; and the humanity of the Lord was recovered from the neglect which had shrouded it, in the minds of even the most pious, for centuries. It is not that true believers questioned that He was perfect Man as well as God the Word made flesh, or would have in general failed to reject and resent any doubt cast by the enemy on the Incarnation. Still the discussion, kindled by the really earnest study of prophecy long neglected, made it plain that men of reputed orthodoxy were false to the plenary inspiration of scripture on the one hand, and on the other to the real humanity of the Lord Jesus. The Irvingites took an active part in opposing the unbelief of many Protestants, and even leaders of religious thought and action in Great Britain, as elsewhere.

But soon, immediately one might say, their accredited organ began to betray fundamental unsoundness in the very vital point which they said, not without reason, to be growingly

compromised by others that seemed to be Pillars.

If the Evangelicals left in the shade the grand truth of the Lord as Man in all the moral glory of His humiliation, and were absorbed in the efficacy which His work acquires from the Deity of His Person, Mr. Irving and his associates fell rapidly into sentiments, first unguarded and daring in their speculations and inferences, and full soon irreverent, heterodox, and deadly. It was well to recall saints from the dry bones of systematic divinity; but Satan availed himself of many hearts returning to Christ as a really living One with Whom we have to do in the fullness of grace, and of the Father's love incomparably better known in consequence, to dishonor, lose, and in effect deny Him come in the flesh, when they flattered themselves that they most of all were true to His Incarnation. By the flesh in which He came, they taught contrary to scripture and even the ordinary confession of Christendom in its most degraded state, “that the Son of God by birth of His mother was in the condition of a sinner,” and this in contrast with the truth that God made Him sin for us on the cross; that He was “conscious of the motions of the flesh and of the fleshly mind, in so far as any regenerate man is conscious of them when under the operation of the Holy Ghost,” and that even “He could say until His resurrection, Not I, but sin that tempteth me in the flesh.” This is not the faith of Jesus, but antichristian blasphemy. Yet the author of it was their most honored and cherished teacher, beyond all ever known among them, and, till his death, angel or bishop of their most influential church.

As Christ is the truth, falsehood to His Person, whether on the divine nature or the human, is fatal. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and may discern in the depths those whose hearts are true when their lives are steeped in error. But we can only judge, and are bound to judge, by the confession made. And it is true charity to gloss over no evil imputed to Christ, any more than falsification of His work, if peradventure those ensnared may be recovered, and others may be warned and kept from the delusions of the enemy, to say nothing of what is and ought to be our prime call, the vindication of His honor to Whom we owe everything precious both now and for eternity.

It is a matter of course, therefore, that having allowed this foul aspersion on Christ's humanity, and consequently asserting another than the true Christ of God, every other part of the truth is dragged down into the mire of fallen humanity. They thus exhibit the sad spectacle of combining the acknowledgment of a great deal of truth, rarely found in Christendom and of course nowhere else, with the effects of that error at the core which vitiates the body right through to every extremity.

Hence the church, though nominally a heavenly institution, becomes in their hands the most worldly of societies claiming to represent the Lord here below: an affair of as fine buildings as they can erect, and as near the Jewish model as is possible on any pretense of Christianity, with costly array in most hues of the rainbow, beyond the garments of Babylon itself, with all the pomp of official degree, with incense, lights, and holy water, with priests, altar, and sacrifice, as if we were not Christians but Jews. And along with this system of meretricious show, so dear and reverent to the natural man, the pretension to prophetic utterances and other displays of assumed power in the Holy Ghost, which they declare is not man, and we are sure is not God; from what source therefore?

For those who have eyes of faith to discern, it is evidently a going back from the unseen objects on which the Christian and the church are taught to look habitually; and as the apostle told the

Galatians when adopting not the hundredth part of the weak and beggarly elements embraced by Irvingites, it is a turning again to that idolatrous religion of the world, from which the faith of Christ is meant to deliver once and forever, as the Holy Spirit is our power acting by the written word. For a religion of form and symbol, which was employed by God's authority as a test of Israel before Christ and His redemption, has another character now that man, Israel in particular, and the world are proved enemies of God in the cross. For a Christian to take up Jewish elements (and nowhere is this so patent as in Irvingism, along with the confessed and utterly incompatible presence of the Spirit), is like a Gentile who had given up his idols returning again to that evil bondage.

Irvingism therefore stands before us to an extravagant degree guilty of a deliberate and elaborate effort to unite the elements or principles of the world with the claims of church privileges and Christian truth. This is essentially and altogether inconsistent, the very principle of that Babylon (the confusion of light and darkness) against which in earlier days there was no end of declamation. No wonder therefore that even truths they teach degenerate, very often losing their true and heavenly character for a Jewish measure and mold. Thus the coming kingdom they set forth simply on its earthly side. They have no real grasp of our intimate associations with Christ on high. They abound with denunciations of judgment; and if they hold out a hope, it is not the proper translation of the whole church of God (and of the O. T. saints also) to meet the Lord on high, and so be ever with Him, but a perverted use of Zoar in Genesis, and of the sealed in Rev. 7, and of those that follow the Lamb on Zion, as an inducement to accept their spurious apostolate and join their party. Alas! what is this but self-deception? It is neither grace nor truth in Christ, but a snare for souls by a false and mischievous abuse of God's word. What kind of unity or catholicity or apostolicity is this? Certainly not of the Holy Spirit.

If these charges are well founded, there is no need of repeating smaller though abundant proof of departure from the truth God has revealed to us. The church, the assembly of the living God, is the basis of the truth. If that which the base sustains, and the pillar proclaims, is not the truth, neither does God acknowledge as His. Christ is the truth; but the church is the responsible witness of it before the world; and what claims to be the church, but is a. false witness, God disowns, as we ought also. It is an instrument for deceiving souls, the more dangerous in proportion to its pretensions. If false in the main, the more truth it presents along with deadly error, the greater the snare. Unmixed error in fact could not attract the God-fearing; but lofty claims of the church, of apostles and prophets, of pastors and teachers, &c., might be ensnaring to souls weary of vain talk and modern inventions, especially when such claims follow testimony to the evident truth of a speedily coming Savior, which acts on the conscience and makes souls anxious to do the will of God. In this way many a soul has been attracted from the emptiness of Nationalism and Dissent, ashamed afterward to leave what was found out little answering to its promise.

Irvingism did not, more than the other sects of Christendom, take its stand on obedience, the only true, humble, and holy principle for such as find themselves in the midst of rain and departure from God, as scripture predicted was to be. The revealed safeguard then is the written word. They like others yearned after power, in unbelief that we have power in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Hence the cry of unbelief was answered by evil operations of the enemy, which endorsed and sealed antichrist as the truth. Humiliation was and is the due place, self-judgment, but withal confidence in the grace of our God, and absolute subjection to the truth; not pretending to more than He gives us, with deep thankfulness for all that abides. Thus should we as saints, ceasing to

do evil, learn to do well, as we await in peace the coming.; of our Lord. We have indeed little strength: but may we keep His word and not deny His Name.

May grace use the present warning to convince the children of God within, or looking to, it, that the Catholic Apostolic body is to be shunned and abhorred for its anti-Christian error, whatever else of truth may be found there.

Chapter 53

Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ: Part 1

" They that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

That "the word of the Lord may have free course" is a matter which few will deny to be of ultimate concern to the glory of God, though it be one which has in many ways been let and hindered by human perverseness; and in nothing more than by confining the preaching of the everlasting gospel within arbitrary limits of place and person, prescribed by man, but sanctioned in no way by scripture. To a single mind which has known the value of God's love, and which views things in the light in which they are put by that blessed knowledge, it would not seem that in the midst of a world lying under condemnation, yet visited by this love, aught beyond spiritual qualification was needed for anyone to declare to those whom he sees around him ready to perish the remedy, that Jesus has died for sinners. Man has been pleased to set up restrictions; but the point with the disciple is to know whether the Lord has done so, and what is the warrant for precluding any from full liberty of preaching to whom He has given His Spirit for the purpose: seeing that if He has been so given, there is infinite loss in the hindrance, and the Spirit of God is grieved. The same faithfulness to Christ, which will yield unqualified obedience to every jot and every tittle of His commands, will also lead us to search out every hindrance to His service, in order to its removal from ourselves or others. The present question is one of deep importance, for it is evident that if the restrictions be not verily and indeed ordered by the Lord Himself, or by His apostles, it comes to this, that in upholding them there is a. loss on the one hand of much comfort and edification to the church by confining to the ministry of one that which should flow from the Spirit in many; and on the other the gospel which was "to be preached to every creature" under heaven is bound and fettered, and multitudes are shut out from the springs of life for want of the invitation which should be upon the lips of all who themselves have drunk of the living waters.

The point to be proved by those who are opposed to the unrestricted preaching of the word is this either that none who are not in prescribed office have the Spirit of God in testimony; or that, having it, the sanction of man is necessary. I do not purpose here a general investigation of the principles of the subject, but merely to inquire whether any of the church of God are not entitled to preach if the Lord give them opportunity, or whether there be any human sanction needful for their doing so. The following considerations are intended, by the Lord's help, to maintain that it is not needed; and that no such sanction can be proved to be necessary from scripture; and that no such sanction was therein afforded.

The question is not whether all Christians are individually qualified, but whether they are disqualified unless they are what is commonly called ordained. I say "commonly," because the word as used in scripture does not in the original convey what it does to an English ear at present. I affirm that no such ordination was a qualification to preach in the days of scriptural statement. I do not despise order, I do not despise pastoral care but love it where it really exists, as that which savors in its place of the sweetest of God's services; seeing that, though it may be exercised

sometimes in a manner not to our present taste or thought, a good shepherd will seek the scattered sheep. But I confine myself to a simple question—the assertion that none of the Lord's people ought to preach without Episcopal or other analogous appointment. The thing here maintained in few words is that they are entitled. The scripture proves that they did so; that they were justified in doing so, God blessing them therein; and that the principles of scripture require it, assuming of course that they are qualified by God. For the question here is not competency to act, but title to act if competent. Neither do I despise herein (God forbid that I should do so) the holy setting apart according to godliness to any office such as are competent, by those that have authority to do so.

Let us then try the question by the light which the word affords us upon the subject. There are only two cases upon which the question can arise: namely, as to their speaking in the church, or out of the church; amongst the “congregation of faithful men,” for their common profit and building up in the faith; or as evangelists, declaring to the world, wheresoever God may direct them, the message of that “grace which has appeared unto all men.” If these are admitted, all anomalous cases will readily be agreed in.

First then let us look into the, speaking of Christians in the church. And here I remark that the directions in 1 Cor. 14, are entirely inconsistent with the necessity of ordination to speak. There is a line drawn there, but it is not between ordained or unordained. “Let your women keep silence in the churches:” a direction which never could have place, were the speaking confined to a definitely ordained person. Quite another ground is taken; which implies directly, not that it is right for every man to speak, but that there was a preclusion of none, because of their not being in any stated office. Women were the precluded class: there the line was drawn. If men had not the gift of speaking, of course they would be silent, if they followed the directions there given. The apostle says, “Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” Does he then say none ought to speak but one ordained? No” Let all things be done unto edifying.” This is the grand secret, the grand rule: in a tongue, by two or at the most by three, and by course, and interpret; the prophets, let them speak two or three, &c. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted,” “for God,” &c. “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted onto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience.”

It is undeniable then, that here we have distinction, not of ordained and unordained, but of those who from their character (women) are not permitted to speak, and the rest are; being also directed in what order to do so, and the ground of distinction stated. And this is God's plan of decency and order. For the rest they were all to speak, that all might learn, and all be comforted. Not all to speak at once, not all to speak every day, but all as God led them, according to the order there laid down, and as God was pleased to give them ability for the edifying of the church. I apply all this simply and exclusively to the question of Christians in general, having God's Spirit, using their respective gifts; and I assert that there was no such principle recognized as that they should not, but the contrary.

It may and will be said by many that these were the times of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. But this is a false view of the case; for do those who make this objection mean to argue that ordination did not begin as a distinctive title till after the departure of the Spirit of God? Moreover

the Spirit of God does not justify, by systematic rules, breaking through His own order; it would be most mischievous to say that He did. But the case, let it be observed, was not one of the prerogative of spiritual gifts, but of order; for women had spiritual gifts, as we read elsewhere, and directions are given for their exercise; but they were not to use them in the church, because it was out of order—not comely. At the same time there was no hint that any or all of the men were not: but the contrary, because it was not out of order. Aptness to teach may be a very important qualification for a bishop, but it cannot be said from scripture to be disorderly for any member of the body to speak in the church, if God has given him ability.

Besides, though these extraordinary gifts, tongues, &c., may have ceased, I by no means admit that the ordinary gifts for the edification of the church, of believers, have ceased. On the contrary, I believe they are the instruments, the only real instruments, of edification. Nor do I see why, on principle, they should not be exercised in the church, or why the church has not a title to the edification derived from them. If the presence of the indwelling Spirit be in the church, it has that which renders it substantially competent to its own edification, and to worship God “in Spirit and in truth.” If He be not there, nothing else can be recognized, and it is a church no longer; for no makeshift is warranted by scripture in default of the original constitutive character and endowments of a dispensation.

But in thus upholding, as one is bound, the common title of the saints, it may be supposed by some that the argument will be at once met by referring to the orderly way in which Christ originally gave His church, “some apostles, and some pastors and teachers,” &c. Now, unless one man centers all these offices in one person by virtue of ordination, the objection will not apply, but on the contrary brings its own refutation. For we read, some were of one office, some of another; the head, Christ, “from Whom the whole body fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” We read also that the members are set in the body, one the eye, the other the foot, the other the ear, that there “might be no schism in the body.” And it is a thought which might well commend itself to our minds, that if we have indeed lost many and ornamental members, it is no reason why we should summarily cut off the rest—the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, and the like, of which there is assuredly some measure yet remaining in the church.

But if the attempt should be made to close the inquiry by silencing all discussion with the startling assertion that it is useless, for the Spirit of God is utterly and altogether gone out of the church, it at once brings on the question, If so, what are we, and where are we? The church of God without the Spirit! Verily if He be not there, all union between Christ and His members is cut off, and the promise, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,” is of none effect. But the word of God shall stand. “The world indeed cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him;” but let the disciples of Jesus know that He is with them; and that Wheresoever two or three are gathered together to His name, there, in proportion to their condition and necessities, His Spirit is with them, for every purpose of instruction and blessing.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 54

Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ: Part 2

Thus far then, in the first case, for speaking in the church. I advocate no system. I mourn over the departure of many of the comely part or parts, however, on which God set comeliness. These passages of the word I take as scriptural evidence that the confining of the edification of the church to nominal office alone has not the scriptures to rest upon. I speak not here of elders or appointed teachers, their value, or the contrary; observing only that grace, and grace alone, should be our standard of valuation, that in the arrangements of the Holy Ghost it is only the gift of God which gives any title to office in the church, or to its claims (nominal office merely as such having no claim upon any one). I speak simply of the one point—the wrongness of a Christian speaking in the church as such. One point—and that is a most important one—in this part of the subject remains to be noticed. If we are reminded of the dangers arising from all teaching, it is admitted at once; for it is admitted that here, if anywhere, mischief would spring up. But looking to scripture, we are not warned against it, upon the ground of its being wrong as regards office, nor because of its effect merely on others. And warning against it is given, as being one of the things in which, as evil will more or less have a tendency to show itself, so the remedy is applied to the spirit from whence it flows. “My brethren, be not many teachers, for so shall ye heap to yourselves greater condemnation.” Here again the warning itself shows that there was no such restriction of office as is now supposed, for thus it would have been, “You have no business to preach at all, for you are not ordained.” But no, the correction was turned to moral profit, not to formal distinction of pre-eminent office.

But the question becomes more important when considered in the second case, viz., as to speaking out of the church, because it precludes the testimony of the gospel by a vast number of persons who may have faithfully borne it to others. Let us inquire into the scriptural facts. In the first place, then, all the Christians preached: “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word” (Acts 8:4); and those who were scattered were all, except the apostles. Some critics have endeavored to elude this plain passage, by saying that it is only speaking, which one not in office may do. But a reference to the original at once disproves the assertion. It is ε■αγγελιζ■μενοι—evangelizing the word; and we read elsewhere that “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19, 20). Now, unless all the church were ordained (I think they are to preach, as far as they have ability), here is the simplest case possible, the case in point. The first general preaching of the gospel which the Lord blessed beyond the walls of Jerusalem knew no distinction between ordained and unordained. It had not entered into their minds then that they who knew the glory of Christ were not to speak of it where and how God enabled them. “And the hand of the Lord was with them.”

Paul preached without any other mission than seeing the glory of the Lord and His word; in a synagogue too, and boasts of it. And he gives his reason for Christians preaching elsewhere, as it is written, “I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor.

4:13). Apollos preached; “he spake and taught,” “diligently taught the things of the Lord,” and of him it is said that when Paul would have sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, he would not go. Yet so far from being ordained before beginning to preach, he knew only the baptism of John. And Aquila and Priscilla took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly. And then, continuing his labors as before, “he helped them much which had believed;” “and mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scripture that Jesus was the Christ.”

Again, at Rome, many of the brethren waxing bold by Paul's bonds, preached the word without fear. And here let it be added, for the sake of those who have doubts respecting this passage, that the word is κηρ■σσουσιν heralds; which shows the character of the work. The same habits of wandering preaching we find in the 2nd and 3rd Epistles of John guarded not by ordination, but by doctrine. Nor in truth is there such a thing mentioned in scripture as ordaining to preach the gospel. We have seen that Paul preached before he went out on his work from Antioch. Now if any plead his being set apart there, still the question is not met; for, as before stated, I reason not against such setting apart, but against the assertion that Christians as such are incompetent to preach. But the case alleged, if it proves anything as to the question at issue, proves that the power of ordaining, as well as of preaching, was not specially connected with office, and nothing more. The only other passage which, though not commonly quoted, seems to me nearer the purpose, is the apostle's command, “The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). But the thing committed here was the doctrine, and proves tradition, if anything, not ordination; for it does not appear that they were ordained for the purpose.

I have now produced ample evidence from scripture to a fair mind. My object has been simply to show the general liberty of Christian men to speak, whether in or out of the church, according to the several gifts which God may bestow upon them, without need of the seal of human authority; and I say that the contrary assertion is a novelty in Christianity. I have abstained from diffusive discussions upon what has led to it, or the principles which are involved in it. I put the scriptural fact to any one's conscience; and I call upon any one to produce any scripture, positively or on principle, forbidding to Christians the liberty of preaching, or requiring Episcopal or other analogous ordination for the purpose.

And here I will advert to that which is commonly adduced upon the subject—the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It is remarkable that those who rest upon it should pass by a case immediately preceding, bearing upon this immediate subject: that of Eldad. and Medad prophesying in the camp, though they had not come up to the door of the tabernacle, because the Spirit rested upon them. “Would God,” said the meek man of God, “that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.” That which was here typically proposed, the pouring out of the Spirit upon all, was in principle fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. Then, subsequently, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram acted not under the influence and energy of the Spirit in testifying to the people, but would have assumed authority—the kingship of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron. This was their fault, which very outrage is committed by those who attempt to defend themselves by urging the case before us: seeing that they are taking to themselves that kingship and priesthood which are Christ's alone, and setting up themselves as the only legitimate channels of blessing; and usurping His authority again on the other hand by excluding those who have the Spirit of God from exercising that which they have by the authority

of God Himself.

These things here spoken of were typical of our dispensation, as also the apostle states; and the conclusion is, that they make universal preaching desirable, and the assumption of priesthood a sin. To the same purpose is the argument of the apostle applied (Heb. 5): the exclusion from the office of priesthood, save by such call as Christ had; in which, in one sense, all believers are partakers—in another sense, He is alone, unaccompanied into the holy place. In a word, the claim of unrestricted liberty of preaching by Christians is right. The assumption of priesthood by any, save as all believers are priests, is wrong. This is the dispensation of the outpouring of the Spirit here, qualifying for preaching any here who can do so—in a word, for speaking of Jesus (for the distinction between speaking and preaching is quite unsustainable by scripture, as anyone may see if he takes the trouble), and in which Christ alone exercises the priesthood within the veil, in the presence of God for us.

This, then, is the force of these passages. The type of the pouring out of the Spirit in the camp with the gracious wish of Moses is the characteristic, the essential distinction of Christianity. Accordingly we find its primary presentation in the world, the Spirit poured out on the hundred and twenty who were assembled together, who therefore began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. And Peter standing up explains to the Jews that they were not drunk, but that it was the thing spoken of by Joel, the undistinguished pouring out of the Spirit upon men of all classes—servants and hand-maidens, their sons and their daughters prophesying—the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh. This was the characteristic of its agency, and this we have seen acted upon in the subsequent history; to deny this is to mistake the power of the dispensation, and, I will add, to lose it. And what is the consequence? Irregular action goes on, and cannot be restrained; for kingly power cannot be assumed to such purpose, or they are taking the part of Dathan and Abiram.

But the power of the Spirit, in which God would give competency to restrain evil, has been slighted. And nominal office, which has been relied on, affords no remedy, unless the rights which the Roman Catholic system has assumed be attached to it, which is the assumption of power not given to the church at all. It is not for me to assert what is the evil of the present day. I am sure it is not the overflowing boldness of testimony against evil; and if evil exists, the remedy is not in seeking to hinder or to reject (for hindered it surely will not and cannot be) the title of preaching the word which the Spirit of the Lord gives to whomsoever He listeth, but the cordial co-operation of those who hold the truth, by which the common energy (and common energy is infinite energy in this matter) may be exercised against all which does not hold the truth, and for the “seeking out of Christ's sheep in the midst of this naughty world.”

One important advantage from taking God's order instead of man's is at once seen—that men will have their place and agency, whether within or without the assembly of the faithful, by virtue, not of nominal official situations formally set up, but of the gifts which God has given them: a most important principle in the difference between Babylon and the divine economy. In truth, there are few things more important to remember, and especially in the present state of things, when human prescription regulates everything in matters of religion, that for anything but grace to be our criterion of station in the church, save in the awful responsibility of the individual, “these sinners against their own soul” must be wrong. In the last dispensation there was externally appointed

order independent of qualification; in the present the manifold grace and gifts of God in His church are the only means of adjusting and blending in true harmony the various parts and offices of the body of Christ.

With regard to one part of the work, evangelizing, it is clear that a large portion of those who preach officially are incapacitated for it by their own act, as being shut up within restricted limits, and universally without any reference whatever to their individual qualifications, whether teachers, pastors, or evangelists, &c., or to the particular necessities of the station in which they are to labor. To such it must be obvious that the deficiency cannot be otherwise supplied than by those who may be willing to allow God to appoint the field of their operations, and to do the work of the Lord wheresoever they shall be led by Him to labor for His name's sake (3 John 7), and who will be owned by Him though a Diotrephes may reject them. Nothing argues greater want of submission to Christ—greater proof of preference of man's authority to the Lord's, than for any to discredit the free and unrestrained bearing forth of the gospel of the grace of God, who have placed themselves in circumstances where they are obliged to stop short of the work, for fear they should be discredited themselves. It is a work which they cannot do, which they have themselves put it out of their power to do, at least without utter inconsistency; for in so doing, they would be acting in defiance of the authority which has placed them in their prescribed position. Such is their situation, that in following the Spirit of God in their work they would, in most cases, act unrighteously, for it would be against the authority which they recognize and act under.

Take a case, by no means uncommon, which illustrates the dilemma in which they place themselves. A large tract of country is destitute of the gospel.

One in whose heart God has put the desire and whose mouth He has opened to speak of His love, goes, preaches there, and is blessed—gathers out of darkness into light many souls. The district is already full of persons professing to hold office in the church of Christ, but who are not shepherds. What is the laborer to do? leave them for Socinians or enthusiasts to catch, or unheeded altogether? There is no godly righteousness in this. But it becomes a matter of faithfulness to Christ that he should preach to those who are ready to perish; yea, it is a necessity occasioned by the systems which sanction or have sanctioned the idol shepherds, by whom he is surrounded. Now which must an authorized minister, even though a Christian, recognize? He must recognize those idol shepherds, and he cannot recognize the faithful man of God; that is, he must associate himself with ungodliness because it is in nominal office, and not with the Spirit of God because out of it. But he has placed himself in a position in which he must be wrong either way. For if he did not own those shepherds, he would be acting in dereliction of his own responsibilities to the system to whose authority he has voluntarily submitted himself.

Hence also we learn the answer to the question, “Why not take the nominal office?” Because the source is so vitiated that many conscientious men cannot identify themselves with it; and a consideration which, to one who habitually waits on the Lord, is of no small account, that the work or the scene of his operations is not regulated by the Lord's guidance, and the varied exigencies of His service—exigencies which can be met only by entire and unfettered looking to the Spirit of the Lord, Who is the Spirit of true order, for doing the Lord's work according to His own time, place, and purpose—considerations without which His servants are but περιεργαζ■μενοι, busy out of place, whatever may be the apparent result of their labors, and which in many instances amount to

the acquirement of a positive disability to fulfill the office to which God may have appointed the individual, as in the case of an evangelist.

I would make one further observation, suggested by the present question. In observing the infinity of contending interests with which the church is now filled, the “wars and fightings” amongst brethren, the restlessness of those who are spending their power and spirituality in defending one human system against another, the inquiry solemnly forces itself upon us whilst witnessing the surrounding scene of excitement—For what are we to contend? The apostle has answered the question: “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” Let the inquiry then be calmly proposed to all our minds, For what are we contending If it be for anything of secondary derivation, God cannot own it: the contention is for our own, and not for the things of Christ; for nothing since delivered is of His Spirit.

The preceding considerations do assuredly tend to show that opinions, supported by ever so fair an appearance of antiquity, are worthless, being deeply injurious to the glory of God, unless based upon His word. The end in view will have been fully answered if but one servant of Christ should be added to the field of labor; or the doubts removed from the mind of but one brother who hesitates to acknowledge as his fellow-workers those who have been called by the same Spirit. And let it be observed that in this, as in all things, the liberty of the believer is not the spirit of insubordination, but of entire subjection to the Spirit and the church of God, wheresoever they may be found; not the spirit of enthusiasm, but of a sound mind, of a mind at one with God, which alone gives righteous judgment. And let the people of God be waiting on Him for His guidance. It is a time in which those who act with the simplest purpose will carry the work with them (for it is a day in which God is separating realities from forms), as that which can alone stand the universal dislocation which every institution is undergoing, and which the Spirit of God shall, and can alone, go through unscathed, and that they are led by Him unmarred and unhurt.

May God work by His Spirit abundantly. “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.”

J. N. D.

Chapter 55

Thoughts on the Chronicles: Part 1

Of the family of Jerahmeel there is little but the names. The Ram here (1 Chron 2:25) is nephew to the Ram, son of Hezron, and brother to Jerahmeel (2:9). But there is in this branch of Hezron's descendants one man most prominent on account of what he was and what he became through the favor of God, and in so sovereign a manner that, while Israel is under law, a Gentile is honored and prominent in Israel. Sheshan had no sons but daughters. Would not his name and family soon be lost among the thousands of Judah? Nay; for his daughter, though given to his Egyptian servant, stands at the head of thirteen generations (35-41).

When Israel came out of Egypt, a mixed multitude was with them, who became the means of temptation and led them to murmur (Numbers 11:4). But one of the Egyptians that followed Israel had learned to bow to Jehovah, and had found it for his honor to be a servant in the house of Sheshan. He is raised afterward to be a son in the house of his bondage. Thus a Gentile slave is brought into the commonwealth of Israel, and has inheritance among them, and is in touch not very remote with the family of David.

Is this a specimen of that grace which will come upon the Gentile, even upon Egypt, when the Son of David reigns over the whole earth? For here it is not, as of old, Egypt oppressing Israel, but Israel admitting Egypt to partake of his blessing. The day is coming when the Egyptian and the Assyrian shall serve, and Israel be a blessing in the midst of the land (Isa. 19:24). The Gentile shall serve Israel, and Israel shall bless the Gentile.

How sovereign the grace which will not overlook the outcast Gentile! The Gentile element is found in the direct lire of David's ancestry, for Boaz is the son of Rahab and the husband of Ruth. But the collateral line has its Jatha. And how irrespective of persons, the low and vile, and the high and noble I Gentiles are interwoven with the two tribes, the most prominent as being leaders in the house of Israel: Joseph, through Ephraim, ruling in virtue of the birthright, and Judah, of whom is the true David; Egypt's noble daughter, Asenath, with Joseph; the ignoble Thamar, with Judah; lower down the line, Rahab, of the doomed city; and Ruth, a Moabitess. Here too in a collateral line to that of Ram, an Egyptian slave is found. God would not be limited to Israel when it was a question of showing grace; He was as to law, but even under the old covenant, which was special to Israel, He chooses from among the Gentiles whom He will bless. Now that the work of the cross is done, how much more is the illimitable character of grace—God's grace—proclaimed. From Ephesians we know how it brings poor outcasts now into—not the commonwealth of Israel, but more—the enjoyment and possession of highest privilege, far beyond that of the favored Israelite. Once we were aliens to the commonwealth, but now we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and—what Israel was never called, and never was as a nation—we are of the household of God.

In chapter 3 we return to 2:15 and David's sons and successors are given down to Josiah in regular succession from father to son. It was God's order, and was maintained even when the father was slain by conspirators. So that the interruption of this orderly succession would be strong

evidence that God had cast off the nation. And as a fact that order was broken in upon after the death of Josiah, and the wrath began to be poured out as it had not been before. And God no sooner ceases to appoint to the throne than Satan steps in, and by his emissaries, the kings of Egypt and of Babylon, sets up men on the throne whom God rejected and gave up to judgment. Jehoahaz succeeded Josiah in the established order; but, not being confirmed on the throne by God, his reign only lasted for three months. The king of Egypt puts him down and carries him to Egypt, and sets Eliakim (Jehoiakim) on the throne. These were the immediate consequences of Josiah's rashness and folly in going to fight against Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt. God had given victory to Israel over larger armies than that which defeated Josiah. But this was predetermined, and the Judge was at the door. See how God makes all to bow to His will. If Judah bows to the king of Egypt, then must both Egypt and Judah bow to the king of Babylon, for that is the place where their period of captivity is to be endured, and we can see now, the only suited place, for God was going to give rule and dominion to Nebuchadnezzar, and the people who had rebelled against God, as their king, would have to feel as captives the power of the world. For eleven years Jehoiakim—Egypt's nominee—reigns. The king of Babylon appears and takes Jehoiakim to Babylon, and places a child of eight years on the throne. And after three years and ten days he also is carried to Babylon, being still a child. Zedekiah the third son of Josiah and uncle to the child-king taken to Babylon is made king. How like making a football of that throne which Jehovah claims as His own. We know Zedekiah's rebellion and end; with him the semblance of the kingdom of Judah ceased, and Jerusalem was destroyed. Yet wonderfully is the royal line of David preserved. Satan was allowed by his instruments—yea the instruments of God's wrath—the king of Egypt and the king of Babylon, to set aside God's order.

Here (1 Chronicles 3) we appear to have all the sons of Josiah; 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chronicles 36 give the names of those that were made kings. But Matthew gives the right line from Josiah, omitting collaterals, down to Joseph the husband of Mary. “And the sons of Josiah were the first born Johan-an, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum” (Ver. 15). Not the first-born who died in Egypt (2 Kings 23:34) but the second carries on the line, and he is carried to Babylon, and his son Jeconiah who was born previous to the carrying away. This grandson of Josiah is the one that the Spirit of God singles out of all Josiah's sons and grandsons to maintain the true genealogy from David to Messiah. All the rest are, we may say, lumped together by Matthew. “And Josias begat Jechonias [Jeconiah] and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon.” (Matthew 1).

Then after that, while in Babylon, Salathiel is born. Whatever changes in name may be as regards the others, there is nothing surprising in it, for the king of Babylon might as a matter of policy change their Hebrew names to Babylonish, even as he did in the case of Daniel and his three companions. He would, not unnaturally, seek to efface from their minds all remembrance of what they were, and all thought of their country, and of God's temple; and if so, equally an attempt on Satan's part to swamp God's line of kings in the common mass of Gentile names. God, who holds all in His hand, may have led the writer of the Chronicles and Matthew to give, the one their own names as Jews, the other the names as they were known among the heathen. Yet in that confusion when driven as captives to Babylon, the Spirit of God connects the last real king of Judah—Josiah—with his descendant born in Babylon. So Matthew has Josias, Jechonias, Salathiel, (the dark time of Josiah's sons is abridged): compare 1 Chron. 3:15-17 with Matt. 1:11,

12. It is enough for the true believer to know that both Chronicles and the Gospel are inspired. Scripture is inspired by God, the foolish criticisms of learned infidels notwithstanding. The genealogy in Chronicles terminates of course with the return from Babylon. In Matthew the promised Seed appears, the last of the line. He will have no successor, for He lives forever. And though the outward link between Jehovah and the throne of Judah—of Israel—is broken, and man appears to control the destinies of that land, the due time is coming when the Son of David will assert His rights to the throne and kingdom. The kings of the earth will resist His claim, as they have: Jehovah has them in derision.

But what a principle of exceeding grace it is that made all Israel's blessing to hang upon the king Most were bad, and chastisement fell on the nation. Some were good, none perfect, anti prosperity followed. When He comes of Whom the prophet says, “Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins” (Isa. 11:5; 32:1), who can compute the blessedness of all Israel, when the Perfect MAN sits on His Throne? yea, who can tell the joy of the Whole earth when God says of Him that He reigns in righteousness? When Matthew wrote his Gospel, the throne was occupied by an enemy. The might and prowess of a David was a thing of the long past, the splendor of Solomon too was all gone, and the true Heir of their power and glory (yea, of much more) was in appearance a poor carpenter, the reputed son of a carpenter. But the crown is His; the royal title is, through Joseph, legally vested in Jesus the Son of Mary, and in Him it remains: and soon He will take the kingdom which is His both humanly and divinely. “For thine,” O Lord, “is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Amen.”

R. B.

Chapter 56

Thoughts on the Chronicles: Part 2

The main object of the Chronicles is now accomplished. The King is revealed, typically by David, who is brought to the throne by the same power which will ere long make the enemies of Christ to be His footstool (Psalm 110); thus David becomes the pledge of the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel.

Now that the purposes of God concerning His King are made known, the children of the kingdom are named through the heads and chiefs of families. The tribes are given in the appointed order, first, the royal tribe of Judah (chap. 4). Judah was mentioned before in chap. 2 because David is of that tribe: not the families of Judah, but David's genealogy is the point there. Here in chapter 4 it is the tribe that comes first, having the preeminence as being the royal tribe, next in importance to the royal family of David. Most of the great and honorable names of that tribe are in connection with his family.

There is honorable mention made of one man for his piety. Jabez is named, not because he had possessions, but in that he prayed. “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested” (4:9, etc.) His prayer was in keeping with God's promises and Israel's relationships. This is the character of acceptable prayer, and the action of true faith which rests and builds upon the revealed word of God. Earthly prosperity was the unerring mark of God's favor to an Israelite. So witnessed the Psalmist. “I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:25). It is not so now. The Lord Jesus himself was here as a poor and dependent man. He had no possessions in this world. Certain women ministered to Him of their substance (Luke 8:2, 3). And the word for us who now believe is, “having food and raiment, let us be content, therewith” (1 Timothy 6:8). The Christian's thought, even when having possessions here, if true to his heavenly calling, is, that he is only a pilgrim...a sojourner here below, and looks not at earthly possessions great or small. There are earthly wants to be supplied, and our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things (Matthew 6:22). The foundation of faith is the same now as then—the word of God. If the word promised every earthly good, contingent upon their obedience, the same word gives us the assurance of heavenly blessing through Him Who has secured them by His death. The pathway to glory may be through poverty, reproach, and much tribulation; but the heavenly inheritance, reserved in heaven for us, is beyond the reach of thieves, or the touch of moth and rust.

“Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.” Is this an intimation that his brethren had forgotten that God was the Giver of their good things? Here they are not said to pray, and they have no such answer. God grants him (Jabez) that which he requested. Among that rebellious and stiff-necked people there were men of faith, and Jabez was one.

Hezron and his children were given in chapter 2 because David was of that line. In this chapter (4) we seem to have the descendants of Zerah. “These are the families of the Zerathites.” But whether

children of Zerah or Pharez, they are of Judah. And besides Jabez we have Caleb, a well-known name, the son of Jephunneh, the son of Kenaz, if we may so conclude from Numbers 32:12. “Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite.” He was the companion of Joshua in faithfulness, and they were the only two who left Egypt and reached the promised land. All others who entered Canaan were born in the wilderness. Then comes Shelah (verse 21). So the three branches from Judah, Pharez, Zerah, and Shelah have a place here. But though Shelah was the eldest (Er and Onan being slain in judgment), there is no name of note among them such as Jabez and Caleb; they are workers in fine linen, as others were craftsmen (verse 14). There were princes among them “who had dominion in Moab,” perhaps those who were appointed to gather gifts (tribute) from Moab (18:2). But “these are ancient [past] things.” Let us remember that this genealogy was written after the return from Babylon. What honor they had was lost through their sin, and “These were the potters and those that dwelt among plants and hedges, there they dwelt with the king for his work” (verse 23). These descendants of princes seem to be gardeners to the king of Babylon.

“ The sons of Simeon” (verse 24). Wily is this tribe in such close communication with Judah, coming before Reuben and Levi who for different reasons (Reuben losing the birthright, Levi gaining the temple service) are both prominent after Judah? The reason is found in Josh. 19:1, “their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah;” and turning to Gen. 49:6, 7, both Levi and Simeon were to be scattered in Israel. Truly Levi was scattered, but how honorably and blessedly! appointed to maintain the worship of Jehovah; no care nor anxiety but that which pertained to the worship of God. Simeon was small in Israel. “Neither did all their family multiply like to the children of Judah.” Notwithstanding, those mentioned by name were princes, and the house of their fathers prospered (ver. 38). Five hundred of them smote the remnant of the Amalekites that had escaped and dwelt in their cities. This down even to Hezekiah's day. But the word of Jacob at the close of his life was prophetic of the future of each tribe. Simeon and Levi were sons of Leah, and were bound together in the wickedness which caused Jacob to say, “cursed be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.” (Gen. 49) Simeon was the elder, and, may be, compelled Levi to share in his cruelty. They were scattered in Israel. But how wondrously and graciously fulfilled in Levi! His scattering was his exaltation. Simeon on the other hand dwindles down to little more than one-third of his number (compare Numbers 1:23; 2:13; 26:14). Zimri, a prince in that tribe, was a ringleader in the iniquity of Peor. The plague that followed slew twenty-four thousand of them and made a terrible breach in that tribe. After the plague, the Lord bids Moses and Eleazar to “take the sum of the congregation;” and Simeon is found to be twenty-two thousand, instead of fifty-nine thousand as at the beginning.

Chapter 57

Come Unto Me

Matt. 11:28

The secret of Christ's rejection breaks through the clouds. The Jews refused Him as Messiah, because He was infinitely more. Had He been but Messiah according to their thoughts and desires, they were willing to make Him their King. (John 6) But He was Immanuel, God with us He was Jehovah the Savior; for He shall save His people from their sins. Tabernacling among us, and veiled in flesh, the glory of His Person could not be quite hid. There was adequate testimony Who He was as well as what; and the growing unbelief only forced out the proof. How solemn it was here that He bears witness to John the Baptist instead of receiving witness from him! The cross was not yet; but morally all was over. The kingdom of heaven was imminent in a new form, and the least in it greater than John, and faith all instead of sight, and the energy that breaks through difficulties. Men were increasingly manifesting their opposition to God; but wisdom is justified by her children. And the most guilty and obnoxious to His judgment were those who repented not after the mightiest displays of His power and goodness in their midst.

At that season it was that Jesus answered such unbelieving ingratitude by unfaltering submission to His Father. “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered to Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son may choose to reveal [Him].” The Lord thus in the hour of Jewish rejection accepts all humbly and implicitly as the good, holy, and wise will of God, and realizes the glorious counsels of universal administration as the Son and the Heir of all things, far transcending the Messianic Kingdom. Not to know Him at all (γιν■σκειν) was to be void of eternal life; but to know Him thoroughly; (■πιγιν■σκειν) was only possible to God the Father. Christ's person was the more inscrutable, because the Infinite was there, yet in a finite form. He was the eternal God equally with the Father; none the less was He made man, the Word become flesh. We cannot fathom, but most surely believe. It is our deep joy that the Father only fully knows the Son, though we know Him enough to have eternal life in Him. Yet the Son not only knows the Father thoroughly, but reveals Him to whomsoever He may choose (John 1:18).

All our blessing therefore turns on the rejected Christ, the Son. He is the truth, the test for all, the center of blessing for any. Hence the amazing force of “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The moment was not yet arrived for publishing the glad tidings to every creature: His rejection must take its course up to death, yea, death of the cross, wherein sin was to be borne and God glorified about it. But the Lord anticipatively opens the way to every weary and burdened soul, to Gentiles as freely as to Jews. To the rejected Messiah all things were delivered by His Father. And if He thus had universal title (to be enforced in the day of glory), He would use it now in indiscriminate grace. Jesus alone could reveal the Father; Jesus would reveal Him to any, the most wretched and troubled: if they were weary of sin and self, so

much the better; if heavy laden, He only could and would give rest. He was come not merely to help, sympathize, or teach, but to save the lost, to give rest where rest was unknown and could not else be. He does not here say how, but declares emphatically that He would give rest, after inviting the most needy to come, and all of them. It could not be without all cost to Himself, or without revealing the Father to them. But He was come to die for their sins and to make known the God of love. He would thus give them rest from toil and burden.

But He does more. He says, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light.” To us, coming as we are, “He gives” rest: He undertakes all, and gives rest of His own grace: all we have to do is to come to Him. But when come, He calls us thenceforward to take on us that yoke to which He Himself bowed with unswerving meekness and humility before His Father. To this He calls us now. Thus only do we “find rest” for our souls in His righteous government. Obedience and submission in the path of Christ is the sole way of rest for the Christian's heart, whatever His grace to the troubled sinner, and it is sovereign.

Chapter 58

The Cross

See how in the cross the whole question of good and evil was brought to an issue in every way. First it was the complete display of man's enmity against God—the contemptuous rejection of God come in love (for this love He had hatred); and in every detail, disciples, priests, Pilate, all bring out the evil that is in man Then, Satan's power is fully manifested, and that over men in their passions, and in one sense in death, at least in the sorrows of Christ's soul. Next, we see the perfect man as nowhere else: perfect love to the Father; perfect absolute obedience, and this in the very place of sin and the cup it had filled, and in human weakness, Satan's power (though above both in looking to God), and the forsaking of God. And then God Himself in perfect righteousness against sin, and in sovereign perfect infinite love to the sinner—His majesty and truth both made good. Such is the cross. In the history of eternity it stands alone. Man in God's glory is its blessed result. J. N. D.

Chapter 59

Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising

Q. Does “day dawning and day-star arising". (2 Peter 1:19) refer not to the second advent but to the hope of Christ “in the heart” now? In other words is it meant that we do well to take heed to the more sure word of prophecy; but that we may do better by having the heavenly hope in the heart? I have understood the words to contain a parenthetic insertion, as follows— “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.”

When this passage is taken with the context I fail to see how it can teach anything short of, or more than, the fact that the “word of prophecy” is our guide in the midst of the darkness which so rapidly thickens “until the day dawn.” The transfiguration referred to in 2 Peter 1:16-18 was intended to place before the disciples the future Kingdom of Christ. The vision was no cunningly devised fable, although but transitory: what then must the surer word of prophecy be to us? Theirs was only a transient witness placed before the eye; ours is a more abiding testimony which we are called upon to take heed “in our hearts”.

If I have misunderstood, I shall be pleased to be corrected; and if what is here expressed is not the teaching of the passage, I shall be thankful to have it expounded more perfectly. R. H.

A. This Epistle is characteristically practical. As a final message to the faithful of the circumcision (1 Peter 1:1, and 2 Peter 3:1), the apostle is earnest that the heart be in unison with the truth. Many were backward, content with elements and not going on fully into grace. So they adhered to old expectations of Messiah, though on fuller ground. This gives occasion to what is in question. “And we have the prophetic word surer [i.e. confirmed by the transfiguration just recounted], to which ye do well that ye take heed, as to a lamp shining in a squalid place, until day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts, knowing this first” &c. He could not but approve of their heeding that prophetic word which was God's gift to His people: no Christian would slight it if guided of Him. Less the apostle does not say, more he would not; for the danger is not slight of misusing the old to leave no room for the still more precious new revelation of Christ already come, and the true light already shining in Him risen, glorified, and about to come in a way special to the heavenly saints as their Bridegroom. All this whether in present communion or in living hope is peculiar to Christianity and might easily be overlooked or neglected unconsciously perhaps, by those he was addressing, occupied as they would naturally be with that enhanced meaning, force, and beauty of the O. T. which the gospel gave it. Here Peter is doing in his last words what Paul habitually and preeminently did—seeking to urge on the saints to lay hold of our “better thing” than the promise. For that heavenly hope was not revealed till Christ spoke of the Father's house, and of His personally coming to take us there.

Hence we may notice that the prophetic word, confirmed as it is by the vision of the divine kingdom on the holy mount, is compared to a lamp shining in a murky place. To this the Jewish or any saints did well to attend; but the fall of Babylon (past or future), the destruction of Edom, the judgment of the nations, or even the deliverance and blessing of Israel, could hardly command the

hearts of those who have a rejected Christ as life and righteousness and draw near to Him where He is, yea, who are one with Him on high. Therefore the apostle adds (whatever the value of the lamp in a place dark, sad, and evil) until day (i.e. not the day, but daylight, as descriptive of the superior brightness of Christian truth) dawn, and day-star (Christ in His quality of Day-star, the personal heavenly hope of the Christian) arise in your hearts. This might have been practically most feeble or nil in many believing Jews then, such as the apostle was writing to. Alas! it is now largely the need of crowds of Gentile saints; though they have had the New Testament as a whole before them all their days: so naturally do even saints slip back into Jewish things which they blend with Christian privileges so as to lose all the distinctive power of their own proper blessings. Accordingly the force of “day” as contrasted with “lamp” comes out plainly, as of day-star likewise. Compare Rev. 2:28, and xxii. 16. On the one hand the day-star of the prophetic word is the king of Babylon, typical of his final representative in the last days; on the other hand, Christ is its sun of righteousness bringing in the day of Jehovah in power and glory and judgment. The day-light of the gospel ought to shine through in hearts now, as also the blessed hope of His coming arise therein now. It is not unbelievers getting converted, but saints truly converted going on from an Old Testament measure to enjoy that light of heaven which shines from Him Who is in glory and coming to bring us there. For the proper place of a Christian is to walk in the light (1 John 1:7), as he is already a son of light and of day; and his hope is just as peculiar. This scripture has nothing to say of the day coming on the world, in which case the day-star arising could not follow.

It is true that the opinions of commentators on the passage are vague and often erroneous. Still only two men ever dared, as far as my remembrance goes, to tamper with the passage by the aid of punctuation, and both violently through ignorance of the truth conveyed. One of the two ventured on the parenthesis which has misled “R. H.” The other equally erred by severing “in your hearts” from the only context that suits them (immediately foregoing), and by joining the clause in a union which suits not. Either result is nugatory, instead of real power and propriety. The aim of the enemy in such expedients is plainly to oppose the apostle's (i.e. the Spirit's) object—the hearts of the saints embracing their proper portion in enlightenment and hope. The lamp is good; but there is a better light now in the gospel, and a brighter hope in Christ than any expectation of old, however glorious. These are for the heart's joy rather than prophecy, grand, solemn, and true as it surely is.

Chapter 60

Death in Atonement

DEAR Sir—Your paper “Scripture Queries and Answers,” in the Bible Treasury for March touches upon a vital question raised and not yet solved. A doctrine has come to light, according to which there was nothing judicial in the death of our blessed Lord. It is asserted that all the judicial part of the work of the cross was previous to the dying and in the sufferings of the abandonment. This notion is founded mainly upon a letter of J. N. D., in which he says, “At the cross I apprehend it was another thing. He was forsaken of God. He had immediately to do with God and just wrath against sin, and He in that place, so that love could have no refuge for His soul. And here, too, He is perfect and having accomplished this ineffable work, His soul having drunk the cup unmixed, atonement having been made, He comes forth from it as heard, and His act of death is merely His own giving up His spirit to His Father; in the time of peace He had said so; but He was to pass through death in His soul, and did as an offering for sin—but then what was death? It was One Who had overcome death, undergone it in its infinite atoning efficacy, and who gives up His soul, more than pure, which had put away sin, into the hands of God.” (Letters of J.N.D., 1. 208).

Now that our Lord passed through death in His soul during the unfathomable sufferings of the divine forsaking, cannot be doubted. This was moral death, but was “expiation accomplished” through such sufferings, then apart from actual death and blood-shedding? Scripture carefully declares that the blood “maketh atonement”. This surely does not exclude the sufferings, but proves that the expiatory work comprises both the sufferings, the actual death, and the blood-shedding. With all deference to the author of the letter above quoted, I am unable to understand expiation without those three things. Again, scripture says, “Christ died for our sins”, and, in order to mark that it was actual death, adds, immediately, “and He was buried.”

Every Christian holds that our blessed Lord had full title to offer Himself to God both as a burnt and as a sin offering, in very virtue of His own spotlessness and intrinsic perfections; also that in that very deed of offering Himself, He the Son of man was glorified and God was glorified in Him: so absolute and infinite was His personal excellency. All this and more was fully brought out in the holocaust, where all went up to God in a smoke of sweet-smelling savor when He was tested by the fire of divine judgment on the brazen altar; and in that character, by very reason of His perfection thus displayed, He could commit His spirit into the hands of His Father and pass away in peace. But there was the sin offering upon the cross as well as the holocaust, although both in one sacrifice, not in two; and in the sin-offering was death “simply the act whereby He commits His own spirit to His Father”? Here one may be allowed to say, with all due respect, that “merely” or “simply” is not simple at all. Where in scripture is the idea that the sin-offering stops short of death, actual death, and therefore confines itself to the sufferings of the abandonment, however needful and profound, yea infinite, these may have been and truly were? In Heb. 2 we read of “the suffering of death", and not apart from death. Hence it is, I humbly submit, that in the two Gospels where our Lord is viewed as the sin-offering on the cross (Matthew and Mark), nothing is said or heard of what is so blessedly in its place in Luke, where we have rather the holocaust and therefore not the forsaking, and in John, where not so, much as a shadow is seen to hang over the

cross.

It cannot be indeed, as you properly remark, a question of “reconciling” statements of scripture. There are mysteries in the work as in the Person, precisely because both are divine, and to explain them is beyond our competency. Nor need we; for our part is to adore, not to analyze. But where scripture makes such marked distinctions, we should take them into account, and not mix up or supplement.

If wrong in the thoughts expressed, I shall be most thankful for correction. Faith is in God's word, not in erring man's; and if the mind of a greatly honored servant of the Lord has been misunderstood and his, words misapplied, it is important that such misunderstanding and misapplying should also be corrected; for the truth in question is a vital one. C.

Chapter 61

Denial of Propitiating God by Sacrifice

Repeatedly urged to say more on the recent heterodoxy as to propitiation, I had declined on various grounds. Enough as it seemed to me was published to warn souls; and those who did not heed it were disposed to think what had been written too strong, bitter, personal, and I know not what. One could not convince those whose will was adverse.

But now attention is drawn to a development, new to most, in “Help and Instruction,” compiled by Walter Scott, and published some two years ago by E. P. Nicholls, 19, Church Street, Kensington, which contains the following statements— “Now we are not to understand by this that God needed to be propitiated by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to reconcile Him to us. We, not God, needed the reconciliation,” &e. (p. 38); “To speak then of propitiating God by sacrifice would be to belie the teaching of revelation, and to deny what He is Whom we know as our God. Such a thought would do for a heathen, but not for Christians;” &c. (p. 39); “But if He needs not to be propitiated,” &c. (Ib.); “To be propitiated on their behalf He never needed” (Ib.); “Propitiation, therefore, had to be made, though God needed not to be propitiated” (Ib. and 40).

These words have alarmed souls who did not see the doctrine of propitiation in “Recent Utterances” to be fundamentally unsound. No wonder it is seen now. They deny what is universally among Christians felt to be the essence of propitiation in the O.T. as well as the New. The sentiment is really skeptical. Not that propitiation is denied in terms; it is asserted in the same pages and elsewhere. But the necessary appeasing of divine wrath is here categorically excluded from propitiation, as by all misbelievers or rationalists, who also confound it with reconciliation. There might be a loophole of escape in the first of these extracts, “in order to reconcile Him to us;” for this no intelligent believer accepts for a moment. Reconciliation according to scripture is, in God's love, of us only. But the author goes farther, and lays it down thrice in the page that follows in the most unreserved and absolute way.

John 3:16 is cited, without a word about ver. 14, 15. Yet the cross is the turning-point of propitiation, whatever the love of God that gave the Son. On such a question think of leaving out here “even so must the Son of man be lifted up”! The presence of the Lord on earth was indeed a blessed witness of His errand of reconciliation; but how does, how could, it refute the faith of God's elect, that God needed to be, and in fact was, propitiated in His vast abhorrence of our sins by Christ's death? Was there not the deepest displeasure on God's part borne by the Sin-bearer? This is now plainly, deliberately, repeatedly denied to be a vital part of propitiation, in a pamphlet of selections made by another, revised throughout by the author, and sent forth for the direct edification and blessing of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ! The editor is “satisfied that the truths therein unfolded will commend themselves as of God to Bible readers.” May all concerned be forgiven so wanton a wrong!

It is not insinuated for a moment that there are not true things in the pamphlet, and some of them (as in pp. 63, 64) quite inconsistent with the new doctrine on propitiation. But I affirm that the author has abandoned the truth of God on propitiation in a way which the simplest believer in the

most unenlightened sect, if orthodox, would denounce as false and evil. Other truths cannot lighten the guilt of setting aside the truth, the foundation truth, of the propitiation. God made Christ sin for us, and forsook Him on the cross, where He became a curse for others, and suffered for sins, Just for unjust. This indeed was needed in propitiation, to meet the righteous but offended majesty of God, a God that had indignation every day. But this, to which the simplest saint clings in his soul and for which the most instructed only deepens in his thankful and adoring value, is just what is now excluded. “To speak then of propitiating God by sacrifice would be to belie the teaching of revelation and to deny what He is Whom we know as our God.”

Are we to sink below what Israel will soon confess, when Isa. 53. is no longer explained away but believed. “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Does anyone doubt that it was God Who so dealt with Him and that He so suffered in propitiation? The next verse is conclusive: “Jehovah made to light on Him the iniquity of us all,” and farther on, “Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin,” &c. So will the converted Jew own the infinite sufferings of his Messiah in propitiation. The heterodoxy before us jumbles it with reconciliation, and so shuts out God in this, the pivot (I do not say the source) of all blessing to saint or sinner. Man is the object of reconciliation, God of propitiation. It is a shutting out of God's wrath revealed from heaven, which the gospel enables us to behold in all its holy nature and solemn issues, because we have submitted ourselves to His righteousness. But it is no true testimony to love in God if one denies that He needed to be propitiated by sacrifice: thereby we lose His love incalculably.

So far is the author blinded by his error that he does not scruple to say that the thought of that need “would do for a heathen.” The fact is that not only did God in the law keep the need of appeasing Him ever before His ancient people by the sacrificial system, but that Gentiles, besotted though they were, could rarely rid themselves of some imperfect and corrupted notions of its necessity. To have no such conscience, no such faith, is so far to be lower even than a heathen. That God provided Himself the Lamb is undoubtedly of faith, and the revelation of His grace and truth in Christ; but it is the enemy's work to leave out and deny that anger of God against sin, even when only imputed to our blessed Lord, which befell Him as propitiation for us. And the astounding fact lies before us, that, as far as is known of the author's associates, there has not been a cry or a groan, not one public protest or private secession of a faithful soul, because of an error which every single-eyed Christian ought to reject, and clear himself from for Christ's sake. It is not merely (as in 1886) a fable supplanting the truth; it is since then an open contradiction of a most essential element of propitiation as revealed in all the scriptures of God, though presumably the last error flowed from the first. For if propitiation be only in heaven after death, there can be in it no abandonment of God, no suffering of Christ. Both errors make shipwreck of the faith; but the former is the parent of the latter, and necessarily involves it.

Chapter 62

Development (Duplicate)

I deny absolutely development in divine things. In the human mind there is development; in the present truth there cannot be, for God has been n revealed. There is no revelation more, nor meant to be any. Individuals may learn more and more; but it is there to be learned. The scriptures give two positive grounds for this: that I am to continue in what I have learned as the only true ground of safety; and that I know of whom I have learned them. There is a negative ground of proof—the apostles committing us, when they should be gone, to that which would be a security for us. If the person of Christ be the foundation truth of Christianity (and scripture declares it is), as the Son revealing the Father, it is clear there can be no development. His person cannot be developed.

I quite understand it will be said, Of course not; but the revelation of it can. Equally impossible. He Himself is wholly, fully, revealed, and reveals the Father. The Holy Ghost has revealed, and is, the truth. Hence John, who treats this subject, declares that was to continue (abide) in them which they had learned, and they would so abide in the Father and in the Son. They could not have more. If my doctrine “other than (παρ■, beyond or on one side, besides) that which we preached,” says Paul, was preached, neither the doctrine nor the preacher was to be received. If the church did not possess fully the revelation of the Father in the glorified Son by the Holy Ghost, it did not possess Christ at all as there revealed; if it did, it could not be added to or developed. If it added to, it falsified Christ.

That men speculated about it, and their foolish and irreverent speculations had to be rebuked, repressed, corrected, this is true. But whatever was more than returning to the simplicity of the first revelation, or went beyond its fullness, was pure mischief.

Either the apostles and the first church had a full revelation of Christ, or the church never was founded on it. If they had, there was no development of it. So His work: it is complete, or the church is not saved; it was completely revealed, or the church had not its ground for justification and peace. If it had, there was no development. That much was lost I believe.

The greatest stickler for church authority does not pretend that the church receives a fresh revelation. He merely says that the church pronounces on truth as having been revealed. But then there can be no development. Till revelation was complete, there were further truths unfolded, but it was by revelation. Once this is complete, all is closed; and Christianity completes it. The word of God is fulfilled, or completed, says Paul to the Colossians. We are to walk in the light, as God is in the light. It was an unction from the Holy One, by which we know all things. “The Spirit,” says the apostle, “searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” And thus the apostle tells us that he spoke by the Holy Spirit in words which He taught. The true light now shines. We have the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost may guard the saints against error, and show it is error; but the apostles were guided into all truth. Thus John in a passage quoted, “Let that therefore abide in you which ye

have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall continue in the Father and in the Son." We see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So Paul to Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Paul, in going, commends them to God and the word of His grace as sufficient. Peter writes that they should have after his decease these things always in remembrance.

As Tertullian justly says, "What is first is the truth." If Eutyches introduced error, Eutyches may be condemned, and truth stated; yet this is not development, but maintenance of truth as it had been revealed.

It is plain, then, that the church does not teach the teacher teaches. The church abides in and professes the truth she has learned. She is, or ought to be, the pillar and ground of the truth; but she does not teach it. The mystery of iniquity began in the apostles' days: the last days were already come. The truth was there, but men, like Satan, abode not in it. But abiding in it, walking in it, in the truth perfectly revealed in Christ, this was the duty of the saint, even if the professing church would not; and the time was to come Take the case of a young man, sent by his father when they would turn away from the truth, as Paul to the university, who has got into bad company and declared they would.

Chapter 63

Ecclesiastical Defilement

There is not a little vagueness as to ecclesiastical defilement, which God's word dispels. Danger lurks on both sides of the truth, whether from lack of care or from misdirected zeal.

On the one hand it is ungodly to quench hatred of error or of evil by making unity everything. For what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? 2 Cor. 6.

On the other hand it is unbelief to abandon unity because of the simple entrance of evil, however heinous. 1 Corinthians is the standing witness against such unwarrantable haste. Yet what more flagrant than the evil denounced in 1 Cor. 5? Even the heathen would not tolerate it. Notwithstanding the apostle neither severs himself nor disowns them. He censures their state and demands the putting out of the leaven, so as to vindicate the Lord and clear themselves. What disqualifies is the refusal to hear His voice, the rejection of adequate testimony in His name. So the assembly if faithful ceases to say “brother,” and designates the evil-doer as “wicked.” When repentant, the apostle charges them to confirm love to him.

Can any saint doubt that, if the Corinthians had disobeyed the apostolic command, they must have become a leavened lump? For the church to bind up evil with the Lord's name by glossing it over is to judge itself no longer fit to be called God's church: holy discipline is the indispensable condition of its recognizable status and title. For God is not mocked.

Evil doctrine is yet worse and more dangerous to others; it lowers Christ or His work. So we read in Galatians that their adding a Jewish element is. vehemently rejected and designated as “leaven,” no less than immorality. What can be more unspiritual (not to say faithless) than to treat it now with more indulgence?

Chapter 64

The Efficacy of Christ's Cross

The cross of Christ, with its infinite suffering, sorrow, and shame, freely endured by Him, can only be known in all its value by God, Who has fully accepted it. For He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God is glorified thereby.

The work of propitiation was there and thus perfectly accomplished by Jesus the Son of God and Son of man, lifted up from the earth, and exalted now to the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). Thence He sent down the Holy Ghost to bear testimony, not only in the church, but to sinful man, that a Savior now sits upon the throne of God, and that to believe in Him secures not only the forgiveness of all his sins, but “justification from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). “For He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification,” (Rom. 4:25). “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

It is no small measure of blessing and joy to a guilty, and condemned sinner, that trembles at God's word, to be able to say, Through faith in a once crucified now risen and glorified Christ, I am “justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3); or, according to Col. 1:14, in Christ I “have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” And is even this all? Far from it. From the moment he believes, he can thank the Father Who made him meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints (Col. 1:12). For he has been sanctified by the will of God through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10); yea, by that one offering “perfected forever” (ver. 14). And a blessed testimony to this glorious truth is given by the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost sent down ever since the day of Pentecost (Heb. 10:15-17), Who bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), all sins and iniquities having been forever removed from the believer before God, so that there is no more offering for sin. Less than this is not His gospel nor suited to Christ's cross. Other than this is not the Holy Spirit's witness to us. The sinner's position is thus entirely changed by the faith of Christ and of His blood. A new standing in divine grace is given to the believer. He is no longer seen in his sins, nor is he any longer under the responsibility of his Adam nature. As a child of God he is set apart by the Spirit to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). He is called to the path of His obedience (1 Peter 1:14-15). He is a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17), old things being passed, and new things come. Peace and joy now fill his heart in believing, and he exults in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2).

Dear reader, if you believe in Jesus the Son of God, this is your happy portion according to God's word. Is it your enjoyed privilege? If not, why not? E. P.

Chapter 65

Elimelech and Naomi

When Luther learned that his writings were condemned to be burned, he said, “Let them destroy my works: I desire nothing better; for all I wanted was to lead Christians to the Bible that they might afterward throw away my writings.” Such singleness of purpose may well be coveted. Honored is the writer who can lead his readers to the scriptures themselves, for there we are safe; they always make Christ their theme.

The story of God's gifts to Adam can be told in one chapter: the story of the gift of His Son to sinners fills a volume of many books, not one of which, in spite of the critics, can be spared by those who have received Him.

The book of Ruth affords a beautiful instance of how the Spirit of God can cast a simple narrative of homely facts into a form that brings before the mind one of the most precious titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rivets the attention upon it, “the Redeemer.” The Revised Version gives the Hebrew word in the margin of chap. 3, verse 9. (Goel), and it occurs nine times in this book. It is found repeatedly in Isaiah, and occasionally in other books, and is translated, according to the context, by “a near kinsman”, “a kinsman”, “he who redeems”, “the avenger of blood”, and, most frequently, “the Redeemer". One has truly said, “This word would be a study in itself “: may the Lord give us light upon it as found in this book.

The narrative opens with the departure of Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, from the place and the portion which the Lord God had so recently given to His people, and where He Himself dwelt among them, in a time of dearth, to seek help from the Moabites. The times were indeed distressing and difficult. It was in the days when the judges ruled, a time when repeated sin brought again and again severe chastisement, and verging on a crisis of the gravest character, when there would be not only aggravated disobedience but open rejection, by Israel, of Jehovah as their King (1 Sam. 8:7). Notwithstanding this, He was with the judges, and in power, on behalf of His rebellious people, setting them free again and again from their oppressors. What a testimony to all that He was there and full of compassion for them (Judges 2:18). Yet this family turned from Him to seek their supplies at the hand of proud, haughty, and wrathful Moab (Isa. 16:6). Had not the Moabites done all in their power to destroy them by sorcery, by lust, and by war? (Numbers 22-25 Judges 3:12).

But more than this. In the laws and ordinances of the Lord by Moses provision was made for the poor; and they had, nigh at hand, a near kinsman, not only rich but kind, and therefore willing to open his hand wide to them. Had they forgotten him, or was it utter faithlessness that turned them from him to the Moabites? Whatever it was, their course recalls to the Christian the more astonishing fact that, when the Son of God came in flesh, became thus the near Kinsman, and nigh at hand, displaying God's bounty in the most distressing scenes of human misery, His own people rejected Him and turned to the Romans. Neither ought it to be lost sight of, that, as Balaam taught the Moabites how to seduce the Israelites, so teachers in the church who held his doctrine, and taught for reward, first drew the servants of Christ from dependence on, and confession of

Him, to find their gratification in the world (Rev. 2:14). Thus, morally, do we always find the various parts of inspired history hang together.

Strange, yet beautiful, it is to see the marvelous effect the name of Boaz had on Naomi when truly humbled by affliction, and when Ruth told her of his thoughtful care and delicate attentions to her, a poor reaper in his fields. She was like another woman. The sun of joy and hope had risen and dispersed all the clouds of sorrow and despair (read chap. ii. onward). She at once instructs Ruth in the claims which God's grace had given them on such a kinsman, and that out of the very laws and ordinances which, aforetime, both she and her husband must either have been faithless to or have forgotten. Oh! the loss, even of truth once known, when the true Redeemer is slighted and the world coveted. Certainly it is not Elimelech and Naomi alone who have turned from the Lord, in a day of trouble, to the world for their support. How many who are saved by faith, fail in times of trial to walk by faith! How many trust God for their souls who are anxious and filled with fears for their families and their daily requirements! The power of circumstances was too great for these Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah; their neighbors were no helpers and they faithless. So, in these anxious times, when, in every path of active life, so many things combine to pile burden upon burden on the child of God, the low state, morally, of Christians all around, and his own forgetfulness of the Lord and His word, cause circumstances often to prove too much for him. It is for such that simple, homely truth is so essential; and, thanks be to God, it abounds for them in scripture, especially in the teaching of our Lord. Self-will and self-confidence are approved in the world, but must plunge the Christian, as they did this family, into deeper sorrows.

There is thus one lesson on the surface to be learned from Elimelech's failure. He, as all, needed God to sustain him. There might be meat in Moab; but life, breath, and all things are in the hands of the Lord. To forsake Him and to lose life and breath in seeking meat is folly and worse; yet this was in fact and experience Elimelech's course, and, alas! the course of many others. His thought was only to “sojourn” in Moab, but he died there; and his sons, no longer restrained, settle there, taking them wives of the women of Moab. The father sought the things of the world; the children, the world itself; and death came upon them all and spoiled their plans. Is not this a scene within the experience of most? Who has not witnessed something of it? Yet who, like Ruth, have profited by it, and learned to shun the ways of the world and put their trust in the Lord, seeking their reward alone from Him (chapter 2:12)?

Naomi and her daughter-in-law are left desolate and there is no heir. Their coal is quenched; they have neither name nor remainder left on the earth. What a testimony to their forfeiture of all creature-blessing! Was such a state of things possible to woman before the fall? Is there any more common since? All blessing for a ruined creature must be on the ground of redemption, and Naomi ought to have known this from the Exodus. But God, in grace, taking occasion by her failure, would lead her into deeper truth, bringing before her in type, not redemption only but, the Redeemer. This will come before us more fully in Ruth's sweet story; but we must not pass over the touching view opened to us of the deep heart-exercises in poor Naomi. She heard that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread, and she would return to the land of Judah. But restoration of soul, though sure when God is working, is not at a bound. We must realize what a blank the world's prizes are. We see her thus dwelling with much feeling on the past, the time before she wandered (chapter 2). Then she was Naomi (Pleasant). She “went out full”. Now she is Mara (Bitter). “The Lord,” she said, “hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.”

All her resources in nature are dried up, and her vision is clouded by her sad experiences. She can scarcely speak of anything, save of her sorrows, her age, and her helplessness. There is not a word of encouragement for those she loves, widows like herself. She even counsels them to return to Moab when affection led them to accompany her on her way to Judah. The simple piety of Ruth kept her from going back, but Orpah was effectually stumbled by it, for each one has to learn what really governs the heart.

It is wonderful how the faithful course of the young convert, and her considerate love for the desponding mother were used to comfort her, eventually to fill her soul with hope by testifying of the grace of Boaz. All this, to the believer in Jesus, is very suggestive. Not only does the mention of His name bring before Naomi's mind the bright certainty that through him the full tide of redemption blessing would flow in and enrich them, but they would possess, and Ruth in the closest way, the redeemer himself. And so it was. Ruth became the wife of Boaz, and thus the Lord gave Naomi a son. Her hope made not ashamed. Even her neighbors, not now the proud Moabites, but the people of God, cannot refrain from praise. “Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a redeemer, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, “There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, The father of David.” Surely Naomi's joy was full. Christian reader, let us ask the question, Is ours? We have more, oh! how much more, to make it so; even as the testimony of the Spirit to our Redeemer exceeds that of Ruth to Boaz (1 John 1:1-4). W. B.

Chapter 66

Eternal Punishment

Q. J. H. (Blundellsands) questions the correctness of the BIBLE TREASURY, No. 415 (December 1890), p. 188; as the Lord's words quoted from Isa. 66:24 refer to “carcases”, i. e., (as hell also refers) to the intermediate state between death and resurrection. “Their worm” ceases to be theirs when the victim is consumed or destroyed, and its death then would in no wise weaken the true force of the words. The fire is everlasting and not quenched as was that of Sodom and Gomorrah. It consumes all and is everlasting, inasmuch as there is no recovery or restoration from it.

When the Lamb has literally taken away the sin of the world, every creature, everywhere, (then) will ascribe praise to the Lamb as shown in Rev. 5, which depicts the full eternal results of the redemption work of the Lamb, as chap. 4. the millennial glory of the Creator.

The apostle John (as Moses on the mount) is shown a picture of God's purposes, in time and in eternity respectively; then the succeeding chapters show how it is all going to be accomplished.

A. Our Lord in Mark 9 carefully rises above the letter of the Jewish prophet and gives nothing but eternal consequences for the lost.

Hence He expressly leaves out “carcases”, however important in adding to the horrors which the prophet unveils for those in Jerusalem at that future day. In neither is there a thought that their worm will ever cease to gnaw, or the fire to lack its object. The solemn warning is lost if we imagine the annihilation of the punished. For how is it “their” worm, or why the fire perpetual? We ought not to trifle with God's word and man's doom.

Again, Rev. 5 is wholly misunderstood. The vision of Rev. 4 v. is after the heavenly redeemed are seen above and before they issue thence (Rev. 19), when the Lord appears for the execution of judgment on the quick and dead. The ascriptions of praise in chap. v. are when the Lamb takes the hook before a seal is opened, a trumpet blown, or a vial poured out. The removal of the saints to heaven evidently furnishes the occasion, and the Lamb's taking in hand then to reveal the providential preparations to enforce the power of the kingdom. Verse 13 is therefore necessarily anticipative; just as our Lord, when the seventy reported demons subject to them in His name, could say, “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:17, 18). Actually it is not accomplished yet, but is to be before the millennium. (Rev. 12) If St. Paul heard in spirit the groans of creation (Rom. 8) longing for its coming deliverance, here similarly St. John heard its joy when the liberated sons of God were translated. “And every creature which is in the heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb [be] the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, unto the ages of ages.” Demonstrably this is not eternity either that is anticipated, for then will be no sea (Rev. 21); and what a wretchedly low and false assumption that eternity will have such creatures, distinct from angels or the redeemed! Not even men will then be in unchanged bodies. but incorruptible and glorious; whereas the verse in question contemplates the creatures of a lower kind, and all such, birds, beasts, animals that burrow under the earth as well as marine, all

delivered from the bondage of corruption, as assuredly must be in the millennial day and only then as a fact.

On the other hand, the overwhelming fact is that Rev. 21 beyond dispute reveals as part of the eternal scene (1-8), that “for the cowardly and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolators, their part [shall be] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.” Nothing more solemn or sure. The lost wicked are devoted to a punishment without end, if we believe scripture.

This is the fullest picture God gives of eternity which knows no change; and the condemned are then in the lake of fire, as certainly as we see the blessed by grace in a new heaven and a new earth in the most absolute sense. To hope or believe otherwise is rebellion against God and His word. The second death is no more extinction of being than the first. It is the full wages of sin; it is perdition everlasting. Either annihilation or universalism is the foul dishonor of God and the cruelest deception of guilty man. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And He employed some of the words of Isa. 66 in the unlimited sense of eternity, dropping terms which are to be literally accomplished in the kingdom that precedes, as we see in other N. T. applications of O. T. language. Both are accurately true.

Chapter 67

Evolution

Q. The following sentence occurs in “The Bible Treasury” for February, page 210. “There is nothing in scripture to exclude a succession of creatures rising to higher organization from lower, as the rule with a striking exception here and there, from the Eozoon in the Laurentian rocks of Canada to the mammalia which most nearly resemble those of the earth as it is.”

What reasons are there for supposing that creatures thus rose without a creative act?

Would not such an idea be out of analogy with the present creation, where God has made each after its kind? Gen. 1:11-12, 21-25. C.O.A.

A. There is and can be no good reason for the notion that creatures rose from the lower forms as the rule to higher ones without God's creative act. The very word “creatures” implies as much. Scripture is most explicit that all things came into being through Him, and that apart from Him not one thing received being which has received being. All such unbelieving theories of development are therefore in rebellion against the word of God. A creative act introduced each new species.

2. The answer to the second query follows as a matter of course. Even the most prejudiced cannot fail to recognize that creation, vegetable and animal, is ordered on grand typical principles, and that species hold throughout, though admitting of large variation within fixed limits, an immense accession for use and beauty.

Evolution

The writer of papers on Gen. 1 has been told, that p. 210 teaches evolution. The notion is absolutely false. No evolutionist can consistently talk of “creatures.” No believer can deny that plants preceded fishes and birds, as these were followed by land animals low and high, last of all by man created separately and with special marks of distinction. Here is in the Adamic week “a succession rising to a higher organization from a lower.” A similar analogy marks God's creative energy in the previous ages of geology; save that man and certain congeners were not then made. But all this uproots evolution. The objector understands neither the truth of creation nor the error of evolution.

Chapter 68

The Father Seeking Worshippers

John 4:23

This chapter shows God's grace and truth in dealing with a sinner by Jesus His Son; and the sinner not convicted only, but brought to worship the Father in the relationship of a child, to worship God according to His nature as a saint. It is the revelation in short of Christianity; and this the more impressively, because the one thus blessed on the spot was just before a wretched guilty woman of Samaria, saved to worship Him Who is God and Father in spirit and in truth.

Doubtless men ought to worship, as they ought to obey and love God. But their state unfits them: they are sinners, in their sins, and alienated from Him. As they are, to take the place of worship and of obeying the law is to deny their ruin. For it is too late to talk of your duty when you are all wrong and lost, as His word declares, in order to bring men to repentance. Again, it is worse than vain, “in the hour that now is,” to pretend to worship our God and Father unless we are genuine worshippers. The apostle adds, that the worshippers, having been once purged, or cleansed, have no more conscience of sins (Heb. 10:2). Adam, now that he had conscience of his sin, hastened to hide from God when he heard His voice in the garden. So would all unpurged worshippers, if they heard His voice to-day. It is no question of sincerity, but of salvation; cleansing by the blood of Jesus is absolutely requisite. Impossible to worship Him in spirit and in truth, till we know Him by faith as revealed by and in His Son; and we never know Him thus till convicted of what we have done and are by His word as the Samaritan was.

Nor are any so guilty as those who seem so near in Christendom. Christening or a catechism does not purge the conscience. The servant who knew his lord's will, and made not ready nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes (the heathen), shall be beaten with few. God is not mocked: evil unjudged and unremoved cannot escape His judgment; and none are so far from Him really as those that hear the gospel and despise it, unless it be those who profess the Lord's name hypocritically, or such as from a bad conscience become apostates from Christian profession.

For there is grace enough in Christ to meet and save the vilest, as this chapter proves. Hear Him, “wearied with His journey,” sitting at the well, and asking a drink of the sinful woman, to win her heart to God's love, to awaken a just sense of her state, to give her faith in Himself, and in fact to make her a true worshipper. And the Father, as He told her, is seeking such: wondrous truth! not they seeking Him, but He them. Sinners, convicted and believing, are made true worshippers. They contribute nothing but their sins. Grace does and gives all that is of price. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all take part. The sinner has but to abhor his sins and submit to be blessed by God's grace. No wonder, that the result is immense, as the work is; but it is of faith that it may be according to grace, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, Whose is the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages, Amen.

And this is “the hour that now is.” Have you yet listened to the Savior Son of God, as did the Samaritan? Then you too are a true worshipper, bound to worship God in spirit and truth, not formally like a Jew, nor of course falsely like a Samaritan. Yea, if a simple-hearted believer, you are entitled to adore Him evermore as Father; for you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Grace does not find in any sinful man what pleases God; it creates and confers all that pleases Him, when it has brought us to confess that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing. Naturally I am a man, a wretched man that needs a deliverer; and this is none other than the Lord Jesus, Who went down below man's sin and God's judgment that we might be set free in His righteousness, yet all in pure and sovereign grace. For grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But have you owned your sins, your life of sin, as the Samaritan did when convicted by the word of Jesus? Or will you hide your sin like Adam and set yourself as far as you can from God? Oh the infatuation! Do you not know that you must be made manifest another day before Christ? For He is the appointed Judge. What will it be with you then? Assuredly everlasting perdition, unless you have all out with Him now and here. But repenting, and believing God's love in Him, you become the true worshipper that the Father is seeking. So the Samaritan became that very day: why should not you to-day? Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. The mountain of Samaria can bring you no blessing, nor can Jerusalem, or those that follow in the wake of either, remove your curse: none but Jesus can avail, Who became on the cross a curse for all under curse. But He is all-sufficient; He is the Giver of the living water. The water that He gives the needy one that asks of Him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. Such are the true worshippers that the Father seeks; and they only then worship God in spirit and in truth.

“ To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but as of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.” It is God reckoning righteousness apart from works; yet it is the only principle that produces good works as its fruit. Oh let not the pride of unbelief blind you to your truly lost estate; but may you turn to God as you are, a poor lost sinner, and find in the grace of Christ all you want!

Then and thus, met with the free-giving of God, and sealed of His Spirit, as one resting solely on Christ and His finished work, your heart will go out in praise and adoration. This is to be a true worshipper; and such is the Father seeking to the praise of His Son, Whose things the Holy Spirit takes and declares to us who believe. As the Son glorified the Father, so does the Father glorify the Son on high; and the Spirit glorifies Him here below and bears witness of Him. Are you a witness of Jesus, God's Son, the Savior of the world—ay, of a poor unworthy Samaritan? Or are you, alas! a witness of yourself or of other men? Such are not those to be saved. The saved are true worshippers.

Chapter 69

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:1

The Old Testament is a revelation from God in view of His earthly people Israel. It was of the highest moment that they should have the truth authoritatively announced that the one true God is the creator of all. Darkness covered the earth, gross darkness the peoples. Israel, in Egypt, as later in the land of Canaan, was ever prone to forget this truth and lapse into the delusions of men. Fallen like others, they wished to be like all nations in their polity and their religion. Hence the importance of their knowing and acknowledging creation in any real sense; it points to and is bound up with the unity of the living God.

A difficulty has been raised, why, if God created, it was not always. The answer is as simple as complete. Eternal creation, eternal matter, is untrue and impossible, a contradiction for thought, even if we had not the word of God to enlighten us. The Eternal God, if He please, creates: there only is the truth of it. To say that the self-existing One cannot create is to deny that He is the Absolute, that He is God. But that God, omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign and good, can create when He chooses, flows necessarily from what He is. If He could not display Himself in this way, or even more gloriously, He is not God. If the display of creation or of anything else were always, He would not be free and absolute. His sovereignty is part of Himself (Eph. 1:11). Suppose any display necessary, and you destroy in thought His divine essence and will. Necessity is at bottom an atheistic device to get rid of the true God. Creation, therefore, was perfectly free to God, but not necessary; it was when and as He pleased. And He was pleased to create. Creation exists.

Nor can there be conceived a more simple, sublime, and comprehensive opening of divine revelativa than these few words: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It is the absolute commencement of creation, and in the most pointed contradistinction from the seven days. The question is solely about the true unforced meaning of the written word of God, not about Rabbis any more than the chosen people. What does the inspired record contain and convey? it may be of interest to examine what Philo or Josephus understood, as well as how the Seventy translated it into Greek long before Christ. One may weigh either Masora, the Jerusalem Targum, and the comments of Jarchi, Aben Ezra, both Kimchis, Levi Ben Gerson, Saadies Haggaon, Abarbanel, or any other learned Jew, to say nothing of others. But there is God's word given to be read and understood, though not without the faith of Christ, nor without His guidance Who communicated it originally. It was not given to teach science, and it is wholly independent of philosophy for its intelligence. Geologists, Botanists, Zoologists, Astronomers, Historians, &c., have His brief and clear account before them. Man's comprehension of what is communicated may be affected by the amount of, his knowledge, and far more by his faith. This however is a question of our understanding and expounding it; but we must never forget that God is the Author, and the writers only the instruments. The Bible is a moral book, only the more striking in its unity because it consists of so many compositions of so many writers, stretching over a thousand years of the most varied circumstances if we limit ourselves to the O.T. The reader may be right or wrong at any given time in the idea he attaches to what we call “firmament,” “plant,” or the like; but the truth remains unadulterated and unchanging in scripture, for us to read again and again, and to

learn more perfectly.

This indeed constitutes its characteristic and permanent value. It is not only a full and sure source of instruction in consonance with its moral and yet higher designs to God's glory; it is the sole standard of the truth, by which we are bound to test all else which professes to be divine. Let us ever search afresh in faith, and ever grow into a deepening knowledge of the revealed mind of God.

The philosophies, as well as the religions, of antiquity were wholly ignorant of creation. Of God, of the “beginning,” they knew nothing. Dreams of evolution were the earliest folly, and among the Ionic school, Anaximander and Anaximenes followed Thales, each differing, all blind. Anaxagoras let in with mere matter the idea of mind, but no creator. It is useless to name others: even Plato and Aristotle, rivals too, had no real light. They, more or less openly, all held eternal matter at bottom; and though the philosophers boasted, as they still do, of their knowledge and logic, they failed to see that they could not prove it, or even that it is to mere mind unthinkable. To the believer it is the simple yet deep truth, that a beginning was given to everything that exists: if God says it, he perceives that nothing else can be true. For it is impossible to admit an effect without a cause; but reasoning never can rise at best beyond, There must be a First Cause; it can never say, There is. This God alone can and does affirm: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God brought the whole ordered system into being. The form, nature, and aim, are not here explained: such a detail had no proper place here. That He created all is a primary and momentous truth.

But there is not a word in scripture to warrant the strange and hasty assumption that the universe was brought into being in the six days of Genesis 1:3-31, so often referred to throughout the Bible. Construe the six days as men will, it is out of the power of any on just principles of interpretation to deny that the first day begins with light, and that the first two verses are marked off in their nature, as well as by their expression, from the work of the six days. Nothing indeed but prepossession can account for the mistake, which the record itself corrects. “In the beginning” has its own proper significance, and is in no way connected with “the days,” save as the revealed start of divine creation, and in due time (however probably immense the interval) leading to that measure of time only when the constitution of things was made for Adam, for the race.

The antiquity of the earth may be as great as the shifting schemes of the most enthusiastic geologist has ever conceived: there is absolutely neither here nor in any other part of scripture the least intimation that opposes vast ages before man was created, or that affirms man to be nearly contemporary with the original creation. It is ignorance of scripture that Moses assigns an epoch to the earth's first formation such as fathers or commentators (not without worthier remarks) have imagined and made current in Christendom. The philosophers who have spent their time in the study of geology and kindred sciences will act wisely in reading with unwonted care the beginning of Genesis 1. They will thence learn that they have been precipitate in the conclusion that the inspired writing is at all committed to the blunders of its interpreters, theological or scientific. However vast the periods they claim, even for the strata nearest the surface, scripture is the sole record which, while revealing God as the Creator of all things, leaves room for all that has been wrought before the Adamic earth. “The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary: there is no searching of His understanding” (Isa. 40:28). While

geology waits for its Newton, subjection to scripture meanwhile would be untold gain to its devotees as to all other men.

There was an epoch then in the infinite course of eternity when God created the universe. This is here stated with the utmost accuracy— “in the beginning.” It is in view of man, primarily indeed of Israel, that the Pentateuch was written, the Second Man, the last Adam, being the, as yet, hidden object (and the church one with Him) of God's counsels. Angels are not spoken of, though we know from another ancient book of inspiration that they expressed their joy when earth's foundations were made to sink (Job 38:6, 7). “In the beginning,” accordingly, is severed from all the measures of time with which man's existence is conversant. How admirably previous duration, unlimited by ordinary notation, suits the immense changes of which geology takes cognizance, needs no further remark here.

“ God” in our version answers to the Hebrew Elohim, which however has the peculiarity of a plural substantive with a singular verb. Christianity alone in its own time cleared up the enigma, which still remains impenetrably dark to the Jews, as well as to other men, who know not in Christ the True Light.

Again, there ought to be no doubt among scholars that the word “created” in our tongue corresponds better than any other with the original. With us, as with Israel, the word admits of application to signal callings into existence out of actual material as in Genesis 1:21, 27 but only with a special ground and emphasis. And never is it used of any other maker than God. But if the aim were to speak of creation in the ultimate, highest, and strictest sense, the Hebrews, like ourselves, had no other word so appropriated. Here the context is decisive. “God created the heavens and the earth,” where nothing of the kind existed previously. They were created out of nothing as men speak, perhaps loosely, but not unintelligibly. The heathen might worship the heavens, as all did, or even the earth; the Jew sinned against the written word if he was ensnared of Satan after their dark example. The first words of God's law told him that those were but creatures; Israel was to hear if others were deaf, and bound to own, serve, and worship the one God, the Creator. The chosen people was quite as ready as any other to worship the creature, as all their history to the Babylonish captivity proves; but there can be no doubt what the Bible supposed, declared, and claimed from its very first verse. God created the universe.

Further, it is not matter created, crude matter, to be afterward fashioned into the shapely and bea'itiful universe of the heavens and the earth. It is not chaos first, as Greek and Latin poets feigned, in accordance with heathen tradition never wholly right, though often mixing up what was not wrong. It is not a nebula, as La Place conceived, a mere modification of the same rationalism however refined it be. Lord Rosse, by his observations with his great reflector, has fairly disposed of this unbelieving hypothesis. For he has proved that many nebulae, considered even by the Herschels irresolvable objects, actually consist of agglomerations of stars. Surely therefore the only just presumption is that all nebulua are nothing more, and only need more powerful means to make manifest their true nature. God only has given the truth plainly, briefly, and after a way transparently divine in its simple and unparalleled majesty. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

How is it, ye savants, that this great truth is found here only in its pristine splendor, towering above your Hesiods and Homers, your Ovids and Virgils, your Egyptian and Mexican remains, your

Hindoo and Chinese fables? How is it that to our day the Lyells and Darwins, to say nothing of profaner men, are stumbling in the dark over a morass of hypothesis, (to say the least) unproved and dubious? It is because God's word is not believed as He wrote it; and this, because men like not the true God Who judges sin and saves only through His Son, the Lord Jesus. So of old when men knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. It is the more guilty now, because, the Son of God being come and having accomplished redemption, the darkness quite passes away and the true light already shines. Alas! anything is welcome but a living God, and least of all the whole universe created by and through and for His Son Who is before all things and by Whom all things consist. “By faith we understand [apprehend] that the worlds have been framed by God's word, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear” (Heb. 11:3). Ed.

Chapter 70

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:2

Creation then in verse 1 is the great primary fact of revelation. It is all the stronger, because the Hebrew text has no article, any more than the Greek in John 1:1. It is therefore undefined. Compare Proverbs 8:23. From the context, however, it is plain that the fourth Gospel rises beyond the first book of Moses; for it goes back to divine and eternal being (not ■γ■νετο but ■ν), and not merely divine origination, which in fact appears later (in John 1:3), and this in a form all-embracing and exclusive. “All things were made (came into being) through Him, and without Him was not anything made which hath been made.”

“ In the beginning” is not a known fixed point of time, but indefinite according to the subject matter; it here intimates that “Of old,” or “In former duration” (expressly undefined), God created the universe, Undoubtedly there is no disclosure of the immense eons of which geologists speak so freely; but the language of verse 1 leaves the door open for all that can be proved by research, or even for the longest demand of the most extravagant Uniformitarian.

But the words do affirm a “beginning” of the universe, and by God's word, as in both Old and New Testament. (See, Psalm 33:64, and Hebrews 11:3). This was everything to accomplish His design, and His design was to create the heavens and the earth, where there had been nothing. Whatever Atheists or Pantheists feign science at length” confesses there was a “beginning;” so that “created” stands here in its proper and fullest sense, as, the context requires:

“There was a beginning, says geology; to Man; and farther back, to mammals, to birds, and, to reptiles, to fishes and all the lower animals, and to plants; a beginning to life: a beginning, it says also, to mountain ranges and valleys, to lands and seas, to rocks. Hence science takes another step back, and admits or claims a beginning to the earth, a beginning to all planets and suns, and a beginning to the universe. Science and the record in Genesis are thus one. This is not reconciliation; it is accordance.” So writes Dr. J. D. Dana, the eminent American Professor, in the Old and New Testament Student of July 1890.

The record declares that God created not a “formless earth,” but “the heavens” (where at no time do we hear of disorder) “and the earth.” But even as to “the earth,” which was to be a scene of change, we are expressly told by an authority no less inspired, and therefore of equal authority with Moses, that such disorder was not the original state. “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; He is God; that formed the earth and made it; He established it, He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). The Revised V. is purposely cited, as confessedly the most correct reflection of the prophet. Here is therefore the surest warrant to separate verse 2 from verse 1 (save of course that it is a subsequent fact), severed, it may be, by a succession of geologic ages, and characterized by a catastrophe, at least as far as regards the earth. Indeed it would be strange to hear of an ordered heavens along with a “formless earth” as the first-fruits of God's creative activity. But we are not told of any such anomaly. The universe, fresh from God's will and power, consisted of “the heavens and the earth.” Silence is kept as to its condition then and up to the cataclysm of verse 2; and most suitably, unless God's purpose in the

Bible were altogether different from that moral end which pervades it from first to last. What had the history of those preliminary physical changes to do with His people and their relations to Himself? But it ought not to be doubted that each state which God made was a system perfect for its aim. Yet it was not materials only, but heaven and earth.

And the earth was [or became] waste and empty, and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God [was] brooding upon the face of the waters" (ver. 2).

The well-known and flexible particle of connection in the Hebrew text introduces the verse. Its meaning, usually and simply copulative, is often modified, as almost all words in every language must he, by contextual considerations. Hence the learned Dathe, in 1781, renders it here "posthaec vero," expressly to distinguish the state of thing in ver. 2 from that referred to in ver. 1, and sends us to such instances as Numbers 5:23; Deuteronomy 1:19. Now there is no doubt that the Hebrew conjunction admits of an interval as often as facts demand it; but there is no need of departing from its primary force, "clad" (though our conjunction is not so pliant); or it may readily have a somewhat adversative force as we see in the 70. The true determination lies in what follows. For the usage of the past verb when thus employed is to express a state subsequent to and not connected with what goes before, but previous to what follows. Hebrew idiom does not use that verb simply as a copula, as may be seen twice in this verse, and almost everywhere; or it puts the verb before the noun. The right conclusion therefore is that Moses was led to indicate the desolation into which the earth was thrown at some epoch not made known, after creation, but prior to the "days" in which it was made the habitation for Adam and the race.

With this agrees the occurrence of the remarkable phraseology "waste and empty" elsewhere. There are but two other occasions—Isa. 33:11, "the line of confusion [or waste] and the stones of emptiness;" and Jeremiah 4:23, "I beheld the earth; and lo! it was waste and emptiness." In both it is a desolation inflicted, not the primary condition. So it is in Genesis 1:2. It is the more to be noted, as in Jeremiah it is said of the heavens at this time that "they had no light." Thus is confirmed, by each of the other occurrences, the conviction that our text describes a state which befell the earth, possibly long after its original creation as in the verse before. It is to this interval that the successive ages of geology apply. There are undeniable facts, full of interest, and implying creation made existent and extinguished. One's confidence in the hypotheses reared on all this may be otiose or enthusiastic; but the exact meaning of Moses' words in this verse leaves all the room that could be desired for those vast processes which may be gathered from the observed phenomena of the earth's crust. There is nothing, in scripture to exclude a succession of creatures rising to higher organization from lower, as the rule with a striking exception here and there, from the Eozoon in the Laurentian rocks of Canada to the Mammalia which most nearly resembles those of the earth as it is. But all the brilliant ingenuity of Sir C. Lyell, with others of kindred view, fails to explain or evade the proofs of change at this very period, immense as it may have been, incomparably vaster and more, rapid than since man appeared. No doubt the deluge had the deepest moral significance, and is thus unique, because the human race, save those in the ark, was then swept away. But physically its traces were superficial compared with those far more ancient convulsions so apparent, except to those who worship Time and —Uniformitarianism.

"We simply assert" (says the cautious Sir R. I. Murchison)," on the countless evidences of fracture, dislocation, metamorphism, and inversion of the strata, and also that of vast and clean-swept

denudations, that these agencies were from time to time infinitely more energetic than in existing nature—in other words, that the metamorphisms and oscillations of the terrestrial crust, including the uprise of sea-bottoms, and the sweeping out of debris, were paroxysmal in comparison with the movements of our own era. We further maintain that no amount of time (of which no true geologist was ever parsimonious when recording the history of bygone accumulations of sediment, or of the different animals they contain) will enable us to account for the signs of many great breaks and convulsions which are visible in every mountain-chain, and which the miner encounters in all underground workings.... The case therefore stands thus. The shelly and pebbly terraces, which exist, are signs of sudden elevation at different periods; whilst the theory of modern gradual elevation and depression is still wanting in any valid proof that such operations have taken place except within very limited areas. Much longer and more persistent observations must indeed be made before any definite conclusion can be reached respecting the rate of gradual elevation or depression which has been going on in the last thousand years, though we may confidently assert that such changes in the relation of land to water in the historical period have been infinitesimally small when compared with the many antecedent geological operations" (Siluria, 490-1, fifth ed., 1872).

On the one hand the facts point to changes in earth and sea, and these repeatedly varied too with fresh water; rocks igneous and stratified and metamorphosed, and (during the periods thus implied, and with a corresponding environment of temperature and constitution) to organized natures, vegetable and animal, from lower orders to high, short of man and those animals which accompany his appearance on the earth; whole groups of these organisms in vast abundance coming to an end, and others quite distinct succeeding and extinguished in their turn. Would it not be a harsh supposition that God, in the fossils of the rocks, made a mere appearance of what once lived? that these petrified creatures never had animate existence here below? On the other hand, the principle and the fact of creation we see not more plainly revealed in verse 1 than of disruption in verse 2; and both before the actual preparation of the earth for Adam as described in the six days.

As the creation, announced in a few words of noble simplicity, is the first and most momentous of God's productive interventions, so the catastrophe here briefly described seems to be the last and greatest disturbance of the globe, the twenty-seventh or sub-Appenine stage, if we are to accept the elaborate conclusions of M. Alcide D'Orbigny (Paleontologie Strat. Tome ii. 800-824), a most competent naturalist, when the Alps and Chilian Andes received their actual elevation, of itself, though with many other changes of enormous consequence, quite sufficient to account for universal confusion, with destruction of life on the earth, the deep supervening everywhere, and utter darkness pervading all. However vast, this state may have been for but a little while. The animals imbedded ages before in the rocks had eyes; presumably therefore light then prevailed. Indeed some of the earliest organic remains had vision with the most striking adaptation to their circumstances, as the Trilobites of the Silurian and other beds, with their compound structure, each eye in one computed to have 6000 facets (Owen's Pal. 48, 49, 2nd ed.) The language of verse 2 is perfectly consistent with this, when compared with verse 1, and in fact naturally supposes the darkness to be the effect of the disorder. To confound the two verses is as contrary to the only sound interpretation of the record, as it is to the facts which science undertakes to arrange and expound. Nor can anything be more certain than the manner in which scripture steers

clear of all error and consistently with all that is irrefragably ascertained, whilst never quitting its own spiritual ground to occupy the reader with physics. To reduce these gigantic operations of the geologic ages, in destruction and reconstruction with new living genera and species, to the slow course of nature and providence in the Adamic earth, the fashionable craze of the modern school, is “making a world after a pattern of our own,” quite as really as uninformed prejudice used to do. It was absurd to deny that the petrifactions of the strata were once real animals and plants, and to attribute them to a plastic force in the earth or to the influence of the heavens; but so it is to overlook the evidence of extremely violent and rapid convulsions before man was made, closing one geological period and inaugurating another with its flora and fauna successively suited to it in the wisdom and power and goodness of God.

Neither verse 1 nor verse 2 is a summary of the Adamic earth, which only begins to be got ready from verse 3. There are, accordingly, three states with the most marked distinction: original creation of the universe; the earth passed into a state of waste and emptiness; and the renovation of the earth, &c. for man its new inhabitant and ruler. Science is dumb, because wholly ignorant, how each of these three events, stupendous even the least of them, came to pass; it can only speak, often hesitatingly, about the effects of each, and, with least boldness, about creation in the genuine sense, though some, I cheerfully acknowledge, with outspoken and ungrudging cordiality. How different and surpassing the language of scripture, which has revealed all these things to babes, if they are hid from or dubious to the wise and the prudent! From the Bible they are or ought to be known on infallible authority, and this in the first written words God gave to man, when Rome and Athens had not emerged from barbarism if they existed as such at all.

Our verse 2 then brings to view a confused state of the earth, as different from the order of primary creation as from the earth of Adam and his sons, in regard to which state the Spirit of God is said to have been “brooding upon the face of the waters.” By His Spirit the heavens are beautified; and as to creatures generally it is written, “Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the ground.” Here it was to be for man's earth. This is the link of transition. All was to be by God's word. Wisdom rejoices in the “habitable” earth, and has delights with the sons of men. A mighty wind might rage over the abyss. The Spirit of God, not the wind, could be said with propriety to “brood.” What new wonders were at hand!

Chapter 71

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:3-5

Now comes the first point of direct contact with the habitable earth and its surroundings. We have had (ver. 1) the creation of the heavens and the earth, apart from date or definite time; we have had also (ver. 2) a superinduced condition of confusion, but the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the waters. Neither one nor other has to do with man's earth, though earth there had been under both those differing and successive conditions. Nor can it be doubtful to him who knows God, that even the latter had its worthy and wise aim as well as more obviously the former. But neither phase is connected immediately with man, though all was done to God's glory with man in prospect, and above all the Second man, as we can add unhesitatingly from the N. T. It is to the facts stated in these preliminary verses that geological observations and inferences would mainly refer. As the words are few and general, there is ample space for research. The believer knows beforehand that theoretic conclusions wherever sound must fall in with the sentence of inspiration. The work of the six days has little if anything to do with geology. There may be a measure of analogy between the work of the third, fifth, and sixth days, and certain of the alleged antecedent geologic periods which the Bible really passes over silently as being outside its range and object, while room is left for them all in vers. 1 and 2. But the effort to force the days, whether those three or all six, into a scriptural authority for the successive ages of geology is mere illusion. If it be a harmless use of geology, it is anything but reverence for God's word or intelligence in it. That there are discrepancies between the record and any facts certainly ascertained, neither geology proves, nor any of the sciences still more sure and mature. But he who is assured of revealed truth can afford to hear all that experts assert even when based on a partial induction of facts, as is not seldom the case. If outside scripture, there is nothing a believer has to contend for; if scripture speaks, he believes, no matter what science declares to the contrary; if science confirms it, so much the better for science. Assuredly God's word needs no imprimatur from men.

If one appealed to any branch of physical science as to the first day, he could get no clear answer. Geology has nothing to say, confessedly. What can astronomy or optics do more? Science, as such, leaves out God—science, not scientific men, many of the greatest of whom have been true-hearted believers. Science, in itself, knows nothing of the power that originated, ignores the First Cause, and shirks, ordinarily, even the final causes which might summon heed to a first cause. It occupies itself with art established order in the world and with secondary causes, especially those at work before men's eyes or probably deducible from experience. The peril for the unwary is obvious, and real, and notorious. It would be much less if science were honest enough to acknowledge its ignorance of what is beyond its sphere. But often its interpreter says “There is not", where logically and morally he is entitled only to say, “I know not". This is not merely audacity without warrant, but sin of the worst kind. The fool hath said in his heart, “there is no God.” It is exactly where science finds itself confessedly stopped by a blind wall that scripture proclaims the truth from God. As He knows, so He revealed as far as in His wisdom and goodness He saw fit. “And God said, Light be: and light was. And God saw the light that [it was] good; and God divided between the light and the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness

He called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, one (or, first) day" (vers. 3-5).

Now who but an inspired man would have so written? The more you depreciate Israel as an unlettered if not rude and barbarous people, the greater the wonder. Did Egypt so teach, or Babylon, did Greece or Rome? How came Moses to declare that the fact was as he writes? I do not speak of the sublime which Longinus so justly extolled, but of that which human experience never could have suggested; for living man, had he judged from universally known phenomena, had ever regarded the sun as the great source of light; so that if the writing had been his, he must naturally have spoken first of that bright orb: In other words, the work of the fourth day would more reasonably have taken the place of the first. That the philosophers taught for ages afterward. But not so the truth; and, whatever the seeming and striking difficulty, especially then, Moses was given to write the truth. As the apostle says some fifteen centuries after, God spoke light to shine out of darkness (2 Cor. 4:6). The darkness is not said to have been everywhere, but "on the face of the deep", and now that an earth for the human race was in question, there it was that God commanded light to shine. That it was "created" now is not said; that it had existed before during the geologic ages for varying phases of the earth and for a very long while for the vegetable and animal kingdoms, there is abundant reason to conclude. But this is science, not faith, though the scriptural account is the sole cosmogony that leaves room for it.

But what is affirmed is that (after utter confusion reigned for the earth and darkness on the face of the deep, yet the Spirit of God brooding on the face of the waters) God interposed and said, Light be; and light was. As far as the Adamic earth was concerned, the light-hearers were not yet set in their functions as now: this was the fourth-day work. The word was, "Light be "; and light was: language evidently consistent with that view of light which prevails in comparatively modern times against Sir I. Newton's theory of emanation from the sun. If the phenomena of light are allowed in general to be a result of molecular action, and dependent on fundamental qualities of matter as it is now constituted, so that it was not the creation of an element admitting of independent existence, as science now owns, is it not remarkable that the words of Moses avoid all error, without forestalling scientific discovery, and express nothing but truth in the clearest terms? At the word of God appeared instant activity of light at that time inert.

But science easily over-shoots itself in hasty generalization. For it contradicts the inspired record when it ventures to say that the fiat as to light on the first day must have preceded the existence of water and of earth, of liquid or solid or gaseous compounds of every kind. Granted that light is manifested in the making of such compounds. But verses 1 and 2 give the surest testimony that "earth" and "water" did exist, not indeed before light, but before that particular fiat of God which called it into action for the earth that now is, after the confusion and darkness which had just before prevailed.

It is all a mistake then, and distinctly at issue with the context to assume, that there was no "light" in the state of things intimated by ver. 1. And it is allowed that even the "earth" and "water" of ver. 2, whatever the then state of ruin and darkness could not have been without "light" previously if but to form them. Verse 3 was therefore really the signal of creation begun, but of God acting afresh and in detail, ages after the universe was created, with its systems, and within them its suns, planets, and satellites. On the plain face of the record, after the mighty work of the universe, and after a disruption that befell the earth with most marked consequences, God puts forth His word to

form the Adamic earth with its due accompaniments. Hence we may notice anticipatively that on the fourth day not a hint is given of creating the physical masses of the sun, moon, and stars. It is there and then no more than setting them in their declared and existing relations to the earth. Their creation belongs in time to Gen. 1:1; but of the rest more fully in its place. That on the first day light dissipated the then prevailing darkness is true, and of deep interest as God's first word and act for the earth of man. But this says nothing about the original creation of the heavens and earth. Nor is it quite comprehensible why “the waters” of ver. 2 should be not literal waters, because utter darkness veiled the deep or abyss. These are the inconsistencies that necessarily flow from the false start which confounds “in the beginning” of verse 1 with the “first day” of verses 3-5 and those that follow; as this again involves the extraordinary error of taking verse 2 to be the original state of the earth in verse 1, when it originally came into being from God.

The hypothesis that the earth when creation began was a frigid chaos or frozen globe, strange as it seems, is hard to escape for such as deny successive states since creation according to God's will, or, which goes along with it, for such as affirm the “creation” of the sun, etc. only on the fourth day. The argument is that, if so, it must have been almost cloudless, well lighted, and well warmed—in short, an impossibility. But reasoning from things as they are to a condition so contrasted in the record itself with what God formed for man subsequently is fallacious. It is simply a question of what God tells us of the abnormal state supposed in verse 2. Not a word implies frigidity, save that darkness was on the face of the deep, which may rather have been the effect of heat acting on the earth and the waters, a transient state after previous order, and before it was made for Adam. The record in no way identifies the disorder with the earth when its creation was effected in verse 1; but it assuredly distinguishes the dark dislocation of verse 2 from the work of the fourth day when the earth and sun and stars became one in system as in their present constitution. In short, the dilemma appears to be quite baseless. The true scope of verse 2 is not at all that the original creation was a scene of darkness, even for the earth, but that when the earth, not the heavens, was thrown into confusion ever so long after, darkness was on the, face of the deep. Light is not an element calling for annihilation (which would indeed be absurd), but a state flowing from molecular activity which God could and did here arrest as far as “the deep” was concerned. It acted all the same elsewhere; as it had over the earth till then during the formation of what some geologists call the Tertiary, Secondary, and Primary beds, to say nothing of what preceded: details for men to discover and interpret as they can scientifically, but as foreign to scripture as the detailed wonders and movements of the starry heavens.

Hence “creation” of light, first or second, in the universe is only the slip of philosophers. Scripture is more accurate than its most modern expounder, even when striving to show the accordance of science with the Bible. In the gloom that overhung the earth thrown into desolation God caused light to act, as the characteristic act of the “first day” of the week, the brief cycle that was to close with man its new master and representative of God here below. “And God saw the light that it [was] good; and God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.” It presents to us God pondering and speaking in gracious consideration of the race He was about to create thereon, with a mind dwelling on realities about to open out for man far more solemn than the light or the darkness, day or night, literally. Yet the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart, says the Preacher (Prov. 15:30), and truly is sweet (Eccl. 11:7), as God pronounced it “good”. “And it was evening, and it was morning, first (or, one) day.” Only we must

guard against taking the previous darkness as the evening. It would appear rather that light shone; and then its waning into night, and brightening into day, constituted the first day. That the earth would revolve on its axis, before the light-bearing of the sun afterward, and so have the phenomena of evening and morning, is easy to apprehend. The fact is certain; the “how” was no difficulty to Him Who spoke and it was done. Our place is to honor Him in believing His word, without which faith nothing is as it should be. Another first day was to behold a better light: there too, still more conspicuously, if that True Light shone when all was profounder darkness, He too had been before the darkness.

If the preceding exposition be just, the day of the first week is plainly one of twenty-four hours. No one can fairly deny that scripture, like other speech, uses “day” where required in a general or figurative sense, which may cover a period of considerable length. But this need never produce embarrassment to a careful reader: as ever, the context gives the clue. In this chapter and the next we have the word variously applied according to the exigency of the case; in none ought it to be doubtful. Here “the evening” and “the morning” should exclude just question. It can only mean, thus defined, a day of twenty-four hours. Before (not “there was a sun”), but before the sun was set to rule the day (of twelve hours) as now makes no difference as to the length meant. The same phrase is carefully used before and after. Nor would any prolonged sense have been tolerated for this carefully specified week but for the error which muddles “the beginning” with the first and following days, makes the heavens and the earth at first to be a chaos, and in so doing effaces in fact the creation of both the one and the other. For where is either really “created” on such a scheme?

This will appear still more convincingly when we come to close quarters with the six days viewed as embracing the immense ages of geology. It might not be so glaring when taken in a dreamy poetic way as a vision in the hands of the late Hugh Miller. But when the simple dignity of the true father of history is vindicated for the matchless prose of Moses, the effort to make the days, or some of them, answer to the ages of geologic formation in building up the crust of the globe proves itself so much the more glaring and violent failure. Take the first day as our first test: are we told to imagine such a notion as that the outshining of the light in dispelling the immediately antecedent darkness occupied an age? And if not for the first day, or the second, or the fourth, how harshly inconsistent to claim it for the third, fifth, and sixth? Especially as the seventh day, or sabbath, should honestly put to the rout any such application. In every case the figurative sense is here irrelevant and unsuitable. We shall see in due time from scripture that the stretching out of the sabbath into an æon is altogether unfounded.

An ingenious attempt is made in “Sermons in Stones” to show that the brooding of the Spirit in verse 2 means the creation of submarine animals (Zoophytes and Bivalve Mollusks without visual organs) before light; then of a higher class furnished with organs of sight after light on the second day; and lastly of Vertebrate Fishes on the third. All this is error opposed by the record, which admits of animated nature for man's world only after the fourth day. For this confusion we are indebted to the misinterpreting “days” here into ages. The truth is, according to the record, that the Spirit's brooding upon the face of the waters is quite general and admits of no such precision, as it was also before the first day. And if the days were simply days of the week in which Adam was created, geology can neither affirm nor contradict. Its main office is to investigate the evidence of the successive ages of the earth's crust before the human race. It is freely granted that the

language employed by inspiration is that of phenomena; but this does not warrant the hypothesis of the medium of a vision. It was a divine communication to and by Moses; but how given we know not and should not speculate, lest we err. A vision in fact might have shown him the submarine animals, being beyond natural conditions; but the hypothesis is invented to foist in the creation of animals not seen or specified in the record.

Further, we must banish the notion that the black pall of an unbroken night was the original condition—a heathen, not a biblical, idea. It was not so before verse 2, which describes a subsequent and transient state. The first verse supposes an order of the universe; the second, an interruption of no small moment for man; then in verse 3 the week begins in which the earth was prepared for his abode who was made before that week ended. The geologic ages had passed before the human measures of time commenced. If the record had been duly read, the Inquisition might have avoided its unwise and suicidal judgment of Galileo; for the first day, compared with the fourth, favors the Copernican theory as decidedly as it condemns the old philosophy of Ptolemy. It exactly agrees with the revolution of the earth round its axis for evening and morning, independently of the function of the sun soon after formed. Only we must take note that the profound darkness dispelled was neither primeval nor universal, as many men of science have hastily assumed. It had nothing to do with the heavens, any more than had the disorder which befell the earth, after ever so long lapse of time.

Chapter 72

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:6-8

Happily the second day's work admits of a notice so much the more brief because of the rather full remarks on the preceding verses. In these were discussed the original creation “in the beginning “; then the superinduced state of confusion; lastly the work of the “first day” that brings in the week of the earth's preparation for the human race.

The evident immediateness of the first day's work applies throughout the other days. Whatever grounds there may be for scientific men to infer processes occupying vast tracts of time before the “days”, there is no real reason to doubt, but plain and positive scripture to believe, that the work done on the several six days was not of long ages, but really within the compass of the literal evening and morning. How unnatural to suppose an age for light to act on the first day! And why suppose otherwise on the second day or any other? A long succession of ages may be true after “the beginning” and before “the days,” which taken in their natural import have a striking moral harmony with man, the last work of God's creation-week.

In this way there is no contest between long periods of progressive character and successive acts of marked brevity. On the one hand the record is so written as to leave ample space for the researches of scientific discovery before man existed; on the other details under the shape of divine fiats in the six days appear only when man is about to be created. There is thus truth in both views. The mistake is in setting them in opposition. One can understand, if God so willed it, immense times of physical action, with secondary causes in operation before man, not without the evidence of convulsion far beyond volcanoes or the deluge within the human period, which great geologists at home and abroad admit, contrary to the recent speculations of others. But there are those that feel the beautiful (not belittling) condescension of God in deigning to work for six days and rest on the seventh, only when getting ready that earth where, not only the first man was to come under his moral government, but the Second Man was to glorify God to the uttermost, give to such as believe eternal life, and prove the worthlessness of all who reject His grace and repent not of their sins: the true and intelligible and blessed reason why this earth, so insignificant in bulk when compared with the vast universe of God, has a position in His favor so transcending all other planets, suns, or systems, put together. If man was much to differentiate the earth, Christ is infinitely more: and lie has yet to show what the earth and man on it are to be under His glorious kingdom, to say nothing of the heavens according to His grace and the counsels of God.

But a little must be said of the second day. These are the terms— “And God said, Let an expanse be in the midst of the waters, and dividing be between waters and waters. And God made the expanse, and divided between the waters that [are] under the expanse and the waters that [are] above the expanse: and it was so. And God called the expanse Heavens. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day” (vers. 6-8).

There is no more ground for conceiving this to be the first creation of atmospheric heavens than we saw in the case of light on the first day. The absolute language of creating is avoided in both cases. As there had been light in the long ages of geology when not only plants but animals

marine and terrestrial abounded, suited to the systems that contained them, so an atmosphere was requisite and no doubt was furnished of God with every provision for their sustenance till a new condition succeeded by God's power. That which now girdles the earth may not have been altogether alike for the varying states of vegetable and animated being long before man existed, to say nothing of the azoic periods before either. They had each an environment adapted by the Creator of all. The remains in successive strata indicate an admirable suitability for the then flora and fauna, quite different from the Adamic earth and its inhabitants, in some of which it may be doubted if man could have lived, as he did not in fact.

The great difficulty for geologists, especially of late from the growth of infidel thought, is to allow such a revolution as verse 2 intimates. Even Christians among them are afraid to be governed by its express declarations, and shrink from the ignorant mockery of those who boldly deny there ever was a breach of continuity between the original creation and the days of man on the earth. But on the one hand it is certain that the record maintains such a breach to have occurred (and this not on a circumscribed part of the earth, which some like Dr. Pye Smith have imagined in a spirit of compromise, but for the earth wholly) as to require an entire re-ordering of it as well as man's creation, God's vicegerent then first made to have dominion over all here below. On the other hand it is intolerable to assume that no convulsions could have effected such changes as the non-action of light, or the destruction of atmospheric conditions, &c. This is mere and narrow unbelief. “Ye do err, knowing not the scriptures nor the power of God.” How little science can explain even of existing life and of its surroundings! And how unbecoming of geology to dogmatize!—one of the youngest of sciences, with so much to explore and adequately weigh, and so far from the precision of chemistry for instance, though there too how much is unknown.

At a fit moment the question of the mammoth &c. co-existing with the musk-ox and other surviving quadrupeds may be briefly examined. But on the face of the argument it is plain that there is no more difficulty in conceiving God might renew some previously existing plants and animals for Adam's earth than in causing light again to act on the first day and the atmosphere on the second. The work of the first day, perfectly if not exclusively consistent with an instantaneous exertion of the divine will, illustrates and confirms that of the second day. Scripture places the description of v. 2 at some time before these days commence. Light acted first after that disorder, and according to the earth's revolution on its axis. Next day the atmospheric heavens, so essential to light, sound, and electricity, to vegetation and animal life, were called or rather recalled to their functions after that confusion which destroyed them in ways beyond our ken.

Assuredly this renewal was no matter of a long age of gradual process, but a work to which God assigned a separate day, though to Him abstractedly a moment had sufficed. As it is, man's attention was impressively drawn to His considerate and almighty goodness Who then separated “waters from waters”, which otherwise had filled space above the earth with continual vapor and without that due mixture of gases which constitutes the air essential to all life on the globe. To its machinery with other causes by divine constitution we owe the formation of clouds and the fall of rain as well as evaporation; to its refractive and reflective powers, that modification of light which adds incalculably to beauty no less than the utility of the creation: a black sky had otherwise cast its constant pall over the earth. Even had dry land by another fiat been disengaged from the waters, without this encompassing elastic fluid vapors would not have been absorbed nor have fallen as now; dew had ceased; fountains and rivers if formed had wasted away; water had

enormously prevailed; and if dry land had survived anywhere, it must have been a dry arid mass with neither animal life nor a blade of grass. But enough; these are not the pages in which to seek the physical methods of creative beneficence.

It is now generally known, as it had long been laid down by the most competent Hebraists before modern science existed, that “expanse” is the real force of the original word, instead of “firmament” which came to us through the Latin Vulgate, as it seems due to the Greek Septuagint. Possibly these Jewish translators in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus may have succumbed here as elsewhere to Gentile ideas or at least phrases. And a great Rabbinical scholar, a Christian teacher, has given his opinion that the Greek version employs the word (στερ■ωμα) in the sense of an ethereal or third subtle orb, and in no way of a solid permanent vault as rationalists love to assume, basing it on etymology and figurative usage. The aim is obvious, the wish father to the thought. Excluding God from the written word, as from creation, deifying nature and exalting fallen man (more especially of the nineteenth century), they gladly depreciate the text by citing “windows” and “doors", “pillars” and “foundations” as if meant literally. Now the usage of the word even in the chapter itself (vers. 15, 17, 20, 28) sufficiently proves that the word conveys the idea of the open transparent sky, whatever may have been the misunderstanding of the reader at any given time. Hence the A. and R. English versions give “the air” as the equivalent of “the heavens” in ver. 28 as elsewhere. It is really the expanse, including the atmospheric heavens in the lower part of which birds fly. A solid vault is out of the question. The true derivation seems rather from a word expressing elevation, like the source of our own “heaven “; but even if drawn from the idea of beating or hammering out, who knows not that words may and do acquire a force etherealized according to the object designated, wholly above their material origin? The scriptures really present the heavens as spread out, and the earth hung upon nothing, nowhere giving countenance to the grossness of the stars fastened like brass nails on a metallic vault. Skeptical ill-will likes that it should seem so; but it is unworthy slander. Even Dathe who was free enough gives “spatium extensum", as did learned Jews generally long before and since.

“ The waters above” consist of that enormous supply of vapor which fills the clouds and falls as rain, hail, or snow. “The waters below” covered the earth as yet, but were shortly to form seas, when the dry land appeared next day. It is ignorance therefore to say, in the face of a crowd of scriptures, that the waters above imply a permanent solid vault like a shower-bath. The Hebrews could see the movements of many heavenly bodies instead of regarding all as fixtures. But even had they been as dull as rationalism is invidious, our concern is with the divine record, the accuracy of which irritates hostile minds who would hail the least flaw with satisfaction. Scripture abides; science changes and corrects itself from age to age. As to figures, “bottles” are used no less than “pillars,” and a “tent” or “curtain” as well as “windows” and “doors.” They are all strikingly expressive. Only the stupid or malicious could take any of them in the letter.

Chapter 73

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:9-13

This journal is scarcely the suited place, nor does the writer pretend, to draw out adequately the wondrous and beneficent functions of the separated waters or seas and of the dry land, any more than of the light and of the atmospheric heavens, on which a little has been said. But a few words here may confirm what was remarked as to the first and the second days, that the record speaks with immediate propriety of God's constituting the earth for the human race. By no means does it intimate particulars of the long periods before man when those successive changes are observable, which laid down vast stores for his future use and fitted the earth's progressively built-up crust, the rich field of geological research. One can admire the wisdom which did not encumber the Bible with the details of natural science. Rocks crystalline and stratified are before men's eyes, who can reason on the fossils they embalm. Scripture alone avoids the universal heathen idea of a primitive chaos, and the philosophic error of an eternal universe or even eternal matter. Scripture, on the contrary, has carefully enunciated God's creation at an undefined moment, “in the beginning”, not merely of crude materials but of the heavens and the earth, without a word about their denizens. It also makes known the fact that, the earth was subjected to revolution so complete that before the Adamic state of things divine power was needed to cause light to act in a diurnal way, as well as to order the atmosphere, and from a previous and universal overspread of waters the appearance of dry land, on which God began the plants or vegetable kingdom for man.

Thus the work of these days wholly leaves out, because chronologically it follows, the vast operations both of slow construction and of destruction which give special interest to the geologist. Original creation and subsequent dislocation (which swept away in due time whole species and genera of organized beings, followed by fresh and different ones, and this repeatedly) it asserts distinctly; and both, before the days which prepared all for his life and probation under divine government who was created ere the week closed. The document itself furnishes the warrant to the believer for taking the first verse indefinitely before the six days, and also for affirming the state, possibly final state, of confusion into which the earth passed before it became the world as it now is.

There may indeed be some analogy between the days that concern the earth of the human race and those immense ages of ripening advance which preceded, so as to furnish a slight ground of resemblance on which not a few men of ingenuity and the best intentions have reared their various schemes for accommodating the days to the geological ages. Yet this hypothesis, even when guarded by the most cautious and competent aid of science, does not square with scripture. It is unjustifiable in every point of view to confound the disturbed state of ver. 2 with the creation of the earth described in. ver. 1, which it really follows, disorder after order; is it not even absurd to identify ver. 3 with either? Each follows consecutively; and the long tracts of time, if filled up in a way that scripture does not essay, would come in after ver. 1, and before ver. 3, which wholly differing from what precedes, introduces a new condition where alone details are given to mark God's direct dealings with man.

Hence the days, from ver. 3 and onward, are wholly misapplied to the geologic ages. Where for this scheme have we the formation of the plutonic, volcanic, and metamorphic rocks? Where the upheaval of the mountain ranges and the tracing of the river systems? Where the succession of organic remains, marine and terrestrial, vegetable and animal, new ones following those extinguished, and mutually distinct, from the Laurentian beds to the Post-Pliocene or Quaternary? The six days set forth the peculiar constitution God was pleased to establish for the existing or human world. What the geologic periods embrace is successive remodeling of the earth, where sea and land have changed place, mountains were raised and valleys scooped perhaps again and again, not only a sweeping away of old organic creation, but an introduction of new plants and animals, each assemblage confessed even by Lyell to admirably fit the new states of the globe; with singular varieties all pointing by harmony of parts and beauty of contrivance to One Divine Maker. These days only begin, when God, having closed the long undefined periods of progressive character, with repeated extermination of their correspondingly changed flora and fauna, forms, within the brief span of human labor, that system, inorganic and organic, of which man is the appointed head, but enriched by all He had slowly deposited and rendered available to man's industry and profit by that dislocation which laid bare treasures so remote and manifold, so interesting and important.

The divine operations of the third day call for more detail than that which was last before us. They form a double class, as does the work of the sixth day.

“ And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together to one place, and let the dry [land] appear. And it was so. And God called the dry [land] Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that [it was] good. And God said, Let the earth sprout grass, herb producing seed, fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind, the seed of which [is] in them, on the earth. And it was so. And the earth sprouted grass, herb producing seed after its kind, and trees yielding fruit, the seed of which [is] in them after their kind. And God saw that [it was] good. And there was evening, and there was morning, a third day” (ver. 9-13).

We have seen light (involving heat) caused to act for the Adamic earth, and that atmosphere which sustains an enormous body of waters above those that lie below: both of them results of essential importance for what was coming, and of course adapted by divine power and wisdom to the system in which the human race were to exist. It was needless and foreign for a divine revelation to explain how these and other works of God were effected. The important truth for His people, and for every soul of man, to know, is that He is both the originator and the maker of all. No student of geology doubts mechanical any more than chemical agency on the largest scale in forming the crust of the earth. Heat, water, and air have played their part under His hand in change, and waste, and progressive formation. But it is only the petty and pedantic unbelief of some who cry up such gradual secondary causes as are now seen, shutting out the evidence which geology itself affords to candid minds of repeated and enormous transformations and all but entire revolution of organic life, in both extinction and new creation, with the corresponding change of the globe and its temperature which this implies, and each of these not for a brief space, but for ages before the earth of man. Facts plainly enough point to these conclusions for those who occupy themselves with the natural antiquities of the earth. Nor can it be doubted that each successive tale inscribed on the fossiliferous rocky tablets of the earth shows on the whole distinct progress, in no way as mere development of the antecedent condition, but the fresh fruit of

creative acts, even if some species seem renewed for the subsequent phase, and all with evident relation to the earth as it was to be for Adam, and as it will be when the Second Man takes it with the universe itself for His inheritance. Unity of plan marks all from first to last.

But all this bygone succession of physical change is only left room for in the revealed word which dwells on man and Immanuel. Geological detail in scripture would have been as much out of place as any other science; but how can the room left for all, in what is said, be accounted for save as implying the knowledge of all by Him Who revealed His word? An original creation of the heavens and the earth without details, and unlimited even by myriads of years, “in the beginning,” perfectly falls in with every ascertained fact; and a violent dislocation of the earth, of the highest importance for the race in its disarrangements, altogether different from and more thorough than any diluvial or merely superficial action, is also made known; followed by that “making” of heaven and earth which is historically described in Gen. 1:3-31 and referred to solemnly in Ex. 20:11.

It is pertinent to observe that the effort to interpret the days of the immense ages before man separates Adam from his historic time as well as the creation placed under him as its head. For according to the long periods of geology what would the fossil-plants of the third day have to do with those that grew on the Adamic earth? And so with the animals on the fifth day, if not the sixth. On the contrary “the six days” were plainly meant to convey a realm of creation immediately connected with Adam, the various forms of organic nature being subjected and given to him. The sixth day is thus made geologic as well as historical. Surely this does not hang together; any more than our having a detailed account of fossil creation, and none at all of that which seems the express object of the several days—the creation in view of the incoming race. Now in a divine revelation it is easy to understand passing over all particulars of the fossilized stages of the earth; but inconceivable that there should be no account of heaven and earth and sea and all that in them is, in dependent relation to Adam and his sons: especially as out of the thousands of organized species in the secondary rocks, not a single species, says Prof. Hitchcock, corresponds with any now living; and even out of the thousands in the tertiary, but few seem identical with living species. The natural and only reasonable conclusion is that, whatever the analogy with the divine action in past geologic time, the days speak solely of what God made in immediate view of Adam; not of fossils, animal or vegetable, but of the organic beings placed under Adam and his race, with their surrounding and suited system. To suppose both is nothing but confusion.

Returning to the day before us we see a fresh operation of God for man's world, the waters under the heavens collected to one place, and dry land consequently appearing. Not that such a separation had not existed before, but that the disruption, wise and benevolent for the earth of man, made it a necessary act now, as indeed in a general way everything had to be made afresh for Adam: a disruption wholly distinct from the vague and useless chaos which the heathen imagined.

Now God formed the earth and seas in the condition which substantially abides to our days. How momentous an act for the race needs few words to explain. That both earth and seas had existed previously no geologist disputes, any more than the various phases of both according to the plants and animals that prevailed from one geologic age to another. Doubtless also, save for dead-level Uniformitarians if there be such, the epochs of change that destroyed the older creatures and beheld new races modified greatly both the earth and the seas; for each period had its own proper

system, with changes in inorganic matter, water, atmosphere, temperature, and the like, corresponding to each new set of organized beings.

The earth then was to have that form for the most part which God saw best fitted for His new purpose: vast continents and vaster oceans, islands large and small, lakes salt and fresh, swamps and torrents, mountains and rivers, plains greater or less, and valleys not merely effected by gradual erosion but often by deep and sudden dislocation. It is common knowledge what a part is played in the physical economy of the world by the “seas”, (which in Hebrew idiom embrace all large collections of waters, oceans, seas, lakes, and even rivers,) as well as by the varied disposition of the land, high or low. To this the disarrangement of Gen. 1:2 had directly contributed; as now in the separation of earth and seas after having been commingled for a time. Rapid extraordinary operations wrought, and of course slow and existing causes in bringing about what was then done for man; but here we learn that God laid down the great landmarks which abide to this day. Genesis 2:11-14 is enough to indicate that men attribute to the deluge or other changes more than can be proved.

God gave names too, as to the objects of His work on the previous days.

But there is a second part of His work to notice: vegetable nature for the earth that now is, that kingdom which mediates between minerals and animals. God commanded the earth to bring forth grass (or, sprout sprouts), herb seeding seed, fruit-trees yielding fruit after its kind, which has its seed in itself after its kind, as is said here most emphatically. This is the true origin of vegetable species for the Adamic earth. And as God pronounced good the dry land and the seas, so now the beautiful clothing of the dry land, and the abundant supplies for man and beast—at first indeed the exclusive food even for man.

How does the protracted scheme of the days as geologic periods agree with the vegetable kingdom on the third day, and the animal even in its lowest forms on the fifth? Is it really so with the evidence of fossils? The coal measures indicate vast brackens, ferns, etc.; but what of fruit-trees bearing fruit according to each several kind? Certainly it would seem that Zoophytes are as early as any vegetable remains, long before the carboniferous era so paraded as the fulfillment of the third day, after a great abundance of marine animals far beyond plants, of which direct evidence appears in the rocks. If the days are taken simply in reference to Adam, there is no difficulty on any such score, as the provision for the world that now is appeared with no interval such as geology can appreciate.

How absurd, taking the third day before us as our example, for us to identify it with the carboniferous. age, or that which laid the basis for the coal measures! What real analogy between coal-plants chiefly acrogens, and the grass, herb, tree, so manifestly for the food of animals, above all of man? What with herb in general producing seed, and what with fruit-trees yielding fruit, after their kind, the seed of which is in them? This is evidently not provision for coal, but for the food and refreshment of man and cattle, of bird and beast. The analogy vanishes when looked into. For geologic era; it is a failure; for man's world it is the simple and suited truth. It was plant-life for Adam's earth. The carboniferous era, when people have been content with facts, was the age, botanically of cryptogams and gymnosperms, in the animal realm of the earlier reptiles, Batrachian or Amphibian. Now does this truly correspond with the third day? With the formation of seas and the emergence of dry land? And this clothed with verdure, herbs, and fruit-trees, each propagating

after its kind? Beyond just doubt Moses meant herbs not of the carboniferous age, but solely of the earth for man, animal life for it not existing till the fifth day. Compare ver. 29.

But the geologic evidence points to plants and animals even in Archman time; for as the simplest animal forms (Rhizopods) have been detected in the Laurentian rocks, so the enormous quantity of graphite, being carbon, implies abundant vegetation, sea-weeds and lichens. The metamorphism of the rocks may account for the rare indications of organic life even in the Huronian beds which were subsequent; but, according to what is generally averred, Pahæozoic time goes farther back than even the Silurian age, Upper and Lower, the era of fucoids on the one hand and of marine invertebrate animals on the other (Protozoans, Radiates, Mollusks, and Articulates). Then comes the Devonian, or age of fishes (chiefly Selachian and Ganoid), and some insects, in addition to previous invertebrates; and besides sea-weeds, Calamites, Conifers, Ferns, and Lycopods. Surely long ages with organic life, not only vegetable but animal, before the carboniferous period, as all geologists accept, disprove beyond controversy the effort to make out the third day therein fulfilled. Hence Principal Dawson (Arch. 168) is obliged to own that the coal flora (consisting mainly of cryptogams allied to ferns and clubmosses, and of gymnosperms allied to the pines and cycads) cannot coalesce with the higher orders of plants called into being in our verses 11, 12. “For these reasons,” says he, “we are shut up to the conclusion that this flora of the third day must have its place before the Palæozoic period of Geology,” i.e., when vegetation was incomparably lower than that of the coal measures! The true conclusion on the contrary is that the third day's work implies a flora for man and the creatures under him, long after the coal measures.

By the way Dawson remarks that “the sacred writer specifies three descriptions of plants as included in it “: the first he will have to be not “grass”, but the cryptogamia, as fungi, mosses, lichens, ferns, &e.; then seed-bearing herbs, and fruit-bearing trees. The cryptogams may well be doubted: if tenable, it might be pleaded even more fairly, that the phænogams, endogenous and exogenous, follow. However it would seem that no scientific classification is intended, but a general division which all could observe into grass, herbs, and fruit-trees, each species none the less expressly and permanently reproductive. In point of fact it is not till the Cretaceous period of Mesozoic time that we find the first traces of Angiosperms (Oak, Plane, Fig, etc.); so that the reference to an age before the Palæozoic time is still less reasonable than the hypothesis of the carboniferous era.

Doubtless geologists would if they could make vers. 11, 12, subsequent to the great operations of the fourth day; for who can question the all-importance not of light only but of the sunbeam for herbage of all kinds, for fruit-bearing, and for timber? This is no difficulty for one who takes the days as “the evening and the morning “; but is it not insuperable for all who regard them as representing ages of untold duration? The Archæan rocks, we must bear in mind, are believed to be near five miles thick; the Silurian system considerably thicker, especially if we add the Devonian. Then come the Carboniferous and Permian formations of not far from four miles; and after the Triassic and Jurassic the Cretaceous, when it would seem that Angiosperms or Dicotyledons began to appear (Rose, Apple, Elm, &c.). In fact it was only just before the Tertiary or Cænozoic, if we include in it as most do the Nummulitic beds. Who can reckon the times of these formations?

There is another observation of importance to make. What scripture reveals of the third day's work points in no way to Archæan or Pahæozoic times, but simply and naturally to the formation of the Adamic earth. Geology tells us that the continents while still beneath the waters began to take shape; then, as the seas deepened, that the first dry land appeared, low, barren, and lifeless; next that, under intestine and external action, the dry land expanded, strata formed, and mountains rose, each in its appointed place, till finally heights and continents reached their fullest development. Now the flora described by the inspired writer does not fit the geologic first appearance of dry land, when of the character above described, till the mountains rose ages afterward and river-systems followed. To say the least, marked advance of state is involved in the flora described by Moses. How then identify it with the earliest geologic time when sea-weeds alone existed in the waters along with lichens on the land, and even then the Eozoon Rhizopod?

Moses describes just such a vegetable kingdom in its main features as Adam had, and we have now. It was vegetation as he knew it; and God led him so to describe it, being the truth. Is there then contradiction between the more or less satisfactory conclusions of Geology and unerring scripture? In no way. Distinguish the times, and clashing disappears. The third day speaks solely of the earth's last emergence from the waters by which it was submerged long ages after the original “outlining of the land and water determining the earth's general configuration.” Dr. Dana on reconsideration should acknowledge that the idea of life expressed in the lowest plants and afterward, if not contemporaneously, in the lowest or systemless animals, the Protozoans, is doubly and hopelessly incongruous with the Mosaic record. Take it as of the Adamic week and all is plain to the believer, if a few difficulties remain for the geologist. Why should any wonder, since it is confessed by the same competent authority that “a broken record the geological undoubtedly is, especially for terrestrial life” (Dana's Manual of Geology, 601, third edition, 1875)? Not so with the Bible, which, being divine, is and must be true: plain for the wayfaring man, profound for the most informed and best cultured:

Chapter 74

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:14-19

The evidence which the record furnishes of the third day is express. It is dry land and seas in view of man: in no way the varying phases of either in the geologic ages, but solely the result, after the last disturbance when the waters prevailed everywhere. Indeed a good deal of unfounded hypothesis is now exploded (especially since the recent deep-sea soundings) as to the alternation of the ocean beds and the vast mountain ranges east or west. For though the strata and fossils, marine, lacustrine or fluviatile, and terrestrial, point to repeated submergence and emergence of considerable regions, the continents have abode from Archæan time, the Atlantic flowing on one side, the Pacific on another. During the ages that followed, allow all that can be proved of change by upheaval, oscillation, dislocation, and rock formation, fragmental or crystalline, eruptive or stratified, by means organic mechanical, or chemical, by atmosphere, water, fire or aught else, there were elements of life vegetable and animal brought into being in the waters and on the land, and successively extinguished and new ones created with the changed state of the globe, each period having its appropriate species in the new environment.

But none of these alternations, vast and important as they were physically, enters the scope of the six days. No geologist denies that the mountains, to take this one sample, were elevated substantially as they are, long before the human race; and on mountains depend the springs and rivers and even the due fall of rains, and striking equalization of temperature between the extremist climes, so necessary to man and beast and herb. Very much more indeed had been done by God in that immense preparation, not only in the partially hidden supplies (coal, marble, lime, precious stones, metals, etc.) for man's use, but in enriching the soil and beautifying the surface of the earth in countless ways, working, as He still does, now for instance by sudden volcanic action, and again for example by the slow process of innumerable polyps, yea and mysteriously by their combined action (though one be organic and the other not) in the accomplishment of His creative designs from a time when there was no life here below, till every organized form was there short of man. Now it is exclusively of the human era and its belongings that the six days speak; and none more clearly than the third day, when the vegetable kingdom began, but solely in reference to Adam and those subject to him. The application to geologic time is impossible as proved by the record itself, and the mutual contradictions of all who essay it.

The evidence is no less plain and conclusive as to the fourth day, of which the more prudent advocates for the long-period days say little. But even here, though it be a question of the heavenly orbs, the record looks at them simply in view of man and this earth. “And God said, Let there be light-bearers in [the] expanse of the heavens to divide between the day and between the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for light-bearers in [the] expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light for ruling the day, and the lesser light for ruling the night (the stars also). And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide between the light and the darkness. And God saw that [it was] good. And there was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day” (ver. 14-19).

It is a mistake to suppose that during the long ages of vegetable and animal life up to the highest forms, one excepted, there had not been the shining of sun, moon and stars, as well as sea and land and atmosphere though not always quite the same as ours. If geology can trace the proofs of life, and its progress in a typical system, which reveals unity of plan as distinctly as deep and comprehensive wisdom, be it so; but they enjoyed sunlight, heat, air, and water throughout. But here we have everything successively ordered for man, after those immense eras of change were closed, when the last disturbance needed God's interference for a new system. Light was caused to act. The atmosphere as it is followed. Next, the seas were gathered to their own place, and dry land appeared, and the vegetable realm, the work of mountain-making and valley-scooping, shaping as well as storing, having been already and it may be in long successive ages effected. In each case of these days the result seems instantaneous. “He spoke, and it was done.” The work stated here is quite distinct. “The evening and the morning” are the expression of God's considerate goodness to man, responsible to learn of Him and to do His will on the earth, as Christ did perfectly.

It is assuredly not the creation of the sun, etc. This the inspired historian does not say, but only that God now constituted the heavenly luminaries, after the plants and before the animals for the Adamic earth. Light had shone otherwise since the first day of the great week. Now He set the light-bearers of the heavens to do their assigned work, but it is for the earth, and indeed for man. Their creation was implied in ver. 1; for God did not create either empty; and what would heaven be without its host? And we saw that verse 2 implies that the earth even had not been so, though so it became with other marks of disorder. What had hindered the functions of sun and moon was now rectified. Light independently had been proved to be under God's control. On the fourth day He gave the luminaries of heaven their unhindered relation to divide the day from the night. Now we can readily understand the plants (and these were for the use of man and his congeners) caused to spring forth on the day before without the sun-beam; but assuredly not so a geological age of grass, corn, and fruit. Yet we see the fitness of the due ordering of light and heat, as we have it, the next day, if the plants were to flourish, as well as for the animal life that begins after that according to His word.

This is entirely confirmed if we inspect the context more closely. For where would be the sense of the light-bearers “for signs and for seasons, and for days and years” if it had been an age (thousands, myriads, millions of years) before Adam? If on the contrary God was not creating them, but, after that which had intercepted, only “setting” them to their ordained task in immediate view of man, all is clear and consistent. And to whom could this be of such interest as to Israel, the people of His choice, in whose history we have them acting as “signs” on critical occasions for His sovereign will? Without dwelling on His wonders in Egypt where light was in Israel's dwellings, darkness thick in all the rest of the land, or later at Sinai, we see what a sign it was to Israel when Joshua said in their sight, Sun, stand still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon: or in far other days when Jehovah spoke to sick Hezekiah and gave him a sign in the shadow that went back ten steps on the dial of Ahaz. And what a sign again where all was lost, as far as man is concerned, in the cross of Messiah when darkness for three hours covered all the land A mere eclipse was then impossible. Nor will whole clusters of signs be wanting when He comes in power and glory on the clouds of heaven. “For seasons” is needed no comment: man alone on earth understands and appreciates these fit and recurring times. As the same Hebrew word means “the

congregation” and “the solemn feast,” as well as the season or appointed time at which they kept it, “seasons” may have a sacred aspect; but the more ordinary sense seems confirmed by what follows. Very little astronomy is requisite to know how “days and years” are defined by them, but only for man. In the ages before him this were all irrelevant. In view of man and Israel especially it is as affecting as full of interest. The constant design is reiterated in “Let them be for light-bearers in the expanse of the heavens.” It was their effeet, not their structure, that is intimated. “And it was so.”

Then we are told that “God made”, not created, “the two great lights.” The language is never varied without purpose. Rosenmüller the younger was an admirable Hebraist, and certainly free enough in his handling of scripture; yet he has no hesitation in his discussion of this question formally, but insists that the genuine force of the construction is not “fiant luminaria” (i.e. let lights be made), but “inserviant in expanso coelorum” (i.e. serve in the expanse of the heavens). He compares the sing. with the plur. of the Hebrew verb for being, and deduces the inference that the language can only express the determination of the luminaries to some fixed uses for the world, and not to their production. Further, it is solely relation to man on earth that demonstrates the strict phraseological propriety of “the two great lights”. He who created all and inspired Moses knew better than Newton or Laplace the sizes of every orb of heaven; but for man's and for Israel's help on earth, to say nothing of every subject creature, what were all the rest for light-giving by day and night compared to the sun and moon?

This again as definitely excludes scientific preoccupation, as it confirms the reference throughout. The stars only come in parenthetically. God made them too, if blind man deified them. But God gave sun and moon to rule over the day and over the night. They were His creatures and gifts for man's use, dividing between the light and the darkness. “And God saw that [it was] good,” not as if they were just created, but the assigned work He gave to be done by them. “And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.” Here it cannot be fairly denied by any, that from the necessary effect of that day's work we have the ordinary vicissitude of night and day; and that a similar diurnal revolution followed for the fifth and sixth days, as for every day since, including the seventh. But this being so, surely consistency requires it for the three previous days. That light was supplied otherwise before the fourth day is no impediment. The daily course of the earth on its axis depends on gravitation, not on illumination, and would have gone on equally, had the sun been only and always opaque, or had its previous and its present action in light-bearing never existed.

And here it may be noticed that those who contend for nothing but the same agencies at work from the first as act now before our eyes, and who go so far as to swell the time into incalculable ages by embracing the fond hypothesis of evolution, so that 300,000,000 years span an inconsiderable period of geological imagination, have now to confront an unexpected and veritable coup de grace from Sir W. Thomson. For he has proved that if the earth existed at all only 100,000,000 years ago, it must have been on scientific grounds a red-hot molten globe altogether incompatible with life animal or vegetable. The geologists in their loose and one-sided way reasoned from the deposition of the enormously deep strata at the present rate of formation. But Thomson founded his far more rigorous calculations on the acknowledged facts of the earth's tidal retardation, as well as of its gradually cooling state. Hence the recent disposition among the less prejudiced men to re-arrange the order and time of formations by the probable contemporaneity of unlike strata. They

essay thus to reduce their egregious demands by the supposition that the Cambrian for instance may coalesce chronologically with the Silurian, the former lacustrine, the latter marine; and similarly the Permian with the Jurassic, etc. The groups thus associated would each owe their different phenomena to their respective conditions of deposit.

But those who accept the plain and simple interpretation of the record here offered will observe that, if all these shifting and precarious hypotheses are due to the dim twilight of the science, scripture is responsible for no error. What it asserts remains not only unshaken but indisputably true.

Chapter 75

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:20-23

We are now come to a fresh activity of divine power, when the Holy Spirit employs again the term “created” (ver. 21): not merely organisms, for these we have seen for the new vegetable kingdom on day three, but the first animal life for the Adamic world, to people the waters below and the heavens above. They are familiarly known to be the opposed but mutually dependent realms of life, far above inorganic nature, not only in growth and structural development, but in germs for the continuance of the species, both of which materialism vainly strives to explain or evade. For plants take in nourishment without an interior cavity or sac, and without digestive fluid, which animals have and as plants imbibe carbon and give out oxygen, animals exhale carbon and use up oxygen: a provision worthy of divine wisdom for the well-being of the earth. Nor is this hard to appreciate; for plants are nourished by inorganic food which they convert into organic for animals, as they store up for their use condensed force from the sun's influence, starch, glutine, &c. for animal development with increasing power, and locomotive faculty, as well as a will. That their germs are chemically like, not only in elements but in their proportions, only brings out the total difference which results from their respective character of life. To originate animal life especially, even in its least form, justly calls for the term “created.”

Thus God is not content with employing chemical powers to disintegrate and to reconstruct, as well as mechanical means chiefly by water, frost and gravitation, not only to enlarge the surface but to increase its fertility. The provision and satisfying of life, is a part of His admirable plan even for a fallen world, the very volcano playing no. small part, whatever its temporary terrors, in His beneficent hand. But all else would have been ineffectual without that great reality, of which science is as ignorant as those whom it most despises in its unbecoming scorn—that reality which would bring God face to face with every rational being, were men not hard in conscience and blinded by sin—that reality which meets every soul as the surest fact, yet the most inscrutable for any man; life, not vegetable only but animal, even if we regard it in its simplest range. It is life that directs the chemistry of plants or animals; it is life which produces the organization appropriate according to its kind. Men may speak of protoplasm, and analyze into carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen; but these are the mere materials which God employs according to the limits He has imposed on species under the agency of life. When life is given, the activity of change goes on in the creature and its reproduction; when life is withdrawn, there is a dissolution into the common stock for the fresh replenishment of the earth and its organized beings. Men may shrink from the Causa causans, and take refuge in “the laws of nature “; but after all they only succeed, if they do succeed, in retreating a step back from the Giver of life, and the Sovereign sustainer of nature. But this retreat is to lose God altogether.

Gen. 1 knows nothing of a primordial gas, or the nebula hypothesis, of an original spore, or of a monad. That God created the universe, is its proclamation, with details of Adam's world. A nisus formativus is here unheard, and left only to the unbelieving fanatics of science. Men would have had wings ere this better than those of Dædalus if desires and efforts availed; nor would the peacock be left alone to expand his feathered glories in the golden light of the sun. The power and

wisdom of God has made these countless creatures, plants or animals, out of a few elements; and these, as geology is compelled to own, repeatedly exterminated on the earth, and as often renewed, in systems ever perfectly suited to each, and as uniformly rising on the whole, when He was pleased to form a higher one, till He created man. Yea at last He deigned to send His Son, the eternal Word, to be made flesh, accomplish redemption, and unite to Jesus those that are His for heavenly glory; as He will send Him again to bless Israel and all nations, to reign from heaven over a reconciled creation (for He is Heir of all things), but none the less to judge those who reject Him the Lord and Savior to their own everlasting ruin.

Further, as God created, so He perpetuates life within variations brought about by circumstances and especially by man's will, which, ceasing to act, leave plant or animal to revert to primitive type; when hybrids are forced, sterility also ensues. His will gave birth to the creatures that people the waters and the sky; and He abides to give constant effect to His will. We can see therefore the wisdom of His revelation of the day before us; for how many sages have dreamed and thought that the sun was the prolific source of life? The vegetable kingdom was formed when the sun was not yet set to do its all-important office for the earth of man. The humbler departments of the animal kingdom were called into being by God the day after. And how manifestly is contingency excluded no less than necessity? It is all the result of the Creator's will, Who upholds all that He has called into being. “For Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were and they were created” (Rev. 4:11). Dualism, pantheism, eternal matter, and evolution are mere but wicked delusions.

“ And God said, Let the waters swarm a swarm of living creatures (lit. souls), and let birds fly above the earth on the face of the expanse of the heavens. And God created the great whales (or sea-monsters) and every living creature that moveth with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind. And God saw that nit was; good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day” (ver. 20-23).

Here it is to be observed that “sea-monsters“ is given by many modern translators, the Revisers among them; so as to include the huge creatures of large rivers, crocodiles, &e., as well as marine. Indeed “whales” may be here in view specifically by the accompanying epithet “great “; seeing that they exceed in size all other animals not only of the Adamic period, but even of previous ages when characterized by creatures of enormous magnitude as compared with analogous ones in man's day. If the whale be here singled out, the description is justified beyond dispute; and all the more because the fossils, as the rule, disclose specimens larger of their kind than any now living, whether Protozoans, Crustaceans, or the Vertebrates in general. Even the birds then must have been gigantic, if we accept their supposed footmarks on the new red sandstone of Connecticut. Their fossils were much later.

In ver. 20 then God spoke into being the creatures that people the waters and those that people the air in terms the most general. In ver. 21 the result is stated with more precision, the great whales or sea-monsters being distinguished from every living creature that moveth (whether Protozoans, Radiates, Mollusks, Articulates, or Vertebrates) which the waters swarmed, after their kind. Again we hear of “every bird of wing” after its kind. A correct version here, as the reader may see, explodes the error which commentators, Jewish and Christian, have tried to explain; for the

sense is not that the waters produced the birds, but that God made them fly in the open expanse of the heavens. Compare Gen. 2:19, which distinctly teaches that they were formed out of the ground, no less than was the beast of the field.

But the important fact announced is that for Adam's world the waters were now peopled and the air likewise) It is in no true sense the Reptilian age, though no doubt such reptiles as belonged to the waters then were included; for land reptiles are distinctively of the sixth day, as is certain from vers. 24, 25, 26, 28. Hence the effort to make the fifth day's work correspond with the Mesozoic time of geology is an utter fallacy. During it, especially in the Cretaceous period, reptiles abounded, and many were enormous, Dinosaurs, Enaliosaurs, Icthyosaurs, Mosasaurs, Plesiosaurs, or Pterosaurs; for in contrast with the fifth day the earth had then its species, as well as the sea and the air. Jurassic Britain had its vast and numerous varieties, as their absence is the more conspicuous since Adam's day. But all that the cautious Dr. Dana says as to birds is, that they probably began in the Triassic, especially as the inferior tribe of Marsupials were then found; that in the Jurassic some if not all birds exhibited the long vertebrated tail which with other peculiarities allied them to reptiles; but that in the Cretaceous they were numerous, and most of modern type, though some were of the older form. To suppose all that now people the waters and air existed then is as baseless as that these verses really describe the Reptilian age. For the great sea-monsters and many birds had yet to be.

Now it is on the face of the record that the entire population of the waters and of the air, as Adam knew both, is meant; not that extraordinary era of the secondary formation, with its prodigious denizens of earth and sea and air. Indeed it is notorious geologically that Protozoans, Radiates, Mollusks, and Articulates had been even in the Lower Silurian; and in the Upper S. fishes appear if only Sharks and Ganoids. Again, who does not know that the Devonian is habitually designated the age of Fishes? How then can it be fairly alleged that the day-period interpretation holds good? If the third day means the Carboniferous age, though this has been proved erroneous, how comes the age of Fishes to be before it? The record declares that the fish and fowl of Adam's world were only and alike on the fifth day.

Is it not then extreme prejudice that has beguiled able and excellent persons into the thought that the record here speaks of the Reptilian age of geology? Hence one zealous advocate limits the swarm of the waters in ver. 23 to “the reptile” and for the same reason changes “that moveth” into that “creepeth” in ver. 21. The fact is that, though the former word often means “reptile,” the context here proves it to be of far larger bearing and in fact of cognate signification with the verb; so that to “swarm swarms” seems the literal force, and to “bring forth abundantly the moving” thing is a fair representation as in the A. and R. Vv. Again, in ver. 21 the right way is to interpret the Hebrew as “moving” in water and “creeping” on land; so any one may see who can intelligently use a Hebrew Concordance. In both respects Sir J. W. Dawson is more correct than the late Mr. D. McCausland.: but he errs in making ver. 21 say “great reptiles.” It is either all the large creatures of the deep, or not improbably “the whales,” for the reason already and appropriately implied in “the great.” Perhaps we may fairly add that the Cetacea call for a special place as being the representative of Mammals, and hence are made to stand apart from the general population of the deep. Certainly they were of the waters.

The effect too of the periodic construction of the days is here quite plainly as unfounded as elsewhere. The fishes with which Adam and his race were familiar are thereby almost wholly left out of God's account of His creation. All they are told, on that hypothesis, is of fossil Saurians, the most anomalous in appearance of all the creatures whose remains have come to view, of which Moses knew as little as the children of Israel, however interesting to geologists in our day. Is it credible that the Holy Spirit inspired the law-giver to speak of wonders only intelligible in the nineteenth century, and to pass by without a word what they needed to know of the teeming creatures in the watery world?

As usual the hypothesis when considered seriously betrays its inherent unreality. The huge Saurians of the Mesozoic were not marine only, as they ought to be if the record spoke of them; many of them were Pterosaurs of the land, some species even winged, though we cannot count Pterodactyles as birds. The inspired text therefore conclusively puts them all out of consideration. Here we read solely of the creatures with which the waters swarmed, of every living creature that moved there, each according to its species, as well as of those justly designated “the great” among the multitudes of smaller sea-creatures; as also of “every winged bird” after its kind. The natural force and true aim of the revelation was to make known God's work in that lower part of the animal kingdom, which is none the less the object of His care; and if one portion be of vast bulk, none the less was it His creature. The Adam family were called to own His hand and goodness in the whole.

The evident intention was to impress on all that heed the written word that the fifth day's work embraced the entire circle of aquatic animals as well as all bird life known to mankind; not at all to acquaint them with a bygone system of animated. nature, which sustained at the close of the Cretaceous period one of the most complete exterminations of species confessed by geologists. In fact too it is only in the Quaternary that Teliost fishes as well as Birds find their culmination; of all allusion to which, though nearly affecting man, the misinterpretation entirely deprives us. If on the contrary the inspired writer speak of what concerns man practically, with this agrees the expressed blessing of God, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” It also derives impressive confirmation from vers. 26, 28, where dominion over the fish of the sea is given to man, no less than over birds of the air, and beast and cattle and all that creep on the earth. The only detail in fact is in setting forth the origin of what was actually put under man's rule; which certainly does not apply to Paheozoic, or Mesozoic, or Tertiary times.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:24-25

It needs few words to prove that in the fifth day's work we vainly look for an exact correspondence with the Secondary or Mesozoic period. Fishes, even vertebrated fishes, had been created in abundance in Palæozoic time, and so before the Carboniferous age; also the earlier reptiles, chiefly Amphibian, preceded the age when they arrived at gigantic proportions and in every sphere, earth having its species no less than sea and air. Does this agree with the record which distinguishes its denizens, as of sea and air, from those that were only called into being on the following day—which declares that every reptile of the earth belongs to the sixth, and not the fifth? Dinosaurs (including Megalosaurs, Iguanodons, Hylmosaurs) being land reptiles stand opposed. Nor is this all. The absurdity of the periodic interpretation is that we are compelled to leave out the fishes proper, such as Adam knew and we, in order to make it fulfilled in Labyrinthodonts, Ichthyosaurs, Pterodactyls, &c. Birds had in no way their culmination, any more than Teliost Fishes, or even the higher insects, and mammals, till the Quaternary of man. The Cetacea (“the great whales”) again resist this expository violence. Expressly specified in the text as created on the fifth day, being water creatures, they according to geology ought to belong to a far later epoch, as being of a high mammalian rank, and in no way to be classed with even the small marsupials, &c., of an earlier day, though this again is not according to the record. The truth we have seen, in accordance with that of the four previous days, is that the fifth day's work contemplates the entire population of sea and air for man's world, and nothing else. Here as in every other case the ages of geology prove untenable when fairly examined. Apply the six days to Adam's time, and the balance is restored.

Exactly analogous for the land's inhabitants is the work of the sixth day. Does it really correspond with Kænozoic time before man, or the Tertiary age? The scripture gives manifestly and solely the land creatures made for man and on the same day as man; geology is obliged to confess that “all the Fishes, Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals of the Tertiary are extinct species” (Dana, 518). Take the equine tribe alone: there was the Orohippus of the Eocene, the Anchitherium of the Meiocene, and the Hipparion of the Pleiocene. All passed away before the Quaternary, when the Equus Caballus exists for man's service. Even those who contend most keenly for nothing but secondary causes operating all through cannot deny the general extermination of species that closed Mesozoic time, any more than the great disturbances that wrought repeatedly and similarly in the Tertiary age. Indeed geologists of eminence, who had nothing to do with theology and alleged prejudice, are constrained to allow that the elevation of the great mountain chains of Europe and Asia, as well as of America, only attained their full height about the close of that period, as well as the larger part of igneous eruption, with the usual destruction of systems of life in being previous to God's introducing a new one adapted to the fresh conditions. “Chaos” is not a word any Christian need favor; but there was assuredly a fearful state of disorder that intervened, however brief the interval might have been. Do not geologists seem rash to deny that of which they are and perhaps must be ignorant? But all this was antecedent to the six days. The believer absolutely subject to God's word can calmly accept every ascertained fact, assured that every work of God agrees with

His word. But hypotheses are another thing and open to criticism, especially where we see plain symptoms of infidelity open or underlying.

“ And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creature (lit. soul) after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the field, after its kind. And it was so. And God made beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after its kind, and every creeping thing of the ground after its kind. And God saw that [it was] good” (ver. 24, 25).

Where is the analogy even here with the age of Mammals, as the Tertiary has been well designated? If we add according to scripture the creation of man on that same day, the system is not only different but even in contrast. The simple truth intended is that we have in these verses the land population of all kinds for the period of the human race; as before we had that of the waters and of the air, after the vegetable provision, with the due establishment not of light only but of the heavenly phenomena.

To introduce the herbivores, the reptiles, and the carnivores into the text is to strain after a scientific gloss, besides failing to represent the sense in some respects if not in all. Compare Deut. 28:26 for the very first class. Reptiles again are too narrow, and so are the “carnivora,” where “ferae” would express the truth more exactly. Nor is there real anachronism in giving “cattle” as the first named in verse 24, the domesticable if not yet domesticated animals, appropriate to the use of man. “Creeping thing” follows in its more literal application, whereas “moving” expressed more fully the action of the creatures that peopled the waters, so as to embrace not only serpents, &c., but insect life. Animal of earth” designates the wild beast.

All of them are terms in constant usage where man lives and reigns; they do not distinctively define the age of Mammals where he was not, such as Anoplotheres, Chæropotami, Dinotheres, Paltnotheres, Lophiodons, Xiphodons, &c. Pachyderms are no doubt included, but by no means so determined as to warrant a reference to the age in which they abounded. Indeed at that time confessedly there was the almost total absence of the tribe of ruminants, which rose to prominence when man was made.

The language of the text does not really call up the period “when the brute species existed in their greatest magnificence, and brutal ferocity had full play,” but the day crowned by the creation of man where material force fell into the shade before higher powers. In man's presence the greater birds and beasts that co-existed even become extinct; as notably the Moa, of New Zealand, the Dodo of the Mauritius, and the Aepyornis of Madagascar; and again the Urus (or Bos primigenius) described in Cæsar's Comm. de Bell. Gall. vi. 26, the great Irish Elk (or Megaceros), the Megatherium, the Mastodon, and the Mammoth. For the evidence points to their co-existence with man, some for but a little while, others till recent time. The tendency has been to push man's age back on the assumption that only so could he have been coeval with them. But the facts are plain and sure enough, not only as to the first but even the last named also, that they existed with man for no inconsiderable time, and this if we accept the lowest reckoning of Biblical chronology. It seems the fashion just now to exaggerate as to time, placing the glacial season or seasons at an incredibly remote distance, and thus the gigantic creatures that perished then, and man also, judging from remains which indicate his hand. There is on the contrary strong and varied evidence, in the estimate of sober geologists, not committed to hypothesis, to show the recent date of the glacial period both in Europe and in America, and the sudden close of what is called “the drift,” and

the extinction of mammoths, &c.

The second part of the sixth day's work is too momentous to be touched here. This only may be remarked, how fitting it is that for Adam's time all animal and vegetable creation should arrive at the highest organization, that the heavenly luminaries should do their regulative work in view of the race, that the seas and the land should be as a whole adequately settled, that the atmospheric conditions in supplies of water, vapor, dew, &c., should stand most favorably, with the bountiful and regular vicissitudes of night and day, for life more varied than ever before here below. Thus, if the geologic ages brought in by divine power and wisdom a constantly rising state of the earth, and of creatures suited to each new state, so the six days connected with Adam and his world express rapidly succeeding divine fiats culminating in him, and in their combination of respective goodness characterizing that period in which the human race were called not only into being but into responsibility before God. Other ages might be distinctively azoic, or the system of life might be ushered in with sea-plants, then with marine life of low type, then with fishes when the Vertebrates were made. Next, when dry land was fitted, such plants grew as would flourish and adapt it for higher ones, and, again for living creatures that live on herbage, as well as prey one on another. So in geologic ages we can talk of the age of Acrogens, of Invertebrates, of Fishes, of Reptiles, and of Mammals. But the human period is characteristically that of all, not in their utmost profusion or in their greatest physical magnitude, but as the rule in their highest forms and also together in their respective places under their appointed ruler, God's vicegerent here below. For example the Cereals attach to the human period, and depend pre-eminently on cultivation. Compare Isa. 28:23-29.

In each case we have God's word, the manifest and immediate result, and its excellence in His sight declared. Thus if the six days gave an immediate relation to Adam, the immense ages antecedent were on a vast scale preparatory; and geology, as one of its ablest exponents owns, “leaves wholly unexplained the creation of matter, life, and spirit, and that spiritual element which pervades the whole history like a prophecy, becoming more and more clearly pronounced with the progressing ages, and having its culmination and fulfillment in man.”

Chapter 77

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:26-27

In day three we saw the distinct twofold energy of the Creator: not only the waters gathered into seas, and the dry land appearing, and this seen to be good; but the earth caused by his word to put forth grass, herb seeding seed after its kind, and tree yielding fruit, with its seed in itself after its kind, upon the earth, and this seen to be good. On the sixth day there is also a double action, and the second still more strikingly distinguished, as human life is brought into being, the highest of earthly natures (not as before vegetable life, the lowest of organized creatures) here below. The spheres had been fitted in divine wisdom and in the unfolding ways of God for the living beings that were to clothe and fill them with beauty, food, and fruit, to be followed duly by higher beings to profit by all that His provident goodness had prepared, all endowed with powers of constant reproduction whether vegetable or animal. In a general way God had in the vast ages of which geology takes cognizance so wrought in creative energy, but without man as the center of systems which successively appeared and fell. The days we have seen have special reference to man who on the sixth follows and crowns the highest animals set under his rule.

“ And God said, Let Us make men in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over fish of the sea, and over bird of the heavens, and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created Man in His image, in God's image created He him; male and female created He them” (ver. 26, 27.).

Not only is man introduced with marked separateness from the previous creation of animals, even from those of the earth made on the same day, each “after its kind,” and all seen as “good,” but for the first time God enters into counsel with Himself for this great and absolutely new work. It is no longer “Let there be,” or “Let the earth (or “the waters") bring forth,” though man's body is in its due place expressly said to have been formed of the dust of the ground. Here the language rises into appropriate grandeur and solemnity, “Let Us make men.” Not a word about kinds of men, for there was but one; whatever people may have subsequently dreamed in their pride or in the selfish advantage they desired to take of their degraded follows. Not a little was suffered afterward in view of their hard-heartedness; but from the beginning it had not been so. We shall hear yet more when we come to a fresh revelation, not of man's creation as its head simply, but of the moral relations in which he is shown to have been set; but here there is ample evidence of the dignity conferred on the race. “Let Us make men in Our image, after Our likeness.” Nothing is more opposed to the Bible than the anthropomorphism of Greek and Roman mythology, which degraded their deities to fallen mules and females with like passions and lusts, and gave the sanction of religion to the basest immorality. And what philosophers of Greece or Rome ever ventured to claim so noble a prototype? Here Moses was inspired to give it as the holy declaration of the Creator. How far from the brute at length evolving man, a theory suggested by Satan to brutalize the race! It is the simple yet wondrous truth: not God brought down to the human level, but men alone created after a divine pattern.

A frequent question is raised as to the force of the terms and their precise shade of difference; for those are not to be heard who hide their ignorance under the assumption that both mean the same thing. The usage throughout the O. and N. Testaments seems to indicate, that “image” represents, and “likeness” resembles. Thus the “image” of the world-power in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented the succession of Gentile empires from first to last: likeness could not be the point. So it is “image” in the plain of Dura, (Dan. 3), the proportions of which exclude a human figure, or time resemblance of any living creature. Whatever it might not be like, it definitely represented what the monarch commanded to be an object of worship. Again, in the N. T. the denarius our Lord asked for had on its face the image and superscription of Cæsar. It might have been a faulty likeness, but was an indisputable image of the Roman imperator. It expressed his authority and represented his claim over the Jew because of their departure from God, ill as they liked to own either.

So men (ver. 26) are said to have been made in God's image, after His likeness, as the former is emphatically repeated in ver. 27: not, in His likeness, after His image. In God's image is the truth insisted on, though here also man is declared to be made after or according to His likeness. To man only was it given to represent God here below. Angels are never called to such a place. They excel in might. They fulfill God's word, they hearken unto the voice of His word. Yet no angel rules in His name, nor does he represent Him, as a center of a system subjected to him, and looking up to him. But man was made to represent God in the midst of a lower creation dependent on him; though in order to he created in God's image, he was also made “after His likeness,” without evil and upright. But even when through sin the likeness existed no more, he abode His image; however inadequate to represent God aright, he was still responsible to represent Him. Hence in Gen. 5:1-2, we read that God made man in His likeness; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day of their creation. But it is significantly added in ver. 3, that Adam begat in his likeness. Seth resembled his father, now fallen, as well as represented him. Again, when after the deluge animals were given for the food of man, blood was interdicted and the most jealous care of human life insisted on, for in the image of God made He man. To kill him was rebellion against God's image, though a man was now anything but like God.

The N. T. fully sustains the same distinction far beyond Caesar's case already referred to. Thus the man in 1 Cor. 11 is distinctively called God's image and glory, as publicly representing Him; and Christ, the incarnate Son, is styled “image of the invisible God.” His not being called “likeness” only confirms the truth. If so entitled, it would deny His deity. He was God, instead of being only like God. Compare for the Christian now Col. 3:10, as well as 2 Cor. 3:18; and for the glorious result Rom. 8:29, and 1 Cor. 15:49.

On the other hand we must not confound the state of Adam unfallen with the new man which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This is descriptive of the new creation, not of the first Adam state where all was mere innocence, but the knowledge of good and evil along with the power by grace which abhors evil and cleaves to good that is implied in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This is not nature, but supernatural in believers, who become partakers of a divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4.

Nevertheless, though Adam's state was far from that of which Christ is the risen head, he evidently was made to have a portion though a creature, above all the creation that surrounded him, “in God's image, after His likeness.” How utterly false in presence of the Bible are the speculations of

evolution, an hypothesis logically at issue with those fixed laws of nature, which the same philosophers cry up to the exclusion of God. For how reconcile invariable law with change of species? The truth is that real science depends upon the uniformity of results, and consists of discovering and classifying them. This does not hinder variation through circumstances, failing which the original type returns. Again, as natural science is based on the reality and continuance of species, so it can give no account of origins. If honest, it admits there must be a cause, and an adequate one; but here, as science, it is and must he wholly ignorant. God's word alone reveals truth; and of all reveries, none viler than the ignorance, which refuses to learn and dares to defy divine revelation, by conceiving man a developed ape, fish, seaweed, or aught else. The truth is that primordial causes are beyond science, which, instead of honestly owning its ignorance, pretends to deny the creation which scripture clearly reveals. God alone could create; and He declares that He has done so, and in what order. Science would gladly learn if not skeptical; for its province lies in investigating effects, and cannot reach up to primordial causes, which it is of all moment to know: we can only know them from. God's testimony, which is simple if we were.

How worthy of God and cheering to man, turning from these freaks of spurious science, to weigh once more His words! “Let us make men in Our image after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over fish of the sea and over bird of the heavens [the work of day five] and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth [sixth day's work]. And God created Man in His image, in God's image created He him; male and female created He them.” How emphatically, it will be noticed, Moses says that God created the race. It was enough to say so once of the vast universe in ver. 1, when it was brought originally into being. Again it was said to mark the introduction of animated nature, or at least of the aquatic mammals, into the Adamic world in ver. 21. But here of man it is repeated again and again to enforce the attention of all who tremble at God's word. Not only was man an unprecedented creature, but he had a place in God's mind altogether peculiar, not merely in time on earth, but for all eternity. For the unfolding of this we must await other declarations of God's mind. What is said here points to his creature place as originally set on earth by God. Even for the details of this we need chapter 2 with its all-important supplement on the relations of Adam, where we have the key to the fact that the man was created “male and female,” as we are told here: a single pair, and even so, formed as none other ever was, that man might be differentiated from every creature in earth or heaven. For immense consequences turn on that fact, which God took care to make good, and only He in the nature of things could reveal.

What can science as such say on a matter so profoundly interesting, and morally so important? Is it logical to deny whatever it does not know? For science to confess ignorance is no doubt humiliating. But is it reverent to despise what God does know and has revealed? Alas science knows nothing of faith any more than of piety or reverence. Were it content to assert only what it knows, and confess its ignorance of all beyond its own limits, it would do less mischief and speak more becomingly. Hewers of wood and drawers of water have a place useful if not dignified. Boasting is not seemly, save only in the Lord for all who trust Him.

Chapter 78

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:28

Thus we have seen Man, the race, created in God's image. No doubt, that this should be true, it was and must be after God's likeness in the absence of all moral evil. But it was emphatically a creation in God's image. Man was the last and chief creature here below, the only one in the heavens or the earth, whom scripture designates as made in God's image: a wondrously high distinction, with the grave responsibility of representing Him aright before others, as His delegated ruler. Not even the highest angel possesses such a place before the universe. Angels serve on account of those that shall inherit salvation.

But here, as we may easily stray, we need simple and entire subjection to the written word; and that we are most unlikely to have or court unless we have unwavering faith in it, as we certainly ought if we believe it inspired of God. This the apostle predicates, not merely of scripture generally as a known body of holy writings, but of everything coming under that designation, some of which had yet to be written. What can be conceived more precious and withal comprehensive, than π■σα γραφ■, “every scripture,” in 2 Tim. 3:16? He declares it to be, not only useful for the various purposes of divine blessing to man, but before all God-inspired. All admit the human instruments; but if scripture be God-inspired in every part, it is certain that God is not a man that He should lie. And He has magnified His word above all His name.

Now there is a two-fold danger of misapprehending Adam's state and place while unfallen. We may exalt it beyond the truth by confounding it with what grace gives in Christ; or we may lower it by making it a question of such reasoning and conscience as man acquired by the fall. In his original state Adam stood in relationship with God. in thankful use of all He gave, but liable to death on disobedience. It was in no way heaven held out if he obeyed, as will appear more fully by-and-by. The danger was of losing his first estate by transgression. But God imposed no such moral government as the law; nor had Adam the knowledge of good and evil till the fall. Man was not holy but innocent, and tested solely by prohibition as the simple test of obedience on God's part. It was a blessed creature's responsibility to obey with the threat of death on transgression. By the fall man got the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the intrinsic perception of right and wrong apart from prescription; or as Jehovah Elohim said (Gen. 3:22), “Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil!” In Adam fresh from God's hand the knowledge of good and evil would have been a defect, a moral inconsistency, and therefore an impossibility. Before the fall he had conscience solely in the sense of responsibility to obey, not at all in the way of accusing or else excusing self. Only when he sinned, and thus lost his innocence, did he gain the moral power of knowing good and evil of himself, henceforth his sad, painful, but most useful monitor. Before that he was naturally enjoying divine goodness in its creative effects, under the test, not of resisting things intrinsically evil, but of a single restriction from God which made eating the forbidden fruit wrong: a state wholly different from ours. The fall changed for evil the whole ground of standing. Propitiation with life in Christ is a still deeper and higher change for good, even though in fact the old man yet abides and is altogether evil in itself. Christianity is no mere restoration of man, but eternal life in Christ and eternal redemption.

But unfallen Adam was in no way free in the sense of independence of God. He had indisputable title to act in what God subjected to him, but in nothing else. Obedience and dependence were due to God. All was good around him to enjoy: one thing was forbidden, and wrong because God. forbade it as a test of subjection to Himself. To act independently was to set self up as God, and thus in effect to set aside the true God. But this is sin, yea, apostasy from God, instead of walking as created in His image, after His likeness, the total opposite of Him, Who being God, became man, the image of the invisible God, come to do His will on earth where all else had failed.

And here it is that science, however interesting in its sphere and useful also, comes in so mischievously. At best it ignores man as God created him, because it only knows man as he is, fallen from His original relationship with God in nature; as it equally ignores man born anew, born of water and of the Spirit, because the new birth is supernatural. This ignorance falsifies scientific ideas and reasonings. For instance that knowledge of good and evil of which scripture speaks as a consequence of the fall, or a moral sense as men call it, is assumed to be the highest ethical constitution that has survived the fall! But there was this immense difference that, while of course God knew good and evil, it was as One unassailable by evil and supreme above it in His own nature: man only acquired it by sin and in subjection to the power of evil, and thus having it now in himself. The Lord Jesus on the contrary was the Word made flesh, born not innocent only but holy, rejecting evil always even when tempted as Adam and his sons never were, and at the end as a sacrifice dying for sins and to sin, that we who believe might live in Him risen, the life-giving Spirit, the Second Man and Last Adam.

Now faith only, not science, recognizes either the fall of the first man as affecting all mankind and the entire scene put under him, or the victory which God gives all who believe in Christ risen from the dead. Science accepts fallen man's estate as the only one, because it alone is the subject-matter of ordinary experience. It is therefore involved in difficulties necessarily insoluble, because it knows neither the sinless and happy state in which God originally set man, nor the righteous deliverance which the Lord Jesus gives to faith in God's love; still less the glory, power, and incorruption to be made good even for the dead and for the mortal body when He comes. Philosophy is either openly infidel or vainly essays to conciliate, with a God of power and goodness, a world of sin, suffering, misery, and death. Were creation truly believed and the fall honestly confessed, the main difficulty vanishes; absolutely so, when God's love is read in the gift of His Son incarnate and suffering for the sinful world which crucified Him in its unbelief of His glory and rejection of His grace and truth. But science as such starts with the world and man as they are, ignoring his moral disorder and the effect of this on what was subjected to him; and cannot rise above the facts it discovers in the perceived course of nature, but may deduce its laws so called. God only could reveal creation. His word alone tells how man fell from innocence in first estate into sin and death, and dragged down with him all the inferior creation. Science in its very nature is incapable of rising to this knowledge infinitely more important as it is than all it can make known or even discover, however ample the field in nature may be. For revelation speaks of three broadly distinct conditions: creation unfallen; creation as it is in guilt, and misery, whatever the resources of sovereign grace held out to faith; creation as it will be when all things are made new. Science occupying itself solely with the intermediate is in great danger of denying in dishonest pride what it cannot know scientifically, to the destruction of all who trust it, instead of the God Who gave His Son in love to save sinners who repent and believe the gospel.

But to return, we read, “And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over fish of the sea and bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that creepeth on the earth” (ver. 28). Man, as Prof. Owen said, is the sole species of his genus, and the sole representative of his species.

This is the second benediction of creation. The first was when God made the creatures that peopled the waters and the air of Adam's world, the earliest to enjoy animal life in that state of things. God has pleasure in blessing His creatures that have a life even of a lowly kind to appreciate the fruits of His goodness, and especially in view of their reproduction and multiplying within their sphere. Here, a second time, He blessed mankind, male and female, of whom alone it is said, though the detailed difference is reserved for a subsequent and more fitting occasion. In verse 22 we have only “saying,” but here “God said to them, Be fruitful,” &c. Man was the depositary of God's revelation, as he ought to be His priest, and, as we have seen, His viceroy. This is more than the interpreter of nature, as one of our sages styled him. He had intercourse with God at once.

Language thus was in no way the slow invention of man's wit, but an immediate endowment of our first parents by God from creation. Here His word assures us of its reality from the first day of man's creation; and everything confirms in the chapters that follow. To imagine otherwise is to disbelieve the Bible and prefer one's own thoughts or the dreams of other men, as if we or they could know anything about the matter. He Who alone knows all has been pleased to tell us the truth through Moses. His word was valid for the unintelligent creation: how comforting for the human pair to hear Him say, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it! Even though man comes in as a creature with the rest, still he is introduced exceptionally as the crown of creation; and the higher creatures are pronounced good separately from man, who is blessed, male and female, in an address to them as at the head of all the rest.

Then comes the proclamation of the rule assigned them by God. Not only were they like others to multiply and fill the earth, they were to subdue, or bring it into subjection. Next He adds as before, “and have dominion over fish of the sea and over bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that creepeth on the earth.” Thus from the outset was man, even when enumerated as a being fresh from God, set apart essentially. None other was to subdue the earth. He alone had the God-given capacity. He alone was called to have dominion. Development in the Darwinian sense is not only an illusion, but at plain issue with the word of God. A striking and practical proof of the reality of this dominion as far as every beast and every bird was given to Adam (Gen. 2:19) when Jehovah Elohim brought them to see what their lord would call them, and whatever he called each living soul (or creature), that was its name: a fact full of interest otherwise on which some remark will fall in its season. He was owned by God in that place of authority which entitled him to give each subject creature its name.

For the present however we do not notice more than the singular evidence here afforded of real intelligible language communicated from the very first to the head of the race. Adam had it in perfection like the other properties of full growth the day he was created. Doubtless in this he differed from all that sprang from him in due time and to this day who have to learn. But here God created worthily of Himself; and even infidels own that there must have been primeval causes for all that exists, of which science can give no account. It can at most only say “must be,” not “is.” For

its fixed laws are only gathered from the constant course of things; and such a course supposes the “things that appear” to have gone on long enough for men to observe the order of nature which they thus designate. An originating first cause is no less certain; also the phenomena need time for that regular course that they describe by “laws of nature.” Eternal self-existence belongs only to God, not to the creature; and none so negligent or perhaps rebellious as geologists, if they forget how often God intervened to create as well as to destroy in a way irreconcilable either with chance or with fate. But these are the characteristic main-springs of Epicureanism on the one hand and of Stoicism on the other, the two chief opposing systems of ancient philosophy (Acts 17:18) as of modern under new names. Without creation and the fall man can account for nothing aright; but for knowing either we need faith and these from revelation, which some in their infatuation pronounce impossible. These men confessedly can make known their evil ideas to their fellows; but God, they argue, cannot communicate His good word. What is possible with men seems to their unbelief impossible with God! Could folly sink lower? Creation must be a miracle; and miracles must not be. Has not the nineteenth century settled it forever?

Here also natural religion betrays its inherent insufficiency and falseness. For it never truly feels or acknowledges the fall, even if it borrow creation as a tradition from the Bible. If it estimated the ruin aright, it would own the necessity of divine revelation and of salvation by grace, yea of a Savior able to meet God in righteousness, no less than man in grace. But it takes the ground of making out a righteousness of its own, supplemented by God's mercy to cover all faults and deficiencies. Impossible for any soul to find satisfaction thus. For on one side he acknowledges a Creator God of power and goodness infinite; on the other he faces a world and race of sin, evil, wretchedness, and death, to say nothing of a judgment he could not but dread. The strongest and clearest mind is lost in this labyrinth; and human efforts on the religious side of superstition are as vain to clear it up and present the truth and purge the conscience as the profane speculations and self-contradictory antinomies of philosophy. Human religion only hardens men in their naturally false thoughts of God as either austere or easy-going. Philosophy (in its struggles to escape the inconsistencies inevitable to a fallen estate which is not confessed to God with a broken heart) only darkens more deeply what is already dark, and ends too often by the mental endeavor to deny the God Whom sin and unbelief have made unknown, save in the qualms of conscience.

No! man was made to look up, not physically alone but morally, in dependence on God the source and giver of all goodness. He sought independence by sin, and gained a conscience already bad, which made him look down, while his pride still pretended to everything. He had lost God and departed from Him, and (being wholly insufficient to abide self-sustained) set his mind on the creature below himself so as at length even to deify it. The Son of God emptied Himself by taking the form of a bondman, being made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross, where God was glorified as to sin by propitiation for it, and the ground laid for the righteous salvation of all who, believe. A man-god was Satan's bait and man's ruin. The God-man dying in obedience and for redemption is the triumph of truth and grace.

Chapter 79

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 1:29-31

The closing notice remains, the economy of the primeval creation, and the divine estimate of it all.

“ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb producing seed that [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which [is] the fruit of a tree producing seed: to you it shall be for food; and to every animal of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, in which [is] a living soul, every green herb for food. And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, [it was] very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (ver. 29-31).

Man has still his distinctive place in God's commission and plan; but it is in the state of innocence. After the fall came in corruption and violence. Animal life was not permitted to man till after the deluge. Herbs and fruit were given at first to man, and to the subject creation every green herb. Death was not in the Adamic earth till sin. Granted that Rom. 5:12-21 does not go beyond the human race as fallen under death through sin; but Rom. 8:19-22 looks at “all the creation” as ruined through the fall of its head. Neither scripture raises any question about states of the earth anterior to Adam. We have seen in Gen. 1:1-2, the general principle of a previous condition called into being and destroyed; which, as far as it goes, leaves room for death by one means or another among the animals then. In no previous conditions was there man existing, still less the great moral trial of Adam the first head, and the varied dispensations of God, till through the last, the risen Adam, God gives those who believe the victory. Whatever gradual approach may have been made before, the six days describe the foundation of that platform where man would be tested in every way according to divine wisdom, and God was in due time to bring in Christ, His Son, become man to glorify Him, not only in obedience but redemption, and a wholly new and everlasting creation only as yet come in the person of its glorious Head on high. The words of God here spoken are in view of man and earth yet unfallen.

Here experience is necessarily at fault. For only the Bible could give us the truth as to the primitive phase of man and the creatures around him. But it at once approves itself, when revealed, as being the sole conceivable state in which the Creator could have placed creation and its head suitably to His own goodness. Hence the force and moral beauty of His final survey in the last verse. “And God saw everything that He had made (i.e., in the Adamic earth), and behold, it was very good.” So with the one exception of day second had He called each thing “good;” now as a whole it was superlatively so in His eyes.

Yet the unbeliever, scientific or not, is misled. by his abuse of experience about a time where he cannot have a tittle of evidence to contradict scripture, and imputes to God, if he allow there is One, such a world as would be the production of a fiend, not of the Only True God. Even on his own ground it is the grossest assumption to assume that at the beginning (and science is now compelled to own there must have been a beginning) things were as they now are. It is illogical, as well as infidel, to take for granted that the present state is a normal one, or that God made men sinful, vain, proud, selfish, to say nothing of more abominable outbreaks; that He left men

indifferent, so as to become heathen or Jews, Mahometans or Christians, of any religion or of none, without guidance or proof. It is evident that the state of the world is offensive to God; and that it has been so since man left records more or less credible. This is a fact, Bible or no Bible. But the Bible alone gives us the simplest, clearest, and fullest explanation, in a few words, how it came to pass. God made man upright, surrounded by everything “very good” yet under trial of obedience, as we shall soon hear definitely; but he departed from God through the wiles of the enemy in the face of solemn warning. He sinned and thus introduced death for himself and his posterity, and “subjected to vanity” the creation put under him. But God, when tracing the evil to its source, has proved His goodness by holding out the assurance of a Conqueror over the enemy, even while suffering Himself, to be born of woman too. And to this word all believers from the fall clung till He came Who made it good in His death on the cross and in His resurrection.

Thus does God from the first proclaim mercy rejoicing over judgment, though sin bore its sorrowful fruits in an outcast race and a blighted world, where no creature is as God made it. It is science, not scripture, here as elsewhere, which brings in difficulties even for believers.

Thus Sir J. W. Dawson in his Archaia, 217-222, raises questions which are certainly not solved, though brought by himself, a very competent geologist, “into the light of our modern knowledge of nature.” He pictures Eden either cleared of its previous inhabitants or not yet invaded by animals from other centers! He supposes man created then with a group adapted to his happiness (Gen. 2:19, &c., treating of. them only), and these latest species of animals and plants extending themselves within the spheres of older districts, so as to replace the ferocious beasts of older epochs and other regions! He fancies that on the fall the curse that befell the earth would thus consist in the predaceous animals with thorns and briars invading his Eden. Most of my readers will have heard more than they wish of notions as irreconcilable with scripture as derogatory to it. How can the excellent Principal of Mc Gill College have indulged in such speculations? Evidently, because being sure, too sure, of his geological scheme, he accommodates scripture to it: a position not very wise scientifically where so much is continually shifting and so little is absolutely ascertained—a position most antagonistic to a Christian's faith in God's word. He is not entitled geologically to assume a mixture of the conditions of the Tertiary with those of the human period in the Quaternary. His theory of day-ages exposes him to these consequences, along with the recently adopted fashion of opposition to A. D'Orbigny's careful and exhaustive proof in his “Prodrome de Stratigraphique Palæontologie,'' that not a species of plants or animals survived the Tertiary, and that a distinct break preceded man's time as often before.

And what is the alleged ground in scripture? “Man was to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the b'hemah or herbivorous animals. The carnivorous creatures are not mentioned, and possibly were not included in man's dominion”! But this is distinctly refuted by ver. 30, which expressly assigns every green herb to “every beast” or animal of the earth. The same text proves that at this time “every animal in the earth was herbivorous,” though it is boldly laid down that this cannot be meant. Nor should any believer question the past fact, if assured by inspired prophecy that the day is coming, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid, when the cow and the bear shall feed, their young lying down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Here undoubtedly science will decry and scoff; but he who believes (as Dawson does) the unfallen state of Adam and his Eden, if not his earth, is inconsistent in curtailing his rule to a petty domain. The apostle, we have seen, interprets his headship of creation in general,

whatever modern geology may pronounce to the contrary.

Philologically too, it is quite an error that b'hemah, though expressing “cattle,” is limited as is here imagined. Any good Hebrew Concordance will show the most unlearned that it is frequently employed in the largest sense and rightly rendered “beast” in both the A. and the Rev. Versions. Compare Gen. 6:7; 7:2 twice, 8; Gen. 8:20; 34:23; 36:6; Ex. 8:17-18; Ex. 9:9-10, 19, 22, 25; 11:5, 7; 13:2, 12, 15; 19:13; 20:10; 22:10, 19. It occurs at least 25 times in this sense in Lev. 8 times in Numbers, and 7 times in Deuteronomy; so often in the historical books, in the Psalms and in the Prophets, where the sense of “cattle” is in fact rare.

This then is God's account of His creation, and in detail of the Adamic earth. No wise man will wonder that we are conducted silently over the vast and successive platforms of dead plants and animals, to say nothing of the debris of rocks, under water and heat. Here we have a system of life rising up, not by any necessity but by divine power, wisdom, and goodness, to beings constituted chief of creation and made in His image after His likeness, before sin brought in death and every woe on the guilty and all subject to them: a system where our feeble eyes cannot fail, save blinded by willful evil, to see it everywhere, above, around, below, filled with contrivances that disclose the omniscient designs and the inexhaustible benevolence of the omnipotent Designer, yet in no case absolutely, but with a view to moral government, the effects of which afford a handle of objection to those who refuse that divine word which reveals good then and still higher purposes of grace in Christ for all who believe. Even in the lowest point of view, well may we at this place exclaim with the psalmist, “These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season: That Thou givest them, they gather. Thou openest Thine hand; they are filled with good.”

Chapter 80

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 2:1-3

These verses are really the necessary supplement and close of chap. 1, if we divide into chapters on a sound principle. It is well known that such a division, save in the Psalms etc., has no authority and is not seldom erroneous. The new title given to God, Jehovah Elohim, indicates consistently a new subject, as will be shown in its place. Hitherto it is simply Elohim, the abstract name of the Creator. Here as everywhere the name has nothing whatever to do with the question of authorship, as ignorant unbelief has suggested with misplaced confidence, but springs exclusively from internal reasons, as may be seen throughout scripture to much interest and instruction.

“ And the heavens and the earth and all their host were finished. And God had finished on the seventh day His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that on it He had rested from all His work which God had created in making” (or, and made, lit. to make) (vers. 1-3).

The last is without doubt a remarkable phrase, falling in naturally with what we have seen in the opening verses, an original creation where man was not, succeeded by catastrophe, and by fresh creative energy, the details of which refer to the scene where and when man was to be brought into being. Here the work and the rest of God are in clear view of the race; and the seventh day or sabbath has immense importance. On its first mention it was unmistakeably the witness of God's rest: His rest, not from weariness of course, but from the work of creation and making. This work was now ended for the life that now is. And as the six preceding days were literal, so is the seventh the closing day of the week.

This is amply and strictly confirmed by Ex. 20:1-11. The sabbath is not a but the seventh day, the memorial of creation finished—of the Adamic world. “For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it.” The language is precise. It is not said “created” but “made”. This was the right phrase as a whole for the work of the six days, however well creating is said of parts within that work. It was not the original production, but a special construction of divine will and power with man in view. That the seventh day is the sabbath is with equal care impressed in Deut. 5:12-15, though the connection of heart here is with the deliverance from bondage in the land of Egypt rather than with creation.

Nor is there a commandment on which scripture laid greater stress, when the law was bound on the sons of Israel, than that of the sabbath. All the others were moral in a sense which this was not; for of their own selves they could not but feel and own the duty. But the hallowing of the sabbath was of God's initiation exclusively, and singularly marked out for His people that they should not even look to gather the manna on that day. His honor was pre-eminently identified with its observance; and so was His blessing.

For us, Christians, the first day of the week, and not the sabbath, is characteristic. That only is to us the Lord's-day, as the day of His resurrection, and the witness of our accomplished redemption

and of the power of His life as risen from the dead, and our life. It is accordingly as much marked by the new creation and grace as the sabbath day was by the six-days' creation and the law. And, though we have to do with the Lord on the first day, as the N. T. makes plain in manifold ways, the sabbath is not done with but will assuredly re-appear, when Zion arises from her long slumber in the dust, and the light of Jehovah shines in Israel for the universal blessing of the earth and the nations, as it never did even in the days of David and Solomon: so the prophets proclaim, and scripture cannot be broken.

Ours meanwhile is a higher call and a brighter hope; for we are by the Holy Spirit united to Him Whom Jew and Gentile crucified, Whom God not only raised but set at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come; we are the body of the glorified Head. Those who had the sabbath, as a sign between them and Jehovah, rejected their own Messiah, Who, slain by the hand of lawless men, lay in the grave that sabbath, “high” or great day as it emphatically was. It was the sin and the death of Israel, the ground of a still more terrible scattering than that of Assyria or of Babylon; yet in God's grace the divine and only efficacious means to faith of blotting out that sin and every other; as we prove who believe the gospel, while hardening in part has befallen Israel. But all Israel shall be saved by-and-by; and when they are, from one moon to another and from one sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Jehovah. We now by the Spirit sent down from heaven draw near by faith within the holiest, and this with boldness by the blood of Jesus. Of our peculiar blessing the first day, not the seventh, is the witness. Nor can lack of Christian intelligence be more decided than confounding the Lord's-day with the sabbath.

But the seventh day is also decisively against the day periods. For what can be conceived more unnatural, save when we let a system of private interpretation carry us away alike from simplicity and from spiritual understanding? Till the six days introduced Adam and his world, it could not be said that the heavens and the earth, still less “all their host,” were finished. Previous states of the creation had their importance; but till man and his congeners, animal and vegetable, there was a great lack. Neither on earth nor even in the heavens was there a creature made in God's image or after His likeness. This was not a little in itself as bringing in moral ways of and with man, and room for God's manifestation in promise and government, till the infinite fact of Immanuel, the Word made flesh, the Son of God a man, and His work no less infinite of redemption, yet to be the basis not only of the church's blessedness, as also of all saints and of Israel to come, but of the new heavens and new earth through all eternity.

What possible evidence from scripture that “the seventh day is the modern or human era in geology” (Archaia, 235)? or as the author of “Footprints of the Creator” puts it, “God's sabbath of rest may still exist; the work of redemption may be the work of His sabbath day”! Does it need the words of any one to refute such a reverie of self-destroying fancy? The scripture before us points out His rest as cessation from work, not merely from creation, but from creating to make. No doubt, if six immensely protracted periods of several thousand years each were certainly meant by the six days, analogy would claim a proportionately lengthened term for the seventh. But the doctrine of God's word even then would be thrown into confusion. For sin violated the rest of creation; and as God could not rest in sin, so He would not in misery, its effect. This is not our rest; it is polluted.

The argument of Heb. 3-4 is that, even though Messiah is come and the work of propitiation wrought, and we that believed do enter into the rest of God, we are only as yet in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Hence we are exhorted to fear lest any might seem to have failed, and to use diligence to enter in. A sabbatism, then, remains to the people of God. It is not yet come. It is the day of glory and not before when God has no more work to do, all being done so perfectly that He can rest forever. So our Lord pleaded to those who indulged in somewhat similar imagination in His day, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work". But work and rest are in contrast. Hence our Lord did on the sabbath what roused the enmity of the Jews implacably. God's rest was in no true sense come. He must work in grace, yea, the Father and the Son; and this has been done beyond all thought of the creature, and God is glorified thereby, yet the rest remains for another day.

But that work, infinitely acceptable and efficacious, is the very opposite of His rest, though the foundation of it. Meanwhile the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ are being called; the delay, the longsuffering of God, is salvation; and the people of God must be by faith fitted to enjoy His rest. In due time they will enter in, in heaven and on earth. But it still remains; it is not yet come. The idea of a sabbath from Adam till now is a dream wholly antagonistic to all revealed truth. It will be at the end when God makes all things new, and the first things have passed away. This is in the fullest sense the rest of God, not the morning cloud that enveloped the entrance into Canaan, nor the dew that passed so early away in Eden. They were but shadows. The reality is to come, the true rest of God. There cannot be rest and work at the same time in the same sense. To view the sabbath or rest of God as contemporaneous with His work is to be in a mist and to lose completely the truth of both in strange fancifulness.

The absurdity which thus inevitably attaches to the age-day theory is proved by no consideration more clearly than by the seventh day or sabbath. That the natural day is meant is only the more evident from the fact that scripture leaves no room for a symbolic or age-lasting sabbath, after the Adamic world was made, but casts us only on its sure but still future dawn. It is “a promise left us” which the day of glory alone fulfills. Of this the sabbath, the natural day at the beginning, was the pledge, the blessed antitype, when God and the creature shall by redemption and resurrection power enjoy the communion of His own rest, sin, sorrow and death completely effaced, and love, righteousness, and glory triumphant forever through our Lord Jesus. This the scriptures hold out abundantly and unambiguously; but an allegoric sabbath stretching over the fall and the deluge, the kingdom of Israel and the Gentile world-powers, to say nothing of the law, the gospel, and the church, is a mere fiction of some few geologists speculative beyond the rest, for which not a word of revelation has ever been truly advanced.

Chapter 81

It Is God That Justifieth

If God justifies, how ineffable must our state be in His eyes (that is, in truth)! He cannot approve or justify but according to His own nature and being. His approbation must be according to what He approves. What a state for us to be in—in Christ! that God not only pardons our sins but justifies us! No doubt those whom He justifies are ungodly in themselves (Rom. 4-5); but His justification is the seal of His absolute approval of what they are according to what He is. What an infinitely perfect place to be in! It is God that justifies—that justifies according to the unalterable judgment of His nature: This is true even as regards our sins, for He is just by reason of Christ's work in doing it. But how much more as in Christ, where it is the positive approbation of us in our place! And in fact not only has He perfectly set evil aside, but glorified God so as to have this place as man, and us in Him.

Further, there are difficulties, trials, dangers in the way, death, the high and holy place so far removed, Satan's power against us. First, as to difficulties and trials, we more than conquer. It is the very path of blessing and honor: there Christ trod; there His power and mind are with us. Take all on high moreover, or in the depth: angels or powers, all are creatures—creature power or creature weakness. They cannot separate us from the love of God: this is more, more sure, more strong, than any creature; yet it is in Him Who, as man, has met for us all of hostile power and death in the way, and is on high for us. It is the love of God, the sureness of divine love, and that in Christ our Lord, Who has been through all, and is now on high for us. This secures us against all and through all for glory.

Chapter 82

The Gospel and the Church: 1

At all times it has been a well-known stratagem of the enemy, when he cannot prevent the promulgation of divine truth, to advance some portion of it at the expense and to the neglect of other much higher and more blessed truths, in order to confine the attention of believers to such as are of secondary import—however precious they may be in themselves—and to keep out of sight, or at least in the background, truths of primary and deepest importance.

What more precious portion of divine truth than the gospel? And what more blessed service than that of the evangelist? Paul, the apostle of the gospel and of the church, writes that he is “not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

But the same apostle writes, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel, whereof I was made a minister,” &c.

The gospel then, as we learn from the apostle, is the means for forming the church, which is the body of Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles. The same apostle calls himself “minister of the gospel,” and “minister of the church” (Col. 1:23-25). The gospel is to the church what the recruiting officer is to the army. The army could not subsist without the recruiting officer. Without him it would soon die out. Neither can the church do without the evangelist. The gospel then is the means of founding the church, and the evangelist is a minister or servant of the gospel and of the church, as we learn from the apostle (Eph. 4:11, 12); “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Now it is beyond dispute that that which is merely instrumental, however blessedly instrumental, cannot hold the same place of importance as that for which it is instrumental. We know from God's own word through His apostle of the gospel of the church, that next to Christ there is nothing so near and dear to God as His church, the body of Christ and the habitation of God in the Spirit. Christ and the church form the very center of the counsels of God! What a sad thing then to assign a secondary or subordinate place to that which in God's sight is of primary importance!

There is joy indeed before God and His angels over one sinner that repenteth. The heavenly joy does not wait until the sinner finds “joy and peace in believing.” But the divine joy of Him Who knows the end from the beginning begins as soon as His divine work in the sinner's soul begins in repentance toward God. Wondrous indeed, yet but natural to those unenvious blessed angelic ministers of God's good pleasure, were those heavenly acclamations on the night of our Savior's nativity, which accompanied the first proclamation of the “good tidings of great joy.”

“ How rightly rose the praises

Of heaven that wondrous night,

When shepherds hid their faces

In brightest angel light!

“ More just those acclamations

Than when the glorious band

Chanted earth's deep foundations,

Just laid by God's right hand.

“ Come now and view that manger:

The Lord of glory see,

A houseless, homeless stranger

In this poor world for thee.

“ To God in th' highest glory,

And peace on earth to find,

And learn that wondrous story—

Good pleasure in mankind.”

But the time is not very distant when another glorious song, equally if not more glorious still, will be heard at the outburst of the joyful heavenly Allelujah. “Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. Allelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints.”

It is true, what the chief apostle of the circumcision wrote—after our precious Savior had accomplished His glorious work of an eternal redemption, and as a risen and ascended Savior and Head of the church had taken His seat on high, and the Holy Ghost had been sent down from heaven— “which things the angels desire to look into.”

But it is no less true, what the same Spirit says through Paul the apostle of grace and glory, viz., “To make all see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

And is that from which the angels derive their lessons in studying the wisdom of God to be a matter of minor importance to you and me, fellow-believer, who are living stones in that wonderful divine building, and members of the body of Christ? Jesus died “not for that (Jewish) nation only, but that also he should gather into one (i.e., into one body) the children of God that were scattered abroad” (i.e., those of the Gentiles) John 11:52. He died not merely to get a certain

number—however great—of saved individuals or units, but that those units should be united into one body, the church, of which He is the glorious, Head.

What then could be more injurious to the individual believer than to neglect and to slight that marvelous privilege which God in His wondrous grace has bestowed upon us, to be members of Christ, members of His body, the church? None can treat such divine blessings lightly without serious damage to the soul. The evangelist who neglects the church and his place in the church, will soon take a low ground in the preaching of the gospel, and the believer who grows cold in his interest in the gospel, thus failing to get the heart established by grace, and stores up church truths in the head, instead of treasuring them up in the heart, will soon become a more or less useless member of the body, a kind of withered branch, besides the grave danger resulting from either, of falling into the snare of evil doctrine or practice. These “latter days” constantly furnish us with solemn instances of both. Alas! how sadly do we fail to realize even in our little measure the immensity of God's blessings connected with His gospel and His church! The greatness of our salvation is but too much neglected, though generally not so much as the greatness of God's blessings connected with that wondrous mystery revealed to His apostle of the church, and, through him, to us.

Whilst in that blessed Gospel-Epistle to the Romans the gospel most properly holds the first, and the church, being its result, appears in secondary; in that grand Church-Epistle of the same apostle to the Ephesians, we find the first place by the Spirit of God assigned to the church, whereas the gospel, being only the means for accomplishing God's wonderful counsels and purposes as to the church, appears in the second line (Eph. 1:7). Those counsels of divine sovereign grace and infinite love in which God predestinated us for the adoption of children to Himself, could not flow out and abound towards us when those wounds had been opened and the precious blood been shed on the cross, which alone could procure their accomplishment. When Jesus was on earth He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with [even His sufferings and death upon the cross], and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” All those stores of divine love and grace and wisdom, treasured up in Him, in Whom the whole fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, Who was the center of all those divine counsels of blessing, however precious and wonderful in themselves, could never have flown out towards their objects, but would have remained pent up in Christ, till the spear of man's wickedness drew forth the blood to save. No sooner is that precious fountain mentioned (ver. 7) when at once those inexhaustible tides of grace and every blessing flow forth “towards us” without let or hindrance, “according to the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself.”

Beloved brethren in Christ and fellow-members of His body, the church, are we going to make that which, next to and with Christ, is nearest and dearest to God's mind and heart, for which Christ gave Himself, that we might be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—that which He has bought at the cost of His cross, “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” —are we going, I say, to make all this a secondary object of our Christian meditations, pursuits, and service?

As already observed at the beginning, it is, and has been throughout the Christian era, one of the subterfuges of the adversary of everything divine, whenever he cannot entirely prevent the promulgation of divine truth, to subvert the order of it by putting that which in God's word and mind is of primary importance into the background, if he cannot entirely put it out of sight or pervert and corrupt it; and by giving a vantage ground to that which, according to God's order, is secondary (however glorious and blessed in itself), being only the means for the accomplishment of that which is of primary importance. For he knows well that where this divine order is subverted, those who suffer themselves thus to be duped and robbed by the enemy will in consequence lower the standard of the gospel truth, for which the apostle of the gospel and of the church endured such opposition in endeavoring to keep up the gospel to that height of divine truth, which had been delivered to him by the Lord.

The preaching of evangelists who, contrary to the truth they had been instructed in, devote all their energy to preaching, to the neglect of the church, will sooner or later assume the character of that soft, sentimental, and humanitarian gospel preaching of the day, which produces slight wounds, if any; and slight healing, if any, with antinomian tendencies and twofold hardening of conscience in its wake. “Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;” Gibeonites, trimmed lamps without oil. One of the Revivalists said, “It is a glorious sight to see ten thousand standing up, confessing Christ!” Alas! what has become of them?

It is solemnly instructive to see how soon after the days of Paul, and ever since, the wily adversary of the truth has sought, and alas! succeeded but too much, to keep the truth of the church of God, as revealed in His Word, in the background, thus robbing the saints of God of that spiritual wealth and strength connected with conscious entering of the soul upon that portion of divine truth. And not only so. Satan, whose character since the days of Paradise has ever been to mar and corrupt what God had established in and for blessing, has succeeded to lower and corrupt both the church and the gospel—the means of forming the church. But the first thing he did in undertaking his mischievous work was to turn that wondrous revelation of the great divine mystery of Christ and the church to a mystery again, by putting and keeping it in the darkest and farthest background possible.

Christ; the glorious Head of the church, His body, Who had sent His Holy Spirit, a heavenly Eliezer, to conduct His heavenly bride through this wilderness to her heavenly Bridegroom, has awakened by His Spirit from time to time faithful witnesses of the truth, especially with regard to His gospel, which like the written word of God itself, had been almost lost beneath the rubbish of the corrupting religious ordinances of the Roman Church. But those witnesses, faithful though they were in the proclamation of the truth of a faller and purer gospel (whose heavenly side in resurrection, deliverance by and union with Christ was but imperfectly known even to them), had but little, if any light about the true character of the church as the “habitation of God in the Spirit,” nor about its heavenly position, calling, and hope. That defect is but too apparent even in the best of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.

After the Thirty Years' War, so ruinous in its religious as well as in its moral and temporal effects, the so-called Protestant church relapsed into spiritual slumber and worldliness, and the prophetic word as to “tares” found its sad accomplishment. God in His longsuffering mercy towards the end of the last century again raised several faithful witnesses, especially in this country, to arouse the

Protestant church from her sinful sleep. But even the testimony of such men as Berridge, Hill, J. and C. Wesley, and Whitefield was chiefly confined to the preaching of the gospel. And though one of the chief blessings of the Reformation, the unimpeded circulation of Holy Writ, continued to exist and the Bible had become accessible even to the poorest, it seemed as if the glorious truth of the church, so long buried under the religious rubbish of centuries, was farther to remain unheeded and neglected.

But our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, Who is not only the Savior of sinners, but above all the Head of His body, the church, composed of saved sinners, would not permit the enemy now, when His coming for His saints is so near at hand, to obscure or keep in the background any longer the precious truth as to Christ and the church, the real center of the counsels of God.

During the third decade of this century (from 1825-30) the Lord raised in England several eminently gifted witnesses of the truth. One of these, in an especial way endowed by God, was used by the Lord for recovering the full truth of the gospel in a purity and fullness which had not been known since the days of the apostles. But not only for the recovery of the truths of the gospel did the Lord use that honored instrument of His gracious designs. The light of the pure scriptural truth of the church, which appears to have been altogether lost during the lapse of so many dark centuries, was by that distinguished servant of the Lord placed again upon the bushel, and shone with a brightness of scriptural simplicity unknown since the days of the apostles. What characterized that movement was especially the practical acknowledgment of the presence and authority and guidance of the Holy Ghost in the church or assembly, and the authority of the word of God, which is “truth,” written by the “Spirit of truth.” In those days that wholesome principle prevailed, “Never the word without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the word.”

The Holy Ghost, Who glorifies Christ, receives of His and shows it to us, being thus practically owned in His presence in the assemblies of those Christians, His blessed activity among them as well as in them was realized in its own unimpeded power in spiritual joy and liberty. It almost seemed as if the blissful days of Pentecost were about to be experienced afresh amongst those simple believers. They realized their dependence upon the glorious Head, and under Him of their mutual dependence as members of Christ's body. Their evangelists did not consider themselves to be independent beings, who went whither they would, and did what seemed good in their own eyes, under plea of their sole dependence upon the Lord; but they entered upon their work from the bosom of the church, commended to the Lord by the church, as did Paul and Barnabas (though the former was not only a preacher but an apostle), and after the completion of their service they returned to the church and “rehearsed all that God had done with them,” and “there abode a long time with the disciples.” Neither did they who were pastors and teachers in the church make themselves the starting-point and terminus of all that was carried on, nor the center of the assembly, saying (like Louis XIV.) “The assembly, that is, me;" but they considered themselves to be servants of the church for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

“But the church is in ruins,” some will say, “and as we cannot rebuild it, the only thing that remains is the gospel. There remains nothing therefore for the faithful and zealous Christian laborer but to devote all one's energy to the blessed work of the gospel, that precious souls may be saved, before the saints and every evangelist be removed and the sudden awful judgments of God break in upon this world.” I can only say that such reasoning is based on altogether false premises.

It is sadly true that the church is in ruins, and he must be blind indeed who would deny it. Yea, I make bold to say that the labors and testimony of a servant of Christ will in the same measure lack the savor of that grace and love which is never without truth, and the fragrance and freshness of the Spirit, as he has failed to realize in his own soul the rain of the church in the spirit of a Daniel and Nehemiah, having far more reason than they to “remember from whence we are fallen.” Not being truly humbled before the Lord do not say about himself and his own failures, but about his share in the common ruin and shame of the church) his ministry, be it in the gospel or in the church, will lack, if not the outward energy, yet the savor of the grace and freshness and unction of the testimony of those honored men of God of old, not being the result of true and deep brokenness of heart and spirit. David could “encourage himself in the Lord” amidst the rains of Ziklag, whilst his men thought of stoning him. And why could he do so? Because he must have been down in the dust before the Lord about those silently eloquent ruins around him, they being the sorrowful and humiliating result of not only his little faith but of his faithlessness to God and His people. How graciously the Lord restored after that, all the lost ones to David!

“ Who shall despise the day of small things?” was the prophet's encouraging word in the days of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, when the enemy taunted the builders with the mocking words, that a fox could leap over their walls. Those days of small things were just God's opportunity for doing great things. But let us, beloved, beware of attempting to do great things in a day of small things. It would be pretty much like the language of those Ephraimites and Samaritans in the days of Isaiah the prophet, who said in their pride and stubbornness of heart, “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars” (Isa. ix. 9, 10).

I do not say this to discourage any true-hearted evangelist in his zeal for, and labor in the gospel of our blessed God. God forbid! Surely the fields are white for the harvest and the laborers few. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest to raise and send more of them, but such as do not disconnect, in a spirit of independency, their labors from the church of God, the body of Christ, whose members they are, pleading the ruin of the church as an excuse for self-will and independency. Has the church (Ephes.) as to its divine side fallen into ruins, because the human side (2 Tim.) as to man's responsibility has become a wreck and fallen into ruins? Has the Lord been unfaithful, because we have been unfaithful? No, blessed be God, He Who when on earth as the faithful Witness was faithful amidst unfaithfulness all around, is now faithful above our unfaithfulness.

Does the Spirit of God in the Epistle of Jude, which was written in a day of low tide, tell the saints to strike the flag, or even to lower the standard of truth on account of the low tide all around? Does he tell them to leave the ruins behind and go on with the gospel? On the contrary, he had intended when sitting down to write his Epistle, to speak to them about our common salvation in the sense of the gospel, but the increasing dangers and corruption in the church, far from making him indifferent or used to it, made him, inspired writer as he was, turn aside from the (however blessed) subject of the gospel to a still higher subject of paramount importance in the sight of God, even the church of God, fast declining toward a ruinous condition, as it then already was, but no less, nay even all the more on God's and His and our Christ's heart on that account, even as a mother cooes and nurses her sick child all the more just because of its bad health. Does the apostle tell the saints to be less careful as to the “assembling of ourselves together,” on account of the low condition of the church? No, he enjoins them all the more to “build up themselves on their

most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," and to "keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

It is a truly wretched thing to make the low and ruined condition of the church a plea for neglectful indifference as to the precious divine truths of God's word, as if the authority of God's word concerning His church were less binding on our consciences because of our having failed as to our responsibility under such privileges. Shall we go on sinning because we have sinned? Certainly every true Christian would with horror recoil from such a thought, most repulsive even to any honest natural man.

Nay, beloved, our responsibility under such grace not only as to our common salvation, but still more as to our common privileges as members of the body of Christ, even the church of God, is in these very last of the "last days" greater than ever for faithful adherence to God's written word, and faithfulness in testimony both in the church and the gospel. The assembly is a divine institution, and we cannot neglect a divine institution without damage to our souls and to our testimony. It is God's nursery for His saints, and especially for His servants not only a nursery but, as it were, a divine drilling-place, for their outfit for service in the gospel. If the evangelist neglects that place, his ministry will lack the unction of the grieved Holy Spirit, Who dwells in the assembly no less than within the evangelist individually, and his ministry of the gospel will gradually have a more or less profane, often so-called popular, character, pleasing the multitude and the great, and despising the small and the few.

May the Lord send more laborers into His gospel field, but such who, like Paul and Barnabas, start from the bosom of the church, borne up by its prayers, and return to it when their labor is finished for common praises and joyful thanksgiving to God from Whom all blessings flow and to Whom all power belongs.

In my next paper I propose, if the Lord will, to offer a few remarks as to the origin, character, and subject of the gospel in its ministry. J. A. v. P.

Chapter 83

The Gospel and the Church: 2. Good Tidings of Great Joy

“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:9-11.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel [of Christ]; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:16, 17).

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us; we pray in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God. For Him Who knew no sin He hath made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:20, 21).

How lovely and honorable is the office of the evangelist, whether we look at him as the messenger of peace in the Epistle to the Romans, or as the minister of reconciliation in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. v.)! There is no ministry more blessed and glorious than that of the gospel of grace and glory. God honors it highly, both in the great gospel-prophet of the Old and in the grand gospel-Epistle of the New Testament. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation.” And if this be true of the messengers of peace in the sense of the Old Testament, how far more of the messengers of the gospel of peace in the Christian sense, be it for the burdened and troubled sinner in the light of the Epistle to the Romans, or the hostile sinner in the sense of 2 Cor. 5.

Beautiful indeed are the feet of the Lord's messenger of peace, who with his heart glowing with the love of Christ, and his willing steps hastening at the Master's bidding from place to place, be it into the centers and hotbeds of infidelity, corruption, and voluptuousness of the great cities, or into the Egyptian darkness of some out-of-the-way village or hamlet, or to the idolatrous heathen in the dark portions of this globe. Opposed step by step, and thus honored and encouraged in some places, or met by silent indifference in others, where the very stones appear to be ready to cry out against the deadness of the place, the message he carries and delivers faithfully and fearlessly ascends permanently to heaven as a sweet savor of Christ to God, though to the unbeliever a “savor of death onto death,” whilst to the believer a “savor of life unto life.” “Knowing the terror of the Lord,” he “persuades men,” sounding in the very face of the enemy the note of alarm, to warn them to “flee from the wrath to come” to Him Who alone is able and willing to deliver from it. He “standeth in the top of the high places, by the way in the places of the paths.” He “crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors, O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be of an understanding heart.”

Guided by the Spirit sent down from heaven for the preaching of the gospel, he is content to be nothing but a mouthpiece of that blessed Spirit, and the “two-edged sword,” being wielded by that

Spirit, does its quick and powerful work, “piercing and dividing asunder,” laying hold of consciences and placing them face to face with a thrice holy, sin-hating God, all things being “naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.”

And, the love of Christ constraining him, he applies the healing balm of the gospel to the wounded and broken-hearted, beseeching, as Christ's ambassador, sinners and enemies to be reconciled to God, pointing to the Lamb slain as the perfect expression of the love of that God to Whom men refused to be reconciled by the life of His Son, when “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” but hated Him without a cause Who was the perfect expression of that love. He impresses upon his hearers that surpassingly marvelous truth, as high above man's blinded mind and hostile heart as the heavens are above the earth, viz., that the very same blood of God's own Son, which was the final proof of man's entire ruin and consummate guilt, should have been made the means, and the only means, of cleansing from all sin even the vilest sinner against that God Who “made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

And when the “ambassador of Christ,” whilst thus faithfully and lovingly preaching to a crowd of perishing sinners the glad tidings of God's full and free salvation, now perceives the first daybreak of divine light in some sin-benighted face before him as a sign that God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has begun to shine into the darkness of that heart; or when he beholds in another's face, as in the “mirror of the heart,” a soul just passing from death unto life by faith in the Son of God; or, perhaps, in another sorrow-stricken countenance the tears of repentance changed into tears of “joy and peace in believing,” through the delivering power of a full gospel—does not the evangelist's heart go up in deep joy and silent praise to the God of all grace, whilst his voice continues with increased assurance, power, and liberty to set forth the greatness and completeness of God's salvation through and in Christ Jesus? Behold, another of his hearers, apparently bowed down under the burden of sins and sin, or under the yoke of legal bondage, heaves a deep sigh of relief from its heavy pressure. It is evident that the cry of despair, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” is just about to be followed by the song of deliverance, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And as the evangelist now winds up his address with a powerful appeal to the hearts of his listeners, a man whose face, distorted with passion, gives evidence of the intention of opposition and hostile demonstration with which he had come, can be noticed, his head bowed down, as if crushed by the mighty hammer of the word. His dark, hostile features gradually relax and soften down into an expression of sorrowful tenderness. His eyes begin to be moistened with a dew coming from a higher quarter than that of Hermon. And when the last tone of the “small voice” of God's beseeching love and grace in Christ's words, “I will in no wise cast out,” has died away from the lips of God's messenger in the quiet and solemn night air, that opposers face and bearing have become the literal expression of those lovely lines,

“ Nay, but I yield, I yield!

I can hold out no more;

I sink, by dying love compelled,

And own Thee Conqueror!”

and when the closing Doxology is sung,

“ Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,”

the figure of that Saul, turned into a Paul, is standing upright, with lit up and lifted up face and streaming tears of joy, joining in

'“ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

whilst the Father's house above is ringing with joy.

The crowd disperses. The evangelist goes home pale and fatigued, but with face reflecting the heavenly joy. Sweet will be thy rest, faithful ambassador of Christ! May His peace be with thee, His messenger of peace, until thou enterest into His rest and hearest His “Well done enter into the joy of thy Lord.” Meanwhile may that prayer, “God bless you!” uttered by some of thy hearers on parting, return in abundant blessing upon thy soul and service!

Let us now briefly consider some salient points connected with the testimony and work of the evangelist, especially for the sake of younger laborers in the gospel field, who from want of a fuller acquaintance with the character of the gospel, and from lack of experience as to the dangers besetting his path of service, is exposed to suffering loss and injuries that might have been avoided if he had been forewarned and thus forearmed. I therefore propose to offer a few remarks as to

1. The source of the gospel.

2. Its character.

3. Its subject.

4. Its object.

5. Its effect.

6. The character of its ministry and ministers.

7. Its end and final result; and,

8. The dangers and snares besetting the path of its ministers, and how to avoid them.

The Lord willing, I shall enter upon these important points in my next paper.

Man, who makes himself the center, would have light to have life. God's way is just the opposite: “the life was the light of men.” Life in the person of Christ comes first; and this is right, because it, and it alone, puts God in His place. The law could not do this, being given to man as man.

Chapter 84

The Gospel and the Church: 3. The Source of the Gospel

God, the God from Whom all blessings flow, to Whom all power belongs, and from Whom life proceeds, is the source of the gospel. It is the gospel of God," as we are reminded by the very first verse of the great gospel-epistle of Paul to the Romans. God alone, Who "is light," and Who "is love," could be the source of the "gospel of God." What heart but a divine could devise and form that vast and wondrous plan of salvation for rebellious sinners, to be accomplished upon the cross, the preaching of which is foolishness both to the wise and to the religionists of this world! All the wisest, most ingenious, and most productive minds, all the kindest, most benevolent, and loving hearts of men, if welded into one, could never have devised or formed such a salvation. Such a mind or heart, however creative, to speak after the manner of men, would be still that of a creature, and of a sinful creature to boot.

And as there was only One Who could conceive and form such a plan, so there was only One Who could perform it and carry it out, even the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men—"the Word made flesh," and "God manifest in the flesh" —the Son of God, Who became the Son of man, and was made a little lower than the angels, to die as the "Lamb of God" upon the cross, where He suffered, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." If all the righteous men that ever lived on earth from Abel to Nathanael under the fig-tree could have been concentrated and made into one just man, that just man could not as a substitute have suffered for the unjust, to bring them onto God, even if he had been willing to do so; for he would be still a man subject to like passions as we are.

And as there was only One Who could carry out that wondrous plan of salvation, even the obedient Son of the Father, Who when about to exchange His glorious heavenly home for this world, the home of sin and misery and rebellion, said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;" so there is only One Who can testify that that vast plan has been carried into effect and accomplished. God the Spirit alone could and can bear that testimony, even the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to preach the gospel by His messengers. He Who glorifies Christ receives of His and shows it unto us, bears witness of Christ Jesus and His accomplished work of an eternal redemption, in the word written by that same Spirit of truth.

All the united wisdom of the universities of the world, and of their professors and "divines" so-called, would be powerless to bear a true and effectual testimony of what Jesus has done and is for poor sinners. The spirit of the world cannot make known or teach the things that are freely given to us of God.

Man's wisdom cannot teach or learn them, but only the Holy Ghost. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned."

There are many preachers now-a-days, but not many true evangelists, who go forth on their blessed errand, conscious of being sent by the Lord, having drunk well and deeply of that divine

fountain of the “God of all grace” and the “God of peace,” which stands ever open for thirsty souls and for those who truly thirst for souls. All His fullness dwelleth in Christ bodily, “of Whose fullness we all have received, and grace for grace,” and “in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” By the Spirit we are united to Him, “one spirit with the Lord,” that we might draw from His fullness everything we need here below to glorify Him in our walk and testimony. “He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.”

I cannot forbear here to give the words of an aged devoted evangelist, who not long ago entered into his Master's joy and rest.

He writes:

“ We must not forget one great secret of success in preaching the gospel. It is one that has impressed me all my life, and never more so than at present, after more than fifty-three years, through much failure, in preaching the word of God. Long have I noticed how the apostle Paul takes care to show that he was not the servant of any party; neither did he derive authority from any human source, not even from the apostles at Jerusalem. He could say, ‘Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead.’ See the whole context of this verse (Galatians 1:1-24). No doubt the Holy Ghost foresaw the authority that men would assume in the place of Christ as to this.

“But is it not as important for the humblest servant of Christ to be the servant of Jesus Christ now as for Paul to be so then? Think what it is to receive your commission from Christ Himself, and to be His servant alone, whatever may be the state of the church! 'Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Jesus Christ.' These are searching words. Who can say them from the heart? Surely they do not set aside the blessedness of the fellowship of saints. But the church does not give authority to the servant of the Lord to preach the word, as is clearly seen in the above scriptures. Well then, if I am the servant of Christ, what would He have His servant do in any place to which He may send him? What is the heart's desire of Christ as to all that are His in that place? What is the will of God as to the whole world, or the unconverted in that district? “

All our resources are in that divine source of light, life, love, grace, joy, peace, power and wisdom, and every blessing in Christ Jesus. May we enjoy more truly the drafts of refreshment in joy and peace flowing from that fountain, in communion with the Father and the Son in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, and so realize more our only safety and strength in dependence upon our Lord Jesus Christ, Who holds not only the keys of death and hades, but of service also.

2. ITS CHARACTER.

The character of the gospel is that of grace, peace, and glory. It is the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Grace is its very keynote, even the glory of God's sovereign, and the riches of His saving and pardoning, grace in and through Christ Jesus (Acts 2:41, 47). Saved by grace, we are to be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” and of the “riches of His grace.” Both we find mentioned in the first chapter of that grand church-epistle to the Ephesians, though it is especially the sovereign glory of God's grace which appears in the first chapter, whilst the second particularly speaks of the treasury of the riches of that grace, reminding us of the pit whence we have been digged, and of the rock whence we have been hewn. First the “basket of first-fruits” (chapter 1.),

then “a Syrian ready to perish was my father” (ch. 2.). This is divine order. It is the deep sense both of the glory and the riches of that grace, which we behold so beautifully evinced in the apostle of the gospel and of the church, and which imparted such an exquisite character and savor to his ministry both in the gospel and the church. The very next chapter (Ephesians 3) furnishes us with a precious instance of how deeply and thoroughly his soul was imbued with the sense of his entire indebtedness to that rich and sovereign grace of God in and through Christ Jesus. The sense of that grace was ever present to him, and lost none of its intensity even when disclosing the wonderful truths of the mystery confided to him alone of all the apostles (ch. 3. 8, 9; comp. 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10; 1 Timothy 2. 12-16). It was at the same time the living and constant sense of that divine, rich, and glorious grace that “establisheth the heart,” which enabled that “mighty man of valor” to brave the “bonds and afflictions” awaiting him, and made him say, “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 preacher of the gospel of that grace who has never had a deep sense of sin, nor consequently of grace, can be but a sorry evangelist.

A further character of the gospel is that of peace, as has been mentioned already. Peter preached it as such in the first preaching to the Gentiles, to Cornelius and to his household. In the same way we find it mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 2:17 that portion so abounding with grace and peace (in an especial way applied to Gentile believers in that chapter). But the express term, “gospel of peace,” we find in the closing chapter of the same Epistle (Ephesians 6:15), “and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Here (Ephesians 6) it is not a question of preaching the gospel to poor sinners, but of the believer's contest with the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies, who oppose the saint's progress in the realization of our blessings in the heavenly Canaan. It would be just as absurd here, where we have to do battle with wicked spirits, to talk of the evangelist ready to preach the gospel, as it would be to transpose the “breastplate of faith and love” from 1 Thessalonians 5 into Ephesians 6.

But what is then the meaning of “your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”? It simply means that the feet of the soldier of Christ, i.e., every believer, to stand his ground in such contest, must be steadied and strengthened with the preparation which the gospel of peace gives us. In short, it means that to stand his ground in that contest, the believer must have “peace with God,” which is the fruit of believing the gospel of peace. Only think of a soldier going slipshod into the battle, or with torn boots, especially over stony or muddy ground! How can he stand his ground against the enemy with his feet blistered and wounded?

For one who has no peace, it is a dangerous thing to preach the gospel of peace to others, thus giving out and commending to others what he has not got nor knows himself. But how shall he be able (if it were not for the preserving grace and mercy of God) to stand his ground and contend against those terrible powers and principalities, even the hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies, if he has no peace with God and does not know his standing and acceptance in Christ? None of those parts of the “whole armor of God” in that important closing chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians must be absent in such a contest, the “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” as little as the rest.

But the gospel of the God of all grace and of peace has further the character of glory. It is the “gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4). It is especially with regard to this character of the gospel that Satan, the god of this sin-benighted world, as we learn from this passage of holy writ, is so busy to blind the minds of them that believe not. It was the Lord, Whose glory, brighter than the sun at noon, had shone upon the apostle on his way to Damascus, when, in the zenith of his religious reputation, he had to make that all-over-powering, crushing discovery that to be a zealous Jew was to be at open war with Jehovah, Whom he thought to serve so well. The Lord, Whose glory had blinded Saul's eyes, that God might “shine into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” had entrusted Paul with the gospel, not only of grace and peace, but especially with the “gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God.” This was in an especial way the gospel of Paul the apostle of glory. Saul's natural eyes, blinded by the splendor of that glory, were re-opened when Ananias came to him, and “there fell from his eyes as it had been scales;” but the eyes of Paul's mind were thenceforth forever blind to the vain glories and natural attractions both of the open and religious world. Forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He followed after, if that he might apprehend that for which he had been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Such was the effect of the gospel of the glory of Christ upon the apostle and evangelist Paul. Like his fellow-apostles, the elegant scholar and whilom disciple of Gamaliel and most honored Pharisee was “made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.” In him grace, peace, and glory were beautifully blended into one harmonious accord, reflecting the character of the gospel he so well and faithfully preached and sealed with his life-blood.

Dear brother and fellow-laborer in the gospel, fellow-pilgrim and fellow-heir of glory, what effect has the gospel of grace, peace, and glory on us? And how far are our lives as well as our ministry the reflectors of it? Depend upon it, if our own hearts are not daily imbibing the refreshment and strength of the gospel of grace and peace we preach to others, and the eye of faith be not steadily upwards to that glory held out by that gospel, the delivery of it may be accompanied by liberty and power (as being connected with the gift of the evangelist), but it will not be in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, and must lack the unction of the Holy Ghost, not being the effect of living communion with the Father and the Son. It will, even in the style and way of its ministration, sooner or later fall in with the low tone and character of the preachers of these days, pandering to the carnal taste of the multitude who have “itching ears,” and will assume the soft character of so many “popular preachers” —grace without truth, peace without righteousness, and love without holiness, leaving out glory altogether, except self-glorification.

In my next paper a few words, if the Lord will, on the subject, object, and effect of the gospel.

Chapter 85

The Gospel and the Church: 4. The Subject of the Gospel

The subject of the gospel is: God's love towards a world of sinners and enemies, manifested in the gift of His only begotten Son, Who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life,” and Who” suffered the Just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.” Or, to put it more precisely: the love of God and the righteousness of God, manifested in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ, sinners “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, to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

The Epistle to the Romans answers Job's question, “How should man be just with God?” Jesus could say, “I am the truth.” Now, “truth” is the exact expression of what man ought to be in obedience to and dependence on God. Jesus, as Son of man, was in his life on earth ever the perfect expression of that. In the very first preaching at Pentecost, the Spirit of God, in describing the perfect humanity of Jesus, refers to Psalm 16, “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved,” etc., etc. Therefore Jesus, in His character as “Son of man,” was and is “the Truth,” being ever in the place of perfect dependence and obedience, and thus showing that everybody and everything in this world was out of that place. Therefore the “truth as it is in Jesus,” as the perfect “Son of man,” would only have condemned man, who ever since the fall has been the very opposite. But, blessed be God, “Truth” is not only the expression of what man as a creature ought to be towards God; it is also the perfect expression of what God is towards men. Christ, in His character as “Son of God,” was also the perfect expression of this—the divine-side of the “Truth." This it is that saves us. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” “God was manifest in the flesh.” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing trespasses.”

But neither the truth, as expressed in the “Son of God,” nor as it was in Jesus, the “Son of man,” would do for men. The “Son of man” must become the “Lamb of God.” Men would not be reconciled by the life of Him, Who in this world was the expression of God's love towards sinners and enemies, but “hated Him without a cause.” Then God, in His wondrous love and longsuffering grace, again manifests in the gospel His love in the death of His Son, saying as it were, “You would not be reconciled to Me by the life of My Son. Will you now be reconciled by His death? Can you doubt My love to you when you behold Him as the ‘Lamb of God' dying upon the cross, and listen to His first and last words upon that cross? ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' and, ‘It is finished.'“ “He made Him, Who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” On the cross “mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Now the Father may kiss the returning prodigal and “grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord” (Romans 5).

Blessed solution of the enigma: “God is Light” and “God is love,” applied to a sinner, without the one clashing against the other.

4.—THE OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL.

Its object is: God glorified in the salvation of sinners. “Glory to God in the highest!” This comes first; then, “Peace on earth,” and, “good will toward men." God's glory must be paramount, here as everywhere. God glorified in the salvation of one sinner is more than ten thousand saved. Leave out God's glory, and salvation becomes a very small thing indeed.

“ This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” may be said here by some Christian philanthropists, who take a humanitarian view of the gospel, making the salvation of souls from hell the chief object, and the glory of our Savior God, as it were, the secondary thing, though not in words, yet in fact. Have those kind philanthropists ever really chimed in with the song of that heavenly choir in the night of the Savior's nativity? If we want true and genuine philanthropy, let us look at Titus 3 Here we find it. “For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.” “But after that the kindness and philanthropy [the literal rendering] of our God and Savior appeared,” etc.

This is real, true philanthropy, which will stand the test, because it is divine. The apostle Paul could say, “For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” God's glory was the first thing; then he adds, “or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.” Such was his love for souls. And why? “For” he continues, “the love of Christ constraineth us.” That was the secret. His love for souls partook of a divine character, so that the less he was loved the more he loved. I am afraid the philanthropy of many of our modern gospel workers would not stand this test.

How those words of the great apostle (2 Cor. 5:13) remind us of Moses on the mount, in his wonderful pleading for the people; and of Moses in the camp among the idolatrous people, in his unsparing zeal for the glory of God!

A few words as to Moses. Why did he leave Pharaoh's court “when he was come to years?” Providence had put him there. Why did he not wait till providence called him thence for the deliverance of the people? In his high and influential position what golden opportunities he might have had for relieving the distress of God's and his own people! It was far from being unlikely, that on Pharaoh's demise the son of Pharaoh's daughter might have ascended the throne of Egypt, and then he might have delivered the people by one stroke of his pen. But in that case God would have been shut out, and Moses been glorified instead, in the deliverance of the people. It would not have been, “Stand still and see the salvation of God,” but, “see my (Moses') salvation.” And what would have become of the glorious song of deliverance in Ex. 15 beginning with those words, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation!”

If I think of myself and my own immortal soul, I rejoice in the assurance of being saved, and I thank God for it, of course; but if I think of my God and Savior, I rejoice in my Savior-God, and in the thought that He is glorified in my salvation, which is far more and far better.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews we have the greatness of our Savior, and in the second our great salvation. If we neglect realizing the former, we shall soon begin to neglect the latter.

Next to the glory of God in the salvation of sinners comes as second object of the gospel the forming of the saved ores into one body, even the body of Christ which is the church of God. God's wondrous counsels of wisdom, grace, and glory, do not confine themselves to pardoning penitent sinners, nor does Jesus stop short at delivering them from the wrath to come and from that place “where their worm dieth not and the fire never will be quenched,” but to bring many sons onto glory, to share it with Him in the Father's house, whither the “First-begotten from among the dead,” and the “Firstborn of many brethren” has gone before to prepare a place for us to be forever with Him, not only as sons of God, brought to glory, but as the glorious bride of Him Who died for us and by His precious blood has washed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests, and made us fit to dwell with Him in glory, to be the “Lamb's wife” in glory, and His bride, His body already here on earth. As observed below, Jesus died not for that (Jewish) nation only, but that also He should gather into one (i.e., into the church) the children of God that were scattered abroad (i.e., of the Jews and Gentiles) John 11:52. He died not merely to get a certain number—however great—of saved individuals or units, but that those units should be united, i. e., baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body, of which He Himself, Who died for us and rose again, is the glorious Head there above.

Do we sufficiently realize, beloved, this second object of the gospel of grace and glory? This is not merely “sinners saved by grace,” (blessed keynote though that be!) but “many sons to be brought to glory.” And not only so, but these many sons, given by the Father to the Son, to be His bride, baptized into one body—His body—by the Holy Spirit, Who also unites us with our Head above. “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me,” said the Son to the Father when about to leave this world and go to the Father.

“Children of God,” “Heirs of God,” “Joint-heirs with Christ,” to be “glorified together with Him,” after having suffered with Him down here, and during His absence having reflected here below in our poor measure Him and His light, Who on earth was ever “the Light of the world” and the “express image” of the Father.

Being ourselves objects of such divine love and grace, objects of such counsels of divine wisdom past finding out, at; His love passeth knowledge, how far do we realize the importance of the second object of the gospel, even the formation of the church of God as being members of that one family of God, that one body of His Son, our blessed Savior and Head in glory? How much do we live “up there,” whilst testifying “down here”? To live heavenly on earth, and be reflectors of Christ, our Head, we must live in heaven.

The evangelist who neglects these things will soon lower the tone and standard of the gospel to the level of the common preachers in the systems of the religions world, stopping short at the grave of Jesus and leaving out or scarcely touching upon the heavenly side of the gospel, and of our union with the risen and glorified Lord and Christ, not to speak of the glorious hope of His coming again.

5.—THE EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL.

Its effects are life and peace for the believer: eternal life by believing in the Son of God, and peace with God, yea, joy and peace in believing. His life is bound up with Christ; for God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, so that “he that Lath the Son, hath life.” And having believed

in God, Who in His love delivered up Jesus for our offenses, and in His power raised Him from the dead, he is justified from all that he has done, and his peace is just as solid and settled as is the work that has procured it, even the work of Him Who has made peace by the blood of His cross. Wherever a full gospel has been preached and received (i.e., believed), these will be the unfailing results, viz., eternal life as bound up with the person of the Son of God, in Whom he has believed, and peace with God, a peace procured and bound up with the work of His Son.

To sum up—the realization in his own soul of the glorious subject of the gospel preserves the preacher from becoming a mere “sounding brass” and “tinkling cymbal “; the realization of its two glorious objects preserves Christians from glorifying a saved sinner rather than God, especially where his previous course of life has been very bad (he may have been an Indian chief, or a prize-fighter, or a chimneysweep, or a fiddler), and thus ruining, as far as they can, precious souls, for whom Jesus died, by setting them up on the pinnacle of vain glory; whereas the realization of the second object, even the formation of the church and its high and glorious calling, keeps both the convert and the preacher from relapsing to the low spiritual level of the professing religious world, which, especially in these closing days, ends but too often with wallowing in the mire and with rationalism, if not open infidelity.

As to the effects of the gospel: eternal life and peace for the believer, they do not depend of course—on the progress of our spiritual life, though carelessness and neglect as to the latter may result in overclouding, and even temporary bankruptcy of assurance and enjoyment of either.

The Gospel and the Church: 5. The Gospel

Its ministry partakes of a twofold character. It is, firstly, the “ministry (or ministration) of righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:9.) and secondly, the “ministry of reconciliation” (ch. v. 18.). In its former character it appears especially in the Epistle to the Romans, and in the latter, in the second Epistle of the same Apostle to the Corinthians. The great gospel Epistle begins, as does the great gospel prophet of the Old Testament, with man's utter ruin, and then presents God's perfect remedy through and in Jesus Christ. As said before, Job's question “How should man be just with God?” finds its full and complete answer in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, where “every mouth is stopped and all the world become guilty before God, 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.”

But the effect of sin, as seen already in Adam, is not only guile, or the attempt to cover over and to conceal oneself, but distrust and positive enmity against God. “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat” says Adam, laying his sin at God's door. Man has not only become a sinner, but an enemy of God. God, when beginning His work in the soul of a sinner, begins with the conscience, the Holy Spirit in His convincing power bringing home to the conscience the convicting power of the word written by Himself. Is it not the same amongst men? Suppose your neighbor has grievously wronged and offended you, would you care for his coming the next morning into your presence holding out his hand and wishing you good morning, as if nothing had happened? Certainly not! You would expect to see some exercise of conscience at least, if not of heart, and consequent acknowledgment of his wrong, before treating him on the old terms. It was just this boldness that characterized Cain's approach to God in professed worship. The effect of the written word of God when brought home by His Spirit to the sinner's soul is just this: it takes, two-edged sword as it is, in its searching and judging power, the conscience right into the presence of Him with Whom we have to do,” and unto Whose “eyes all things are naked and opened.”

Take the case of a young man, sent by his father to the university, who has got into bad company and

been led astray by his boon companions. One day he receives a letter from his father. The very sight of it makes his heart smite against his ribs. His first thought is: “Should my father have heard of my ways?” He opens the letter and sees that the father knows all about it, reprimanding his son for his disgraceful conduct. What would be the effect of the father's “written word” upon the son? Why, he feels as if his father stood before him, as if his father's eyes were upon him, and his voice speaking to him. In short, he would feel himself, as it were, in the presence of his father, face to face with him, so to speak.

Such, then, is the effect of Holy Writ, when applied by the Holy Spirit to the sinner's conscience. It brings him face to face with a thrice holy, sin-hating God, exposing him to the all-searching light of His holy presence.

And it is well worth noticing how both the chief apostle of the circumcision and the great apostle of the Gentiles, the former in the preaching of his first gospel at Pentecost, and the latter in his gospel Epistle to the Romans, guided by the Holy Ghost, take care, as mere mouthpieces of God, to let the written word do its own work of divine power in the souls of the hearers or readers—for those at Jerusalem, in bringing home to their consciences their guilt in having rejected and crucified their Messiah, and in the Epistle to the Romans quoting alike from the psalms, being that portion of Holy Writ so especially adapted for dealing with both consciences and hearts. The searching power of the passages quoted from the psalms in the third chapter of Romans appears strikingly adapted for dealing with consciences.

And hear, let me add, appears to be one chief cause of the falling off in the power and effect of the gospel preaching at the present day. The conscience is little dealt with, and the religious sentiments of the natural heart appealed to and wrought upon instead. True gospel preaching always begins with “Repent.” for its keynote, be its preacher John the Baptist, or the Lord Himself, or His apostles. “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” was the burden of the forerunner's preaching (Matthew 3:2). “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” the Master Himself preached (verse 17). And as to His apostles, “They went out and preached that men should repent,” (Mark 6:12). At the close of the first transitional gospel at Pentecost, the agonized inquiry of the Jews: “Men, brethren, what shall we do? is again answered by: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And even after the gospel of grace, peace and glory, as preached by the apostle of the Gentiles, had assumed its full Christian character, Paul was “testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 20:21.

Where the wound has been but slight, there can be but a slight sense of God's healing grace, and the heart thus not being established in grace, the feet of such a lamb of Christ's flock will soon betake themselves again to the going astray. Where there has been a real conversion, God will not fail, in His grace, to deepen, sooner or later, by way of discipline, the sense of the solemn nature of sin and of His grace in those who are His. But the spiritual father of such a convert might have saved to his child in the gospel a good deal of sorrowful and humbling discipline, if his ministry in the gospel had been more effective there where God begins, viz. in the consciences of his hearers. Antinomianism must be the natural result of such sadly defective revival preaching, followed by hardening of conscience and a Christ-dishonoring walk.

But in every real conversion, God works in the heart as well as in the conscience of the sinner. There is not only a blinded and hardened conscience to deal with, but also a blinded, hardened, and impenitent heart, filled with distrust and enmity against God. What does God, Who “is love” no less than “light"? He “commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The same Spirit of truth who convinces the conscience of sin and guilt, draws as the “Spirit of love” the burdened conscience and contrite heart toward God, Who had been so grievously sinned against. “For Thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great,” pleads the psalmist. He pleads what, for a human judge, would have been the very reason for condemning him. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions,” says the same psalmist. “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” prays the publican in the temple.

The evangelist who keeps on hammering on the conscience with verses 3 and 5 of John 3, having very little to say to the heart about verses 14 and 15, and still less about verses 16 and 17, produces but a kind of legal mulatto Christians: sorry fruits of the gospel of grace, peace, and glory.

Whilst, then, in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans where we have man in his total sinful ruin brought before us, and God's wondrous way of justifying the ungodly by faith in Christ Jesus, the gospel appears rather in its character as “ministry of righteousness,” though even there its character of reconciliation is not lost sight of (Rom. 5): it is in the second Epistle of the same apostle to the Corinthians (chap. v.) that the “ministry of reconciliation” is prominent. “Knowing the terror of the Lord” the apostle persuades men “to flee from the wrath to come;” but the “love of Christ” constraining him, he beseeches them to be reconciled to God.

If in man's hostile heart there had been any response to God's heart so full of love, mercy, and goodness, it must have come out when “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” — “God was manifest in the flesh.” The Man Christ Jesus, the only Mediator between God and men, had been in this world, going about and doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the hungry, giving sight to the blind, healing the broken-hearted, speaking words in season to the weary, blessing their little ones, setting at liberty the captives of Satan, and preaching the gospel to the poor. At Cana, He rejoiced with them that did rejoice; at Bethany, He wept with them that wept: wherever there was sorrow and misery, Jesus was near and ready to remove it.

But man's heart was like an instrument which is out of tune. Let the most perfect master put his hand to it, it only utters an unharmonious sound in reply, because it is out of tune. There was the “mourning” in John the Baptist's days, but there was no “weeping.” “He hath a devil” was their reply. Then there was the “piping” in the days of the gracious and accessible One, and they answered: “Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, friend of publicans and sinners.” It was the final burden of Stephen's sermon (before they stoned him and sent him after his Master with the message that they would not have Jesus to rule over them), that whatever God had sent in grace, they had rejected, but clung to that which God had rejected. True, they had hung on His lips like bees, drinking in the honey of the gracious words of Him Who spake as never man spake, when He preached His first gospel in the synagogue at Nazareth, pronouncing those sweet words of His prophet, about the preaching of the gospel to the poor, the healing of the broken-hearted, the preaching deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, the setting at liberty them that are bruised and the preaching the acceptable year of the Lord. The “little book” was sweet in their mouth, like honey. But when the gracious but holy and true One began to speak about the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian, and brought their true condition home to their consciences, His words proved bitter to the belly. The same evil one, that acted later on in the consciences and hearts of Stephen's hearers, was at work in the consciences and hearts of the audience at Nazareth; and they arose, and thrust Jesus out of the city, to cast Him down from the brow of the hill.

Men would not be reconciled to God by the life of Jesus, by Whom not only grace, but grace and truth, came into this world, the very reason why they hated Him without a cause. “They had both seen and hated both Him and the Father,” until the only response to all that grace and goodness,

“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” arose in the streets of Jerusalem, and around the cross Jew and Gentile stood united in common conspiracy against the gracious, holy, and true One, who was the express image of the invisible God.

Then God says, as it were, “you would not be reconciled by the life of my Son: will you be reconciled by His death? Can you doubt my love to you, poor fallen sinners and enemies, when you see Him, the rejected Son of man, as the Lamb of God, the Lamb of My own divine provision, bleeding and suffering upon the cross? The same precious blood of My dear Son, which is the proof of your consummate guilt and enmity against Me, is the proof of Mine and His redeeming love to you, and at the same time the means and the only means, to cleanse you from all sin. And from the same glory, whither you have sent back My Son rejected and crucified, I have sent down My Spirit, to announce to a dying perishing world of guilty, and yet hostile sinners, through My ministers of the gospel, a full free pardon and forgiveness of sins, through that same blood; and not only full pardon and forgiveness, but justification from all you have done and from which you could not be justified by the works of the law. And not only pardon, forgiveness and justification; but the very One rejected by you and crucified, to be righteousness, even Mine own righteousness for you. For He, who knew no sin, has been made sin for you, that you might be the righteousness of God in Him. I, then, not only invite, but beseech you, through My ambassadors who pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' “

Wondrous ministry of righteousness! Still more wondrous, “ministry of reconciliation!” Worthy of Him, who giveth divinely, and forgiveth divinely, and saveth divinely, ever worthy of Himself!

“ Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.”

May He who is our Head, once crowned with thorns, and now crowned with honor and glory, in His rich grace enable those of His servants whom He has entrusted with the blessed message of the gospel, to be able and faithful messengers, applying the word, which “is truth” and also the “word of grace,” with equal power to consciences and hearts of poor sinners, and, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to minister the word in its own authority and simplicity, empty and dependent instruments in the Master's hands, and able ministers of the gospel, both as the “ministry of righteousness” and the “ministry of reconciliation.”

In the next paper, the Lord willing, a few words on the character of the evangelists as “Ambassadors for Christ.”

Chapter 87

The Gospel and the Church: 6. Character of the Ministers of the Gospel

CHARACTER OF THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

The evangelist is an “ambassador for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20), at least in his measure.

Now an “ambassador” in the ordinary sense of that word, signifies one, sent by the head of one state to the head of another state, to be the representative of the dignity, rights, and interests of the one who sends him.

In the world such an ambassador, whilst ever mindful of the dignity and interests of his sovereign and country, will and dare not fail to acknowledge the dignity and to admit and respect the interests of the government and country whither he has been sent and at whose court he is accredited. His bearing and demeanor will be the expression of the majesty of his sovereign and of the dignity of the government of his own country, whilst no less expressing the reverence due to the sovereign to whom he has presented his credentials and to the government of that country.

A similar, if not quite the same, character attaches to the “ambassador for Christ.” But his function, his position, and the dignity of his ministry excel that of the ambassadors of this world, just as far as heaven is high above the earth; for he is the representative of the “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

That sovereign Lord and King of Glory, once crucified and expelled by this world, which was made by Him and knew Him not, said, when risen from the dead, “Peace unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” He has sent His ambassadors into this world with a message of life and peace. He Himself “is Light,” the “brightness of glory,” as He was the “Light of this world,” when here below.

But He is not only “Light,” but also “Love.” His ambassadors, whilst reflecting by walk and word the light of Him that sent them, and carrying the light of the gospel of glory into this sin-benighted world, should be the expression of His love no less than of His light. They are inseparable (1 John 2:9-11). Knowing the “terror of the Lord,” His apostle “persuaded men “; but the “love of Christ constraining” him, he “besought” sinners and enemies, to be “reconciled to God.” Even the ambassadors of this world do everything, by a courteous, kind, and obliging demeanor, to gain the confidence and goodwill of those around them and thus widen their circle of influence. How much more should Christ's ambassadors, by their mien, word and action, be the (however imperfect) expression of the love of Him Who sent them, and Who gave Himself for the salvation of those to whom they are sent! His voice should be like the voice of the charmer, not only “charming never so wisely,” which rarely produces real and lasting effect for blessing, and often the very opposite, but attracting and winning souls in their own interest by the enchanting voice and appeal of Christ's love in the evangelist's heart, uttered and ministered by the Spirit, not only of “power,” but of love, and of a “sound mind.”

But how unlike the diplomatist of this world is the “ambassador for Christ”! He does not, like the former, endeavor by pleasing manners to enlist people in his and his court's and country's, but in their own eternal interests, whilst showing them the interest which God with all the untold glorious hosts of His heavenly courts takes in the eternal welfare of their souls, rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth. The policy of Christ's ambassadors it's not like that of this world, “Do ut des” (i. e. “I give that you may give”), but “Do ut accipias” (i.e. “I give that you may receive”).

But the Spirit, Who is to guide the evangelist and be the power of his ministry is not only the “Spirit of love” but first of all the “Spirit of truth.” “The ambassador for Christ” therefore, whilst endeavoring by a gracious, patient and loving demeanor to win souls for Christ, should never, like the diplomatist of this world, stoop to the low policy of flattery, painting over and propping up the old Adam, trimming the empty lamp of the respectable religionist, making pillows for every armpit, and speaking “peace” where there is no peace, for the sake of the “cause,” and of a good attendance in chapel or church, or missionary rooms. Unlike this world's ambassadors, who, whilst ever conscious of the majesty of their sovereign and of the dignity of their office, always are mindful of the reverence due to the sovereign and government, to whom they have been sent, the ambassador for Christ, being fully alive to the glory, majesty and power of his heavenly Master and of the dignity of his office and of the all-importance of his mission, never should flinch from faithfully delivering his message, all-absorbing in its eternal importance, and eclipsing in its divinely glorious character all the vain glories of this world and its potentates. Be it in the presence of the great ones of the earth, or faced by the fury of an impious mob, he delivers his fearless testimony of divine truth to their consciences, whilst with God's “small voice” of grace, he knows how to appeal to their hearts with this message of grace, peace, and life. Unlike the ambassador of this world, who is bound and eager to represent in his grand appearance the power and dignity of his sovereign or government, and to reflect their glory in the style of his living and the splendor of his retinue, Christ's ambassador is prepared and ready to appear as the “offscouring of all things and the filth of the world,” where his Master, the “Lord of glory,” was crucified.”

Such were the apostles of Christ, and such should be His evangelists. What examples are the apostles, especially Peter and Paul, in all this!

But the apostle could add:

“ Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, 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. And who is sufficient for these things? “

Many of our readers will be aware that the apostle Paul alludes here as he does in other places, to the military customs in the ancient Roman army. When a Roman general returned victoriously from an important war, a triumphal entry into Rome was usually granted him on his return. The captives of war preceded him. A portion of that large crowd was generally destined to death (to fight with gladiators or wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater), and the rest were sold as slaves. Clouds of incense preceded the returning conqueror, covering the crowd of the unfortunate captives of war. Those clouds ascended as a sweet incense to the sky; but to those captives, that

were destined to death, they were a savor of death unto death; “whilst to the rest, whose lives were spared, it was a “savor of life unto life.”

It is to this custom among the Romans the apostle evidently alludes. The gospel of God always ascends to heaven as a sweet savor unto God. For is it not concerning His own glory, and the honor of the name of Jesus His dear Son, and concerning the salvation of precious souls, for whom Christ suffered and died and rose again? What else could that gospel be but a sweet savor ascending to heaven?

But the apostle in the sense of his entire dependence upon God and of being nothing but an instrument used by the Master according to His own good pleasure adds: “And who is sufficient for these things?” It is well for the evangelist to bear this in mind more constantly. Then he concludes:

“ For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.”

Let us well heed these four points: 1. “As of sincerity;” 2. “But as of God;” 3. “In the sight of God;” and 4. “Speak we in Christ.”

If all preachers and evangelists (for they are far from being one and the same thing) would take more to heart these four points so essential to every true minister of Christ, it would be well with them and with the fruits of their ministry.

The Gospel and the Church: 7. The Gospel

The end of the gospel is the saving of the believer's soul, as present and everlasting, and that of his body as a future and equally everlasting thing, called the “adoption, to wit, the redemption of our “body” (Romans 8:23; 13:11; Philippians 3:20, 21; Hebrews 9:28). Its final result will appear in glory, when He who died to bring many sons to glory will have safely brought them there, and say, “Behold, I and the children which God hath given to Me.” Then all the three classes of believers having part in the “First Resurrection” will be seen around Christ, being the fruits of the corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Then He, the Just, Who suffered and died for us to bring us to God and finally to glory,” shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied,” and we “shall be satisfied” when we “awake in His likeness.”

I need not say that the present salvation of the soul, as well as the future salvation of the body (now so near at hand) is a final and eternal result for believers in the gospel. God in His perfect grace places every believer on a divinely solid everlasting foundation. He that believeth in His Son hath life, even life eternal. His salvation rests on the work of an eternal redemption accomplished on the cross. The Lord always means what He says. When He says, “My sheep shall never perish,” He means “never.” And when He says as to the final doom of unbelievers, i.e. rejecters of Christ and the gospel, that “their worm, (i.e. repentance which is too late), dieth not and the fire is not quenched,” He again means what He says, “is not.” Would any man of common honesty mean the opposite of what he says? And yet there are such, nay, Christian teachers and preachers of the gospel (such as it is) who would fain make you believe that God does so! Oh, the patience and long-suffering of Him Who is “the God of patience” with this faithless and perverse generation of ours!

Again, when the Good Shepherd says of His sheep, “None shall pluck them out of My hand,” and again, “None (not no man, but “none” —α■δε■ς) is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand,” does He not mean “none?” None means neither Satan nor yourself nor anybody else. (The Father's discipline with disobedient or backsliding children has nothing to do with their eternal safety in Christ which is as sure and enduring as the Bock of Ages cleft for us, in Whom every believer is hidden from judgment forever). Suppose Noah had gone mad in the ark, and wanted to jump into the surging waters of the deluge, he could not get out for the Lord who had shut him in possessed the key.

What a wondrous end is that of the gospel of God, and how eternally safe now already, are its blessed results for the believer, amidst the changing scenes of this restless, sinful, sorrowful, unruly and God-alienated world, and afterward with Christ in unfading glory. There an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance awaits every child of God. But above all, and better than all, Jesus Himself is waiting for the Father's word, bidding Him to leave once more His seat of rest, honor, and glory to descend into the air, and to call up thither the dead and living saints, and receive them up unto Himself and lead them into those mansions in the Father's house, whither He has gone before to prepare a place for us.

“ There made ready are the mansions, glorious, bright and fair,

But the bride the Father gave Him still is wanting there.

Who is this that comes to meet me 'bove the desert way,

As the Morning Star foretelling God's unclouded day?

He, it is, Who came to win me on the cross of shame;

In His glory shall I know Him, evermore the same.

Oh, the blessed joy of meeting, all the desert past!

Oh, the wondrous words of greeting He shall speak at last!

He and I together entering those bright courts above;

He and I together sharing all the Father's love.

Where no shade nor stain can enter, nor the gold be dim;

In that holiness unsullied I shall walk with Him.

Meet companion then for Jesus, from Him, for Him made;

Glory of God's grace forever there in me displayed.

He Who in His hour of sorrow bore the curse alone,

I who through the lonely desert trod where He had gone,

He and I in that bright glory one deep joy shall share:

Mine, to be forever with Him; His, that I am there.”

But fain as one would dwell longer on these” brighter things above,” we now must turn to a. more serious and solemn subject. I mean

THE SNARES THAT BESET THE PATH OF THE EVANGELIST.

The enemy of God and of His people and testimony in the gospel and in the church has always his snares and temptations ready for every servant of Christ. But the evangelist is, even more than others of his fellow laborers in the Lord's work, exposed to temptations peculiar to gospel work. It is, therefore, not in any spirit of disparagement that the writer of these lines (who has been interested, and, in his poor way, been active for more than forty years in the blessed work of the gospel) would offer a few suggestions which might serve, under God's blessing, to guard against failures in that important part of the Lord's service, and thus save them experiences which he had to pass through, very humbling to himself, while he can but praise God's preserving grace, which alone could keep and deliver, as it has saved him.

The first of the dangers for the evangelist is of an inward, and therefore all the more serious, nature. I mean the want of balance of character, which appears where the laborer's inward communion with God lags behind his outward engagement in the gospel service. Much sail with

little ballast. produces capsizing. The “not chewing the cud,” with the “undivided hoof,” is unclean. “Meditate on these things,” wrote the apostle to his young fellow-laborer and son in the gospel. “Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.” Absence of “fins” (the propelling power), and of “scales” (the protecting power), was to be “abomination” (Leviticus 11). “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine (? the “scales”), continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee” (? the “fins”). I know that the lack of balance between communion with God and public service is a danger against which all servants of Christ have constantly to be on their guard. But it attaches in an especial way to the work of an evangelist, on account of its more public and absorbing character. His service keeping him continually in the presence of men, he even more than others of his fellow-servants needs to be much “alone with God.”

Our great Divine Master of service, the Pattern of all servants, had the ear of the learned, and therefore He had the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to them that were weary. And is not the blessed gospel a “word in season to him that is weary?” He indeed could say, “Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest “; and “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

“ Cold mountains in the midnight air

Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”

Mary sat at her Master's feet before her hands performed on His Person that service, the odor of which filled the whole house, and ascended higher still because it came from a heart filled with Christ, and was done to Christ. In the same measure as Christ is the evangelist's daily food, will the Christ preached by him enter in saving and delivering power into the hearts of his hearers, however true it may be that the gospel of Christ is in itself the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

It is the heart's prayerful study of the “word of Christ,” at the “feet of Christ,” that makes us imbibe the “mind of Christ.” The ascended and glorified Christ and the written Christ are closely connected. The same Spirit Who is the author of “Holy Writ” has linked us with our Head above. He glorifieth Christ, receives of His and shows them unto us. If we get away from the Christ above, we soon lose the relish for the written Christ; or vice versa, if we neglect the word of God, which reflects Christ's glories and beauty, we soon shall neglect communion with Christ above. And every believer knows that the early morning is the best and proper time to render unto God, after the mercies of another night, the firstfruits of the day in praises and adoration, and for the prayerful reading of His word at the feet of His dear Son, Who has not only declared Him, but brought us to God by the sufferings of His cross. In the morning our mind is like a blank sheet of paper, open to the searching power and comfort of Holy Writ; while at the close of the day our mind is like a sheet filled with the impressions of the day. Hence the power and freshness of the blessed Divine Book are most felt and recognized in the early morning. It is in the morning that we want the hath, more than in the evening. We do not know what temptations a day may bring, and forewarned is to be forearmed. And as to every day's needed encouragement of faith and cheering of the spirit,

“Thy morning smiles bless all the day.”

Have not we all experienced the truth of it? The evangelist needs in an especial way these blessed “morning smiles” of his heavenly Master as well as His warning voice. His place during the daytime is not the quiet solitude of the study, but the “going out unto all the world, preaching the gospel unto every creature.” The gates of the city, the market place or the town-hall, and the tent and the mission room, are his wider sphere of activity.

Chapter 89

The Gospel and the Church: 8. The Snares in the Path of Its Ministers

After a day's service, spent in visiting, preaching, distributing tracts, evening service and after-meeting, often till a late hour, it is not much to be wondered at if evangelists generally are not early risers. So they are but too often, alas! deprived of the heavenly Master's “morning smiles,” for which all the smiles of religious friends and admirers cannot make up. His smile alone, and the “awakening of the ear morning by morning” (Isaiah 50) — mark it is not said “evening by evening” —by the Master's voice, giving to the evangelist the orders for the day, is able to preserve in him the necessary spiritual balance against the pernicious effects of the incense of human flattery. This only serves to hide the Master's face, and to rob him of that smile which encourages him in his rugged path—if he be a faithful messenger—against the frowns and opposition of the adversary.

No Christian stands in greater need than the evangelist of having his “ear awakened morning by morning,” in order to speak with the “tongue of the learned;” none needs more than he that cheering “morning smile” of our gracious and pitiful Master to enable him to smile at the adversary's fury. And yet there is none in greater danger of losing, from the reasons just mentioned, these exercises, and encouragements, and instructions, unless he is careful to redeem the “morning time” especially. In the morning seasons, spent alone with God, the servant of Christ acquires that spiritual balance so rare in our days, yet so much needed by every Christian now more than ever, and which is produced by the exercise of conscience and heart keeping step with the outward exercise of gifts and with our knowledge of divine truths.

In prayerful dependence then we acquire a deeper sense of our utter weakness and nothingness—nay, good-for-nothingness, and at the same time of the “exceeding greatness of the power” of Him to Whom all power belongs. This bears us up against the depressing effects of the cares and circumstances of daily life in service and elsewhere. This forms a part of the apostle's prayer for the saints at the close of Eph. 1 And moreover we get a deeper, more real sense of God's grace, by which only we have been saved and upon which we daily live. It is this sense of His grace (so insisted on in Eph. 2) which keeps us down, thus guarding us against the lifting up tendencies of flesh and self within; otherwise we shall be constantly “up and down” in the wrong way. If even in a natural sense a well-balanced character is a fine sight, such an equilibrium of character is still more blessed to behold in a servant of Christ, especially an evangelist, whose natural character very often partakes of a sanguine tendency. That Christian equilibrium can be acquired only at the feet of Him Who is meek and lowly in heart, and during His unremitting service here on earth could “never be moved,” because He had set His God before His face, and He was at His right hand.

All these are well known truths, and yet how constantly do we need to be reminded of them. The service and testimony of the evangelist who is not careful to cultivate this all important equilibrium between his outward activity and inward communion with God, will sooner or later capsize, and his

testimony be ruined, to the dishonor of the gracious Master Who saved and sent him.

Another no less perilous snare in the evangelist's path is that of “popularity.” It is true some evangelists, more than others, possess the gift of adapting themselves and their way of presenting the gospel to all kinds of hearers and localities, which is indeed one of the indispensable qualities of the true evangelist. Compare the apostle Paul's variety of ways in presenting the gospel according to the different places and circumstances and persons to whom he preached, as seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles. But besides that essential quality of an evangelist, many of them possess naturally a great affability of manner. They know how to adapt themselves to all kinds of people with whom they come in contact. They know how to fall in with their ways of thinking and expression, to enter into the details of their daily life, and to adapt their way and style of preaching to it. Thus they become favorite or “popular” preachers and draw great crowds by witty and interesting and seasonable, or “stirring” and “impressive” sermons, as the case may be. This is especially the case where those pleasant and affable manners of the preacher are combined with great oratorical power.

Now all these qualities may in no small degree become contributory to blessing in the gospel field, provided they are kept under the control of the Spirit. But just here lies the snare and the danger for a “popular preacher” of the gospel. The sweetness of religious renown and honor is still more dangerous and pernicious in its effects than that of natural fame and flattery, because the religious flesh is even more subtle than the natural. How many excellent servants of Christ in the gospel have been spoiled and marred and cast down from their excellency, yea, almost wrecked and ruined (if it were not for the preserving and restoring grace of our God and Savior) by the worse than foolish flatteries and adulations ministered to them by their thoughtless admirers. This has been in an especial way the case with those who have risen (often, rather, been elevated) from a humble station of life. Exhibited on the stages of theaters and on the platforms of town-halls, supported by the elite of the religious world, presented with heavy testimonial purses, they have lived in stylish houses fitted up with the commodities and luxuries of this world, where they certainly did not appear like the “offscouring of all things, and the filth of the world.” Is it like apostles of Him Who owned nothing in this world except His cross, and said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,” and “He that will be My disciple, let him deny himself, take his cross upon him daily, and follow Me?” Can we wander at the final shipwreck of the faith and testimony of so many of them? Pride, that cause of Satan's fall, and man's innate sin, is more disastrous in its effects upon the Christian than upon the unbeliever.

“ If the fear of man bringeth a snare,” the men-pleasing is akin to it, and is no less a snare to, many a servant of Christ, especially in the gospel. “Do I seek to please men?” wrote the great apostle. “For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” Solemnly instructive words these for every popular evangelist; above all in these “last days” where the religious atmosphere is filled with evil ways and doctrines of every kind. A popular preacher naturally loves and looks for a wide sphere and crowded audiences. One can easily understand this, and wish him every success in his ministry for God's glory. But let him beware lest this desire become his snare, by service and religious fame becoming his object instead of Christ. Alas not a few once esteemed servants of Christ have gone to sleep on the laurels of their religious reputation, and even grown cool and

indifferent to Christ's glory by permitting themselves to be drawn into association with Christ-dishonoring teachers and doctrines. They dread to see the sphere of their service and influence narrowed, and want to move with a large (I would rather call it broad) heart in a broad way. In our days of “religious latitudinarianism” (what a broad word for a broad way!), where temporal things are grasped very tightly and divine things held very loosely, where men sell the truth instead of buying it, faithfulness to divine truth must necessarily isolate.

But who was more isolated than our blessed Master Himself, because He was ever the faithful witness, faithful amidst unfaithfulness. What was the effect of His very first gospel in the synagogue of Nazareth? They wanted to throw Him down from the steep brow of the hill. And how was it at the close of His blessed ministry? He was forsaken of all. He was “like a pelican of the wilderness, like an owl of the desert, and as a sparrow alone upon the house-tops” (Psa. 102) And what was the effect of Paul's faithful testimony, who followed so close in the footsteps of his Master “All in Asia have turned away from me.” “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me... Nevertheless the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known,” etc. Mark also the solemn dying injunction of the faithful apostle of grace and glory, addressed to his beloved Timothy and to all true evangelists:

“ 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” (and it has come and is now in full bloom) “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.”

These words do not sound like those heard not very long ago in a hall filled with “ministers of the gospel,” inquiring of the famous foreign preacher in their midst about the way in which he composed his sermons, that attracted such crowded audiences to his church. What would Paul and Silas say to accomplishments of the gospel? Yes, they too sung, but with their feet fastened in the stocks, and their. backs wounded and bleeding. “And the prisoners heard them.” Rather a different audience! But God heard them, and He answered by an earthquake—an outward earthquake and an inward (in the gaoler and his family).

But I must close. One or two more short warnings to my beloved and esteemed friends in the blessed gospel work. Beware of Revivalism! It is a wrong expression in itself, sprung from professing Christendom. An unconverted person, dead in trespasses and sins, cannot be revived, but must be quickened in his soul. So much as to the absurdity of the term. But how far more serious is the thing itself It is the flesh assuming the power of God—Jannes and Jambres imitating the miracles wrought by God through Moses—the forging of “Epistles of Christ” by a misuse of the writing of the Holy Ghost—a galvanizing of corpses into apparent life—the seeming life of that

which was destined to death and the killing of those which were destined to live. It falls like a mildew upon the tender plants, wherever it appears. May God in His great mercy keep His servants in the blessed gospel field from the baneful effects of “revivalism” with the fearful hardening of souls in its wake, the natural reaction after the natural excitement.

Paul may plant and Apollos water, but the increase is of God. How constantly is this forgotten! In the Gospel of Mark, that Gospel so instructive to all servants of Christ, the Pattern of all true service, the Master tells His disciples, “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” What can the sower do to make the corn grow whilst he sleeps? The seed grows, but “he knoweth not how.” Would that all laborers in the Gospel more heeded portions like those of 1 Cor. 3 and Mark 4. Let us cast the seed into the ground and leave the increase to God, Who alone can give it. Like the husbandman let us patiently wait for the early rain and the latter rain. It is of no use poking the seed with a revival stick. The word of God will never take root in that way.

Again, a danger for the evangelist, and not a small one, is the tendency of setting up a “cause” of his own, and suffering himself to be confined within the narrow limits of a smaller or bigger chapel. Having thus got under the patronizing wings of a committee or of some wealthy patron or patroness (the latter still worse than the former), he will be like a caged bird and his wings will soon be clipped.

Another snare is this, that he always will be inclined to press those whom he considers to be converted, to be received at once into fellowship. Natural as this desire may be for his “children in the gospel” to take their place with the redeemed family at the Lord's table, he is apt to forget that their reception or non-reception into fellowship is not a matter for him to decide, but for the church or assembly. Sad and disastrous conflicts have arisen in not a few instances through the evangelist insisting upon their reception against the better and mature judgment of elder and more experienced brethren, whose consciences before the Lord in such important questions he had not sufficiently taken into account.

Having offered a few remarks on the all-important ministry of the gospel in no grudging spirit (I trust), I now turn to a no less important but alas! sadly neglected subject for our meditations, I mean the church, which is the “house of the living God,” the “habitation of God through the Spirit,” the body of Christ the glorious center of His counsels. J. von P.

Chapter 90

The Gospel and the Church: 9. The Church

We now approach—God grant that it may be with unshod feet—the holy ground of what in Holy Writ is called “the house of the living God,” I mean the church which is the body of Christ, His Son. The principalities of heaven study the manifold wisdom of God, made known by it. They may desire to look into those things that concern the gospel of our salvation, which had been a mystery to God's holy prophets of old, even whilst testifying of it. But when the time had come for the revelation of that mystery, “which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God” from angels and prophets alike, and the Holy Ghost had been sent down from glory to preach the first gospel of salvation through Jesus, and to unite its first-fruits, even those three thousand saved and baptized precious units into one body, the body of Christ, then it was that a more marvelous building than Solomon's temple arose before the wondering eyes of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Stone, which their builders had rejected, was to be the foundation stone of that building, laid by the divine Master-Builder sent down from heaven.

But where God is at work, the enemy is not idle. What God has made for blessing, Satan, the adversary; seeks to spoil and to destroy. Such always has been and is and will be his character since his own fall until his final doom in the place prepared for him and his angels. But above all, the wiles and fury of the Serpent-Dragon have been and are directed against the divinely instituted union of God's children, and against the divinely appointed place where God was to be worshipped by His own. The instigator of the builders of Babel's tower and founder of “Babylon the great” has at all times, in his character as the “Accuser of the brethren,” sought to divide the people of God, be it the earthly or the heavenly, and to defile the place where God was to be glorified, be it the tabernacle or the temple or the church. Let it be the tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple at Jerusalem in the times of the kings, or in the days of Ezekiel and of Ezra and Nehemiah and Malachi, or in the days of the Messiah Himself, or finally in the days of the false Messiah, when that defilement will come to its climax in the setting up of “the abomination that maketh desolate” in the temple of God—it has been always the same. Satan's efforts have not been in vain, whatever the overruling grace of our faithful God may have been and is still and will be right on to the end, blessed be His Name! But nowhere have those destructive effects of his efforts in dividing, corrupting, and defiling, or in producing lukewarmness and indifference, become more sadly manifest than in that which is, so to say, the masterpiece of God's counsels, if one may speak thus about that which is all perfect in itself, and in every part.

PENTECOSTAL TIMES.

A feeling entirely peculiar in its kind comes over the Christian reader, when reading, in God's presence, that portion of Holy Writ which most inappropriately is called the “Acts of the Apostles,” but in fact is the divinely inspired record of the building of the church of God under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of the apostles. It is a feeling akin to that produced in the beholder of this visible scene at the passing away of that which was noble, fair, and good. Only in the Christian this impression has not the character of a mere poetic,

elegiacal, transient sentiment as in the case of a naturally tender and well-ordered mind. It is sorrow mingled with humbled and chastened joy, sorrow and shame that bows us down in the dust before God, when we reflect what has become of the “house of the living God” under the hands of man (2 Tim. 2:20). Yet the heart turns with joyful praise and confidence to God, when looking at the divine side (Matt. 16; Eph. 2:20-22), which can be reached and defiled by our sins, or impeded in its progress, as little as the sun can be by the mists and fogs of this world.

But this feeling of calm and joyful confidence in Him Who is faithful above our unfaithfulness, does not, if genuine, weaken in us the consciousness nor restrain the confession of our own humbling share in the general ruin of the church of God, so touchingly expressed in Daniel and Nehemiah as to Israel's sins and ruin. Remembering the incomparably higher order of blessing and privileges granted to us, we have incomparably greater reason than those far more faithful and humble men of God to bow down before God in dust and ashes, “remembering from whence we have fallen,” and to say, “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee.” But then we also like them may continue, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him". First the “because” then the “although". The latter without the former preceding would be simple antinomianism (comp. 1 John 2:1). David “encouraged himself in the Lord his God” amidst the ruins of Ziklag. But he must have been down on his face previously before the Lord his God, or he could not have “encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” For grievously as David had sinned before the battle of Gilboa (the lowest moral point in his whole course of life), yet afterward, the way he humbles himself under the chastening hand of God (comp. Psa. 32; 51) showed that he certainly was no antinomian.

And ought not the ruins of that which was once so glorious and beautiful, and an object of study for the angels—ruins of which we ourselves form a part—speak to our hearts and consciences with a louder voice than the silent ruins of Ziklag to David's? Surely, if their effect upon our souls is that which it ought to be, it will not be a kind of Laodicean boastfulness as to outward gospel success, and at the same time lukewarmness as to that sublime portion of divine truth, the zeal for which once characterized those early Christians, gathered by the Holy Ghost to the name of Him Who is the foundation, chief corner, and topmost stone, “in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit.” Soon the last stone will be added to this wondrous edifice, the divine side of which, whatever Satan or man may have done, can as little be impaired in the divinely perfect beauty and harmony of its structure, as it can be impeded in its “growing unto an holy temple in the Lord.” May the Lord grant us all a deeper and more real sense of our most humbling individual share in its outward ruins when reading such portions of His word as the “Acts.”

SIMILAR EFFECTS OF READING THE “ACTS” AND “EZRA.”

We read in the book of Ezra (when at the laying of the foundation of the Temple, the priests with their trumpets and the Levites with their cymbals sounded forth praises to the Lord, “and sang together by course in praising and giving thanks, because He is good and His mercy endureth forever”) that all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; whilst those of the younger generation, who had not

known Solomon's temple, “shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted. with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.”

Both those that wept and those that rejoiced were justified in their sentiments—those weeping, when thinking of the past, and the rejoicing ones, because they connected with the new Temple the prospect of a new and happier era for Israel. The weeping and the shouting ascended to Jehovah, perhaps equally acceptable.

A similar impression the spiritual Christian reader experiences when reading that precious portion of Holy Writ, called the “Acts of the Apostles,” Only there is this difference, that at the laying of the foundation of the. temple at Jerusalem, they that had known the magnificent temple of Solomon, on remembering the glorious past, could not refrain from weeping; whereas the rising generation at the sight of the rise of the present temple rejoiced. The effect produced in us on reading the “Acts” is the opposite. When carried back in spirit to. those happy days when the building of a more glorious temple than that of Solomon began at Jerusalem, under the direction of a wiser master-builder than Solomon—a building consisting of living stones, which not only were being built, but building up one another on their great foundation stone, and when the multitude of them that believed were one heart and one soul, as they had been baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, the body of Christ—when carried back in spirit, I say, to those happy and wonderful Pentecostal days, the believer's heart becomes filled and warmed with the glow of a holy and divine joy.

But again, on awaking from that happy “trance,” so to speak, one finds one's self in the sorrowful reality of the present, amidst the ruins of what once was in every respect the house of the living God, and can but exclaim with the prophet when amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, “Mine eyes fail with tears...for the destruction of the daughter of my people.” Let us now enter more fully, under God's help, on the all-important subject of these meditations. We may divide it simply under the following heads;

What is the origin of the church?

What is its ground or foundation?

What is its character and position?

What is its hope and calling

Chapter 91

The Gospel and the Church: 10. The Church

The church of God has its origin in God Himself, in Whose eternal and unchangeable counsels it was hidden before the foundation of the world. There it had its existence before it was revealed to the “sons of men” in God's own appointed time, and entered into visible existence on this earth.

On reading, in God's presence, such portions of the New Testament as the Epistle to the Ephesians, we have a similar impression to what we experienced when in the solitude of the night we observe the firmament—these worlds of light—which none can number. How beautifully that effect has been expressed by the inspired pen of the Psalmist,

“ When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained: “

“ What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him? “

Keeping the eyes fixed on those starry worlds above, one feels dwindling away and shrinking into such insignificance as if one were a drop of water in the ocean or a grain of sand on the seashore. Oh! the stupendous grace of God, Whose sun turns dew-drops into jewels, to pick up such atoms as we, and make them objects of His divine counsels of glory, grace, and wisdom, all to center in Christ, His beloved Son! Well may we exclaim, with the apostle of the church: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!... Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever and ever... glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

But God's thoughts, counsels and works are but the expression of what He is. “God is light” and “God is love.” Light and love cannot be hidden. They must manifest and communicate themselves. Light shines out and surrounds itself with light. And love shines out and surrounds itself with love. Both must have an object and a sphere for their activity.

What is God's sphere of activity?—Heaven and earth. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

What are His objects?—Christ and the sons of men.

“ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

“ I was daily His delight... and My delights were with the sons of men.”

And what is the sum and great end of God's counsels?

“ That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him; in Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

The sphere, where God now makes His glory shine forth from His throne, is not this earth but heaven. There He exhibits before His heavenly hosts the beauties and glories of His beloved Son, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost is God from eternity. Before the visible heaven and earth were, He was Jehovah's daily delight—

“ The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth:... then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth: and My delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:22-31).

“ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Yes, He, the “last Adam”, the “second Man”, Who is “the Lord from heaven”, wanted (even in heaven, where He was daily the object of the Father's delight and of the homage of countless hosts of angels) an object of His love and delight.

THE “FIRST MAN ADAM” AND THE “LAST ADAM”.

Adam, the earthly type of the perfect heavenly Man, found himself, for a time, in a similar position. He had been placed in the garden of Eden planted by Jehovah Himself. It was a scene of perfect human happiness, for God had made the paradise, and sin was not yet known on earth. No groan was heard to disturb the peaceful harmony which characterized that scene. Everything there was light, life, and happiness, in the first bloom of untainted creative beauty, fresh from the hand of its Maker. In that paradise God placed Adam, the man created after His own image, to be chief, center, and head, over all the lower creation—the figure of Him Who was to come. Adam was to have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of heaven, and every beast of the field. The Lord of lords and King of kings, Who had bestowed such a power on Adam, His vassal-king on earth, and assigned to Him the beautiful “Garden of Eden” for his royal residence, Himself had installed him in his place of honor, and brought the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air to Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him

Never since that day has there been, nor will be again, such a coronation-scene on this sinful earth until the great millennial coronation morning dawns, when He Who is the last Adam, under Whose feet God has subjected not only the earth, but the heavens also, will appear as “Lord of lords and King of kings” to reign over this earth.

But He will not come alone. The church—His bride, “the Lamb's wife” (most precious title!) will come with Him, to reign with Him over the blissful and peaceful millennial earth. It is that happy moment for which the whole creation, subject to the bondage of corruption for man's sake, groans

and travails in pain together until now.

It was not so with Adam in the lovely garden. of Eden. There was a king, but no queen to share the crown with him. When the “sons of God (i. e. angels) above in the heavens “shouted for joy” on looking upon that perfect scene of earthly bliss and beauty, they had one common interest and motive for joy, even the glory of God that made their hearts beat with one common impulse. Even the “morning stars” (i. e. angels) “sang together” when that bright creation-scene sprang into existence. They had fellowship in their joy. But man was alone amidst that lovely scene: alone in his power — alone in his honor—alone with his thoughts—alone with his heart. Each of those numberless creatures subject to Adam's dominion, from the eagle in mid-air down to the singing birds on the trees; from the roaring lion down to the bleating lamb feeding peacefully at his side (as it will again at a not very distant happier age), and lower down to the mute inhabitants of the waters—each had its mate to share the enjoyment of its new existence. “But for Adam there was not found a help meet for him.” He was alone in the midst of a paradise. There was a void in his heart with all the abundance of that beautiful garden around him. There was no kindred heart to share and respond to his feelings; no kindred spirit to understand end enter upon his thoughts and to take sweet counsel with; no countenance to be the mirror of his own and to reflect his smiles of happiness; no familiar voice to answer to his, or join in sweet harmony with his voice of praise and thanksgiving, when Adam looked up from the paradise around him, to the heavenly residence of his divine Liege-Lord above, the Father of lights, from Whom every good gift and every perfect gift cometh. Adam knew what light was; for the sun and the moon and the stars of heaven declared the glory of Him Who clothes Himself with light as with a garment and is the “Father of lights”. But he knew not what love was; for in the wide universe around him there was nothing to draw out the love that gives itself for the beloved object, loses itself in it, and shares everything with it. But the blessed God, Who is not only light but also love, knew it.

Chapter 92

The Gospel and the Church: 11. Mystery of the Church

“ This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Eph. 5:32.

“ And the Lord God. said: It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a help-meet for him.” (lit., “a help that is his equal.")

God Himself had an object for His divine love, even His only begotten yet co-equal Son, in Whom the Father's heart found its daily delight, before angels or heaven and earth had been called into existence. But that love, though divine and therefore perfectly happy and, if we may say so, perfectly satisfied, wanted to manifest itself outside itself. As has been observed already, love as well as light cannot be hidden. It manifests itself in the wider range of a creation called forth by His word, by Whom all things were made and are upheld by the word of His power. A range that embraces millions of angels in heaven and creatures on earth, whom that divine love had provided for and made perfectly happy, each in their proper sphere and place. Well may the Psalmist exclaim, “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.”

But that the vast range into which that love had expanded, should include for its especial objects, children of disobedience, enemies of God, this it is that characterizes that love as so truly divine and constitutes its highest glory—the glory of redeeming love, and the glory and riches of divine grace which is the result of divine love.

Yes, dear fellow-heir of glory! The Father's love would have many souls to be brought to glory, whom He had predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. He wished His heavenly house above, which is as large as is His divine heart, and where there are “many mansions” to be filled not only with the brilliant hosts of His angelic servants (holy and blessed though they be), but with children, (once lost prodigals in a far country,) in glorious bodies, His daily delight for eternity, as His Son was from eternity and will be for eternity. That blessed Son of His love, Who had to shed His blood upon the cross, to fit them for that glorious house, and provide them, according to His power, with glorious bodies, like His own, meet for that heavenly abode, will soon come to take us up to, and introduce us into the Father's house and to present all to His and our Father. “Behold, I and the children which Thou hast given Me.” Blessed hope, to be turned at any moment into a still more blessed reality?

But the Father's love wanted not only children for Himself, but a bride for His Son, and He has given us to Him “Thine they were, and Thou hast given them to Me” (John 17). A bride taken not from His holy angels, “who do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word,” but from among the sons of men, fallen, sinful and rebellious men! That bride is to dwell with Him in His Father's house above, whilst the terrible vials of divine wrath will be poured out upon this earth, where once the cross stood and where He bought her, whom He loved and washed in His own blood from her sins. She will dwell there with Him, in the daily peaceful enjoyment of His love, and the object of the Father's perfect delight and love in heaven, as we are now though being in this

world “as He is,” beloved, being “accepted in the beloved One”. She will dwell there with Him, until the last vial shall have been emptied upon this poor world, and Babylon, the “great whore", shall have met her threefold deserved fate, and the heavenly hallelujahs chime and announce that “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

We have turned away, for a few moments, from that bright and happy scene of a yet undefiled paradise, to a higher, brighter, and happier one, which will be ours and will never be defiled nor lost. Let us now return, for a little while, to the earthly type of our blessings in a heavenly paradise, and above all to Him Who is the center of it.

“ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of His ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a. man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh”. Wondrous scene! foreshadowing that deepest mystery of divine love, power, peace and wisdom. A scene without parallel, even in the divine record, except by its Antitype on Calvary and at Pentecost. The Holy Ghost, when referring to it in Eph. 5 through the inspired apostle of the Gentiles, to whom the great mysteries of God as to His church had been revealed, says, “This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

The One Who had formed Adam out of a piece of clay, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, we behold here bending over the sleeping man, to form a help-meet for him—not from the dust of the ground, but from flesh—then sinless flesh—even the rib out of Adam's side. It is the Same Who, after four thousand years of poor humanity's probation, was to give His flesh for the life of the world. He Who had said, “It is not good that the man should be alone: I will give him a help-meet,” was one day, when hanging between heaven and earth upon the cross, to be alone in the most terrible sense of the word, to gain His “help-meet”, i.e. His bride His wife—to be His companion in a glorious heavenly home. He was to be alone, not in a paradise, but in the wilderness, to stand firm and immovable, and to bind the strong man, and spoil him of his goods, whilst the first Adam, who was now sleeping before him, soon fell at the first trial of obedience amidst the abundance of a paradise. He was to be alone during His life time, like a sparrow on a house-top, though followed and surrounded by thousands; for not one understood Him, not even His disciples. He was to be alone in the agonies of Gethsemane, when the prince of this world was approaching to bring all the power of death he wielded, to bear upon Him. His disciples whom He wanted to be near Him and watch, whilst He prayed, fell asleep. They had forgotten their Master's watchword, which He gave at the very threshold of that place, not only to them but to us all. Poor sentinels! The enemy, coming suddenly, found them sleeping.

And at last—alone upon the cross, after His own had forsaken Him! When the assembly of the wicked, the bulls of Bashan, the lions and the dogs enclosed Him, He was alone, forsaken of His God. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; else it would have abode alone. But, blessed be His gracious and glorious name! He could not, nor would He be alone, even in glory. He must and will have His spotless and glorious bride with Him there. That same wondrous psalm, which opens with the cry of agony of the forsaken One upon the cross, contains, after He has been “heard from the horns of the unicorns,” these blessed words, “I will declare Thy name unto

My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee". He could not, He would not be alone, either as to His earthly people in the millennial blessing, when He will say, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved "; or even in His Father's house above, surrounded by all the glories of heaven, He cannot be alone. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." And not only so, but "the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

Let us remember also these words of our gracious Lord's prayer, beloved; as we find them reiterated by the Spirit of God in Eph. 4:1-3. May the Lord keep us from any spirit of selfish independent isolation, whilst in strictest separation from all that is contrary to His will as expressed in His word, which is truth. Soon will He Who would not that "man should be alone" come again, making good His gracious promise, to receive us up into His Father's house unto Himself, that where He is we may be also.

Chapter 93

The Gospel and the Church: 12. What Is the Ground or Foundation of the Church?

WHAT IS THE GROUND OR FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH?

The scriptures present the church in a two-fold aspect: 1. As the house or temple of God, “an habitation of God in the Spirit “; 2. As the body of Christ, its Head in glory.

Our question refers to its character as the house of God. We speak of the ground or foundation of a building, not of that of a body. (Of that we shall speak further on.) It is in this aspect then scripture deals with our question.

What then is the ground of the church, as the habitation of God in the Spirit?

Our Lord Himself tells us in the 11th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. He there gives to the “blind leaders of the blind”, tempting Him with vain questions, that solemnly significant answer, that no sign should be given to that “adulterous generation” but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

“ And He left them and departed.” Solemn words these!

Then after the Lord with His disciples had gone to the coast of Caesarea Philippi, He asks them: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” They answered “Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”

“ One of the prophets!” That was the highest point the natural man could reach by dint of his religious reasonings and conclusions, be it “men” in general, or “a man of the Pharisees”, saying, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.”

But those who “sat in Moses' seat”, to whom the Lord announced so solemn a judgment, saw or thought with their friend Simon, “This man, if he were a prophet” (Luke 7). Or if they could not deny nor explain away the mighty deeds of Jesus, as in the case of the raising of Lazarus, they said, “This man doeth many miracles”, and “from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.”

The Lord then (Matt. 16) turns to His disciples and asks them, “But whom say ye that I am?” A searching and decisive question, all-important in its bearing and results! His disciples had told Him of the opinions of “men” in general, and those opinions varied not a little, as is the case in these latter days. But now that testing and all-searching question—the touch-stone of genuine faith—was addressed to themselves! And that confession of true faith, the “gift of God”, how gloriously does it proceed from the lips of the Lord's chief apostle, whose natural weakness is recorded in holy writ more than that of his fellow-apostles, and in this very same chapter meets with the Lord's sharp rebuke!

But the weakness of the vessel makes all the more apparent that the ground upon which Christ was going to build His church could not be revealed by flesh and blood, i.e., not be the result of natural wisdom, nor even of the greatest religious knowledge. It must be the work of a direct revelation on the part of the “Father Who is in heaven “; of the quickening power and grace of God, Who is the source of life and light. God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had shined into the heart of Simon Bar-Jona—not yet, of course, in the sense of 2 Cor. 4:6, to give the light of His glory in the face of His risen, ascended, and glorified Son Jesus Christ, as now in us. Of this there could be no question at the time. Besides, this litter revelation, most blessed as it is, could not be the ground upon which Christ would build the church. It was not the Son of man, ascended to heaven and glorified at the right hand of God, Whom Stephen saw there, but the revelation made by the Father, that the Son of man, Who had come into the world, and was rejected by men, was the Son of the living God. ‘And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Here (i.e. in the second part of Peter's confession) we have the ground of the church.

For Peter's confession, as we see, consists of two parts: 1. That Jesus was the Messias (or, Christ).

Clearly this part of Peter's confession could not be the ground on which the Lord was going to build His church, although this revelation also could only be the work of God. But the acknowledgment of Christ, in His relation to His earthly people as their Messias, cannot be the ground of the church of God, which is not of this world. The great apostle of the church, once the zealous Jew, says, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” The ground upon which the Lord would build His heavenly church could have no connection with this earth.

It was the second part of Peter's confession which alone could form that ground, “Thou art the Son of the living God.” The whole stress lies on this part, “Son of the living God.” This great foundation-truth of Christianity forms also the keynote of the marvelously grand Gospel, and of the Epistles of the Lord's bosom disciple.

Note, Simon Peter confessed the Lord to be not only the Son of God, but the Son of the living God. The Old Testament speaks of Christ as the Son of God (though, of course, not in a Christian sense), as for instance in Psa. 2, where the kings and judges of the earth are enjoined to “kiss the Son,” that is, to do homage to Him, “lest He be angry and they perish in the way,” when He will enter upon His millennial kingdom and appear as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19), to call them to account and deal with them in judgment.

But whom have we here? The Son of the living God! As high as heaven is above the earth, so does this glory of His surpass the splendor of a millennial kingdom with all its earthly blessings under the scepter of the Son of man, and as King of the Jews. That term, “Son of the living God,” lifts us entirely out of this world and takes us up there, where He is, Who is “that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,” even “God manifest in the flesh,” —the Son of the living God Who can make children out of stones and quickeneth and raiseth the dead. These words,

Son of the living God," take us straight up to the fountain-head of life, light, grace, and power, whence Simon Peter had received those revelations.

No sooner has Simon uttered this glorious confession of Christ as Son of the living God, than Christ, in His own authority as the Son of God, sets upon him His seal of acknowledgment, as God does with everyone who has "set to His seal that God is true." (John 3:33 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13).

This honorable acknowledgment of the apostle on the part of his divine Master, and of His glorious testimony, consists of three parts: 1. A new name is given to Simon. 2. The keys of the kingdom of heaven (for Jews and Gentiles) are given to Peter. 3. The power of binding and loosing connected with it.

But it is not merely that wonderful and gracious divine acknowledgment of Peter's confession (the work of God's grace in his soul) that is to occupy us now, but the words of his and our Lord and Master: "Upon this rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell [or, hades] shall not prevail against it."

Here we have the ground upon which Christ was about to build His church. What was that ground? It was the confession that Christ is the Son of the living God. The Person of the Son of the living God, and the confessing Him as such springing from living faith in Him, was and is still the only ground of the church of God. It was the ground work of the grace and power of the living God in Peter personally, as it is in every single believer, and it was to be the ground on which Christ would build the church, that wonderful building composed of living stones, when the time should have come for the accomplishment of that word: that Christ died not for that nation only, but that He might gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Thus we have here the groundwork of the living God, and necessarily connected with it the confession of Christ as His Son, in every single believer, and the Son of God building His church upon that same ground, which is as everlasting and unchanging as He is Himself.

Every soul to whom the Father has thus revealed His Son, is not only conscious of a blessed change having taken place within, but such an one is conscious that the new life in Christ, which is the life thus communicated to Him in the revelation of the Son of God, is the work of the living God, Who not only is able to make children out of stones, but ready to communicate even to His enemies His quickening power, the exceeding greatness of which He manifested in raising Christ from the dead; for "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

As another has truly observed, "Christ must first be found before and outside of the church. Christ must first and above all be known and discovered in the awakened soul of the sinner. Christ, and what He is, must be before and above all revealed to the heart by the Father. He may use for that purpose, as instruments, persons belonging to the church, or He may work directly by His own word. But whatever may be the means employed by Him, it is the Father Who reveals to a poor sinful man the divine glory of the Son. And this once having been done in the individual, Christ says: 'Upon this rock will I build My church.' Faith in Christ is essentially God's way and order, before the question of the church arises. The Holy Spirit works out that blessed revelation of the Son, made by the Father. The personal question [between God and the soul] once settled, the corporative privilege and responsibility of the church follows."

“ It is, therefore, not enough to say, I have Christ ', however infinitely blessed this may be. If I know that He is the Son of God, I must also believe that He is now building the church. Do I know my place in His church? Am I walking in the life of Christ, a living stone in my proper place in the house He is building—as a member of His body, in regular and healthy activity? The building of the church is going on on this earth. Here it was that redemption was accomplished, and here it is that the church is being built upon the Rock of our salvation. The gates of Hades (the invisible place of the departed) shall not prevail against it. Death may come, but the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.... He (the Rock, the Son of the living God) says: Behold, I have the keys of death and hades.' “

I have observed already that it was not the first part of Peter's confession (“Thou art the Christ”) that was to be the ground on which Christ was going to build His church. His disciples on another occasion confessed that He was “the Christ.” But the Lord simply forbade them to tell this to anybody. The Son of David as such could not be the ground of the church. Peter at Pentecost proclaims Jesus to be the glorified Lord and Christ. He proclaims Him to be the Messiah, Whom the Jews had rejected and killed, but Whom God has raised from the dead and exalted at His right hand. That was not the ground upon which Jesus intended to build His church. At Pentecost we have still semi-Jewish, not full church, ground. Even to Cornelius Peter did not preach Christ as Son of God, but Christ the Lord—Jesus of Nazareth, anointed with power and the Holy Ghost, going about, doing good, etc., God being with Him, Who raised Him from the dead and ordained Him to be the Judge of the living and of the dead. We have not a word there about the Son of the living God. Neither at Jerusalem nor at Caesarea do we find the ground of the church mentioned.

At Antioch, where the disciples for the first time were called “Christians”, the character of the church as such fully appeared. Paul, the great apostle of the church, who labored there with Barnabas and others, preached after his conversion, in the synagogues of Damascus, not only that Jesus is very Christ, but first of all that He is the Son of God. Here then we have again the only true ground upon which Christ has built His church.

This firm living faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God it is that gives us strength, victoriously to resist the world and its temptations or opposition. The mere belief that Jesus is the Christ does not suffice for that. Such a belief proves that he who owns Jesus to be the Christ is “born of God” (1 John 5:1). But “who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (ver. 5)?

Christian reader, it is in the “last days” when the coming of the Lord for the rapture of His church is evidently imminent, the spirit of anti-Christ being more busy than ever to deny or at least to obscure in every way the glory and Godhead of our blessed Savior, that more than ever we ought to keep, yea constantly, before our eyes the adorable Person of the Son of the living God in His divine glory. Satan ever repeats himself, however various his stratagems. In the days of the apostles, when the full free grace of God which “reigns through righteousness” on the divinely solid ground of an eternal redemption by Christ Jesus was being preached in contrast to the works of the law, Satan attacked the work of Christ. But later on, when these faithful witnesses were gone, and only the aged bosom disciple of the Lord remained, the adversary grew bolder, thinking, very likely, that the aged and infirm apostle of Christ would no longer be able to cope with him. By his emissaries lie now attacked the glorious Person of the Son of God Himself in the false doctrine of

the so-called “Gnostics”, attempting to lower the adorable Person of the Son of God (as has been attempted of late) to a mere “essence” or influence emanating from God. But the Lord soon proved afresh that it is His Spirit in the fragile, feeble, aged vessel, and not man's spirit (even not in John) that testifies of Him and glorifies Him. He inspired by His Spirit His aged servant to write that blessed Gospel, truly called the “grand Gospel”, which from beginning to end speaks of and sets forth the divine glories of the Son of God, and reflects the beauties and perfections of His adorable Person, making the heart bow before Him in adoring wonder. None but God knows the number of precious souls who, through reading that portion of holy writ, have learned through divine grace to confess with Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Satan once more had defeated himself.

But is it not the same in these last days Christian reader? When fifty years ago the gospel of God's full and free grace in Christ Jesus was proclaimed by some faithful witnesses, whom God had raised and delivered from the “camp” of a Judaized Christianity, the adversary of the truth again directed his attacks against the testimony of the complete work of Christ. But in our days, when, in spite of his opposition, the full gospel of grace and peace on the ground of the finished work of Christ is known and widely proclaimed, Satan again aims his attacks at the Person of the Son of God, of Whom the Holy Spirit, Who “glorifies Him", testifies that He “is over all, God blessed forever”. We need not mention here the names of all those God's-Son-denying sects who dare to call themselves “Christian.” May the Lord direct our hearts more constantly to His all-beauteous Person, and fix our eyes on His glory. (2 Cor. 3:18).

I am afraid we have been enjoying in the writings of the great apostle of the church the truths concerning the body of Christ and its glorious Head as the glorified Son of man, but are in danger of neglecting that portion of divine truth (written by the same Spirit) concerning the Son of God, and of thus practically slipping from that which is in every individual believer, as for the church, the only true divine ground. If once we begin to lose sight of that ground, i.e., of the Person of the Son of the living God, we shall soon cease practically to hold the Head. “And as He Himself builds His church upon that ground, so let us, beloved, build up one another on the only true ground of “our most holy faith, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal.”

Chapter 94

The Gospel and the Church: 13. Character and Position of the Church

At the beginning of the preceding paper I observed that in holy Writ the church is presented in a two-fold character:-1. As the house of God, and 2. As the body of Christ, its Head in glory.

Each of these two high qualities granted on God's part to His church supposes on her part an equally great responsibility as to a corresponding moral and spiritual character and walk here below. Alas! how lamentably unmindful has the church been of her responsibility in this respect, forgetting “how she had received and heard.” — “Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth.”

1. THE CHURCH, AS THE “HOUSE OF GOD”.

In this character, scripture presents the church in a threefold aspect—1. As the “House of God.” (1 Tim. 3:15.) 2. As the “Temple of God.” (1 Cor. 3:16; 4:16; Eph. 2:21.) 3. As the “Habitation of God in the Spirit.” (Eph. 2:22; 1 Peter 2:9.)

We know what is the character of the “House of God” as such. It is holiness, “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever.” (Psa. 93) What then ought to be the corresponding Christian-moral character of the church as the “house of God?” Holiness. “Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

The apostle of the church, therefore, when in his first epistle to his Timothy, he calls the church the “house of God,” at once insists upon a walk consistent with that holy character of the church: “that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”.

It is not enough to believe and confess that Christ is the “Son of the living God,” which we have seen to be the only ground upon which Christ has built His church, however blessed to the heart it may be to realize this by faith. But we must remember that the church thus built by Christ is the “church of the living God,” as it is the pillar and ground of truth.

For Christians it is of paramount importance, that they should acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the truths taught in the word of God, concerning His church, so dear and precious to Himself and to His dear Son. May He in His grace incline the hearts of His dear children to a more prayerful study of His own word, bringing home to our consciences our sinful neglect in slighting that all-important portion of His truth.

But there is another thing which has a still more injurious effect upon individual souls and is damaging for the public testimony of the truth of the church of God. I mean the mere intellectual acquirement of church truths, without their producing a corresponding exercise of conscience and heart before God and consequent power in our walk and behavior in the church, which is the “house of the living God".

It is very easy to become a correct and orthodox church-Christian, but something very different to glorify God and the Name of His Son Jesus Christ by a corresponding walk in the family and in the

church, and in the world, befitting those who are of the “household of God,” and work out our salvation with fear and trembling, as such who belong to the “church of the living God,” which is the “pillar” (as to public testimony) and “ground of the truth” (as to our fellow Christians). Alas! how little have we been mindful that the measure of our privileges and blessings and of our knowledge of the truth is also the measure of our responsibility. If, then, our walk in holiness and righteousness and the character manifested thereby on our part, do not correspond with the character given to the church on God's part, the church will fail to be a “pillar” in testimony to those who are without.

If we look at the human side, i.e. at what the church has become under human responsibility, one can, whilst bowing amidst the ruins, but tearfully exclaim with the prophet: “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.” What has become of the “house of God” in its human aspect? A heap of ruins and rubbish! What of the “church of the living God?” Split up into churches and chapels—who knows their number? What of the “ground of the truth” and what of the “pillar?” Alas! the divine truth became to those within the house but too soon a matter of habit, and then the “house” ceased to be a “ground of the truth.” For if divine truth becomes a matter of habit instead of inhabiting us (Col. 3:16), and therefore being lived out by us, we shall soon grow cool and indifferent as to it; and instead of being established in the truth, shall be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, and our testimony will be without the savor, power and unction of the Holy Spirit. It will reach only the cars but not the hearts and consciences of the hearers; and they will “speak evil of the way of truth,” instead of being turned to God and instructed in His way.

So it came to pass that the “house of God” in the hands of men became a “great house,” as it

appears in the Second Epistle of the apostle of the church to Timothy. The pillar of public testimony lies on the ground among the ruins, its inscription half effaced, overgrown with weeds and brambles.

But whilst being bowed down in shame and confusion of faces over ruins of which we ourselves form a part, we look up to Him Who is faithful if we are unfaithful, and Whose word is as faithful as He is Himself, and beholding the divine (that is, perfect and unchangeable) side of the church of God we ask, Has the church ceased to be the “house of God,” and have believers ceased to be “of the household of God,” because professing Christendom has become a “great house,” where everyone who desires to be a “vessel of honor,” has to purge himself from the “vessels of dishonor?” If so, the divine injunction in 1 Tim. 3:15 as to a Christian's behavior becoming the “house of God” would no longer have any meaning. Par be the thought! It would lead either to despair, as has been the case with not a few, who looking only at the human, instead of the divine, side of the church, give up everything, and, contrary to the very instinct of the new nature in the Christian, withdraw from fellowship with their fellow Christians, instead of serving them individually; I say individually—with the grace and gift and knowledge God has granted them. Others, worse still, grow indifferent to the truth, being driven along with the stream. Such a Laodicean indifference appears to be scarcely less hateful than the Nicolaitanism in the Lord's solemn warning addressed to the church at Pergamos.

A house does not cease to be a house, because it is in disorder. Whatever may be the sad aspect and condition of the church, looked at from the human side, its divine aspect and nature as it appears at the close of the second chapter of the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, cannot be affected by it.

“ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through [or, in] the Spirit.”

Holiness is the first requisite for the “house of God.” But there is another no less essential one, I mean Order. Not human order, which here as in all divine institutions produces but disorder, and only serves to “make confusion more confounded.” “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” If even in a worldly, still more in a Christian, household the principle of order is all-important for its welfare and prosperity, how much more in the “house of God”!

In the next paper, if the Lord will and under His gracious help, I hope to offer a few remarks as to these two essential requisites for the house of God, beginning with Christian discipline, a subject so little understood and yet of such intrinsic importance for all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, and remember that “holiness becometh His house forever.”

Chapter 95

The Gospel and the Church: 14. Christian Discipline

VI. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

There is scarcely a principle of Christian truth, about which so many great mistakes and differences of opinion prevail amongst Christians as about the meaning of “Discipline.”

The word “discipline” has in the Greek original of the New Testament, and in the Latin and the Romanic modern languages, pretty much the same meaning as education. That true education without correction is impossible, be it in divine or human things, is a well-known truth, though alas! but little heeded in these “perilous times” of pride, self-will, and self-assertion. But the term “discipline” has in many countries, especially among nations of schoolmasterly habits, assumed a meaning savoring more of the “whip” and the “rod,” than of Christian grace—truth without grace; whilst amongst others, noted for their liberal inclinations, the opposite error frequently appears, viz.: grace without truth. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” This is God's order, not to be set aside, least of all in questions of discipline.

The ground for the prevailing confusion and difficulties as to matters of discipline is to be sought, partly in our natural propensity to judge others rather than ourselves, in our sad want of Christian grace and humility; partly in our propensity to partial fleshly predilection for, or aversion to and prejudice against, the one who is the object of discipline; and last but not least in the general ruin of the church of God, and a false religious system and consequent confusion as to church truths in general.

The church, as the “house of the living God,” cannot do without discipline, if it will not forfeit every claim as such. As long as the flesh and wretched self within and the world with its temptations around us exist, discipline is an absolute necessity even in this world; how much more in the church of God! What would a school, or an army, or a household, be without discipline? Nothing but confusion and corruption, doomed to destruction. How much more is this true as to the “house of the living God!” “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever.”

But it is of the highest importance that we should be fully clear about the meaning and nature of discipline; for ignorance as to this solemnly important question has caused and still does cause serious mistakes with the saddest consequences for the church of God. Let us endeavor, therefore, to find the answers to the following questions, which naturally present themselves, praying the Lord for His guidance.

The questions we have to consider, are:

1.—What is Christian discipline?

2.—What are the kinds of Christian discipline?

3.—In what way and in what spirit ought discipline to be carried out?

1. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE?

By Christian discipline I understand the believer's privilege, under grace, and the loving endeavor incumbent upon him, to warn, exhort, instruct and advise a fellow Christian who has erred or is in evident danger of straying, in the spirit of that wisdom which is from above, and in the “spirit of meekness” (James 2:17, 18, and Gal. 6:1) as in the presence of God; and (in case of repentance) to encourage, comfort and strengthen him, and to help him to renewed communion with God, and thus bring him back to the path of holiness, righteousness and peace, that is, to “restore” him.

What is often understood by church discipline, viz.: the exclusion from the assembly, ought to be and is in fact only the end of discipline, the last and extreme measure, after all efforts to restore the erring one, have proved fruitless. Nothing can be more contrary to the Spirit of God and the grace of Christ, than to begin with exclusion from the assembly or church; that is to make that the first step in discipline, which ought to have been the very last and the close of discipline, the intention of which ought to be to prevent that extreme and solemn act of church discipline. For, however true it may be that a church which refuses to exercise godly discipline, can no longer be considered as the assembly of God, an assembly which is guilty of such a hasty and premature act of discipline, pronounces its own condemnation, and will find that the “Judge standeth before the door.” What should we say to a physician who, when called to heal a diseased leg, would begin the cure by cutting it off? Or what would be said of a father of a family who, in the case of a disobedient son, would begin his discipline with expelling him from the house? Would he not be called an unnatural father and his action stigmatized as barbarous in the extreme? And yet how often have we heard of such heartless procedures, when in cases of so-called godly discipline the first cry has been, “Exclusion from the assembly!” Those Gentile mariners, who “rowed hard” to save both Jonah (who was the cause of all their distress) and themselves and the ship, might teach a lesson to many Christian mariners!

How must such cruel and ungodly measures wound the tender and loving shepherd-heart of Him Who is our Head in glory, and whose last action before going again to His Father, was to restore a stray sheep of His flock, who was none less than His chief apostle, to whom He had entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and who had denied Him thrice.

Such judicial enactments do not fail (as we constantly are witnessing) to bring sooner or later the judgment of God upon those judges and tip-staffs, on the part of Him Who is the Son over His own house, Head of the church and Chief Shepherd, and Who more than 2,000 years ago by His prophetic Spirit in His prophet Ezekiel, pronounced this judgment upon the false shepherds.

“ The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.... Behold! I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hands, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.” (Ezek. 34:4-10.)

Chapter 96

The Gospel and the Church: 15. The Church

Let us now consider the different kinds of Christian discipline. There are three:

1. When a brother sinneth against a brother. (Matt. 18:15-17.)

2. The discipline of fatherly watchfulness and pastoral care. (Gal. 6:1, Acts 20:28-31, 1 Thess. 2:11-12, 1 Tim. 5:19-21.)

3. The discipline of Christ, as Son over His own House. (Heb. 3, John 13)

The two first have a personal character. Their intention is to prevent church discipline.

1.-A BROTHER SINNING AGAINST A BROTHER.

As to this case, our Lord's instructions are clear and simple: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

In these words of our gracious Master we cannot fail at once to notice the especial care he takes to remind us, that this is not a case for church discipline, but of personal wrong of one brother against another, warning us against confounding the two, which has caused great sorrow and mischief in the church. It has always been Satan's endeavor (in which the flesh in us is but too willing to aid him), to degrade church questions to personal questions, or dignify personal matters into church questions, thus using our natural pride to produce the canker of party spirit in the church of God. The history of the church from the days of the Apostles until now contains the sad confirmation of this.

“ If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” What did our meek and lowly Master intend by these words? Simply this, that the brother who has been wronged, should go to his brother in the spirit of that love which “covereth a multitude of sins,” and with the intention that the sin of his brother might not only be covered, i. e., remain a secret to everyone else, but confessed and judged as in God's presence, be thus entirely put away, between God and the brother who had sinned, and between the two brothers themselves, after the manner of our loving and gracious God, Whose “imitators” we are to be. He “giveth freely and upbraideth not” (James 1:5), and He forgiveth freely and upbraideth not, saying: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17). The latter is far more difficult to us than the giving and not upbraiding. The intention is that the sin of the brother should be kept a secret, nay, entirely put away, before it can reach the ears of a third person, let alone the church. But if the brother will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two. One witness in the sense of love and grace, but two in the sense of wisdom, according to the individual character of the erring brother and the more or less hopeful result of your first private interview with him. In the latter case two

witnesses would be more likely to impress the conscience of the failing brother, and in certain cases it would be wise, not to appear before the church as witness in your own cause, in case the matter has to be brought before the church.

But if the erring one will not listen to the church. (or assembly), what then? He has hardened his heart against the tearful entreaties and remonstrances of the brother wronged by him; the united testimony of two additional witnesses has proved without effect upon his conscience; even the exhortation of the assembly has been left unheeded—what remains, some would say, but the painful necessity of church discipline? Ought he not to be Put away?

No! says the Son over His own house, Who is holier, wiser and more gracious than we all; “if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee” (that is to the one whom he has sinned against) “as an heathen man and a publican.” He, the Head of His body, the church, as He is our personal Lord and Master and Savior, will not permit us to dignify personal matters into church questions, nor to lower church questions into personal matters.

Let us heed this warning injunction of our Good, Great and Chief Shepherd! What sorrow, grief, distress and havoc might have been spared to the precious sheep and tender lambs of His flock, if His under-shepherds, like good sheep, had listened to His voice and heeded his distinct instruction! May He grant us to be “strong in the grace that is in Him” (2 Tim. 2:1), and to “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9).

It may and does happen that such an impenitent brother, hardened and persevering in a willful evil course, may become finally subjected to church discipline, and be excluded from the assembly. But this is quite a different thing. Such a sad extremity is not prevented by going before the Lord and beyond His word, but by waiting upon Him and following His word.

Another case of Christian (though not church) discipline is that of a brother “walking disorderly,” that is, as the apostle explains, “working not at all, but being a busybody” (2 Thess. 3:6-16). The apostle here commands with the solemnity of apostolic authority (as in 1 Cor. 5) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, “withdraw from such an one.” The reason of his solemn language in this case is, because idleness, so sharply rebuked throughout the pages of holy writ, and even by the world, opens the door to the tempter, as testified by David's warning example. But this is after all not a case for putting away or church discipline as in 1 Cor. 5, but of discipline to be enacted by the brethren individually against the idle and mischievous one, by withdrawing from all personal communion with him. The intention of this kind of Christian discipline is, to act by the force of such a united testimony upon the heart and conscience of the one who “walketh disorderly,” and thus to prevent his expulsion from the assembly. The apostle then continues, “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle” not—"put away,” but, “note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed,” that is, that he may see his evil way and forsake it, and thus be spared the final, that is, church discipline, which might become necessary by some of the serious fruits of his idleness. For this reason the apostle concludes with the gracious words, “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” His language in this case is very different from that in 1 Cor. 5

As to the case in Matt. 18 I would offer a few remarks about a mistake (to speak gently) of by no means rare occurrence—I mean the case of a brother abstaining from breaking bread, either

because he thinks himself insulted or wronged by somebody in the assembly, or, what is worse still, he entertains a personal dislike or suspicion against that person. If acting thus from the first mentioned reason, he constitutes himself accuser and judge in his own cause, thus proving how little he has learned, to know and judge himself (his pride and self-will and their blinding power misleading him to such presumption) and how little he has realized in his soul the true character of the church as the body of Christ. And not only so, but by excluding himself, for the sake of his ill-favored brother, from the Lord's table, he withholds from the Lord not only the tribute of worship in adoration and thanksgiving due to Him at the memorial of his love, but robs himself of all the precious blessing connected with the Lord's table. To be avenged of his face he cuts off his nose. What folly, not to speak of the sad condition of soul that causes it.

“ But,” some will say, “is it not worse to sit down at the Lord's table, which is the expression of Christian fellowship, with a brother who has wronged me, or against whom I have something on my heart, or have reason for suspicion? “

My answer to such is simply this, that in divine matters the word of God and not natural feelings and principles ought to be the rule for our actions. In none of these cases does scripture warrant such a step of independence. To such I should say, If you think your brother has wronged you, why not, after acting according to Matt. 18, “let him be to thee [not to you] as a heathen man and a publican?” That is, you may refuse to him the right hand of fellowship, not noticing any longer. his presence in the assembly. Not a word is said that he should be excluded from the assembly, much less of your placing yourself under discipline instead of him.

In the second case, that is, where you have anything in your heart against a brother, why do you not act upon the Lord's clear injunction in Matt. 5:23, 24, and go to your brother, in order to rid your heart of what you have against him? In the passage just referred to, the Lord enjoins us to go to our brother, not only when we have something against him, but “if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Certainly then ought you to go to him, if you have anything against him, and be reconciled to him. But instead of this you turn your back upon the altar and stay away with your gift of thanks due to God. What, blindness in thus sinning against God and against your brother!

In the third case, that is, staying away from the Lord's table because you think you have cause for suspicion against a brother, either having noticed something wrong in his walk, or having heard some evil report about him, your way of acting appears to be still more perverse and sinful. For either the bad thing you have noticed in his walk or have heard about him is of such a nature as to make him liable to church discipline, that is, to cause his exclusion from the assembly, or it is of a less urgent and solemn nature. In the former case it is your bounden duty to acquaint the church with his evil course, if proved, and known to you as a fact, in order that the evil may be put away from among them. Instead of this, either from the fear of men, or from natural motives of human love, friendships or family relationships, you excommunicate yourself from the table and the church, permitting both to be defiled, and imagining in this way to pacify your conscience and keep it pure! What defilement! What cowardice! What grievous sin against God, against Christ, and the church!

If, on the other hand, the inconsistency you have noticed in a brother's walk is not of so serious a nature as to cause his exclusion from, or even a public rebuke before the church, why in due love to your brother do you not go to him and try to remove the defilement you noticed by washing his feet according to our blessed Lord and Master's own example and solemn injunction? (John 13:14. Of this I shall speak further on.)

Do you suspect your brother? “Charity thinketh no evil.” Do you distrust him? “Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things” (1 Cor. 13). Or is your diffidence founded on information by some trusty brother? Ask him whether he has spoken to the brother against whom he has supplied you with that damaging information, and if he has not, offer to accompany him at once to the one against whose godly character he has raised doubts in your mind If he refuses to do so, rebuke him sharply, and at once dismiss from your mind any further suspicious thought against the suspected one, for you have no right to entertain even the shadow of a suspicion against a fellow-believer, unless founded on undeniable facts and trustworthy witnesses. To utter or spread such evil surmisings or even only disparaging expressions about a fellow-believer, which may be done sometimes in an apparently innocent, half jocular way, is not only base and ungodly but really devilish. In many gatherings all true fellowship, peace, and blessing have been paralyzed and disturbed, the “accuser of the brethren” having succeeded in impregnating the spiritual atmosphere in such assemblies with vague suspicious distrust, evil surmisings, and indistinct misgivings to such a degree that the spiritual breathing in such a thick and poisonous atmosphere became almost impossible, and terminated in the breaking up of the gathering.

To stay away from the Lord's table from mere suspicion or distrust against one or some in the assembly only betrays that the surmised evil, from which such a separatist pretends to purge himself by his own exclusion is enclosed within himself. He therefore had better begin with himself, instead of sitting in judgment upon his brother and upon the assembly by separating from them. Such a pharisaic pride under the cloak of conscientiousness is most sad in a Christian, proving the subtlety and blinding power of the flesh in us.

Let me sum up what has been said, in a simple illustration. Suppose one of the children of a family fancies he has ground for complaint against one of his brothers, or entertains from some cause or another a great aversion to him. His feeling grows so strong that he determines to absent himself from the common family meals. By his absence from that table, which in itself is the expression of the family tie and union, he would not only put a slight upon his brothers and sisters usually present at the table, but above all commit a flagrant disregard of his parents who preside at that table. Besides, that not very amiable son, in order to show his dislike or disapproval of his brother, would expose himself to starvation, a suicidal procedure, which would little serve his purpose. For one would scarcely suppose that that separatist member of the family, who thus spurns the parental table, would go so far in his boldness as to expect his meals to be sent after him into his cell (as little as the self-willed member of Christ, separating himself from the Lord's table, could expect God's blessings connected with the table to follow him into his self-chosen exile). Suppose now that peculiar and unsociable son, on being remonstrated with by his father for his conduct, should plead that the parental table being the expression of family communion, it would not be consistent and honest of him to sit down there with a member of the family with whom he felt he could have no communion. What would the father say to such an excuse? He would say to him, “If your brother has offended or wronged you, why have you not gone to him, seeking to convince

him of his error in the spirit of meekness and brotherly love? And if he would not listen to you nor to his brothers and sisters, you should have told me, and I would have admonished, and if necessary reproved and corrected him. Instead of pursuing this only proper course, you, my son, have preferred to take the matter into your own hands and constituted yourself accuser and judge in your own cause. Your way of acting does not appear to me a conscientious one, as you wish to present it, but rather it betrays an evil heart and a perverse conscience, pride, and self-will. The table, on which you have turned your back, is not yours, nor your brother's, but my table. If you continue to spurn the family table and thus disregard both your parents and your brothers and your sisters, there remains nothing for you but to leave the house and go to the world's boardinghouse and taste their fare."

I have dwelt on this point longer than I intended, on account of its frequent occurrence, especially in small towns and country gatherings, where personal acquaintance is so much closer, and so more liable to friction.

" The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Chapter 97

The Gospel and the Church: 16. Fatherly Watchfulness and Care

2.—FATHERLY WATCHFULNESS AND CARE.

(Gal. 6:1: Acts 20:28-31; Thess. 2:11-12; 1 Tim. 5:19; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 John 2:13-14.)

The second kind of Christian discipline is that of fatherly watchfulness and pastoral care. It has, like the preceding, a personal character. The church, as such, has nothing to do with it. Its intention is the prevention of church discipline.

But whilst in the preceding case it was the question of a personal matter between brother and brother, this second kind supposes, and indeed requires, spiritual experience, wisdom and grace, on the part of the one who is to exercise it. He is to speak as a father to his children, as one whose superiority is not merely that of age and greater experience and knowledge, but of grace and a godly walk. “Ye are witnesses, and God also,” the apostle of the church could say, “how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” Then he continues, “As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.” The same we find in Gal. 6:1. The apostle first exhorts them (chap. 5:25-26), “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” He then continues, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Not he who assumes the air of a father, is a father. The real father behaves himself and acts as a father simply because he is one. “For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” True spiritual superiority does not assert itself but makes itself felt. It does not look out for acknowledgment, but is acknowledged because real. Some at Corinth carried themselves like fathers, but in fact were babes.

Fatherly authority in the church should be coupled with motherly tenderness, as was the case with the apostle. He not only exhorted the Thessalonians as his children; he also knew how to comfort them. He wrote to them, “We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” Are not perfect power and perfect tenderness united in our God? His hand is as tender as it is mighty. It will cast the unbelieving into the lake of fire and wipe for heaven all tears from the faces of His beloved children.

“ Fathers” are those who “know Him that is from the beginning,” to Whom not only “all power in heaven and on earth is given,” but Who, is also “meek and lowly of heart.” They have “learned Christ,” Whose yoke is easy, and His burden light, and are thus able as such “that are spiritual,” with a father's authority, tenderness and care, to restore those that have been overtaken in a fault “in the spirit of meekness,” and to “bear one another's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ."

Such an one goes to his erring brother, whose sin and burden he has taken before God upon himself as his own, and speaks to him words of grace and truth.

Words of truth, thus spoken to an erring brother in loving gentleness, will always find a good place with him, even when not received well at the beginning. In these last days, when pride and self-will, not only in the world, but, alas! in the church of God, lift up the head, the Christian service of washing one another's feet must frequently expect an unkind reception. There are men whose skin is so thin, that a slight scratch causes bleeding difficult to be stilled. And so there are now-a-days not a few Christians with such a tender, or shall I say? slender, spiritual constitution, that at the slightest accidental scratch, so to speak, they start up as if they had been pierced by a dagger. They only prove how little their hearts have been established through grace, and how little they have learned of Him Who is meek and lowly of heart. But this ought not to deter us from our duty under grace, to wash one another's feet, which our gracious and lowly Master, Who is love but also the “holy” and “true,” so solemnly did enjoin upon His own on the eve of His death on the cross, after He Himself had set us the example.

“ 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 lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

Christian meekness and humility, so closely connected with Christian love, are most essential requisites in the service of feet-washing.

When our Lord said, “I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you,” He certainly did not mean that we should imitate Him in the mere preparations for that service, such as the “girding with the towel,” and the “pouring water into the basin.” Many show great aptitude for such preparations, but break down in the act of feet washing, because they spurn to kneel down to get at the brother's feet. They enter into his presence with an air which says, I have come to wash your feet. Such preparations resemble rather those of a barber than the humble service of a Christian feet-washing, and generally do more harm than good. A well-known servant of Christ has truly observed, “If I do not judge first in myself the flesh I see active in my brother (for the same exists in myself), I am not fit to wash his feet.” If before going to a brother to wash his feet, I have been in the dust before the Lord, I shall appear little before my brother, and thus be able gently to remove the defilement.

How much humility ought I to have towards a brother? Enough to supply his lack of it. If he won't bow his knees, let me bow mine and he will soon follow. Did not Gideon do it before the Ephraimites? (Judg. 8:1-3.) How much love should I have for my brother? Enough to make up for his lack. Did not the great apostle of the church set us the example? (2 Cor. 12:15.) Thus it should be amongst the members of Christ. One member ought to supply the others. Is it so amongst us?

The important service of Christian foot-washing forming such an integral part of the wider range of fatherly watchfulness and pastoral care, I thought a few remarks as to the general Christian duty of foot-washing might be seasonable amidst the increasing difficulties that beset the “house of the living God” in these last days.

Chapter 98

The Gospel and the Church: 17. Discipline of Christ As Son Over His House

SECOND PART.—THE CHURCH. 9. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE.

DISCIPLINE OF CHRIST AS SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE,

AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE PROPER. (Heb. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5).

The two first kinds of discipline spoken of before have a personal character and intend to prevent church discipline, i.e., the exclusion of the questionable person from the church, and thus general sorrow and shame. Another has truly observed that nine-tenths of Christian discipline are personal. If it has come to this that the discipline of Christ, as Son over His own house, has become necessary, it is not, as in the preceding cases, the question of restoring one that has sinned, but of the responsibility of all to keep the house of God undefiled. The very expression, discipline of “Christ, as Son over His own house,” should serve to impress the assembly with the deep and solemn sense of its corporate responsibility before God.

Christ holds not only the keys of death and hades in His victorious hand, but as “Son over His own house”. “He that is holy, He that is true,” holds also the key of testimony and service. And how could we expect that He, the Holy and True One, would give an “open door” to the testimony of an assembly which, whilst professedly gathered to His Name, in careless indifference stamps with that Holy Name the evil which dishonors it, thus betraying that it has little or no sense of what it owes to Him Who bears that Name and is “the Son over His own house?”

The apostle, therefore, was obliged to recall His Name to the remembrance of the Corinthians who practically appeared to have forgotten its meaning with those words: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan,” &c., &c. The Corinthians had forgotten what they owed to Christ as the Son over His own house, the “house of the living God,” the “habitation of God in the Spirit.”

As observed already, in this case of (church) discipline it is not a question of a personal restoration of the one who is the object of it, but of the common responsibility of all, to keep the house from defilement. The restoration of the sinning one may be the result of the church discipline; but that is another thing and has nothing to do with the necessity of the church discipline as such, nor can it alter its character. The Name of the Lord must be vindicated first.

If cases like 2 Thess. 3:6-15, or that of a public rebuke, are designated as church discipline in a general sense, I have no objection; only they appear to me, as I have said already, rather as means for preventing the necessity of discipline by Christ as “Son over His own house,” which is the exclusion from the assembly, and thus is at the same time the beginning and the end of church discipline in the strict sense.

The authority of Christ as Son over His own house is guarded and maintained through the presence and efficacy of the Holy Ghost (Who glorifieth Christ) in the church, as the “habitation of God in the Spirit.” In saying this I do not mean that Christ Himself could not directly take in hand and exercise this discipline for the maintenance of His authority over His own house, should it please Him to do so. There have been solemn instances of it. His power and authority are the same in our days as when “Judas went out, and it was night.”

But when the spiritual condition of a church is good, and therefore the working of the Holy Ghost not impeded, church discipline, when necessary, will be carried out with little or no hindrance. But where the state of a church is low or positively bad, as it was at Corinth, the carrying out of church discipline will be comparatively difficult. But for such cases of difficulty, occurring as they do but too often these last days of the church on earth, the gracious promise of the Son over His own house becomes doubly gracious, “Where two or three are gathered unto My name, there am I in the midst of them.” He does not say, My Spirit, but “I.” Even in the church at Corinth there were still such faithful individuals, as Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus; and the Lord Himself was in their midst and carried out the needed discipline through His apostle.

Two cases are especially mentioned in Holy Writ, where the Lord as Son over His own house exercises discipline. The first is that of Ananias and Sapphira; and the second, the exclusion of the wicked person from the church at Corinth.

The Gospel and the Church: 18. Ananias and Sapphira

In the solemn case of Ananias and Sapphira we see the discipline of the Son over His own house carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit in the chief of the twelve. Ananias and his wife had" agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord," and for that sin of hypocrisy and effrontery, they suffered death by the power of the "Spirit of truth" (against whom they had lied) acting through Peter. This case was not one of church discipline in the strict sense, inasmuch as the church as such could bake no active part in it (except by practically owning what had been done), for its responsibility for such participation could, of course, only apply to known and manifest sins. With Ananias and Sapphira, Christ acts as Head of the church through the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira had "lied to the Holy Ghost "; they had "lied to God," and "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." In Holy Writ their sin is exposed in all its awfulness.

3. CHURCH DISCIPLINE. CORINTH.

In 1 Cor. 5 we have proper church discipline as such, in its complete character, that is, Christ as Son over His own house, through His apostle of the church reminding the saints at Corinth of their responsibility to purge His house from defilement (John 2:13-17), and thus awakening them to the sense of their duty under grace to "put away from among themselves the wicked person."

The canker of party spirit had undermined the church at Corinth to such a degree that all true blessing had been nearly rendered impossible. Only a few like Stephanas and his household, and Achaicus, and Fortunatus, appeared to have kept themselves untainted with the leaven which had leavened nearly the whole lump, and made its pernicious effects felt in all directions until they extended even to the Lord's table, where many did no longer discern the body of the Lord. That terrible sin of profanity had been visited by the Lord in some cases with illness, and in others even with death.

There is a well known natural law, that the more delicate, tender, and excellent a thing is, the swifter and more complete is its corruption. For this same reason a backslider slips to a lower degree of moral degradation than many an unconverted man, committing himself to sins of which the latter would be ashamed. So it was at Corinth. The canker of party spirit with its concomitant passions of vanity, boasting, and jealousy hart so completely undermined the originally sound Christian ground in the church at Corinth, that not only were they individually puffed up within themselves but amongst themselves and one against another, the different parties comparing themselves among themselves and lifting up themselves the one above the other, instead of in lowliness esteeming one another better than themselves. The greater the pride the deeper the fall. So it came to pass at Corinth. A sin of such a shameful and unnatural character as was not known even among the Gentiles had been committed in their midst. But instead of throwing themselves with much weeping down before the Lord, like whom Ezra and those with him, who trembled at the words of the God of Israel because of the unfaithfulness of those that had been carried away, and instead of saying every one, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the

heavens... We have trespassed against our God... yet now there is hope... and now let us put away...", they continued to be puffed up, and “had not mourned, that he that had done this deed might be put away from amongst them.”

Christ, as Son over His own house, interposed through His apostle in order to maintain both His own disregarded authority and the purity of His house. Paul, in virtue of his apostolic authority bestowed upon him by the Head of the church, was therefore obliged to write to the Corinthians. “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

But Paul acted here not exactly as Peter did with Ananias and Sapphira, in virtue of his apostolic authority. For at Corinth the sin to be dealt with was generally known, which was not so on the former occasion. It became therefore necessary that the church at Corinth as such in its responsibility for the holiness and purity becoming the “house of the living God,” should take part in the putting away of the evil, which gave to that solemn act the character not only of apostolic but of church discipline. Paul therefore, whilst speaking with the full authority of an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ (as Head of the church and Son over His own house), and as an apostle of the church, “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” at the same time as member of the church, which is the body of Jesus Christ, took his common place among them in the assembly, adding, “when ye are gathered together and my spirit, with power of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In that great and honored servant of Christ we perceive, in beautiful unison, apostolic authority, Christian humility, grace, and wisdom, to stir up the hearts and consciences of the Corinthians, so blinded by the enemy, to do that which was due to God and His Son, as Head of the church, and to obtain the desired result for God's own glory and their common blessing, and for the restoration of the fallen one.

May God grant to His church in these perilous and difficult days of decline, grace and wisdom as well as decision and faithfulness in following the example of His great yet humble apostle. In these days of religious party spirit, fleshliness and worldliness (where the exercise of true godly discipline in the fear and love of God and of Christ is rendered more difficult than ever, though none the less binding on that account) the teachers and pastors, given by the Head of the church, will (in the case of the necessity of church discipline, so sorrowful and humbling for us all) do well to remember that they are “brethren” as well as pastors and teachers. On such distressing occasions service is not rendered to sleepy consciences by addressing with quasi-apostolic authority, to arouse them from their dormant condition. This is the way to neither their hearts nor consciences. A church discipline brought about in this way will bear no “peaceable fruit of righteousness,” but the very opposite. This is not the spirit of the “Son over His own house,” Who washed the feet even of a Judas, before exercising discipline, nor is it the spirit of His apostle, who called himself “less than the least of the saints,” and spoke even weeping “of them who were enemies of the cross of Christ.” The way to the conscience goes through the heart, and if we do not know how to find the way to a brother's heart, we shall not find a way to his conscience (2 Peter 3:1, John 21:15-17).

Chapter 100

Prof. Drummond's Greatest Thing in the World

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

Again, our author says that spiritual laws are as natural as the laws of nature; that they are both natural or both supernatural. St. Paul says, “First that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual.” Our blessed Lord Himself says, “The flesh profiteth nothing.” Again, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Has Prof. D. weighed the force of these words? or is he prepared to explain them away? They will not fit in with his theories. Must they be “re-crystallized,” to borrow his own metaphor? As an eminent prelate (the Abp. of York) said the other day, “A revelation without the supernatural cannot be conceived; it would be merely a speculation.”

But if anything more were wanted to show the hollowness and profanity of Prof. D.'s views, the following remark from his address would demonstrate it. “We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws from those in which we get the body and the mind.” What plainer denial can there be of original endowment? It is a virtual negation of the truth of man's spiritual nature, and, though probably the Prof. is not aware of it, sheer materialism. Mr. D. is evidently bent upon riding to death his favorite hobbies of “environment and habit,” borrowed as they are from the godless philosophy of Herbert Spencer. But is there nothing more than this in “religion”? Is man merely a creature of “environment and habit”? No one would deny the influence of surroundings and of good, as alas! of evil habits. But Professor D. shows where he is, when he makes it everything, and actually puts the Christ of God on the same level! And so, as everything spiritual is to be degraded to the natural, he labors to minimize faith, “without which (says the scripture) it is impossible to please God.” How fatuous to set one grace against another! All grace is of the Spirit, and if love be undoubtedly the greatest, faith is essential as owning our evil, looking to God, and receiving Christ and His work, our only salvation, which flows from God's gratuitous love to us and alone produces love in us. Without faith man has no love according to God.

As was remarked at the outset of this paper, Mr. D.'s pamphlet may serve as a practical homily, and many simple souls who discern not the shadowy foundation may even be edified, and possibly stimulated to nobler practice and walk. All the same, the article is at bottom pernicious in the extreme. That this contention is fully borne out is plain from other remarks early in the address,

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

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

Again, we are told that “our heart is slowly changed.” This is strange from a man who has written truth on the “new birth.” But to the readers of that too popular volume, “Natural Law in the Spiritual World,” to such at least as had eyes to see, it was too plain that the author would drift still farther away. It seems strange, to make one more quotation, to say (though this does not bear directly on the question, but may serve as a specimen of Prof. D.'s hasty inferences) that love was not Paul's strong point! It was strong enough to make the great apostle of the Gentiles wish himself “accursed from Christ” for the sake of his brethren, and to give him “continual sorrow of heart.” Did John go farther or as far, blessed witness though he was of the same divine love?

The rationalism of the Professor is shown later in the pamphlet as his materialism is prominent throughout. For he interprets the “failing” of prophecies to mean that, having all been fulfilled (was this before they were uttered?), they have now nothing to do but to “feed a devout man's faith.” And faith, according to Mr. D., is not of much account. Are we not abundantly justified in our strictures? Alas! one prophecy is being fulfilled, that “men shall depart from the faith.”

In conclusion, some of the closing words may be quoted. “The words which all of us shall one day hear sound, not of theology but of life, not of churches and saints but of the hungry and the poor, not of creeds and doctrines but of shelter and clothing, not of bibles and prayer-books but of cups of cold water in the name of Christ.” And Christ is spoken of merely as “the One Who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick! “Not a word of His deity while very man, not a word of eternal life in the Son, of His sacrifice, of His atonement, of Himself our righteousness. Nay, it is rather insinuated that be who feeds the hungry, he is also Christ! And this is the modern substitute for the “faith once for all delivered to the saints.” R. B., Jun.

Hannah

" Much food is in the tillage of the poor" (Prov. 13:23). Naomi, whose history precedes that of Hannah, has already afforded us an illustration of this. In her day, as we have seen, the written word of God was probably limited to the books of Moses, and but a very small part was applicable to her case. That small part, however, awakened in her soul faith in the goodness and grace of God. In it He had made provision for her need and that of Ruth, and He also had raised up Boaz to accomplish His purposes of mercy for them. On this their faith acted; and the rich harvest of blessing bestowed on these poor widows tells the abundance of food that was in their tillage.

What a testimony against those who now possess the whole word of God, yet, because of unbelief, reap nothing!

The book of Ruth then typically sets forth the introduction of a soul into new and eternal relationships with God and with Christ by faith through redemption. Hannah's story follows as a necessary supplement, descriptive of the processes whereby, after introduction, these new relationships become more deeply prized and enjoyed. The estate of each was equally established: both were women of unfeigned faith, and piety; and they were tenderly loved. Indeed Elkanah, Hannah's husband, assured her of it in the most affectionate terms (ver. 8); but she was in the depths of sorrow while Ruth was happy. Why was this, and what instruction is there in it for us?

In Heb. 2:14-18 we learn a two-fold purpose in the incarnation of the Son of God. He came in flesh that He might make propitiation for the sins of the people, and by the sacrifice of Himself obtain for them eternal redemption. But there was yet another object. In the days of His flesh He suffered being tempted, and while ever without sin, entered thus into all the afflictions of His people that He might succor them in all their temptations. (Heb. 4:15; Heb. 5) These two purposes must be kept clearly and distinctly before the soul, that redemption may be seen to be perfect, secure and eternal; and that suited and effectual help in every distress is, at the same time, made certain. Both are proofs of the abundant provision made for man, whether an anxious sinner or a tried saint, by God in Christ Jesus. The story of Ruth illustrates the former, while that of Hannah shows the need of the latter. We have only here to add that the end and purpose of redemption in the case of Ruth was, that she might be united to her redeemer. Boaz, as we have seen, purchased her to be his wife. So now, the redeemed of the Lord are joined to Him, and thus one Spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17): a truth that cannot be too earnestly pressed in this day, when almost everything vital to the interests of Christ in them that are His seems to be called in question. It is by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) that Christ secures, not only the possession, but the love of those He has bought with His blood, and their joy in loving Him is unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8).

Yet the same apostle tells us, that those who thus truly love the Lord and are redeemed by His precious blood may be "in heaviness [grief] through manifold temptations" (ver. 6), and it is by these afflictions that Satan endeavors to shake their faith. Paul's anxiety for the Thessalonians sprang from this; and, if we read 1 Thess. 3:1-5, and compare it with chapter 1, we shall see what

a very real anxiety it was. It will not do then to leave off with the history of Ruth; we must go on to that of Hannah.

But it may be well to remember, that all through scripture we have these important distinctions as to experience maintained. The songs of joy, the timbrels and the dances when the people of Israel were fully delivered from Egypt and brought to God, fall in perfectly with the close of the book of Ruth; while the three days without water, and the bitterness of that in Marah (Ex. 15), are more in character with the books of Samuel. On the shore of the Red Sea, the children of Israel saw that the right hand of the Lord, glorious in power, had dashed in pieces their enemies; but in their journeyings they learned, that “in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and He carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9). The language of the Psalms also furnishes us with a very perfect expression of these experiences, descending at times to cries of almost despair, and rising at the close to a full chorus of praise. In the New Testament, although accomplished redemption and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit give clearer apprehension of the ways of God, yet we see, as in the case of Paul, there is the same mosaic of joys and sorrows. “What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” And the last book tells us how the disciple whom Jesus loved, and to whom was given abundance of revelation, was a companion of his brethren in tribulation, a banished man in the Isle of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Thus we find these things repeated with great variety of detail, yet with perfect unity of design. Praise is comely, but, in order to its being perfected, prayer is a necessity. Ruth and Naomi rejoice before the Lord, and all their neighbors join them in His praise; but Hannah, before she can sing, must pour out her soul in secret before the King and weep sore.

What then is the purpose of God in this? In His grace He has told us in many passages, but we shall find it expressed in brief but most explicit terms in Psa. 81:7. In ver. 6 we have the grand deliverance effected by redemption. Speaking of Israel, the Lord says, “I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots [baskets].” They were free, no longer toiling under the lash for Pharaoh and his people, and the day of their freedom from them was the day of their espousals to Jehovah. (Jer. 2:2.) But in ver. 7 it is another thing, “Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder” —the trouble we have been considering; but why “the secret place of thunder”? The form of the expression is striking, and evidently intended to awaken attention. Let us not think it to be merely the elevated language of poetry. Hannah, we shall find, got her answer in and from “the secret place of thunder”. She had to abandon every hope from natural laws, and this it is that gives meaning and force to this striking expression; for Job well describes the power of God as displayed in nature. He sets it forth in a magnificent style in his answer to Bildad in Job 26. As given in the R. V. it is very beautiful, but the last is the crowning verse to it all— “Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand? “

In these two passages of scripture we have His works in nature, and their revelation of Him distinguished from His answer to the cry of His people in trouble and their consequent knowledge of Him. As the sound of a whisper, so is the witness to God in the works of nature, wonderful as they are. As the voice of thunder, so is His answer to believing prayer. It is impossible for the suppliant not to hear it and rejoice—"God is, and He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek

Him.”

As the naturalist pursues his researches, he ought to discern the outskirts of the ways of God, to catch some whisper of Him; but it is not thus the Lord responds to the call of His people in trouble. They command the thunder of His power and learn to understand it and to praise Him Whose voice it is.

That laborious student of nature, the distinguished author of the Origin of Species, expressed, at the close of it, his belief “in life having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms, or one.” Thence would he derive, not only species, but man! Faint indeed was the whisper heard by him in his studies, and even that, how misunderstood! Still he does trace us back to the Creator, though in a way of his own. Others, as laborious, if not so distinguished as he, refuse even this. Biogenesis (birth from the living) concedes, they say, too much. The latent power of matter may effectuate everything, though here their microscopes fail them and the origin of life is for them “not proven.”

Hannah had a problem of another kind, which no science could solve; yet the future of the nation, and we may say of the whole world, hung upon its solution. The richest provision of mercy for man in man had failed. The priesthood, utterly corrupt, taught the people to transgress, and a sweeping judgment was impending. (If permitted to look a little into the truths revealed in her song, this will come before us fully.) God must be looked to to work outside the course of nature, as in the case of Abraham— “God Who quickeneth the dead” (Rom. 4:17). The denial of miracles is an attempt to silence the voice of the Almighty, an attempt as cruel to man as it is audacious to Him. Had Hannah been a mother, like Peninnah, she would have been thankful to the Lord; but she never would have worshipped Him in the magnificent strains of her song. It was no mere whisper of Him that called forth such rapturous notes of praise. In her Samuel (asked of God) she heard His voice, not in the laws of nature, but answering her tears and b er cries from “the secret place of thunder.” Would that we all knew more of this! There are few now, it is to be feared, who have Hannah's singleness of purpose in their desires; few who pray such prayers, or who can sing such a song. The Lord multiply them. Never were they more needed. W. B.

Chapter 102

Hannah's Prayer

In the things of God we ought never to hesitate to correct our expressions by scripture. We have spoken of Hannah's song; we read, “And Hannah prayed.” It will be for our profit to inquire why her thanksgiving is called a prayer. It is very significant that, whatever were her personal trials, it was at Shiloh, at the tabernacle, and at the yearly gathering for worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, that Hannah's grief was inconsolable. When her husband pressed her to partake of the sacrifices of his peace-offerings she could only weep, she could not eat. And why? By the ordinance of the Lord the peace-offering had a special and precious significance too clearly set forth to be misunderstood (Lev. 3). In it He condescended to bring the worshippers into communion with Himself. A selected portion was called “the food of the offering;” and this was to be consumed on the burnt-offering and with the meat-offering, before they or the priests partook of what was reserved for them. All pointed on to Christ, and to the infinite delight that God found in Him—in His life and death—and believers, redeemed by His blood, were to participate in this divine delight. Could there be food for Hannah in this offering if there were none for the Lord?

What then was the state of things at Shiloh? The priests openly set aside the revealed will of God and instituted a custom of their own (ii. 13-17). Woeful indeed was the time when the conscientious worshipper pleaded only that in his sacrifices God should be honored by obedience to His word, yet pleaded in vain. And not only this. The priests with unprincipled rapacity and insolent violence took of the offerings whatever they pleased.— “Thou shalt give it me now, and if not I will take it by force “was their threat. Even Eli, the high priest, although he remonstrated, suffered these things to go on and became a partaker of the sin. “Thou honourest thy sons before Me,” the Lord said to him, “to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel, My people.”

How could those who feared God have communion with all this? What could it be but distress of soul to Hannah? Men abhorred the offering of the Lord, and those who went on with the outward form did so with heartless indifference to the holiness of God and the authority of His word. This was the case with Peninnah, who, with proud contempt and scorn for Hannah's tenderness of conscience, took this public opportunity of provoking her; and the more confidently as she could point to her many children as a proof of the Lord's blessing, while Hannah's barrenness must be a sure indication of His displeasure. This intensified, not only her grief, but her isolation. In the midst of a crowd of outward worshippers and in the presence of Eli she was alone, but alone with God.

Still, it must be remembered that she was under the law, and the Levitical priesthood had a place of great importance in connection with the law (Heb. 7:11). By worshipping the calf at Sinai the people had broken at once their covenant with the Lord and righteously forfeited everything. The priesthood and their services were then ordained of God in compassion for a redeemed but an erring people (Heb. 5). The high priest interceded for them, obtained counsel from the Lord for them, and on the day of atonement represented them. Even Joshua was dependent on Eleazar, and the people no less so on the faithful Phinehas (Num. 27:18-.21; Judg. 20:27, 28). But Hannah

had to correct Eli, though with meekness, as became her; and he accepted the rebuke, for personally he was pious and gracious, though his criminal weakness as high priest, judge, and a father, brought judgment on himself and his house.

Alone then, and her voice not heard, Hannah pleaded with the Lord; and we may gather from her vow much of what was exercising her soul. There was the absence of self, a most blessed thing in prayer (James 4:3). Her whole concern was for the glory of the Lord and the service of His people. She longed for a son, that she might give him to the Lord to be a means of blessing to Israel when those who had been given for that end were serving themselves. Her husband being of the tribe of Levi, this desire was in full accord with the spirit of the law (Num. 3); yet there is something exceedingly touching in her prayer, that she pleaded for only one son—"O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Had then the leaven in the priesthood spread to the Levites? Was the service of God corrupted like His worship? Were all seeking their own, and not the things of the Lord? Though so early in Israel's history, it would appear to be so. Surely the Spirit of God in Hannah's prayers and tears was giving expression to the wants of the godly remnant in, that people, and, may we not say? affording encouragement for all in like sorrow in the church of God.

We now enter on a scene of great interest. In the midst of the crying evils and the dark forecast of impending judgments of that sad time, she and Samuel appear to be the only hope for the nation; yet what was there in either to fit them for this? Samson had failed with his great strength, and Eli with his exalted position. What hope can there be in a weak woman and a still weaker child? The answer surely is, prayer; and in this they are as one, Samuel, if we may say so, the continuation of Hannah. (See 1 Sam. 1; 2; 7; 8; 12)

We lose something by the division of the chapters. It is better to take no notice of it. Then we read, "And he [or, "they," R. V.] worshipped the Lord there; and Hannah prayed." Before leaving the young child at Shiloh we see them worshipping together. It was a painful moment for such a mother, but her will was broken and her heart was full. We are permitted to hear her prayer, and to learn that thanksgiving for mercies received is accepted of God as a petition for the continuance of them. She, in effect, begins the prayers and service of her child with her praises, for thanksgiving is inseparable from such prayers.

The foundation of all is the known and enjoyed salvation of the Lord. Because of this her heart exulteth in Him, yea, like the heavenly hosts, in His holiness. Without His salvation, what avails the natural prosperity of Peninnah, or even the exalted position of the priests? Not these outward things but actions will be weighed, for the Lord is a God of knowledge. What then are external advantages so coveted by man? The bows of the mighty will be broken, the full become empty, the fruitful languish. Grace, on the other hand, raises the fallen and girds them with strength, the hungry are satisfied, the barren made joyful with children. Thus the way of the Lord is to humble those He will exalt, to bring low those He will lift up. Where man's purpose and pride wither, faith can grow, and "the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning." Hannah had proved it, and it gave her joy to think that all believers are in the hands of Him Who had so tenderly dealt with her. She sees them, however lowly here—the beggar on a dung-hill—made to sit with princes and to

inherit the throne of glory; while by their own strength not one of them would prevail. This is salvation as Hannah knew it; and nothing less is the salvation of the Lord, present, future, eternal hands of Him Who had so tenderly dealt with her. She Sees them, however lowly here—the beggar on a dung-hill—made to sit with princes and to inherit the throne of glory; while by their own strength not one of them would prevail. This is salvation as Hannah knew it; and nothing less is the salvation of the Lord, present, future, eternal.

What then of those who reject or neglect it? How: will they escape? If alive when the Lord comes to claim the earth they will be broken to pieces (Ps.2.), while the dead will be judged before the great white throne. She seems to distinguish thus between “the adversaries of the Lord” —those who will be arrayed against Him for battle—and “the wicked,” that is all such; as surely we ought to do who have such definite teaching by the last of the prophets. (Rev. 19:11-21, 20:11, 15.)

But judgment is not a fitting close to such utterances as these. The Anointed (Messiah) alone can be that. Before she prayed, the bullock which she had brought with her child had been sacrificed, the testimony to the sufferings of Christ and His atoning work had been given: and she cannot close her prayer without telling of the glories that shall follow— “Jehovah shall give strength to His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed.”

It is a marvelous portion of God's word, when we consider the times and think of the woman, so feminine (1:22, 23; 2:19), so weak, and, in the eyes of the prosperous, so despicable, yet made of God the first of blessings, in their low estate, to His beloved people. Till she found all her strength in the Lord, she was overwhelmed with the difficulties. When she did, so great was her joy in Him, that in all this prayer she never once named. her child. With our greater light and privileges how few are like her in this, and in the bright assurance of salvation, through redemption, right on to glory!

Chapter 103

Hearing and Faith

“ Faith Cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

This is God's order, not man's. The word “hearing” in this verse is not a verb but a substantive. If we read it as a verb, we lose much of the meaning. We speak of a man who has become deaf as one who has lost his “hearing.”

First then “hearing [cometh] by the word of God.” That is to say, the word of God finds its way into the heart and gives “hearing,” or, in other words, the ability to hear.

Then this “hearing” is the channel for the formation and growth of faith.

Of course this has nothing to do with natural hearing. It applies as much to the naturally deaf as to those whose natural hearing is perfect. It is spiritual hearing, and who can spiritually hear that has no spiritual life? The links of the chain in their order are: the word of God; hearing; faith.

First of all you have a dead soul. The word of God enters the heart and imparts the spiritual hearing; and hearing the word gives rise to faith.

The thought must not be allowed that the word of God is at the first applied to a soul that can already hear; for as we have seen, “hearing cometh by the word of God.” His word is the living seed, which, entering into the heart, brings forth life in that which was before dead.

It is very important to grasp this truth in its simplicity.

“ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14). What then is the use of preaching the word to those who do not receive it?

This is the question so important to be clear upon. To all human reasoning it would be of no use at all. But in truth it is what God has appointed, this “foolishness of preaching “; sowing the seed, the living and life-giving word, into hearts that are dead. The evangelist does not go forth endeavoring to coax or press the natural minds of the unregenerate into receiving the word of God. He knows that it can never be done so for good. The object before his mind is, by the Spirit, to sow, as it were, the word of God into the hearts of those whom he addresses. Now the word of God is not only seldom but never truly received by the natural heart, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). I may call on a friend, who gives me his hand and receives me into his house. On the other hand an officer of the law may call at a criminal's house, and the criminal resists to his utmost by trying to keep the door shut. Nevertheless as the officer by strength prevails and enters the house, the criminal could not be said to receive the officer into his house. On the contrary, he did what he could to resist the officer.

Now the word of God, though not received by the natural man, finds its way by God's grace into the heart, reveals Christ, and quickens. The new life is capable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God. Thus “hearing” is the channel for the formation and growth of faith. Many seem to have the erroneous idea, that the natural heart, before the new birth takes place within it, has faith which it

can exercise in hearing the word, the seed of life. In this case faith would not be by hearing, for it would exist before the hearing; which directly contradicts the truth. According to such a notion faith, at least at its commencement, would be an act of the old Adam nature. It could not well be strained to support the idea that after the new birth faith passes over from the old to the new nature. “The dead hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear live.” Faith characterizes those who are born of God, born of water and the Spirit. So it is at the first, and so it continues to the end. It is interesting to note how the order we have been considering is kept up throughout scripture. It is not the Spirit's motive everywhere to bring before us every link; but we never find Min contradicting Himself by reversing the order. For example, “He that heareth My word and believeth (on) Him that sent Me hath everlasting life etc.” (John 5:24). Again, “In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth” (Eph. 1:13). Of course none can hear the word, but they who have God's word applied to their souls by the Holy Spirit. In the two verses just quoted the first link is not given, but the order is as elsewhere, hearing; believing, etc. Indeed we in scripture mostly find the life-giving (and consequently the power to hear) by the word spoken of as a very distinct thing, a passing from death unto life; as John 5:24 says, He that heareth and believeth hath passed from death unto life. He could not hear otherwise. The recognition of the truth, as conveyed in the words at the head of our paper, enables the evangelist to go forth in simple dependence on God; fully confident, knowing that by the Spirit he handles the one and only means of giving life, namely, the word of God. And on the other hand he is nothing discouraged by outward appearances, knowing that all to whom he is sent are alike dead and devoid of hearing, and that the success of his ministry depends not on those whom he addresses, but on the word as applied by the Spirit. Like his Lord Whose life animates him, he speaks (if we may so say) as one that hath authority and not as the scribes. Matt. 7:29. D. T.

Chapter 104

Hebrews: Introduction

From the absence of an address it has been doubted whether this is an epistle. The closing chapter however, with not a few confirmations less marked throughout, is proof positive that it has a real epistolary nature, though, like the letter to the saints in Rome, somewhat of a treatise also. Its contents demonstrate beyond just question that the Epistle before us was directed to Jews professing the name of the Lord Jesus. For all would be truly applicable if not a Gentile were called at this time to believe. Beyond all other books of the New Testament it is as to every point of doctrine and even exhortation based on the ancient scriptures familiar only to the people chosen of old.

This stamps it with a character different, whoever the writer might be, from every other. It appeals to the Old Testament from first to last as no other Epistle does. Yet the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, are made to speak as it were with new tongues. They all render a distinct, united, and glorious testimony, once earthly in the letter, now heavenly in spirit, to the Lord seated at God's right hand, His proper position for the Christian. To lead on the believing Jew to know and enjoy Christ where He is, to worship and walk in this faith, is the prime object of the bright, glowing, deeply interesting and instructive Epistle that claims our attention.

It is therefore the inspired exercise of the teacher's gift rather than of the apostle and prophet announcing absolutely new revelations. There is no such language here as “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery,” as in Rom. 11:25. There is not a word about his apostleship here, as in the two Epistles to the Corinthians; of the mystery of Christ, as to the Ephesians and the Colossians; nor even “this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” as to the Thessalonians. The writer speaks of others as “those that heard” the Lord; he himself is here a “teacher of” Israelites “in faith and verity.” He simply cites and reasons on the ancient oracles as well as histories; he applies prophecies and expounds the types of the law; but rarely if ever does he unveil the magnificent scenes of the latter day, when Israel shall be blessed, under Messiah and the new covenant, and the nations also in a circle concentric indeed but not so close. He writes with the utmost fullness of Christ's exaltation on high in view of the heavenly calling and those who now partake of it before that day.

Christ is never spoken of as the Head, nor consequently is the one body wherein the old differences vanish, nor that new man where is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all. The nearest approach to unity is that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. The assembly is of the firstborn ones, viewed as an aggregate of individuals and not as the body of Christ. Those who composed it were heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; but joined to the Lord as one spirit is not said here.

This may be conceived by some as implying another hand rather than Paul's. But the inference is baseless. For though he alone develops the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church, it is only in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, with the First to the Corinthians

practically and in that to the Romans allusively. In the rest of his Epistles we find “the body” no more than in that to the Hebrews; and this as distinctly in the ordering of the Holy Spirit, as in those which contain it fully. Our individual relationships are no less important than our corporate. The divine design regulates the topics introduced, as much as their appropriate handling. Each Epistle or other book of Scripture is perfect for the purpose God had in view when He inspired each writer. As the main object in that to the Hebrews is Christ's priesthood with its necessary basis, due adjuncts, and suited results, and as this is for the saints individually, the one body of Christ could not fittingly fall within its scope, if it were a divinely inspired composition, whether by Paul or by any other. Its central doctrine is, not we one with Him as members of His body, but He appearing before the face of God for us. Abiding forever, having His priesthood unchangeable, He is able to save to the uttermost those that by Himself approach God, as He al ways lives to intercede for them. The same persons compose the body of Christ; but the associations are wholly distinct and only compatible through the fullness of Christ.

Some have wondered why Paul, if the writer, should not have given his name at the beginning. The peculiarity is at least equally true of any writer. It would in fact be more strange in one who had written no other Epistle. If the great apostle wrote, its analogue is in the First Epistle of John, who does not prefix his name there, though in the two lesser he addresses himself “as elder” in a style unmistakably his own. In the Revelation, where the difference of the subject matter calls for a manner of writing wholly distinct from either his Gospel or his Epistles, his name appears alike in the preface as in the conclusion. Is not this self-evidently as it should be?

Now supposing Paul to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not difficult to suggest weighty motives for his putting forward, not his own name and apostolic authority, but such a treatment of the Old Testament scriptures as must carry divine light and firm conviction to all who weigh them before God. That the Hebrew Christians were prejudiced and disputations even in early days is a fact beyond question, for one who reads Acts 11; 15; 21, to cite nothing else. They could not but feel that the doctrine of the apostle had a depth, and height, and comprehensiveness which made it a strain for those so long swathed in Jewish bands to follow him. He was apostle of the uncircumcision, in itself no small trial to ordinary minds of their mold, as we may assuredly conclude even from the Apostles Peter and Barnabas, favored as they had personally been of God toward Gentiles. Therefore does the writer, supposing him to be Paul, approach them with the most consummate delicacy and tact, as his burning love for his brethren—doubly brethren, both after the flesh and now after the Spirit—would dictate. He becomes as a Jew that he might gain the Jews; to them that were under the law, as under law, though being himself not under law, that he might gain those under law. The omission of his name had thus at the starting-point a special propriety in his case beyond that of other man.

Another ground for that omission is plain from the unusual task before him. The force of the appeal lay in its coming from the first and throughout with the authority of God; and to Jewish Christians this could be effected in no way so telling as that here employed. “By many measures and in many manners God, having spoken of old to the fathers in prophets, spoke to us in [the] Son Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1, 2). How enfeebling would have been the apostle's introduction of himself in such a connection! Even we who were of the Gentiles, and who are of the church, would feel it in either way out of place, aesthetically in the one instance, spiritually in the other. For the Hebrew Christian no method so

impressive, welcome, and authoritative. It was the true end of controversy. Impossible to evade or to gainsay that which carried in itself the evidence of God's mind revealed in His word—at least to a believer.

Hence all flows on the ground of what is confessedly divine; and any living man's authority, however truly conferred of God and admitted by believers, would be felt rather to interfere than to be seasonable. Therefore we hear in chap. 2. of the word which, having had its commencement in being spoken “by the Lord,” was confirmed to as by those that heard, even thus God also bearing witness both by signs and wonders, and manifold powers and distributions of the Holy Ghost according to His own will. In like beautiful accordance Jesus is shown in chap. 3. to be the Apostle, as well as High Priest, of our confession. Clearly therefore it is superficial in the extreme to reason on 2:3, 4, as evidence against Paul's authorship. Those who were designated apostles by the Lord on earth are merely “those that heard “; and as Saul then was but an unbeliever of Israel like the mass, he graciously sinks himself among the rest as “to us.” Just thus, long after he was an apostle by call, he could say on meet occasion, “I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia,” and even “I am a Pharisee, son of Pharisees,” and “according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” It would have been self-importance, not gracious wisdom, to have asserted his apostleship in this place, writing as he was by the will and inspiration of God, but evidently outside his special field of the nations, as laid down in Gal. 2:7-9 and elsewhere. It was a final warning to the Christian Jews; and who so fitted in love no less than in everything else as one who had ere this testified to the Roman Christians that he loved the ancient people as much as Moses, when he asked Jehovah to blot him out of His book if He would not forgive their sin? As the apostle of the circumcision had been employed, and not Paul, to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles (Acts 10), so did the only wise God use the apostle of the uncircumcision, and not Peter, to summon for the last time the Hebrew Christians, whose attachment to the old and earthly system He had so long borne with.

No doubt there were not a few who had learned better than the amalgam which had hitherto prevailed in Jerusalem among the baptized. But the time was come, and the most suited instrument ever raised up on earth, to bring to a close a state of things abnormal to the spiritual eye, and dangerous for the carnal: who, even if they love the Lord at bottom, are apt to fluctuate and more prone to palliate and foster natural and educational inclinations than to judge them by the word. Jerusalem was about to pass visibly away with the temple, ritual, and priesthood. It was of moment that, before the external blow of judgment fell, the faithful in Palestine should learn what they had been too slow to apprehend. Jesus is not only the Savior and the Lord, but the great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, and to this end both Son of God in the supreme sense, owned as God and as Jehovah by Him Who is God and Jehovah, and thus as both divine and human in One Person seated at God's right hand on His throne where no creature ever did or can sit.

Hence the Epistle starts with Christ in that glorious condition; and we know who it was that saw this great sight to his conversion from Judaism as well as sin—who it is that above every other even of inspired men was given to seize and preach and write down permanently the great truth of a Christ known no longer after the flesh, but dead, risen and exalted in heaven; who accordingly writes death on all that flesh and even religions flesh gloried in, that he and we might find life and righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, redemption, in a word all we and all that God wills us to

possess, in Christ at His right hand. We are thus heavenly, as is the Heavenly; and with the assurance of safe keeping and ultimate triumph over every foe; for as we have borne the image of the earthy (Adam's) we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly (Christ's).

This was the apostle's great ministry of the church, and thus he was enabled by the Holy Spirit to fill up the word of God, even that blank which was left for the revelation of the mystery that had been hid from all ages and generations. Here it is circumscribed no doubt, as was necessary because of the infantine state of the believing Jews, who little suspected that their adhesion to the old things, and mingling them with the new, hindered progress more than aught else could. Hence the aim of the Epistle is to show the substance, force, and perfection, of all the ancient forms in the truth of Christ's person, and office, work and position, thus raising the Jews who believed to heaven in faith, affection, worship, service and hope, and making it easy and even happy for them to see the old covenant passing away, the Aaronic priesthood giving place to a better, and earthly sacrifices of no account, yea of exceeding peril if they became rivals of that finished work by which the faithful have been and are sanctified, and perfected in perpetuity, as surely as Christ sat down in perpetuity at God's right hand. Thus “the camp,” once the place so favored of God's people, is a place for the Christian Jew to leave. For the blood of atonement has been carried into the holiest for us, and He Who shed it suffered without the gate. Our place therefore is now within the holiest before God, and without the camp before man; for it is effectively and ought to be only with Christ in both. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22). But let us not forget the other side and present duty: “Let us go forth to Him without the camp bearing His reproach; for we have not here an abiding city but we seek that which is to come” (Heb. 13:13, 14).

It is impossible to conceive anything equal to this Epistle, whether in the most winning approach to the Jewish Christians where they were, or in the no less admirable deliverance from the ritual yoke by the proof from God's word that Christianity alone yields the true and intended and complete meaning of all they had been well nigh idolizing in the letter.

It ought not to surprise any that Scripture has settled the authorship of the Epistle; and this not by men reasoning on the reference to imprisonment and release in Italy, with relationship to Timothy, but by a sufficiently determining statement of Peter in his Second Epistle, addressed as we know it is to the elect Jews of the dispersion (cf. 1 Peter 1; 2 and 2 Peter 3:1), as the Epistle to the Hebrews contemplates those in the land. In either case believing Jews are contemplated. What then can be plainer than the apostle Peter's word? “Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you; as also in all Epistles speaking in them of these things” (2 Peter 3:15, 16). Now this Epistle repeatedly speaks of the day of the Lord, with some things as usual hard, especially for Jewish minds to understand, as in 9., 10., 12. Thus it is certain that Paul as well as Peter wrote to the Hebrew Christians; and that these are spoken of as “scriptures” by implication in the words that follow. Either then the Epistle to the Hebrews is what Paul wrote to them; or that portion of the “scriptures” is lost. It has been shown already that the scope of truth is eminently that of Paul; and the peculiarity of his task to any reflecting mind would readily account for an elaborate handling of types, most desirable for Jews, but out of place in his

writing to Gentile saints.

The contents and connection of the Epistle are plainly defined, which from its nature is less colored with feeling than the other letters of the writer. The personal glory of the Lord Jesus is the basis of all, chap. 1. Son of God, chap. 2. Son of man. Thence follows in chap. 3. the superiority of the Apostle and High Priest of the Christian confession to Moses and Aaron. He was the divine Builder of all, Son over His house, Moses being but a ministering servant, though faithful. And this introduces the wilderness as the scene through which we are tried, with promise of entering into God's rest—glory at Christ's return. Hence not only is God's word needed by us but a High Priest able to sympathize with our infirmities, as in chap. 4. This leads in chap. 5. to the contrast of Christ's priesthood, God's Son according to the order of Melchisedec, with that of Aaron taken from among men, and able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since he himself was clothed with infirmity, and was bound to offer for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.

But here the apostle turns aside, as his manner is, to lay bare the hindrance through Jewish elements, still pertinaciously clung to, yet incompatible with the everlasting and heavenly things which suit our relation to that great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens and set Himself in a seat so glorious. The word of the beginning of Christ, however good, is quite insufficient; and the Christian must go on to full growth (chap. 6.); for as it is expressed elsewhere, we are no longer under the law, suited and given to man in the flesh, but under grace, as should be self-evident. How else could we be heavenly, as is the Heavenly? Sovereign grace, reigning through righteousness, alone accounts for it. And hence the danger of going back from the heavenly privileges now revealed to those elements which are nailed to the cross and vanished away to faith in the light of Christ on high: a danger to which none were so exposed as Hebrews. He therefore desires that each might show diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, having God's oath as well as word with a forerunner in Christ within the veil.

Chap. 7. proves how immeasurably and in all respects the priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God, surpasses that of Aaron, bound up as it was with the law which made nothing perfect. The ancient oracles which fully prepare for it intimate also a new and better covenant (chap. 8.), before which the first grows old and ready to vanish away, instead of possessing that immutability with which Rabbinical pride and imagination clothed it. And this leads to the great truth of sacrifice according to God's mind and will (chap. 9. 10.), which has found alone its adequate force in the blood of Christ Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God. Therefore its unity is insisted on, as its completeness is attested by His sitting in perpetuity on God's right hand, the work finished, and those that are sanctified perfected forever by that one offering. Here too the warning of abandoning for sin such a sacrifice is solemnly rendered, while it is allowed that we have need of patience in faith, till Jesus come.

This is followed (chap, 11.) by the striking roll of God's worthies, all being testified of for their faith, before the law and during it, culminating in Jesus the Leader and Completer of faith, Who, infinitely above all in person, suffered immeasurably more and differently, and is alone now in commensurate glory at the right hand of the throne of God (chap. 12.). And here is beautifully shown that for believers suffering flows from His love as the Father of spirits, and not now of a nation. Our standing is in His grace, not the law of Sinai; and we are come in faith to the glorious

results anticipated for heaven and earth, as the kingdom will display when at His appearing He will cause not earth only but the heaven to tremble.

Brotherly love, hospitality, and compassion are urged, with the sanctity of marriage, and freedom from avarice through trust in the Lord (chap.13.) Departed leaders are to be remembered, as living ones to be obeyed. Jesus abides the same. Serving the tabernacle has no more value: all is found in Him, His work, and His offices. “Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” Such is Christianity as here shown from divinely handled Jewish types and O.T. teaching. Prayer for the writer and those with him is asked, as he beseeches of the Lord peace for them, saluting all their leaders and all the saints.

Hebrews 1:1-2

The opening words are worthy of the great theme. In Christ only is the perfection of all that Israel gloried in. Every other person and office, every other walk or object, honored in God's living oracles, had it most of all in and for preparing the way for Him. He is the one comprehensive aim of the Holy Spirit, open or understood, positively or negatively, throughout scripture.

Here that which was comparatively obscure of old is set in the light; for Christ is the true light. It is He Who, once dimly discerned, now stands fully revealed, and thus illumines what once seemed dark, what without Him is and must be dark indeed still. Thus is all scripture knit together into one whole. There is the Old Testament; there is also what is called the New Testament, even if the Spirit avoid so characterizing it; together they constitute the Bible, whose unity turns on Christ, once promised, now come and, after accomplishing His work on earth, exalted at God's right hand in heaven. It is above all God revealed in the Son.

Hence it will be apparent, when once pointed out, why this Epistle does not unfold the mystery of Christ; for this would involve the introduction of what was absolutely unknown to man, yea, not then revealed by God. The revelation of the mystery supposes the rejection of the people of God, to make way for an entirely new and distinct purpose where a Jew as such is no more than a Gentile; and the church of God becomes the absorbing scene of the Holy Spirit's operation to the present exclusion of Israel. The church therefore in its full character implies a break in God's dealings with His ancient people, not merely because of idolatry which let in the times of the Gentiles, but because of the rejection and cross of the Messiah, His only-begotten Son, which let in the new and heavenly purpose of God in the church, Christ's body.

Here it is rather the continuity of divine testimony culminating in Christ, Who has laid in His blood and death the unchangeable basis for everlasting blessing, and gives the most glorious expression to its character in His own session as man on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. For this reason, from the first chapter to the last of this Epistle to the Hebrews, we have the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets cited more fully than in any other part of the N.T. So also the ritualistic services, the vessels, and the holy places are turned to direct account; in an elaborate way; and the persons whom the Holy Spirit could employ from the beginning, are either detailed or taken in the gross (chap. 11.) till we are brought to Christ, the crown and fullness of all. With this will be found to agree the particulars, which we now proceed to consider.

“In many measures and in many manners God, having spoken of old to the fathers in the prophets, spoke to us at [the] end of these days in a Son.”

The words that compose this grand exordium are most pregnant, as well as undeniable truth. They briefly, yet distinctly, convey the character of the O.T. communications. It was not in their nature to be complete or final. They were essentially piecemeal. No doubt the prophets wrought “at sundry times,” and the modes in which God dealt were “divers:” but neither phrase of the A.V. conveys the force of πολυμερ■ς κα■ πολυτρ■πως. The common translation is borrowed from the Version of

Geneva, in 1539. Wycliff, in this not faithful to the Vulgate, had dropt altogether the first words, though he rightly gave “in many manners.” Tyndale and Cranmer unite in “diversely and many ways,” as does the Rhemish with a change in the order. “In time past,” or “of old,” π■λαι, is the sole expression of time. It was the same God and the same Christ; yet the object is to prove an immense change of His dealing: God speaking in a Son, after having spoken to the fathers in the prophets; also Christ no longer connected with the earth, but in heavenly glory. Then He spoke “in many parts.” His word was but fragmentary; perfect in its object, but in no wise that fullness which it was in His purpose to bestow when the due moment arrived. As a variety of persons were employed in that work, so “many ways” or methods of revealing, as open speaking to Moses, visions, and dreams ordinarily. “I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved” (Hos. 12:10, 13).

How mighty the advance now! God, though He be not here revealed in the elevation and intimacy of the Father, “spoke to us at the end of these days in a Son.” The apostle in no way dissociates himself from the chosen nation, though he takes care throughout to show that only the Israel of God, the true believing remnant, have valid title. But writing to those who were dull to appreciate that which was absolutely new and above this creation, he gives frill weight to all previous revelations, however partial and short of what was now come; not only does, he record the honor from God put on “the fathers,” but ranges himself with their sons, as among the “us” to whom His word had now come in a completeness beyond all given before.

“ In these last days” (as Tyndale began, followed by all the Protestant English) is too vague a rendering, and apt to be confounded with the different phraseology of 2 Peter 3, Jude 18, or even the more distant phrases in 1 Tim. 4 and in 2 Tim. 3 Still more objectionable is the Rhemish text following the Vulgate. Wycliff is nearer the mark, “at the last in these daies,” though not quite right. “At [the] end,” or [the] last of these days is the literal and true force, the close of these days of the age under the law, when the Messiah comes.

God Who spoke to the fathers in past days spoke to us at the last of these days in a Son. The omission of the article has to do neither with the preposition going before nor with emphatic position, as many learned men have said. That there was intention is obvious; for ■ν το■ς προφ. would naturally call for ■ν τ■ υ■■. Yet the phrase is anarthrous, and therefore does not present the person as an object before the mind, b at brings character into prominence. The prophets were, like Moses, only servants; He in Whom God spoke at the end of these days was Son. Compare chap. v. 8, &c. Such was the quality, such the relationship to Himself, of the One in Whom He now spoke. Our language does not so well bear the absence of the article; but it is regular in Greek, and at once the most forcible and the most accurate form of expressing character, which is precisely what was wanted here. Not in the prophets any longer, nor in angelic guise as often, but as Son God spoke now.

This adds a fresh reason why a man's name, however blessed or in whatever a position, would be unsuitable; and we have already shown grounds why the author in divinely given wisdom and grace preferred his name in particular not to appear, though the character of the truth and the final notices ought to leave no doubt who he was, without any external voucher, inspired or not. This is much confirmed by the next chapter (ver. 3, 4), where our Lord Himself is introduced, the Prophet

that should and did come, though Son. The apostles themselves, the twelve, were but His hearers, God joining in the attestation both with signs and wonders and divers powers, and distribution of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. How out of place would have been the introduction of his own apostolate! The Son of God, the Christ, had deigned to be the Apostle of our confession (ch. 3:1).

Was there aught in this justly to offend the warmest love and reverence for the O.T.? Rather does the O.T. bear it out and even require it to seal its own truth. For Law and Prophets bear their consenting witness that One would come, even a prophet like onto Moses, only greater as he himself testifies; Who should speak in God's name, but so that whosoever would not hearken must bear the penalty from God. Then should be made on God's part a new covenant, not according to the former one when they were brought out of Egypt—a covenant which they broke no less than they idolized it; but a new one marked by God's grace and power, as the former one was by man's responsibility and total failure.

This Epistle proves that the Blesser is come, if not yet all the blessing, and appropriately opens with God's speaking in the Son. His silence after Malachi made it all the more impressive, since that last messenger of Jehovah sealed the canon. Then the interval of four hundred years, not without marked and varied premonitory signs, is closed by a prophet and more than a prophet in John the Baptist, disclaiming to be more than a “voice,” yet proclaiming One standing in their midst Whom they knew not, Whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose, the Lamb of God, Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. “This is the Son of God.”

With the same truth we start here. God speaking was no new thing; for He had in many parts and in many ways. Now there was no limit; for it was in a Son, only-begotten, full of grace and truth. It was therefore no mere assemblage of revelations from God, divine but partial and suited to the instruments and the circumstances; it was God revealing Himself. His Son was the sole competent One for this purpose. In the beginning of the Epistle it is God so speaking when He was on earth; toward the close it is He that speaks from heaven (ch. 12:25). Everywhere it is God revealed, and not merely communications from Him. This therefore gives the utmost force and impressiveness and authority in the last resort to every subject that is handled, especially to that change which it is the main object of the Epistle to make known. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (ch. 7:12).

The immeasurable superiority of Christ, and consequently of Christianity, comes out in this respect at the starting point; and the more strikingly, because no Christian questions the divine inspiration of all the ancient oracles. Yet every true Christian feels the different and surpassing character, not only of Christ's words in the Gospels, but of the apostolic writings and the N.T. as a whole. It is truly Christ speaking in them all; it is God revealing Himself in Him as Son, with an intimacy peculiar to Him alone and in all its perfectness. And this superiority we may see running through the entire Epistle. He is above all men and angels; He is God and Jehovah, seated though man where no creature could be. He is the true Captain of salvation, not Joshua. He is far above Moses the apostle of the Jewish confession, far beyond Aaron the Levitical high priest, more than filling up the wonderful picture of Melchisedec. And no wonder; for Moses and Aaron were but servants in that house of which He was the builder, as indeed of all things. They were all brought into being by Him, and without Him was not one thing brought into being of the created universe.

Nor is it only above all persons and offices that we see Jesus; but He alone gives a fuller and more divine meaning to every institution God set up in Israel. Take covenant in chap. 8: and sanctuary, sacrifice, and offering in chaps. 9,10. Everywhere His incontestable superiority is no less apparent; so as in Christianity at least to involve and prepare the way for their passing away, as the shadows and signs of that substance which now abides in all its preciousness to God, in all its efficacy for the believer.

If we look at faith, on which in every way the N.T. lays the utmost stress, others of old may and do show its beautifully refracted colors; but away from so great a cloud of witnesses we must look steadfastly on Jesus if we would see the Leader and Completer of faith. He is the full and pure light of it all. Therefore are we come in spirit even now to such an assemblage of glories (ch. 12:18-24) as not only eclipses but contrasts with the earthly and terror-inspiring associations of Sinai, whence dates the national distinction of Israel as God's people on the footing of the law. It is ours, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, to have grace whereby let us serve acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Others, however to be remembered and imitated in their faith, pass; but another blessed superiority is that Jesus Christ, God and man now glorified, is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. And He defines our place with Him both before God and man: within the veil through His blood, without the camp bearing His reproach. What God has joined, let not man's unbelief and selfishness sunder. The force of this for the Jewish Christian was immense: do we now make them both good in our souls and ways?

It is the voice of Christ all through if on earth to gain the ear of the remnant and attach them to Himself, to God in the Son; in heaven to detach from all the earthly elements of Judaism which had done for the faithless their worst in becoming a rival through Satan's wiles, their best in spelling His name Who is all and in all them that believe. And here is another superiority which we shall trace in detail, that what He gives us is in each case declared to be “eternal,” in contrast with the temporary good things of Israel. He is the author of “eternal salvation” (chap. 5: 9). He has found an “eternal redemption,” and we receive the promise of the “eternal inheritance” (chap. 9.), even as He by the “eternal Spirit” offered Himself without spot to God, and the covenant consequently is “eternal” (chap. 13.).

The personal glory of Christ, Son of God, and His work as profound as His dignity is of high account for all, when we see Him to reveal God and give effect to His grace beyond all thought of man. This would, if anything could, draw Jews out of Judaism, where made willing to grow by the knowledge of God. And this we shall find to be the practical gist of our Epistle from first to last; nor was any so suited for the work as Saul of Tarsus, nor any time so seasonable as before Jerusalem was swept away, and the temple with its priesthood and sacrifices came to an open end as already defunct.

Hebrews 1:2-4

The peculiar form of the phrase then “in a Son,” difficult without loss or a paraphrase to convey adequately in our language, is simply to characterize the relationship, not Who but what, as in Matt. 4:6; 9:29; 27:40, 43, 54, Luke 4:3, John 1:1 (last clause θε■ς), 5:27, 8:54, 10:33, 36, 19:7, as well as in Heb. 3:6; 5:8; 7:8, 28. Where the person is the object before us, the article is invariably inserted, as may be seen in the context of these texts and in Scripture generally. “In the person of the, or His, Son,” or “in Him Who is Son,” would therefore require ■ν τ■ υ■■. A subordinate sense where the article is absent is in no way the truth, in the mind either of friends or of foes. Where character is predicated, the article is excluded, as here. Only in English we must say “a” or “the” which so far enfeebles the expression of what is here intended: “a” as capable of implying others which is not at all meant but the reverse; “the” as presenting Christ objectively, where is meant predicatively that character of intimate relationship to God which is proper to Him only in eternal title and right. Some only have it subordinately by creation, as angels; others again, as the faithful, by sovereign grace through faith in Christ and eternal life in the Son.

Next comes His heirship. “Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds:” testimonies to the glory of Christ of exceeding moment, to which we shall return after citing the passage in full. “Who being the effulgence of His glory and the very impress of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a name more excellent than they” (ver. 2-4).

As in Rom. 9 to Gentile saints, so here to Jewish, in general “the ages,” but also beyond just dispute used by Hellenistic Jews for the universe (perhaps as the theater of the divine dispensations or ages) as here and in chap. 11:3. See Eccl. 3:11 in the Sept., said elsewhere. the apostle proves that Christianity reveals the Messiah in a grandeur far surpassing the imagination of the former or the tradition of the latter. He is Son as none else. He is Heir of the universe; and no wonder. For as He created the worlds, so He upholds all things by the word of His power. Yes, the very Man Whom they crucified by the hand of lawless men, Who was crucified through weakness At the moment He bowed His head and expired, He was sustaining all creation. It were absurd to think or say so, had He been only man; but He was God; and the dissolution of the tie between the outer and the inner man in no way touched His almighty power.

Jesus then is not merely the Messianic Heir of the nations as in Psa. 2. He is the Heir of all things as He created all. Compare John 1:3. All things in the heavens, and the things on the earth are to be summed or headed up in Christ: such is God's good pleasure which He purposed in Him (Eph. 1:9, 10). He is exalted accordingly to the highest seat, the pledge of all that is to follow; for now we see not yet all things subjected to Him, but we behold Himself crowned with glory and honor. And we know from elsewhere why He does not yet enter on the immense and glorious inheritance. He awaits the calling out of all the joint-heirs whom He will invest with the inheritance at the same time as He takes it Himself; for if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Such are

the wondrous. counsels of God, through His Son and to His glory.

He, Who is the appointed inheritor of the universe, and also fully entitled as being the Creator of the worlds, is yet more set forth in ver. 3: being the effulgence of God's glory and the very impress of His substance or being, and upholding all things by the word of His power. He is in the highest sense (as intrinsically there can be none other) a divine person no less than the Father, and the Holy Spirit. But He is specially the displayer of Godhead, as in power and providence so in goodness, and in grace even to the lost. (Compare 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15.) And this comes into the utmost prominence in the words that follow— “having made,” or when He made, “purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” where we may observe that, even omitting “by Himself” with the oldest uncials and good versions, &c., the participle carries in itself the remarkable force of having done it for Himself. He took His seat on high on the accomplishment of His work in the purification of sins. For this He had come as being the will of God, and only goes on high to take that place of glory when He had Himself done the work.

It will be observed that Christ is said here to be the outshining of God's glory. In our Epistle it is not the Father (as in John) but God. Both are true and each has its own importance. And it is scarcely needful to say that “person,” borrowed in the A. V. from that of Geneva, is a mistake. It is “substance” or essential being, as in Wickliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Rhemish from the Vulgate. The doctrine of course is one hypostasis and three persons, as is commonly known: both truths are made evident in Isa. 6 compared with John 12 and Acts 28, as indeed by many other scriptures.

Christ's maintenance of the universe presents His divine glory in a striking way. “By Him all things consist,” as the apostle affirms in Col. 1. They were created by Him and for Him, and they subsist together in virtue of Him. This becomes all the more remarkable because He deigned for the deepest purposes to become a man. This however trenched not on His deity; for the incarnation means not Godhead swamped by humanity, but this taken into everlasting union with itself, each nature abiding in its own perfectness, not metamorphosed but constituting together the one person of Christ. As He therefore brought all into being, so does He sustain all the universe, and ever did so.

There is another and profounder element of His glory, His effecting in His own person the purgation of sins. To create needed but His word; to sustain, His will; but not so redemption. To command in this case would have been wholly insufficient. The purging of sins could not be without the shedding of blood, without sacrificial death, for which the O.T prepared men from the beginning. The earthly sacrifices could neither suffice for God's glory, nor cleanse man's conscience, as we are taught fully later on. But they were weighty testimonies from the days of Adam downward, though only elaborated into a system most full and instructive of types by divine inspiration under Moses. Christ's was indeed “A sacrifice of nobler name, And richer blood than they.”

Christ alone gives the full meaning and the true dignity to sacrifice, as is here briefly shown and bound up with the glory of His person. Sin is rebellion against God; it is lawlessness. God therefore is the One invariably concerned, whether it be also a human wrong or not. “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight:” yet he who so cried had been guilty of blood as well as of the worst corruption. As God's majesty and character are thus

intimately in question, it is He who undertook to settle all in His Son. But here nothing less than His death could avail, yea, death of the cross, where He Himself laid the sins on the spotless Victim's head (Isa. 53) that they might thus be borne, and borne away. Not otherwise could there be forgiveness of sins according to God. There must be the purification of sins; and it is the “blood of Jesus Christ His Son” that “cleanseth from all sin,” from every sin.

No wonder this deepest work of God is treated here as part of the divine glory of Christ. He must be man on behalf of men, He must be God to be available with God; He is both in one person; and thus as the justification was thus perfect, the result is unfailing for all who believe. Once cleansed thereby the worshippers have no more conscience of sins; and He, having offered one sacrifice for sins, “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” sat down in perpetuity, as Heb. 10 tells us, not only forever but without a break in the efficacy of His sacrifice. How could it be otherwise if God in the Son undertook that work? And as this is thoroughly reasoned out and applied in the latter part of the Epistle, here we have the great truth stated clearly at the start: a truth “hard to be understood,” by a Jew particularly, accustomed as he was to the routine and repetition of sacrifice as well as all other Levitical observances. But the Holy Spirit of God does not keep it back, giving it a foremost place in the introduction.

It was scarce needed to say that Christ “by Himself” made purification of sins. For He alone suffered for sins; He alone was sacrificed for us. The Father had His will in giving Him for the purpose; and the Holy Spirit bears testimony to the complete efficacy, as He previously held out types and predictions and promises. But it was for Christ alone to suffer for sin; and this He did to the uttermost. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.....It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin,” &c., “He poured out His soul unto death; and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isa 53)

And this is the basis of what the apostle elsewhere calls the “righteousness of God,” that righteousness, not of man which the law sought, yet found not in the sinful, but of God Who in virtue of Christ's propitiation can fully bless all that believe, and freely plead with and call on all men as they are. The purification of sins effected by a divine person is not limited and cannot fail; but it necessarily can take effect on none that hear the gospel unless they believe: God would be consenting to the dishonor of the Son if He made light of men's unbelief. Besides, the word received in faith has a morally cleansing power, as all believers are born of water and the Spirit. But here it is the work, not in man, but efficacious before God which occupies the apostle, and this is the purification of sins by Christ before He sat down at God's right hand.

What an attestation is that seat of His to the perfection and completeness of the work He undertook! When Jehovah laid our sins on Christ, He was made sin for us, and treated it as it deserved at the hand of God. For what did man, or even saints, know then of that infinite task? God indeed marked it by a darkness for which nothing in nature can account, and Christ confessed it in that cry of His inapplicable to all others but Himself: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Yes, this was the necessary result of sin-bearing: absolute abandonment by

God. Though He were His God, yet Christ was made sin; and it was no make-believe, but real if anything ever was; no slurring over the least sin, no leaving out the greatest. It was Christ bearing the judgment of sin, the sole righteous way for the purification of sins. And the work was done, finished, in such perfectness, that the only adequate seat for Him Who had borne all was at the right hand of the Majesty on high. David's throne will be taken another day when blessing dawns on the earth on Israel. And when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all the nations. But here is a seat incomparably more august, and in fact proper and possible to none but a divine person; yet is it also presented as the place suited to Him Who had just made purification of sins. In this He suffered and wrought; on that He sat down, the work finished and thus accepted. What more glorious for the humbled Messiah? What more blessed in its fruit for the believer? A sacrifice to God, He gave Himself up for us.

There is another word added here, the bearing of which is no less evident on Jewish minds They thought much of angelic glory. The law they received as ordained by ministry of angels (Acts 7:50, Gal. 3:19). They were wont therefore to regard with awe and wonder those obedient messengers of God's power, of which there can be no stronger proof than John's temptation in Rev. 19; 22. Hence the gravity of the further testimony to Christ's glory here, “made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a name more excellent than they” (ver. 4).

It is Christ Who renders evident the ground of God's counsel to raise from among men those destined to a place incomparably higher than that of angels. If the Son of God became man, it was at once intelligible, becoming, and necessary. And the redemption that is in Christ, and our consequent nearness of relationship into which grace brings the believer makes plain our association with Him and our elevation above angels. For they are not called, but kept. Not sunk into moral ruin, they have no experience of the mercy that saves and unites with Christ. Hence angels are never said to reign. They serve, instead of sitting on thrones. We are to reign with Him, yet shall we serve then as we serve now, and all the better through grace, because, delivered from the lowest estate of guilt and evil, we are objects of His ceaseless and infinite love, and shall share His glory as surely as we now rest on His grace. Angels know not either extreme, as we do, but all we boast is through Him Who became so much better than the angels as He hath an inheritance more excellent than they.

Hebrews 1:5-9

Next comes a series of quotations from the O.T pertinent to the Sonship of Christ just laid down. This fullness of citing the ancient oracles, though found elsewhere in the apostle's writings and conspicuously in the Epistle to the Romans, is nowhere so rich as here. Nor could we well conceive it other. wise, if he were writing to believers from among the chosen people, and anxious in his loving consideration for them to rest all on God's word already known to them familiarly rather than on his own fresh prophetic communications.

“For to whom of the angels did He ever say, Thou art My Son: I this day have begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to Me a son? And when, again, He bringeth in the firstborn into the habitable earth, He saith, And let all God's angels worship Him. And indeed as to the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels winds and His ministers a flame of fire; but as to the Son, Thy throne, O God, [is] unto the age of the age, and the scepter of uprightness [is] scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou lovedst righteousness and hatedst lawlessness therefore God, Thy God, anointed Thee with oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (ver. 5-9).

As Jews they were accustomed to think much of angels who were seen often on critical occasions by the fathers, and took a most distinguished part in bringing in the law, as well as in heralding or accomplishing deliverances afterward, as every one can see who reads the Law and the Prophets with attention. This tended to produce no small veneration in the minds of the just, and to superstition in such as went beyond scripture. Christ alone gives and keeps the truth in us by grace. And here we have a clear instance in point, as throughout the Epistle. Not only was the Life the light of men, rather than of angels, but the Son of God becoming man really, as He had often anticipatively intervened in human guise, gave proof that the good pleasure of God is in men, and prepared the way for the revelation of the glorious counsels He has ever had for such as believe, in the day of Christ, when even angels are to be in a subordinate place as indeed throughout eternity. This assuredly could not be without redemption, as redemption in the full sense could not be without incarnation, supposed in chap. i. and openly stated in chap. ii. as we shall see. As the Son is incontestably above the prophets, so is He now proved far above the angels; and He is the foundation of all our blessedness.

The first scripture quoted is from Psa. 2:7, “Thou art My Son: I this day have begotten Thee.” Never was such a word addressed to an angel. It applies only to Christ. But how? The apostle John loves to expatiate on His eternal Sonship. Again, elsewhere in the Epistles of Paul He is often shown as Son of God in resurrection (Rom. 1:4; 8:29, Col. 1:18), as of course also when He returns from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10). How is He regarded here? As Son of God born in time: so we see Him in Luke 1:32, and yet more definitely in ver. 35. The assumption of flesh in no way lowered His Sonship: Son of God eternally, He was still and no less Son of God when born of the virgin, as He is in resurrection and evermore in glory; He only, and in virtue of divine right acknowledged of and to Jesus solely by the word magnified above all Jehovah's name.

It is the more important that this should be seen clearly and irrefragably, because even the learned Bp. Pearson in his famous work on the Creed over and over again gives countenance to the mystic view of this verse of the Psalm cited in Acts 13:32, 33, as if the apostle had so definitely ruled. But this is quite an oversight. On the contrary and beyond controversy the apostle distinguishes in ver. 34 the Lord's resurrection (attested by Isa. 55:3 and Psa. 16:10) from His Sonship in the days of His flesh as in Psa. 2:7. The “raising up” (not “up again” as in A. V.) in 32, 33, is as Messiah on earth; with which is contradistinguished in 34 God's raising Him upfront the dead.

Hence there is no need or even room for swerving from the simple yet grand truth that, as the Psalmist, so the apostle, in preaching at Antioch of Pisidia and here in writing to the Christian Jews, speaks of what Jehovah said of His Son when born a man. It is therefore His birth in time: “I this day have begotten Thee.”

The next citation appears to be from 1 Chron. 17:13 (2 Sam. 7 where the same words occur being more historical); “I will be to Him a Father, and He will be to Me a Son.” This is the assertion of the perfect and mutual affection that reigned between the Father and His Son now a living man: not what became an accomplished fact as Psa. 2:7, but what should subsist when He was born of woman, “Son of David, Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1).

As to the second text there has been little discussion among orthodox men. Not so in the third, which stands in our Epistle identical with the Vatican (not the Alexandrine) Septuagintal text of Dent. 32:43, and in substance with Psa. 97:7. But it has been keenly urged as to the prefatory words that “again” (π■λιν) belongs to ε■σαγ■γ■ and denotes a new and second introduction of the Messiah, instead of being as in the A. V. and many others the mark of another citation. Not a few ancients, mediζvals, and moderns have so understood, though they differ widely as to the alleged second introduction. But the Pesch. Syr. found no such difficulty as the Vulgate; nor did Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Beza, Bengel, Wolf, any more than the fullest of modern commentators, Bleek. It is assumed that π■λιν would not stand where it is in the Greek if it introduced another citation; yet the good scholar who so speaks allows that in point of interpretation the rendering of the A.V. is much to be preferred! Is this really safe? That a false version yields better sense than the true? That the true is not justifiable grammatically?

The fact is that the collocation stands alone, as far as I can see, in the N. T. and that there is nothing either way in the LXX. T., in the other instances of the N. T. there is no case precisely like this before us, not only no ■ταν δ■, but nothing analogous. I do not admit (until a real case is produced adverse to what is confessed by a candid and competent man, Canon Humphry, to be a much preferable resulting sense) that we are driven to deny an elasticity to the Greek of which our tongue is perfectly susceptible. Englishmen are certainly not tied down to such an order, as “Again, when He bringeth in.” What proof is there that the far more pliant Greek is more restricted? Not infrequently there are solitary examples of collocation or construction even in the N. T. as in other writings. If we may say, “And when, again, he bringeth in,” &c., I know not why the writer may not with equal liberty have adopted a corresponding order, even though there be no other instance of or call for such a variety.

What then is the grammatical principle or the usage which is supposed to be traversed here? “In this Epistle, when it is joined to a verb, it has always the sense of a second time, e. g., ch. 4:7,

5:12, 6:1, 6." Is it not unfortunate that the very first is adverse? It is no more joined to a verb there than in the verse debated. It means "Again, he limiteth," not "He limiteth a second time." No one doubts that in 5:12, like 6:1,6 it means iterum (not rursus, particularly when used as a sort of parenthesis, as in chap. 1. and often elsewhere). Indeed, the very first occurrence in the N. T. refuses this imaginary canon of grammar. Our Lord said (Matt. 5:33) π■λιν ■κο■σατε, of which the unequivocal and universally allowed sense is, Again, ye heard, and not, because a verb follows, Ye heard a second time. To say "joined to a verb" begs the question. Is it really so? We may be assured it may not be.

The fact is that the apostle's object appears to be, not defining time when God ushers the Firstborn into the world, but (whenever it shall have been, past or future perhaps) proving the universal homage of all God's angels to the glory of the Son And surely Luke 2:13, 14 is a beautiful witness to it. Nor is there the smallest ground to limit "the firstborn" to resurrection. As any reader may see, Col. 1:15 points out the Lord Jesus as the Firstborn of all creation, quite distinctly from His subsequent and still more glorious position of "Firstborn from the dead" in ver. 18 (cf. Rev. 1:5). "Firstborn" as such is therefore more suitable to Him simply as incarnate; which tells, as far as it goes, against construing π. with the verb as "a second time." At the same time it is frankly allowed that the fulfillment of Dent. 32. or of Psa. 97 as a whole awaits the Lord's second advent.

We have, after this, words cited from two Psa. 104:4 as to the angels, which no Jew would dispute, and indeed such messengers and servants cannot but be angelic, whatever Calvin may argue to the contrary; 45:6, 7 as to the Lord Jesus. I have no right to pronounce on the true objects and the true predicates in the Hebrew. But it cannot be doubted that the Epistle to the Hebrews cites from the Sept. as in the Vat., save in the form of the last words; and there the true order admits of no question. So the meaning of the earlier Psalm is beyond just controversy. The glorious beings of heaven, its natural denizens, are made to do God's will in providence and to act in wind or flame. But instead of making Christ this or that, He says, Thy throne, O God, is for the age of the age (forever), and the scepter of uprightness is scepter of Thy kingdom.

Here, be it remarked, that it is a question of the time of fulfillment no more than in Dent. 32. (or Psa. 97); for it is very certain that the judicial kingdom described in Psa. 45 is still future, having had no real accomplishment yet. But none the less is the recognition of Messiah's glory most available even now for the object of the Epistle. For God owns the Messiah as no less than Himself; and, if God, it cannot be a mere question of time, whatever of glorious display may yet be in store.

The past too is not forgotten, nor ever can be by God. "Thou didst love righteousness and didst hate lawlessness." Such was Jesus as a man here below; for in truth He is both in one person, and not more truly God than man, nor man than God. Compare Phil. 2 "Therefore God, Thy God, anointed Thee with oil of gladness beyond Thy fellows."

How beautiful to see the largeness of grace and truth. After this lofty owning of Messiah as God by God comes the fullest acknowledgment of others. He Himself is no more ashamed to own us His companions or fellows than God is to own Him God. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. Yet He is God no less than the Father, Who will have all men honor the Son even as Himself. What have infidel dreams of progress to compare with simple and sure Christian truth?

Hebrews 1:10-14

The quotation from Psa. 45 was most distinct and conclusive. No Jew then, if now, could doubt that the psalm refers throughout to the Messiah introducing and maintaining His kingdom on earth in association with the godly Jewish remnant. Christ is seen as King, not Head of the church (though godly Jews are now anointed as His partners, before He appears in His royal glory). But the one object for which it is cited is to prove that God recognizes the Messiah as God. It is not men only nor angels, nor Jews nor Gentiles. It is “God,” the divine title, not of special earthly relationship, but of essential nature in contrast with the creature. What an answer to reproach and rejection!

It might be supposed impossible to find any ascription beyond this in honor of Christ; but it is not so: the next witness exceeds. Here is another and higher testimony to the Son from the fourth book of Psalms (102:25-27): “And, Thou in the beginning, Lord, didst found the earth, and the heavens are works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou continuest; and they all shall grow old as a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou roll them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail” (ver. 10-12).

The “and” simply connects this fresh quotation with the former as said to the Son. But the divine title differs. It is the name which every Jew owns as incommunicable and supreme. “God” may be used subordinately in peculiar circumstances of those who represent His authority, as kings or judges. Compare Ex. 21; 22, Psa. 82. But Jehovah, in the LXX. translated “Lord” as here used, is never applied otherwise than to God in the highest sense, and this in special or covenant character of relationship with Israel, as the Everlasting and Immutable.

The force of this application of the closing words in the psalm is immense. It is Jehovah's answer to the prayer of the Afflicted, the humbled, cast off, and suffering Messiah, and especially to His petition in ver. 24. No language can more thoroughly show Him man when overwhelmed and pouring out complaint before Jehovah, yet the Holy One of God, so born and so sustained under unparalleled temptations in unbroken dependence and obedience. In ver. 1-1 Messiah spreads out His distress, His heart smitten like grass, His enemies' reproach, Himself taken up and cast down because of Jehovah's indignation and wrath, certainly not against Him but for Israel's sake, so that His days were as a shadow. Then from ver. 12 He contrasts Jehovah's permanence and fidelity to His covenant as the security of Zion, whatever her desolations even in the set time to have pity on her, with the results sure and blessed not only for the generation to come, but for the peoples and kingdoms and nations in that day of fearing and

Christ on His throne in the age of His display, no angel will ever be. Angels were made to serve, not to reign: they never did, nor will. Dominion was given to Adam, the type of Him that was to come. God ever had the kingdom in view from the foundation of the world. Of this kingdom Christ is the destined King. But as He will have in His grace the changed saints to reign with Him, so also He will have saints unchanged set on His right hand and despisers on His left, when He sits on His throne of glory and judges all the nations according to their treatment of His messengers (His

brethren) sent forth just before He appears again.

Never will the church sit where Christ sits now, nor any members of it, apostle or prophet. It is peculiar to God Who calls Christ there: because Christ also is God and Jehovah, as we have seen, no less than He Who sent Him, Christ sits there. During the Apocalyptic period judgments from God fall successively and with increasing intensity on guilty man, especially in Christendom, and at length, when His enemies are set a footstool, Christ personally appears to tread them down. Then when in association with His ancient people Jehovah sends the rod of His strength out of Zion, and He rules in the midst of His foes. But such no longer are the Jews, who once constrained the Gentiles to crucify Him; they offer themselves willingly in the day of His power. He will have then the dew of His youth, the generation to come. “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.” Men corrupt themselves more and more, whatever they vaunt of progress. Nevertheless under Christ there will surely be the best wine for the earth kept till then. And then will the blessedness be shown of Jehovah's oath about the great Melchizedek; for though Christ is so now as to order, only then will it be exercised. He will bring out the bread and the wine for the victors in all their meaning, blessing man on the part of God most high, and blessing God on man's part. For indeed will it be the good age, and every one and thing in its due place, which He only can accomplish. No doubt that clay will open with wrath, as we know it will close with judgment when time melts into eternity.

But then again the aim of the Spirit is not to open out the coming glory for the earth, but to demonstrate the singular dignity proper to Christ at God's right hand, in contrast with angels who at best are all ministering spirits sent forth on service for those that are to inherit salvation. Higher than this they never rise. Christ might and did become David's Son; but He was also David's Lord, as our Lord Himself put the case to the Jews and unanswerably, because their lips were held fast in unbelief. But faith here answers at once. He was God equally with the Father. Where else then should He sit but at God's right hand? Surely none the less because man or Israel would have none of Him. The first of Israel's royal line, the father (after a long succession then to come) of Him Whose is that kingdom everlasting, though yet awaiting it, owns his Son, by the strangest reversal of nature, as his Lord: a thing unaccountable, unless He were God, the Root as well as Offspring of David. The holy angels are sustained of the Lord. It is ours to know salvation, whether as now seen complete in Christ (as in Eph. 2, &c.) or as completed in AB at His coming and therefore future (as here and elsewhere).

Hebrews 2:1-4

From the foregoing cluster of O.T. quotations this conclusion is drawn—

“ Therefore we ought to pay the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply [or, ever] we should slip away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Which having begun to be spoken through the Lord was confirmed to us by those that heard, God also bearing witness with [them] both with signs and wonders, and varied powers, and distributions of [the] Holy Spirit according to His own will” (ver. 1-4).

The danger set before the Hebrews is of the gravest. They had known the Jews' religion originally. They had now professed to believe the gospel. Woe to such, above all men, if they slipped away from Christ; for the truth of God and the blessing of man center only in Him. Christianity and Judaism are as different as heaven from earth; but as the heavenly things are not yet displayed, all enjoyment of them must be by faith of God's revelation, crowned by the standing facts that Christ is come, has accomplished redemption as far as remission of our sins is concerned, and so glorified God in it, that He has now glorified the Son of man in Himself, the Holy Spirit being already given the believer as unction, seal, and earnest. If the believer look away from Christ, he is like his forefathers in the desert without the living God, with nothing but the barren sand. Now a Jew naturally expected a bright path of honor and prosperity on earth. The cross stumbled him when Messiah came. “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” (John 12:34.) If they got occupied with trial and disappointment, not only did murmuring set in but faith was imperiled. And if self-judgment did not work restoration of communion, what could the end be but total drifting away? What did this mean? How could it be otherwise?

God had spoken fully and finally in a Son, the Heir and Creator of the universe, to Whom even the preparatory testimonies of His word bore witness as His Son, God, and Jehovah; Whose position after He made purification of sins was unique in heavenly glory, the object of angelic homage according to God's will and word. The greater His grace and glory, the more solemn the responsibility to heed the testimony. For this only it is as yet: the time is not yet arrived, nor can it be under the gospel, for His power to compel absolute submission, as it will by-and-by (Phil. 2:10, 11). It is the day for obedience of faith. But the word was nigh them in their mouth and in their heart, the things read as well as heard. To grow light, cool, or listless, exposed them to the danger of slipping away, not the truth only, but themselves also. God would not be mocked in His Son and in His grace. To have once owned His glory binds the soul ever to heed His word and person.

Here again angels are introduced as the foundation of a stronger call. “For if the word spoken by angels was made steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall we escape if we have neglected so great salvation” (ver. 2, 3)?

The Jews were not mistaken in boasting of the singular honor God had put on the law, introduced as it was by angelic ministration. The N.T. is as clear in this attestation as the O.T. Nor were they wrong in maintaining the inviolability of the law in itself. How could its authority waver if it was God's law? It is not only in great things but in small, as man would think and say, that we see God vindicating it. Every transgression and every refusal to hear received righteous requital. Other ways of God came in no doubt, whereby mercy could rejoice against judgment; but unsparing judgment of evil was the principle proclaimed and enforced throughout. It was a ministry of death and condemnation.

Incomparably more serious is it to despise grace brought in by the Head of all glory. No notion more contrary to truth than that grace makes light of evil—that the gospel is a sort of mitigated attenuated law. It was when man, and man under law, was proved wholly bad and irreparably rained, that God sent His Son and laid on Him the entire burden. Salvation is the fruit for him that believes. There is and can be for sinners no other way. It is entirely Christ's work, exclusively His suffering. His blood cleanses from every sin—if not from all, from none. Such is the grace of God that has appeared in Christ, and especially in His death. But man is the enemy of God through listening to an older and mightier rebel than himself; and grace is far more alien and offensive to man than law. In the law his conscience cannot bow to righteousness, even though he is himself righteous; but he knows and approves what is right, while he follows what is wrong. Grace is beyond all his thoughts, all his feelings, all his hopes, because it is divine love in God. rising above all His hatred of evil which He lays on the only sacrifice capable of bearing it before Himself and taking it away righteously.

This the gospel proclaims, not promises only but preaches, because the Savior has come and finished the work given Him to do on behalf of sinners to God's glory. And hence the supreme danger of neglecting so great salvation. For its immensity is proportionate to His dignity Who came to save sinners, and to the unparalleled work in suffering at God's hand for all our sins what they deserved. His divine person gave Him competency to endure as well as infinite efficacy to His work. He became indeed man to suffer for man; but He never ceased to be God.

Such is the doctrine here, and uniformly in scripture where it is treated. It is a salvation on which the Holy Spirit never wearies of expatiating. And how gracious of God toward those who have His word and yet are in danger of neglecting “so great salvation"! not only neglecting to receive it but negligent of it when professed. This snare of a religions people like Israel is just the danger of Christendom now.

It will be observed that “we” is emphatic in the first part of ver. 3, and that the writer includes himself too in its occurrence before the close. This is one of the stock arguments against Paul's authorship of the Epistle. But it appears to be only superficial and an oversight of its character. For, supposing Paul to he the writer, this merging himself with the Hebrews he was addressing outside his special apostolic province is precisely in keeping with his task in hand. To make this inconsistent with Gal. 1:12 seems petty indeed; for the latter is distinctively personal, and Heb. 2:3, 4 has evidently a studious generality. He is setting forth the claim of that word which began to be spoken by the Lord Himself in contrast with the law of old, august as its introduction may have been, which he would have been the last to deny. But the Lord was here in the midst of the Jews to bring us not the law that kills lithe guilty, but His own great salvation for the lost. The first person

does not at all mean that he had heard it, but that when it thus began to be spoken it was confirmed “unto us” by those that heard. Indeed, he distinguishes himself rather from those ear-witnesses, without at all branching off to his own peculiar and long subsequent privilege outside Damascus. But he does identify himself with those whom the Lord addressed at the beginning without in the least implying that he had himself heard Him. Was he not a Hebrew of the Hebrews To cite Eph. 3:2, 3 is therefore wholly beside the mark. Both are true, and manifestly so.

The great aim of all indeed is to put forward the Lord as the Apostle no less than High Priest of the Christian confession, as He is styled in ch. 3:1. This accordingly leaves out not only himself born out of due time, but the twelve as apostles. In presence of Him they are only “those that heard.” The Lord began the word of this salvation; they heard and confirmed it to the people responsible to receive the Christ of God; and God also bore witness with them in all way beyond all example. The object in view excluded all mention of the extraordinary Gentile apostleship, to say nothing of the grace in Paul that sought to meet the Jews, as God did, and to disarm their prejudices.

Nor can any description be conceived more exact and guarded than the language here used, while at the same time intended to impress the believing Jews with the superiority of the gospel to the law, “Which [salvation] having begun to be spoken through the Lord was confirmed unto us by those that heard, God also bearing witness with [them], both by signs and wonders and varied powers and distributions of [the] Holy Spirit according to His own, will” (vers. 3, 4).

Salvation took only a beginning of publication in the days of His flesh. For the work of atonement was not yet touched, as it was and could only be accomplished by His death at the close. Yet salvation assuredly began to be spoken of, when the Lori entered on His public ministry. Of this Luke 4:16 et seqq. is the beautiful witness, founded on His reading on the sabbath in the synagogue of Nazareth Isa. 61:1, 2, and stopping with the acceptable year of Jehovah. The day of vengeance, surely to come in its season, was not to be till He comes again. It was salvation now. “To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.” Earlier still Simeon saw in the Babe the salvation of God. Now a further step was taken. The Lord had begun to speak of it. For indeed the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him, and He was anointed to preach good tidings to the poor. Jehovah had sent Him to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that were bruised, in short, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And so to weary, heavy-laden souls He gave rest in His grace from first to last, as the cross itself testifies.

Certainly when in due season Christ died for the ungodly, when He rose with “peace be unto you.” and again “Peace” in sending by Him, that salvation was confirmed by those that heard. Nor did God fail to bear His joint testimony, if those sent out were weak indeed. The Spirit given was of power and of love and of a sound mind. And His operations were such as, to arrest the most careless and even hardened, while they did not, as they could not, fail to awaken unbelievers however prejudiced. Such was the effect of the Pentecostal signs and wonders and manifold powers and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. The tongues of scattered man's speech were spoken in a moment, as the Lord had promised (Mark 16), not only a “wonder” but a “sign” to Jews gathered to the feast from all nations; as the “varied powers” were displayed in healing the sick, casting out demons, and the like. “Distributions of the Holy Spirit” find their explanation in such a scripture as 1 Cor. 12. They all were forms of divine attestation that accompanied or rather followed the great salvation confirmed by those that preached it.

Hebrews 2:5-9

The glory of Christ has however another side. He is Son of God before the worlds, Son of God incarnate, Son of God risen from the dead. He is God; He is Jehovah. His position suits and attests His divine dignity. But He is Son of man also; and the moral glory of His humiliation is answered by His conferred glory, as the Epistle proceeds to develop, but with marked reference to the present exaltation of our Lord since the cross on high, and not to the millennial day, though this is assured for the earth by-and-by.

“For not to angels did He subject the habitable [earth] to come, whereof we speak, but one somewhere testified, saying, What is man that Thou rememberest him? Or son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest Him a little lower than angels; with glory and honor thou crownedst Him [and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands] : Thou didst put all things in subjection beneath His feet. For in that He subjected them all to Him, He left nothing unsubjected to Him. But now we see not yet them all in subjection to Him. But we see Him that hath been made a little lower than angels, Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by God’s grace He should taste of death for everything” (vss. 5-9).

Here the angels are not only surpassed beyond comparison, but have no place whatever. It is a question of subjection and of rule; but this is not for angels. They serve; they never reign. Man is called to rule, to have dominion. God was looking on to His Son, the Son of man. For Him the habitable earth is destined. God has not made it in vain. He knew from the first that the first man would fail. His counsels ever center in Christ. But He must reign alone, if this were all; for all sinned and do come short of the glory of God. Yet rest for man with God in glory was ever His design. This could only be by death, the death of the Lord Jesus. His death is therefore the sole possible meeting-point, the solution of all hardest enigmas, the conciliation of perfect love with inflexible righteousness, of grace to the sinner with the untarnished glory of God, of man’s weakness and of Satan’s power, of judgment borne and of peace made, of the Highest taking the lowest place in obedience that He might receive the highest on a ground on which He could have the vilest now sanctified with Him, the sharers of His joy through redemption. Such the counsels, such the ways, of God in Christ.

It will be observed that man, the Son of man, comes into the greatest and most fitting prominence. It was only the name of shame and sin, if He to Whom it specially belongs were not Son of God as no one else is as divine. But this held fast, what can be sweeter to man if he believes God? For its true force and ways we have His word, the only sure standard. Now it is never applied to Him vaguely. It is His title when the consciously, evidently, rejected Messiah.

In the N. T. it first occurs in Matt. 8:20. So He speaks of Himself to a scribe that proposed to follow Him “whithersoever Thou goest.” This might be all well for a Jew subject to the Messiah, the King, the fountain of dignity and reward. But the Lord even then realizes His position. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” He had come to His own things, but His own people received Him not. This was about to be fully and

awfully demonstrated; but He knew it then, and speaks as already outcast and having nothing. The death of the cross would be ere long the undeniable and absolute proof; but He realizes it and expresses it, not only by the title but by what accompanies it, if any were ignorant of its import. Again, “the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” and proves it by enabling the paralytic at a word to arise, take up his bed, and walk (Matt. 9). He will have come before His envoys shall have gone through the cities of Israel (Matt. 10) — a mission to be resumed before that day. At the later stage of Matt. 11:19 the transition is plain; as in the solemn charge of ch. 12: 32, 40, preparatory to His bringing out the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, the earth and earthly people were morally judged and found good for nothing. It was now a question of “the Sower,” of a new system which He was to begin, though Satan again would ruin, as far as public result on earth appeared, yet would He secure the good and judge the evil.

Still more emphatic is the testimony of Matt. 16, where the utter unbelief of the Jews forms the background, in contrast with which shines the faith of the chief spokesman of the twelve, who receives a new name from the Lord and learns that, on the rock of the Father’s revelation of the Son, the Son of the living God, Christ was to build His church. It was then He charged His disciples to tell no one that He was “the Christ “not Jesus, (which is absurd and not authentic, but the addition of copyists ignorant of the truth). From that time forth He began to show them that He must suffer many things and be killed and raised again: His manifest change to the fall meaning of Son of man, as is pointed out expressly in Mark 8:29-31, Luke 9:20-22. The Gospel of John in his personal way sets out the same truth of transition for the Lord in chapter 12., where, after being presented as the Christ, as is written in Zecheriah 9:9, in the face of the Pharisees more hostile when He raised Lazarus from the grave as the quickening Son of God, His word to Andrew and Philip speaking for the Greeks is, “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (vss. 23, 24). All judgment is committed to the Son of man, Who must be honored thus by those who, not believing in Him as Son of God, despised Him as man: He will judge all such (John v.). So He appears coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24); so He deals with the Gentiles in that day (Matt. 25).

Nor is it otherwise in the O.T. It is the same Spirit, as the truth is one. For it will be observed that, as Psalm 2 is a weighty testimony to His Sonship as incarnate in Hebrew 1, Psalm 8 is the no less appropriate citation here in chap. 2. Nor is this casual, but the kernel that they respectively bear. The first Psalm sets before us the Jewish covenant and contrasts the righteous with the ungodly, as the judgment will manifest. Psalm 2 introduces the Christ, Jehovah’s King on Zion. Such is the decree. For He is Son, begotten in time, as we are told here for His kingdom, before time and all things (being their Creator) as we are told elsewhere. When He asks, He will receive not Judea merely but the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. But this is characterized by judgment executed publicly, by His breaking them with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Clearly this is postponed by His rejection on the part of the unbelieving Jews and lawless Gentiles; and when it is fulfilled, the church will be with Him and share His rule in a glorified state as is explicitly declared in Revelation 2:26, 27. Now this further stage of His rejection and its blessed consequence in a higher elevation and larger sphere, not as the Messiah only but as the humbled and glorified Son of man is precisely the truth taught in Psalm 8 as we are instructed in our Epistle.

Thus, the prefatory Psalm 1 and 2 give us the righteous and the Messiah according to Jehovah's purpose, spite of opposing kings and peoples, the Psalm that follow, 3-7, point out how His Spirit works in the circumstances and sorrows of the righteous while He does not reign; and Psalm 8 closes this series by Christ as the humbled Son of man set over all things. Though the habitable earth be not yet subjected to Him, as our scripture tells us, yet when we look at Him crowned with glory and honor on high, we behold by faith even now the divine glory set in Him above the heavens, the pledge that His name will soon be acknowledged excellent in all the earth, as it really is. Without Christ man is indeed feeble and fallen. Angels excel in might; and we naturally look up to the heavens, the moon, and the stars, though but the work of Jehovah's fingers and His ordinances. But look at man in Christ! His shame and suffering on the cross are the ground of the highest glory even God could confer on the Man that went down below all, now exalted above all far beyond the oath to David or the promise to Abram. It is the glorious denouement of His abasement for the suffering of death, as it is here explained, and that God's grace might have its fullest exercise. His present place is in heaven, in no way the subjection of the habitable earth, which is "to come" as the scripture itself says; still less is His seat on the Father's throne the assumption of His own throne. It is God straightway glorifying in Himself the Son of man Who glorified Him as to sin in death. For the rest we await, as He does, the times and seasons the Father has set within His own authority. He is Himself, and as man, in the highest; and we seeing it by faith bear witness to Him, to His sufferings and the glories that should follow. His immeasurable superiority to angels as man is not to be doubted, though the time is not yet for seeing all things subjected to Him. From 1 Cor. 15 we learn that it awaits the resurrection at His coming. So absolute and universal is the supremacy over the universe He had created as God that it seems good to the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Corinthians to except Him Who subjected all to Christ; as here it is affirmed that He left nothing that is not put under Him.

How blessed and precise the appended words "that He by God's grace should taste death for everything"! This last rather than "man," appears best to suit the bearing of the context. It is the sphere not merely as a universe but including "everything" brought under the reconciling power of His death. The following brings in persons and different language is used.

What gives peculiar force to "the habitable earth to come" is the undeniable fact that the main object of the Epistle is to develop and maintain the present glory of Christ as He sits, on the accomplishment of redemption, at the right hand of God on high. From first to last this is obvious and all-important. The Jewish Christian, disposed to abide in or glide away into earthly hopes with the Messiah on His throne for their center, needed to be continually recalled to his actual relationship with Christ in heaven. At the same time there is no lack of testimony throughout, to the rest of God that remaineth for His people (chap. 4.), to the age to come, of which the powers vouchsafed in apostolic era were a sample and pledge (chap. 6.), to the new covenant to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (chap. 8.), of which we have now only the principle, not the letter but spiritually, in the blood shed which is its basis, to the appearing of Christ a second time (chap. 9.), to the day approaching (chap. 10.), to the blessing concerning the things to come when the promise shall be received in fact, instead of in faith (chap. 11.), to the full and ordered scene of glory in heaven and earth (chap. 12.), when the Lord shakes not earth only but also heaven, and to the city actually come and continuing (chap. 13.).

Here we have the most distinct evidence that, whatever may be the displayed glory of the heavens in that day, (and no one intelligent in Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, and other scriptures, would enfeeble but insist on it for Christ and the risen saints), yet it is an irreparable blank to leave out of that day's blessedness "the habitable earth." Abundant strains of the prophets anticipate it with assurance, joy, and praise, as the law had of old, and the Psalms afterward. Nor does the fullest light of the N. T. omit the earth in the proclamation of the coming kingdom, though the opening of heaven as the characteristic faith and hope made the higher naturally predominant. If the Lord taught His disciples to pray that the Father's kingdom should come, He did not fail to add as the next petition, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." The revelation of new things does not blot out the old; as indeed Christ will be the center and head of both in that day to the glory of God the Father. So His outpouring in John 17 He asks what assuredly will be fully answered in connection with His giving to the saints the glory which the Father gave Him (not of course what was personally intrinsic and eternal), "that they may be one, even as we [are] one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them even as Thou lovedst Me." In the day of glory it will be a question of "knowing," not as now an appeal to "faith" (cf. ver. 20, 21). But there is undeniably "the world" to know when they see those truly divine counsels of grace fulfilled in the manifested glory of Christ and His own. There are earthly things no less than heavenly in the kingdom (John 3); which is as different from the present time of the gospel as from the still more remote eternity with its conditions of total and fixed change.

And how suitable is it that "the habitable earth" where the Lord was born, where He labored, suffered, and died on the cross, should be subjected to His government, and behold His glory, and experience more blessedness under His scepter than it groaned in misery and corruption under rebellions man misled by a mightier rebel than himself! It is His due, not only as Creator of it all, but as Redeemer. There He was put to shame, there He will triumph. There man and Satan brought in death and the curse; there God and His Son will fill the earth with peace and glory. How sad the blank if this were not to be!

In vain do ancients and moderns err from the word and pervert this scripture to the state of the church under the gospel. On the face of it "to come" distinguishes the world into which God brought in the Firstborn (Hebrews 1:6). Such is its state in the future; as no mystification or argument can make it legitimately mean a heavenly and spiritual system such as our condition of gospel and church privilege. Nor is there any difficulty in the clause that follows, "whereof we speak." For the matter treated of is the future subjection of this habitable world to the Second man, and not to angels. Undoubtedly it is not the eternal state when He shall deliver up the kingdom to Him Who is God and Father. It is His reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet, death last of all. It is not the time when He ministers as the High-Priest in heaven for those who on earth suffer and need His succor and sympathy. It is not the gospel state, but the millennial kingdom which intervenes between the gospel as now and the eternity which closes all. It is the world or habitable earth under the manifested power and kingdom of the Lord Jesus, the rejected Messiah but Son of man exalted to reign over all peoples, nations, and languages.

Hebrews 2:10-15

Certainly the death of Christ is not here associated with God's law. What possible boon was law for the guilty? For such it can bring no blessing nor pardon, but a curse, and this righteously. Compare with Deut. 27. Rom. 4:15, 1 Cor. 15:56, Gal. 3:10, 1 Tim. 1:9. But here it is grace, God's grace, and by it Christ tasted death for every one, if it be not rather “everything.” Compare the verses before. What more, what so, expressive of outspreading mercy, with glorious consequences to the universe, from His personal glory Who thus deigned to die by God's grace! God could not but have worthy purposes of goodness to accomplish rising over sin and rain by such a death! Where sin carried the first man and his race, the Second man went by God's grace. He died; but He for everything.

“ For it became Him for Whom [are] all things, and by Whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both the Sanctifier and the sanctified [are] all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name to My brethren; in [the] midst of [the] assembly will I sing Thy praise. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God gave Me. Since then the children have a common share of blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner took part in the same, that through death He might annul him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all those that by fear of death were through the whole of their life subject to bondage” (ver. 10-15).

The grand truth first before us, and justly, is that it became God—Him for Whom and by Whom is the universe—in bringing (not everybody but) “many sons” unto glory, to make the Leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Where sin is, in God's righteous government there must follow suffering. Undoubtedly in Christ was no sin, not only no sin done, but none in Himself. But He became the responsible Man to retrieve God's honor outraged everywhere by the creature above and below. Satan and his angels had left their first estate. Man was disobedient. All was ruin. The Son of man goes down in obedience and bears all the consequences, glorifying God infinitely even as to sin, and on the road endures sufferings in every shape and degree, as none else could, according to His moral perfection and personal glory, till all was exhausted in the cross, so that it was for God's righteousness to exalt Him, as now in glory. Thus was His course finished, that He in glory might bring “many sons” to glory; but the path lay through sufferings. Thus was He perfected: not that He was not ever the Perfect One, but that so only could it be if God were to be vindicated and Himself the Leader of salvation for the many sons to share that heavenly glory. The work is done which gives Him a title to “everything” by redemption, as He had also the rights of Creator. He died, having made peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. But He responded entirely to the gracious purpose of God which would also have “many sons” reconciled to share the glory with Him, and therefore He accepted all the sufferings which were the necessary condition. Judgment must have closed the door irrevocably on all men as on all angels that sinned. Where would grace then have been? The sufferings of Christ made it righteous to have many sons in the same glory as Himself,

not derogating from God's glory but enhancing it and giving it a new, larger, and higher form than ever. Where would judgment have been otherwise?

“ For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.” No thought can be more opposed to the truth than confounding this blessed association of the saints and incarnation, so as to bring in all mankind. Beyond controversy without incarnation it could not be; but their association is founded on His death and displayed in His resurrection. Incarnation means not Christ's union with all the race, nor yet the union of the saints with Him, but (what was essential to redemption as the basis for this union) Deity united with humanity in the Word made flesh. Sinful man could not be sanctified otherwise. Incarnation was but the state of His person, henceforth God and man indissolubly joined, in order to His suffering for sins once, as He did atoningly on the tree; but it is as risen and glorified that He is said to be “made perfect,” and to have become the author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey Him (Heb. 5:9).

Christ is thus effectually separating to God. He is the Sanctifier; and both lie and the sanctified are all of one. The Epistle does not rise to the unity of which we learn in Ephesians and Colossians or even in 1 Corinthians He and they are not here said to be one, but “of one.” There is efficacious and blessed association, yet the unity of the body of Christ is not the truth which is here opened, but rather heavenly calling, as we read in Heb. 3:1. Nothing can be conceived more unwise, irreverent, and childish than therefore to slight its aim. No Epistle is more adapted than this to the Hebrews to exalt the Lord or to draw out the renewed affections of the saints. So far from being Jewish, it is the final word to deliver the too slow disciples from earthly thoughts and fleshly hopes and worldly religion to Christ in heaven.

But it is false that He and mankind are “all of one,” only He and the sanctified. And sanctification is not union but separation to God. Therefore is it that in John 17 our Lord speaks of Himself, not as sanctifying others, but as sanctifying Himself. This He did not at all in the moral sense (for He was ever the Holy One of God, and even demons confessed Him so), but as setting Himself apart in heaven, the model as the glorified Man, to form and fashion us now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and this expressly in absolute separation from the world of which we are not, as He is not nor was. There was grace toward the race in all perfection. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. But the world proved itself irreconcilable, though there He was rising above human sin, selfishness, and misery, “not reckoning their trespasses to them.” But they despised the reconciliation and rejected Himself. In His rejection on the cross God made Him sin—laid on Him atoningly its awful consequences, that the believer might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus both the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. They are one set.

This truth, so often gainsaid by some and undermined by others, is set forth by apt quotations from the O.T. introduced by the words, “for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” As God was not ashamed to be called the God of the fathers, so Christ is not ashamed (I say not to be called Brother but) to call us, the children, brethren. It is His relationship which He nowhere extends to man as he is, nor even to His own disciples though born of God, till He rose from the dead. Before then the utmost He uttered was altogether vague: “Behold, My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.” As risen, He sends the new message, “But go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God,” followed the

same day at evening by His characteristic act of inbreathing and saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit". Henceforth they had life in resurrection power, life more abundantly as indeed He had promised.

But Psa. 22:22 intimates more. The time was not yet come for Messiah's praise of God in “the great congregation” (ver. 25), of Judah and Ephraim in their twelve-tribed fullness (Acts 26), when all the ends of the earth also shall remember and turn to Jehovah, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him. Ver. 22 is pointedly different, and applied now by the Spirit that inspired the Epistle to the Hebrews. Indeed the truth of it was made good that evening when Jesus came, though the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, and stood in the midst of the assembled disciples, and said, Peace be unto you, showing them withal His hands and His side, the marks of that death in which He was made a sacrifice for sin. The Psalm impresses on the scene, not the mission of peace as in the gospel, but the united praise of the assembly which Jesus Himself leads as “in the midst.” And how deep and high and truly of divine savor is that praise which Jesus hymns! How unbelieving to doubt that, as He is in the midst where two or three are gathered to His name, we may count on His leadership of praise! May we be not faithless but believing!

Is this to lower the Lord? It ought to strengthen us in the grace that is in Him, drawing out the proof how truly the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one. Hear farther, “And again, I will put my trust in Him; and again, Behold, I and the children which God gave me.” The first of these truths occurs repeatedly in the O.T., but it would seem that it is cited with a suitable modification from the same prophecy which furnishes the second, Isa. 8:14, 18. The original passage is full of interest, and affords a strikingly pertinent application to the Christian Hebrews. For the Son of David had been just before predicted as to be born of the virgin, yet called Immanuel (chap. 7.), and owned (chap. 8.) as a child born to the Jews, yet Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, unquestionably the Messiah. Before the day when He increases the nation and breaks the rod of the oppressor, He shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken. Still more remarkable language follows. “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. And I will wait for Jehovah that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given Me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts Who dwelleth in Mount Zion.”

This has been accomplished to the letter. The day is at hand for the display of His power and glory in the deliverance of Israel. Meanwhile it is only a remnant of them that is in relationship with Him; and they are more than ever favored spiritually. The testimony is bound up, the law or teaching sealed, among His disciples to whom He is a sanctuary, while His face is hid from the house of Jacob generally. So that He and the children given Him of Jehovah, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, are for signs and for wonders while He is a rock of offense to both houses of Israel. It is just the place of Him Who became man to trust in Jehovah, and of those given Him by Jehovah from the Jews (as in principle true of all Christians) meanwhile. He was as truly man as Jehovah; and we who are given Him reap the blessing of both facts united in His person. The dependent man was the LORD God of Israel, the sanctuary of the remnant when the nation stumbled at the Stumbling-stone.

Here is the deduction. “Since then the children have a common share (κεκοινωηκεν) of blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner took part in the same, that through death He might annul him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all those that by fear of death were through the whole of their life subject to bondage” (ver. 14, 15). The Son of God became man, as the children were men, in order to meet Satan in his last stronghold of death, and thus by dying exhaust his power for those who being under law were harassed all their life long by fear in their conscience. It is plain that the enemy is here in view, as God was in ver. 10; and as the sufferings of Christ vindicated God's holy nature and character, leaving His love free to act in saving us and bringing as to glory, so did His death break Satan's power to naught and deliver from fear the troubled saints, henceforth in peace, for He was raised for their justification. Satan is no longer to the believer the King of terrors. Christ has disarmed the enemy by submitting to death, and his power is gone forever for His own. His resurrection proved the seal of death broken for us, as for us He died; and our resurrection will be the demonstration of its truth, not to us who believe, who have in ourselves the witness of His grace and glory, but to all who disbelieve, rejecting Christ and the gospel.

“ Since then the children have a common share of blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner took part in the same, that through death He might annul him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those that by fear of death were through the whole of their life subject to bondage” (vers. 14, 15).

Here we have indeed the Incarnation set out more definitely than anywhere else in this Epistle or perhaps in any other. Here then those who base their theology on that immense and to us most affecting truth, considering Who He was that was thus made flesh, should compare their deductions with the revealed mind of God. The Holy Spirit brings before us its true objects and design. Far be it from the heart to seek to limit its scope. Let other scriptures be taken into account, and no ray of heavenly light from any be shut out. Only let it be the divine truth, and not human speculation; for no one fully knows (■πιγιν■σκει) the Son but the Father. Be it ours therefore to hear, and to adore.

Clearly then “the children” are in immediate view, and not a vague and vain thought of all mankind. As they had blood and flesh as their common portion, He also in like manner took part in the same. Blessed a proof as it may be that God's good pleasure is not in angels, however near Him and in themselves glorious, but in men, weak though they are, yea, worthless and wretched through sin, His eye is on them for good, His heart toward them in mercy, and so much the more because misled and oppressed by a powerful and relentless foe. But it is no ineffectual testimony that we hear. Jesus had come in grace, or, as we are told elsewhere, “anointed of God with the Holy Ghost and with power; Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” But man would none of Him, however welcome at first; least of all His own people. Jew and Gentile conspired to reject Him even to the death of the cross. In that death God broke the power of the devil, wrought deliverance for His own, and laid an atoning and eternal basis, not only to meet, but through faith to save, the foulest sinners on earth. Nothing but the death of Christ could bring to naught him that had the power of death; nothing else deliver all those who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Incarnation is a blessed truth, but it is only the means to the end here specified; and where misused as it often is, it clouds and shuts out that death which defeats the enemy, and delivers the captives, as being the true ground of God's righteousness, because sin there only was judged definitively and in grace toward the guilty. Infidelity denies God and His Christ altogether: His deity and His incarnation are to it nothing, as God is in none of its thoughts. But with fallen Christendom the controversy habitually is, whether the blessing turns on a living Christ on earth? or on a dead and risen Christ exalted to heaven? Tradition and humanitarianism affirm the former. The latter alone asserts the truth, because it alone, while holding incarnation fully, leaves room for the vindication of God and the annulling of Satan, the judgment of sin and the deliverance of the believer, as well as the glorifying of Christ.

The same death of Christ lays doubtless a ground for all men, as we see in Rom. iii. and elsewhere. In virtue of the blood on the mercy seat God's righteousness is “unto all,” and “upon all that believe.” Here it is the last only. It is “the children” who are in question, whom Christ is not ashamed to call “brethren.” The world at large does not here come into account. We must be subject to the word of God, and receive truth as God reveals it: else we fall into confusion.

Chapter 112

Hebrews 2:16-18

Now we come to those in whom the Saviour directly and blessedly interested. Here again is nothing vague, but all is made carefully precise.

“For doubtless not of angels doth He lay hold, but of Abraham's seed he layeth hold. Whence it behooved Him in all things to be made like to His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to help those that are tempted” (ver. 16-18).

The rendering of verse 16 is faultily given in many versions, in none perhaps worse than our own A. V. The sense is totally changed, and a preterite form assigned to the verb, instead of the present tense, the natural consequence of such a change of sense. “He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took,” etc. This, it is evident, ■πιλαμβ■νευαι cannot bear. It is expressly a present. Again, the word means to lay hold of, especially when with a genitive as here in the middle voice. Such is its force, even when uncompounded; and the preposition defines or emphasizes. Never does it mean to take a nature, though the A. V. seems to have been led into this, partly by Beza, chiefly by certain Greek commentators, for whose mistake no excuse can be made. They were occupied with controversies which misled them to catch at straws. The incarnation was the chief one in this case. But this had been fully treated and just closed. The Holy Spirit here goes on to Christ's making a special object, not of angels, but of Abraham's seed, which of itself ought to have guarded reflecting minds from the error. Why Abraham rather than Adam? It is evidently owing to another truth, no longer the assumption of human nature, but their cause he undertakes. Incarnation was the necessary means, in order to accomplish this and other ends according to God. Here the seed of promise comes into view, a truth palatable to those who valued their descent from Abraham; but, as our Lord showed (John 8), they only are Abraham's children who do the works of Abraham; and none do his works who share not his faith; which, as it did not go with mere fleshly descent, so it was open to those who had like precious faith. For they that be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham (Gal. 3:9).

The uncertainty that has prevailed is extraordinary as to almost every word. “For” is the only right sense, not “moreover” as Macknight says, nor “besides” with M. Stuart. The word δ■που was quite mistaken by those that followed the laxity of the Vulgate. The Syriac Versions early and late pass it by altogether. It occurs nowhere else in the Greek Testament nor yet in the Septuagint; but its force is unequivocally in the ordinary usage of the language, as “doubtless,” “I presume,” “forsooth.” We have already seen that “to take up” or “undertake the cause” is the meaning of the verb so emphatically repeated, negatively and positively. Angels He has not as the object of His care, but Abraham's seed He has. It may be applied to laying hold or arresting with hostile intent: where a gracious aim is plain as here, the sense is no less certain. Assuming a nature is without example and in no way involved in the word itself. Nor does it suit the verse either; for, for our Lord to assume Abraham's seed had no nature distinctively. Of blood and flesh it had been already declared He partook, but this is humanity; and the reason assigned is that, as the children, or

Abraham's seed, had a common share of the same, He is no doubt undertaking their cause, not that of angels. When it comes to the question of espousing a cause, not of incarnation, we hear not of human nature, but expressly of those separated on the ground of divine promise, the objects of grace.

Hence the moral necessity that He should be “in all things made like to His brethren.” Even though deigning to become man, He might have been in wholly different circumstances from most or all. Yet Adam never knew what it was to be a man, as the Lord of glory did from birth onward. From what trial or suffering was He exempted, sin only excepted? and this that He might in due time be of God made sin on the cross, bearing its bitterest consequences? And this we see as the end in view in 18, “That He might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

The allusion is plain to the exceptional position of the high priest on the day of atonement. He and he alone was the actor on that day, and this typically. Christ and Christ alone was the one Sufferer also in the antitype. What was wrought on the cross goes far beyond the “shadow,” though the shadow was constructed to indicate a great deal. But Christ alone gives us the full truth of atonement or of anything else, because He is the truth. His person, unique and divine, made the superiority in every respect.

It was not at all the normal action of priesthood in the holy place. The high priesthood on that day was representative of the people before God in their sins. This was quite extraordinary. A far deeper need was in question than intercession that followed, or representing them within in their acceptance. If sin was to be adequately dealt with even in type, and only for the purifying of the flesh, and but for a year, no other way lay open. It is not application, but God met according to His nature: even the people's lot was putting the confessed sins away out of His sight in the form. The momentous reality appears in all its moral glory and efficacy in that work of Christ's death for sin and our sins, which has perfected and glorified God and brought in eternal redemption.

The English versions are various, and none of them exact, yet there is no uncertainty as to the sense. Wiclif is the most periphrastic “that He should be made merciful and a faithful bishop to God, that He should be merciful to the trespasses of the pupil.” Tyndale is closer, “that He might be merciful, and a faithful high priest in the things concerning God, for to purge the peoples sins.” And so Cranmer and the Geneva Bible. The Rhemish has the barbarous Latin servilely reproduced, “that He might repropitiate,” &c. The A.V. gives “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people": an awkward misrendering. Reconciliation is of persons, as well as of creation; but for sins is not justifiable. Propitiation or atonement for them is correct.

Here too it will be noticed that the Spirit of God does not warrant that unlimited extension for which so many contend. And such is the frailty and caprice of man's mind that those who without and contrary to the text would widen the sphere of “the people,” and “the children of Abraham,” and “His brethren” to all mankind are often the same who on shallow grounds would expunge the universality of the outlook of divine righteousness in Romans 3:22, and change the beautiful distinction of “unto all, and upon all those that believe,” into the indiscriminate and feeble generality of “unto all them that believe.”

The propitiation of Christ is the basis of His priestly action on high. Save the exceptional work of atonement, there was and could be nothing of the kind. For heaven alone is its regular sphere; and this runs through our Epistle from first to last. It was when made perfect (and this was clearly after His sufferings were complete), that He became the cause of everlasting salvation to all that obey Him, being addressed or saluted of God as High-priest after the order of Melchisedec (chap. 5). But the basis of an all-sufficing, God-glorifying propitiation must first be laid and accepted; and then He takes His place in heaven to intercede for those whose sins He bore.

But there was another necessity fully met. He must know not sin, but suffering. He must be tempted to the uttermost, sin excepted (Heb. 4), in order to succor the tempted. “For in that He hath suffered when tempted, He is able to help those that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

Temptation means trial; never in Christ's case, what is in fallen man's, inward solicitation to evil. This is what the Holy Spirit expressly denies of Him, and what no one who believed in His person ought to have allowed for a moment. Lustful experience or sin is incompatible with the Holy One of God; and, so far from being in a single instance predicated of Him, it is wholly excluded: χωρ■ς ■μαρτ■ας could be said of neither Enoch nor Elijah, nor of John and Paul, but of Him only. The blessed endurance of temptation (James 1:2, 12) He knew beyond any; but what James describes in verses 13-15 of his first chapter was foreign to Him, and a blasphemous imputation, as it proves fundamental unbelief of Who and what He is. We are too familiar with the human and selfish argument that He could not sympathize with us adequately if exempt from those internal and evil workings, bemoaned in Rom. 7 and bitterly known by every soul born of God, at least in the early days of his awakening. But if we needed the Lord to be similarly harassed in order to feel fully with us, we should on that ground want Him to have yielded, as we alas! have often done, in order to sympathize with us in our sad failures. No! that ground is wretchedly and absolutely opposed to Christ; and what the word reveals as the remedy for evil within and without in every form and degree is not Christ's sympathy but His propitiatory suffering for us. He sympathizes with us in our holy, not in our unholy, temptations. For our unholiness He died: the cross alone has met it fully in God's sight. Had there been in fact the least inward taint of sin, His sensibility of evil had been impaired, His sufferings diminished, and His sympathy hindered, to say nothing of the deadly wound to His person, unfitted by such an evil nature to be a sacrifice for sin.

Hebrews 3:1-6

Chapter 3 follows 1 and 2 in beautiful order. For “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” answers to the chapters before: the first of these titles of Christ being specially connected with His being Son of God, as the second is with that of Son of Man. He comes from God to man on earth; He goes from man to God in heaven. And this is largely, though not entirely, the reason why the writer was led not to speak of himself as an apostle. He had it as his task to present Christ as the Apostle. This might have been enough for one whose reverence was guided unerringly by the Holy Spirit. We can understand why he forbore to speak of himself or any other when so speaking of Him; even if there had not been the gracious reason of not so introducing himself beyond his allotted sphere of the uncircumcision. And we may notice the further and not unimportant or uninteresting fact that, in writing to the Hebrew believers, he is exercising the function of a teacher, rather than of an apostle, however truly he was this. He is unfolding the treasures of the O. T. in the light of Christ, of His blood and presence in heaven most particularly. And thus we are indebted to the exceptional circumstances in which the Epistle was written that it is the richest specimen of inspired teaching in the Bible, more than any other affording and applying the key of Christ's work and position and offices, and grace and glory in all; to unlock what had otherwise been to us hard and obscure. What an incentive and aid to encourage us to follow in the same path in our poor measure, by His grace Who so enabled him! Were all the commentaries that are extant on the O.T. to be effaced, is it too much to say that it would be a real gain if the Lord’s servants betook themselves afresh to its study with a believing use of this single Epistle to the Hebrews? Certain it is that few have adequately profited by it, because they have so much tradition to unlearn; and that the mass even of saints are so steeped in preconceived ideas that the simple yet profound truth it presents is foreclosed and escapes them.

Christ's apostleship leads to the comparison with Moses, as His high priesthood with that of Aaron, the main topic in a large part of the treatise.

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus; faithful as He is to Him that appointed Him, as also [was] Moses, in all His house. For He hath been accounted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as He that built the house hath more honor than it. For every house is builded by some one; but He that built all things [is] God. And Moses indeed [was] faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things afterward to be spoken; but Christ as Son over His house; Whose house are we, if we hold fast the boldness, and the glorying of the hope firm to the end” (ver. 1-6).

There is emphasis, of course, in the unusual combination “holy brethren.” Since the Jews, as such, were accustomed to be called “brethren” after the flesh, there was the more propriety in designating Christian Jews “holy brethren,” however truly it applied to any Christian.

Again, as the chosen nation was partaker of an earthly position and hope, we can understand well the force of describing the believers in Christ from its midst as “partakers of a heavenly calling.” Such indeed they were. They entered the new privilege not by a tie of birth, but by call of God; and

this, as it was from Christ in heaven, so it was to heavenly glory, bearing earthly rejection, suffering and shame, as the Epistle shows from first to last. The calling upward or high calling of Phil. 3:14 answers to it.

Truly we must distinguish the heavenly calling from the calling in Eph. 4:1, developed in that Epistle which is still more intimate and precious. For it is bound up with the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church. Accordingly we do not hear of the oneness of the body with its Head in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as we do not hear of Christ the High Priest in that to the Ephesians. Even when church is spoken of in our Epistle (Heb. 13:23), it is regarded in its individual components, not in its unity: so distinct is the design of each. Hence we are not viewed here as quickened with Christ, raised up together with Him and seated together in Him in heavenly places, but as represented by Him in heaven, where He appears for us and gives us access into the holiest while here below.

Christ is shown to surpass Moses and Aaron next, as we have already seen the angels left behind in chapters 1 and 2. The contrast with Moses is traced in chapter 3. That with Aaron begins in the latter part of chapter 4. But it is well also to notice “our confession.” It leaves room for such as turn out mere professors; for it is not even said “our faith,” though this might soon become a lifeless creed. And this is borne out by the solemn warnings not to neglect, to hold fast, and the like, which abound throughout our Epistle, as we find similarly in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and in that to the Colossians.

It will be noticed that the name of “Jesus” stands here in its simple majesty. For a Jewish Christian it was all-important. Every Jew owned the Messiah, or Christ. The Christian Jews confessed Him already come in Jesus. And the aim of this Epistle is to open even from the ancient oracles the varied glories that center in Him with all the store of blessing for those that are His.

Nor is it only that Jesus “was” faithful, though this is true. But “is” goes farther as the more general and absolute term. Only it seems strange that reverent minds should venture to apply to Him ποι■. in the sense, so liable to misconstruction and error, of making or creating Him, when the context clearly points to constituting Him officially.

If Moses was a messenger of God singularly honored as all confess, he was after all in an inferior position, however faithful in all the house of God. But Jesus was not only a man approved of God among the Jews beyond all by miracles and wonders and signs in their midst, not only anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, unequaled in word and deed, yet withal the lowliest in obedience and love and holiness, but “He hath been accounted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as He that built the house hath more honor than it,” i. e., the house. And in this case the reason has no limit. “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things [is] God.” The allusion is evident to the argument and precept of Hebrews 1, Jesus, whatever office He may fill, is God. He sheds glory on the position He takes, though assuredly the way in which He administers each office redounds to the glory of Him that appointed Him.

It is interesting to see that the axiom of the fourth verse is the morally irresistible argument from design, which has been more or less ably applied by those who have written on the evidence of creation to its Creator.

But there is a truth also of the deepest interest to believers. The house or dwelling-place depends on redemption. Whatever might be the ultimate end of God in what He made, sin came in at once through the creature's lack of dependence. God could only dwell on the ground of redemption. Hence it is that in Genesis we have no dwelling of God here below. He might visit Adam, or yet more and more touchingly Abraham; but even with Abraham He does not dwell. In Exodus God has His dwelling in the midst of a poor unworthy and failing people; but it is solely in virtue of redemption. No doubt it was only partial and provisional, alike the redemption and the dwelling of God, each the type of that which is perfect and everlasting. And the wonderful fact of Christianity is that both are now verified by the coming and work of our Lord Jesus. No redemption will ever surpass or even equal what is already. With (or by) His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained everlasting redemption. Hence, as Ephesians teaches, we are builded together for God's habitation in Spirit. The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven makes it good. What an incomparable privilege—God's dwelling, and Christ's body, as the same chapter had shown, to say nothing now of the many and yet fuller testimonies.

Here, however, it is first the general truth of the universe as God's house, with which we do well to compare Rev. 21:3. It is in the eternal scene only that this will be vindicated and manifested. Our Epistle does not here develop that perfect rest of God, but pursues its present aim of comparing the great chief of the legal economy with the still greater One Whom the Jews had crucified by the hands of lawless Gentiles. “And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of things afterward to be spoken; but Christ as Son over His house, Whose house are we” —we emphatically, as the Epistle never confounds the “sanctified” with mere Jews or all mankind. It is carefully those that are set apart by the Sanctifier, even Jesus, the test of God for man. Moses never rose above a servant, nor is the creature in any case, were he Gabriel in heaven, or yet Michael the archangel. Jesus is the Son, the Eternal Word, the Only-Begotten Who is (not was merely, but is) in the bosom of the Father from everlasting to everlasting. In His case therefore it was not merely for a testimony of what could be spoken. His was and is glory intrinsic and personal. He was the Faithful Witness, as in all things He has the pre-eminence; and so He is here and now spoken of as Son over His house, the house of God, as it ought not to be doubted. There is no sufficient ground for “His own” house as in the A. V. It is the house of God throughout, even though its present application is immensely and necessarily modified by the coming of Christ. It is the believers who constitute this house, as is now carefully implied in the serious words that follow, “if we hold fast the boldness and the boast of the hope firm to the end.”

The Spirit of God foresaw the danger of those addressed. Freshness of enjoyment is apt to pass, and souls are thereby exposed, under trying circumstances, to turn toward what was left behind when grace and truth wrought in power. The course of time, with distractions within (for so it will be till Christ come, in presence of an enemy that hates all that is of Him) and with attractions for the flesh without, tests souls. It is well when we hold fast firm to the end the boldness and the glorying which the hope forms and entitles us to. But it may be very different even with real children of God; and it will assuredly prove those that are unreal. For the same things which injure those born of God are the ruin of those who have not life in Christ. Hence the grave caution here enjoined, peculiarly needed by those addressed, and in no small measure by those drawn to the Lord's name out of a professing mass, when clouds gather, difficulties increase, and desertions are frequent.

Is it not an extraordinary deduction from verse 6, that the Christian is in danger from confidence in his soul, and from the boast which glory before us inspires? Yet such is the perversion that prevails among those who shrink from enjoying the revealed riches of God's grace in Christ. It is plain and sure that the Holy Spirit here takes for granted that the Christian has the confidence to which Christ and His redemption entitle every simple-hearted believer, and that the glory of God we hope for is a happy and settled boast. Those who think otherwise have been defrauded of their proper portion by ignorant, perhaps false, guides. The real danger against which the Hebrew confessors are warned is giving up that confidence and boast. They are urged to hold it fast. This is the reverse of cautioning them against such confidence. The Christian dishonors the Lord by not cherishing true confidence and abounding hope; and yet more by giving them up, through difficulties or trials, when once possessed. This is dangerous unbelief.

Hebrews 3:7-13

It is clearly not our standing which is in question; for this being wholly of God and in Christ is settled and sure and unchanging. The wilderness journey is before us, flowing very simply from the allusion to Moses. And this is followed up with evident suitability in the quotation from Psalm 95.

“Wherefore even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted [Me] by proof and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, and said, they always err in their heart, and they ignored My ways: as I sware in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest. See, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of unbelief in falling away from a living God; but exhort yourselves each day while it is called to-day lest any of you be hardened by deceitfulness of sin” (verses 7-13).

Now Psalm 95 is in its primary force a final call from the Spirit of Christ to Israel in view of the great morrow when the kingdom is introduced for the earth in the power and glory of Messiah's presence. They are therefore to hear His voice “to-day” (ver. 7). Hence it is truly applicable since the apostles called souls to believe the gospel in view of Christ's appearing. But nowhere is it more apt than as here urged on the Hebrews.

To hear His voice is the characteristic of Christ's sheep. So the rejected Son of God puts it Himself in John 10:3-4, 16, 27: compare John 5:24. On this depend the most blessed issues; as the rejection of His voice is to lie down in sorrow, the prey of a mightier rebel than man. It is the work of the Spirit to give one hitherto deaf to hear Him, according to His will Who spoke on “the holy mount” (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35). It is life, eternal life.

Alas! it was easy to hear with the outward ear only, and to harden the heart, even as Stephen warned. “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). Sin is in the measure of truth heard and despised; and what testimony can. God present to those who refused the voice of Christ not only humbled but glorified, Who died for sinners? The very blessedness of the gospel, “so great salvation,” marks the desperateness of the need, the imminence of the danger.

So, but not at all to the same degree, it was with Israel of old “in the provocation, in the day of the temptation in the wilderness” (verse 8). The allusion is to Meribah, and Massah which the Septuagint thus translates. Compare Psalm 95:8. The Septuagint however in Exodus 7, gives not “provocation” as in the Psalms, but “reviling” as in ver. 2 also. Elsewhere Meribah is rendered ■ντιλογ■α, contradiction. Massah is uniformly translated πειρασμ■ς, temptation, and this against God as the strife or reviling was against Moses more immediately. Tempting Jehovah in the desert was saying, Is Jehovah among us or not? This way seems to unbelievers a small offense; in the eyes of God and of faith it is heinous. Had He not broken the pride and power of Egypt on behalf of His poor unworthy people? Had He not brought them out of the house of bondage triumphantly,

their Guide and their Rearguard, to dwell among them and be their God? “For ask now of the days that are past which were before thee” (says Moses to Israel, Deut. 4) “since the day that God created man upon the earth and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation by temptation, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors according to all the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?” And was He less toward them all the wilderness journey in daily manna and rock-flowing water, in sheltering care and guiding mercy, notwithstanding their too constant murmuring and waywardness, their disobedience and stubborn rebellion every now and then? Righteousness indeed there was in Him and holy abhorrence of evil; but oh, what unwearied compassion and unfailing goodness! Truly they tempted by putting Him to the proof in the midst of unceasing tokens of His faithful presence. It was bad for heathen blinded by lusts and Satan's power to say, because of the chastisements of Israel's sins, Where is their God? How much worse for themselves to ask, Is the LORD among us or not? And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust... How often did they rebel against Him in the wilderness and grieve Him in the desert! And they turned again and tempted God and provoked [or limited] the Holy One of Israel. (Psalm 8:18, 41-42). The least that became such a people before such a God was to judge self and go forward in the assurance of His gracious power. But not so did Israel, though they “saw His works forty years” (verse 9).

“Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, and said, They always err in their hearts, and they ignored My ways” (verse 10). It was just because He is just and true that God felt so deeply the refractory and deceitful rising up of Israel against His will. Their error lay not in their understanding but in their heart: hence they never got to learn God's ways, but ignored them. Moses truly feared and loved Him: thus only are His ways discovered and delighted in; as it is written in another Psalm (103) “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.” Above His palpable doings they did not discern. “As I sware in My wrath if they shall enter into My rest” (or, they shall not). A solemn sentence of exclusion. In man's mouth it is elliptical, God do so to me and more, if! In God's lips the condition of man's entering is the moral certainty that it is all over with him. Good is only and wholly of grace. There is no entrance into the rest of God if it depend on man's deserts. If they shall enter, means, for unbelievers, that they shall not enter.

It may be well here to say that God's rest is for us future and in glory. We lose the force of the teaching in these two chapters, especially chapter 4 in which it is so conspicuous, if we conceive it to be anything given to us on our first believing in Jesus, or found experimentally in submitting to His easy yoke and light burden. Both of these are real and important now, as we know from Matt. 11:28-30. But the rest of God is when work is over and burden is no more; when the enemy deceives not and creation no longer groans, when judgment is executed on earth and righteousness reigns, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day. Heaven and earth shall be united in a chain of descending goodness and universal blessing, when Christ is no longer hid in God, and His sons are revealed for the deliverance which the long enthralled creation awaits. Till that day God works, because there is still unremoved sin and misery; and we work in the communion of His love. When it comes, we shall be in the rest of God.

“See, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of unbelief in falling away from a living God; but exhort yourselves each day while it is called to-day, lest anyone of you be hardened by deceitfulness of sin” (verses 12-13).

Here the root of the mischief is touched. It is “unbelief.” This hindered Israel of old from setting their hope in God (Psalm 78:7). This exposed them to forget His works and to break His commandments, neither the heart prepared aright nor the spirit steadfast with God. It is impossible that He should lie or be not faithful, yea gracious. Faith is invited and may be bold to rest on Him confidently, now especially that He has raised Christ from the dead and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. None however were so liable to stop short and ask for signs as the Jews, accustomed as they were to a religious system of rite, ceremony, and symbolism. And as Christendom has fallen back from faith into a resumption of these rudiments of the world, which the work and glory of Christ now condemn as weak and “beggarly elements” (Galatians 4), there is like danger of unbelief. It is in truth departure from a living God for forms which He used, to do service before Christ came and died atoningly, when redemption from under the law was effected and the believer passed from bond-service into the status of a son and heir of God, receiving the Spirit of adoption so as to cry Abba, Father. Anything short of this is not Christian relationship; and it is in evident contrast with Jewish subjection to ordinances, to which the Catholic bodies (not Romanist only) have turned back again. It is a deceptive form of unbelief, a going away from the living God to dead forms, because the heart lacks confidence in His grace in Christ.

So it was with Israel; so it is with Christendom. No wonder that it is denounced as “a wicked heart” of unbelief. For what else is or can be distrust of such a God? The more His love is revealed, the more is the heart convicted of wickedness. Nothing more false than to regard faith as a mere process of the mind, involving nothing moral. To believe, to bow to Christ Whom God has sent, is the first and most imperative of calls. What obligation to compare with being at the feet of the Son of God, Who became incarnate to suffer for my sins? God too was glorified in Him and His cross, as in naught else; as the Father's glory raised Him from the dead, that believing in Him I should know myself and all who have faith brought nigh to God. Is it not a wicked heart of unbelief that neglects so great salvation? It is this even in a worse degree, after confessing Him to depart from a living God thus proved for any other object; for here only is He known truly by a sinner and best honored. For us love, service, worship and all that is good follow faith and cannot exist without it.

Hence the call to exhort, not exactly one another, though this is included, but “yourselves,” which seems rather more pointed than the former phrase. They were to encourage each other day by day as long as it is called today (the day of grace), that none should be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. For which of us knows not by humbling and bitter experience its luring character and slippery paths? A little evil allowed is the beginning of very great evil. The heart is hardened as we look off from Jesus, and self-pleasing takes the place of doing God's will; and only mercy's intervention hinders the end from being according to the way. Truly sin is deceitful.

Hebrews 3:14-19

It is the wilderness which is ever before us in this Epistle; not Canaan, the type of the heavenly places, which is the ground of the Epistle; to the Ephesians. It is here therefore the scene of trial and danger through unbelief, with the fleshly and worldly lusts to which it exposes. Hence here too the early exhortations interspersed with doctrine. Further as in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, profession has prominence. For though reality is assumed, room is left, for those whose minds only accepted the truth which their lips confessed, but were not born of God, and hence fell away through fear, external attraction, revival of old religious habits, or other causes of a natural kind. For this reason we have responsibility urged with grave warnings, and as the Gentile saints are so dealt with in Corinth, so here are the Hebrews that bore the name of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, as has been often remarked, the “ifs” which so abound in this context as elsewhere. Faith profits by the admonitions which flesh takes lightly to its fall in the desert. Where the tie of life and love was never formed between Christ and the soul, the need of grace and mercy is not felt; glory on high fades into nothingness as the earth rises before the heart as a place of present enjoyment in desire, if not effectively.

“For we have become fellows of Christ, if only we hold fast the beginning of the assurance until the end; while it is said, Today if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For who on hearing did provoke? Nay, did not all that came out of Egypt through Moses? And with whom was He displeased forty years? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest but to the disobedient? And we see that they could not enter in on account of unbelief” (verses 14-19).

The word here translated “fellows” is the same as is quoted from the Greek version of Psalm 45 in chapter 1:9. “Companion” would be more modern English, but the same rendering is kept up here as in the Psalm to which the allusion is made. “Partakers” not only breaks the thread of connection, but suggests what might easily mislead. There is no lowering of Christ's glory in applying “fellows” to those who confess Him. For when first used, the Holy Spirit carefully recalls how God owns Messiah as God, and even when grace adds “fellows” of His people, He is anointed as man above His fellows. He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one, and to be manifested in the same heavenly glory. But some who seemed to begin well stop short or turn aside. It was faith of mere mind and feeling, not the Holy Spirit's living work in the conscience; and such in the strain of trial, or weary of habitual self-judgment, or turning again to the mirth and pleasant enjoyments of the world, abandon first the path, and then the word, and the name of Christ. The danger of the Hebrew confessors found its parallel in their fathers' snares during the journeyings of the wilderness, and we now in Christendom are exposed to like danger. The possession of the heavenly privileges is evidenced and conditioned by holding steadfast to the end the beginning of the assurance of the Christian.

How, then, say some who assume to teach that it is presumption to have any such “assurance"? For the assurance here insisted on as proper, necessary, and incumbent from first to last is

grounded on the glorified Lord Jesus, our propitiation and our high priest, on the divine dignity of His Person and the accepted efficacy of His work for us, leading, as He undertook, many sons to glory. One can hardly therefore find doctrine more opposed to the gospel than a preliminary denial of that assurance which every Christian is solemnly exhorted, not merely to have, but to hold fast and firm to the end. If assurance be founded on anything in ourselves, the sooner the better to abandon what was really self-righteous and unbecoming and spurious. The confidence which dispenses with continued dependence on God is worthless and a delusion of the enemy. But if we rest on Him by faith, we are bound to have and cherish by faith what is only His due. And it may be that the Hellenistic sense of “confidence,” while certain from the usage of Polybius (4. 54,10; 5.16,4; 6.55, 2; Diod. Sic., etc.) as cited in modern commentaries, flows from its primitive meaning of subsistence, substance, and the like. Compare Hebrews 4:3 and Hebrews 11:1. It points strongly to an objective base in the Christ, instead of a mere sentiment in the soul which might easily change and fade away. But the Spirit, where there is life, keeps believers true to the Lord.

Doubtless “today” is a serious and trying time (ver. 15). We are in the wilderness, and without God what is there but difficulty and danger for His people, weak as spilled water in themselves? But there especially He speaks in His word; and even when the kingdom comes, the prophetic word calls His own to hear His voice. If they were bitterly provoking, He was patient and gracious. And if there be difference now, as there is assuredly, since Christ accomplished redemption, and took His seat at God's right hand, and sent down the Holy Spirit to be in us who believe, it is still said, “Today if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” What He has done and revealed and made ours, so transcending all wrought of old in Egypt and the desert, ought to be the most powerful stimulus, as well as firm foundation, in heeding His revealed will against our treacherous hearts, so sure to grow hard if we slight His word or tamper with sin. “Today” is till Jesus comes, the point so constant in N. T. expectation.

“For who on hearing did provoke? Nay, did not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?” (ver. 16).

The A. V. followed the indefinite pronoun, not the interrogation as is here preferred with the R. V. Thus the appeal has all force. It was not “some” only, but the mass, as is put immediately afterward, a shameful answer to Jehovah's favor toward Israel. And it is of painful interest to observe how the Spirit employs the same scenes with yet more detail in 1 Corinthians 10 to warn the Gentile faithful at Corinth, as here for the Jewish. What made the case so grave is that it was after they heard they fell into the provocation. So sin is worse far in a baptized man than in a mere Jew or Gentile; and the idolatry of Mary or Peter or an angel worse in the sight of God than that of Zeus or Venus. All that came out of Egypt by Moses. What power, judicial and delivering, had they not witnessed! What continual goodness and withal solemn dealings with rebellion and profanity! The Christian profession is admonished to beware of similar departure. “And with whom was He displeased forty years? Was it not with those that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?” (ver 17). It was no mere sudden slip, but the grave evil of habitual state that aroused His strong displeasure; in fact, the whole period of His unparalleled intervention in the wilderness, where their stay gave occasion to His constant and wondrous tokens of mercy before all eyes. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, or walk in obedience, holiness and love. Without it there is but sin continually; as they sinned, and their carcasses fell. For God is not mocked, nor His righteous government, which was then visibly displayed.

“And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to the disobedient?” (ver. 18). Disobedience, and above all disobedience such as this, God abhors and judges. It is not meant isolated acts, but insubjection to Himself; just the opposite of what Romans 1 calls the obedience of faith, now especially as He has revealed Himself in grace in the Lord Jesus. It is yet deeper than obedience to His commands, however important this may be in its place, and the proof not only of love, but of divinely characterized faith, and therefore of life in Christ. Such as are insubmissive to Himself, especially now that the Son has declared Him, shall assuredly not enter into the rest of God, the heavenly glory at Christ's coming. So He swore then; as His wrath is now revealed from heaven against all such ungodliness, even if after a sort they hold the truth ever so fast in unrighteousness.

The next verse closes this portion with a word on the root of the evil thus disclosed. “And we see that they could not enter in on account of unbelief” (ver. 19). Their having disobeyed God in the sense of hearkening not to His word, and thus of insubjection to Himself, pointed to their inward unbelief. Present, palpable, visible things were their all. God was in none of their thoughts really; for it is no question of idle dreamy sentiment, but of spiritual life. How could unbelief or those marked by it enter His blessed glorious rest?

Hebrews 4:1-2

The all-important point for a just interpretation is that God's rest is here before us, His glory in heaven. It is not at all rest for the conscience or for the heart, which the believer has or finds now in Christ. The rest of God is exclusively future. The perfect word of God distinguishes even outwardly what may be, and ought to be, now enjoyed from what is only in hope however sure. Our Lord in Matthew 11:28-29, speaks of what His grace makes good while we are here; Hebrews 3:4 only of what the believers enter at His coming. Hence ■ν■παυσις is the word for rest in the Gospel, κατ■παζσις in the Epistle. Jesus, rejected as Messiah, does not only fall back on the heavenly and universal glory He looks for as the Son of Man, but unveils Himself as the Son of the Father, and invites to Himself all that labor and are burdened. To those that come to Him the Son gives rest. It is free and sovereign grace, present and full relief from the toil of law and the burden of sin. This rest He gives to conscience, the starting point by faith to all holiness. Therefore He adds, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls.” This is rest for the heart of the Christian day by day, and found only in obedience. It is not help, as men say, nor peace exactly, but rest of heart in the submissive acceptance of God's will. So Christ Himself bowed and was blessed here below; so all that follow Him. But He gives rest to the conscience (without here explaining how) before we find rest for our souls in judging self and doing God's will. Faith makes both our own now; but we are called also to exult in hope of the glory of God. This is His rest; and we are going on toward it, as Israel to Canaan. Such is the text here applied. It is God resting in what satisfies His love and holiness, when righteousness reigns and sorrow flees away, Κατ■παυσις being stronger than ■γ■παυδες. The former is applied in Genesis 2 (70) when sin and death had not yet entered the world. It is used here also for the scene and time of glory.

“Let us fear, therefore, lest a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short. For indeed we have had good tidings borne to us, as they also [had]; but the word of the report did not profit them, not having been mixed with faith in those that heard” (verses 1-2).

It is impossible to understand the entire context, if we regard the rest here spoken of as any other than the future rest of God into which Christ will introduce us at His coming. Wrest it to the primary need of the soul, as men are apt to do, and all is confusion. Would the Spirit say, “let us fear” if it were a question of believing in Christ to all joy and peace? The word of the Lord to the troubled soul is “Fear not;” “I will: be thou clean;” “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace;” “Daughter, be of good comfort,” and the like: never a syllable to induce a doubt of the Saviour's grace, or of the believer's salvation. For indeed He came to seek and save that which is lost. But here the warning is given to those that bear His name who were stopping short and weary, like Israel, of the pilgrimage through the wilderness. There is danger on all sides. It may be the desire to go back into Egypt, or the slight of Canaan—the pleasant land, or murmuring against Moses and Aaron meanwhile. In every case it is unbelief; and Israel paid the penalty. “Let us therefore fear lest, a promise having been left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have fallen

short.”

Fallen, unbelieving, man is ever in quest of this or that. He is restless, and knows no happiness (or rather, pleasure) in this world but change, the pursuit of what he has not but wishes to have. Had he the gift of God's love, the water that Christ gives would be in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life, of which he drinking shall never thirst again. Even so, he needs to have always before his heart that heaven to which he now belongs, his new fatherland, where Christ is gone before. If Israel had a hope, we have assuredly no less, but in far richer measure and brighter light. The hope of the future according to God has a mighty effect in delivering from the power of present things opposed to Him. The renewed heart needs it and has it clearly set before us in scripture, as here. Let us fear therefore lest any of us should come short in this, respect. What is destructive where there is no faith is injurious, and may be so to the last degree, to the believer. Therefore do we hear of “seeming” to have come short. There is no rest of God now, nor for us is it here but in heaven. Let us fear even the appearance of settling down on earth.

This was natural to a Jew's feeling and expectation, especially if Messiah were come. But He is rejected, gone up, and is glorified on high. There with Him will be our rest, and, what is far better, the rest of God. Let none of us (for surely it is no less true and weighty for the Gentile believer) let none of us seem to have come short of that rest. The Christian Jew was in nothing behind his fathers; if the elders had good tidings, those who cleave to Christ in heaven had no less. But if the word be not mixed with faith, it can no more profit the hearer now than of old. Then the fathers saw wonders and heard the Voice more awful than thunder or earthquake; yet they fell through unbelief, and disobedience its effect. So now, when it is no question of sight or sound, the word mixed with faith for those that heard is indispensable: else the ruin is still more irretrievable than falling in the wilderness.

I am aware that the mass of ancient MSS. favors the strange reading adopted by the Revisers, as well as by most modern critics, “because they were not united by faith with them that heard.” So almost all the uncials and cursives and many ancient versions. Here I cannot but agree with Tischendorf that the Sinai MS. (m) is right, as are a few cursives, the Peschito Syriac, and some good copies of the Vulgate, &c. The externally best supported reading seems hardly sense if not wrong doctrine. Ed.

Hebrews 4:3-10

The rest then is God's rest, made by Him, and suited to Him, which He will enjoy in perfected glory with those who believe in Christ, Who alone by His work could fit sinful men to share it perfected as they are through His one offering.

“For we that believed enter into the rest, even as He hath said, As I sware in My wrath, If they shall enter into My rest, although the works were done from [the] world's foundation. For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day thus, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works, and in this again, If they shall enter into My rest” (ver. 3-5).

The present tense of Hebrews 4:3 is not historical but absolute, a usage most frequent in scripture and in ordinary speech too, especially as to principles of truth. Believers are the enterers into the rest of glory: not all men, nor yet all Israel, but “we that believed"; for the past participle adds to the definiteness of the class accepted for the blessing, not simply those who believe as if they might later or when they pleased. There is no thought of an actual entrance now, for the whole argument shows the rest here is future, whatever rest may be for faith to apprehend before God shares His rest with all that are His own. This Epistle always regards the believer as on the way. The sabbatism here in view is not yet enjoyed by the saints but “remaineth” (ver. 9). It is for those that believed, and none else. Of those that did not believe, how true it was, as God swore to give it all the greater solemnity and assurance that they should not enter into His rest! Their unbelief of Christ made it conditional on themselves; and they were ungodly, as all such are and must be. For Christ only is the source of life as well as forgiveness, the one strengthener of the weak and guide of the erring, the sole Saviour of poor sinners or of saints. For what would even saints be or do without Him? As unbelievers trust themselves or certainly do not trust Christ, they shall not enter into the rest of God. The “if” is their death-knell. If self is the sinner's condition, it is all over with him; and as with Israel, it is no less sure in Christendom. “If they shall enter into My rest,” practically as in principle for those who know what unbelief is, means that they shall not.

Yet God had revealed His rest from the beginning. Only the Adamic world is spoken of, only those “works” of God which were effected on the six “days". The vast operations of creation in geologic time are outside consideration and have nothing to do directly with His rest. But His works in view of man immediately conduct to it. And so He has said in Gen. 2 “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works,” as He had in Psa. 95 thousands of years after, “If they shall enter into My rest". The first scripture proves that He had a rest Himself; the second, that even His people had not yet entered into it. Sin came in for Adam and his race at the beginning. God could not rest in sin, nor could sinners as such enter into God's rest. God indeed did not then speak of any entering in. But He did, in thus speaking, imply that the unbelievers who provoked Him in the wilderness should not enter. Preferring self to Christ they, as all others, must reap the ruinous consequence. And this He records in a psalm which not only recalls the ruin of the rebellious people in the desert but looks on to the future day of glory when Israel is invited to come with songs of joy and thanksgiving before Jehovah, not only the Creator (as the gods were not, but mere demons and

impostors) but their Maker and God. They having believed at length, after ages of judgment because of their unbelief, should enter into His rest—how welcome and sweet for that people, His people, after such a history of sorrow, shame and unrest, through sin and the unbelief that barred all escape or deliverance! For “to-day” will be then, not merely a persevering call of grace (as more preeminently in the gospel), but God's power in salvation; “and so all Israel shall be saved” in that day.

“Since then it remaineth that some should enter into it, and that those that had first good tidings borne did not enter because of disobedience, again He defineth a certain day, saying Today in David after so long a time, even as it hath been said before, Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. For if Joshua made them rest, He would not have spoken after these things of another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbatism for the people of God. For he that entered into his rest, himself also rested from his works, as God from His own” (ver. 6-10).

The inference is drawn that some would hear and believe, whilst the mass were unbelieving and perished; and both were verified in the type: Israel fell as a whole; Joshua and Caleb entered Canaan. It was a sad issue then with which grace would point the moral to the Jews that professed the name of the Lord, and indeed to any now in Christendom. God's mercy would not, be hindered by human opposition or indifference. If those first appealed to refused the glad tidings, He persists in calling. He again fixes a day, and in David, long after Moses and Joshua, “Today” is the word, (as it has been said) “Today, if ye should hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” He is coming, and Israel will not harden their hearts in that day, but will say Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah; as the Christian and the church now say, Come, for they at least have proved His infinite grace. They dread not but long for His presence. But withal the, call goes on to the unbelieving while He tarries. For He is a Saviour as well as their Bridegroom. (Rev. 22)

It is impossible to maintain that Israel's entry into Canaan was God's rest or man's entrance into it. The failure is as evident in Canaan as in Eden. Neither was His rest. But in that reasoning His word is definitive. Long after Joshua made Israel rest in the land, God by David speaks of His rest not yet realized, as sure to be lost by unbelief as of old, as open to faith as ever—we may say now in the gospel more than ever; but this is scarcely the object in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a final call to the people, and a solemn warning against unbelief to such of them as called on the Lord Jesus. Whatever measure of rest then Joshua gave Israel, it was not the rest of God, for this in David is still held out prospectively. There remains therefore a sabbath-keeping for the people of God.

So in Rom. 8 we are said to be saved by hope; for the salvation spoken of goes beyond the soul, taking in the body (ver. 11, 23) and creation generally (ver. 19 and seqq.). But hope, says the apostle, that is seen is not hope; for who hopeth for that which he sees? But if we hope for that which we see not, we do with patience wait for it. It is thus with the rest God will have, prepared for those that love Him, where even He can see no flaw, and which, when all work is done, He will give us to enjoy with Himself. Hence it is wholly future; it remains for His people, whether for those above or for those below. For Christ is the Heir of all things, and we are joint-heirs with Him. All things in heaven and all things on earth are to be under Him, not in title only by personal exaltation at God's right-hand, but by actual possession in indisputable and acknowledged power when He reigns on His own throne. Such is the rest of God, as His word presents it, but alas! many that

bear Christ's name feebly believe if at all. It is as sure as His death; which is the ground of hope as of so much else infinitely precious; and shown carefully in Hebrews 2.

No present rest then is the rest of God; and the futurity of that rest is a grand safeguard against the snare for any Christian, most of all for a Jewish one, to seek it now here below. As God cannot rest in sin or misery, neither ought we to allow it even in our desires, still less make it our life. Now is the time for the labor of love if we know His love, now to seek true worshippers of the Father as He is seeking Himself, as the Son loved to do here below, as the Spirit does now sent down from heaven. Thus should we show that we have fellowship with the Father and the Son downward and all around in grace, as upward in praise and thanksgiving; while we wait for the rest of God to come, and this when it comes is everlasting.

Verse 10 is an added word, very characteristic of the inspired writer. It asserts the general principle, by the case put, that we cannot be working and have rest in the same things and the same sense. When one is entered into his rest; he also has rested from his works. It is not at all the common notion of resting from bad works when a man gets peace with God. However true this may be, it has nothing whatever to do with what is here written. And this is demonstrable, not only from the whole passage treating, not of the soul's spiritual rest by faith of Jesus but of God's future rest in glory, but by the comparison that follows, as God from His own (works). For assuredly His works were never bad but always and perfectly good. Nevertheless He is to rest even from the activity of His love to enjoy the glorious results. So is the case spoken of He that is entered into his rest is no longer busied with his works. It is a necessary principle and a blessed application to the matter in hand, and in no way a moralizing on a sinner, ceasing from his evil works and finding rest in Christ. Now is the time for the saint not to cease from his good works. Soon he will enter the eternal rest of God. The prevalence of sin and misery calls for unremitting labor while it is day; in this too we have communion with the Father and the Son (John 5:17). When they rest, so shall we; and eternity, as the active Arnauld d'Andilly said to Nicole, will be long enough to rest in. The A.V. is very faulty in its mistaken emphasis, which helps on the popular misapprehension.

Hebrews 4:11-13

The eleventh verse concludes the caution against present rest for the Christian followed by a statement of the means grace supplies to safeguard us through the wilderness.

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, that no one fall into the same example of disobedience. For the word of God [is] living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing to dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and a discerner of thoughts and intents of [the] heart. And there is not a creature unapparent before Him; but all things [are] naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do” (ver. 11-13).

We are exhorted to earnest striving now; for there is much that invites us to ease and relaxation. The very mercy of God to our souls might so dispose us, especially if brought up in a previous school of legal thought. For deep and full is the peace with God into which faith in Christ introduces; and so much the more is it enjoyed, if we have been toiling to better our case by self-denying efforts and a round of religious observances. Immense is the deliverance from bondage and doubt and dimness by the simple yet profound gospel of God. Yet the danger of reaction is not small. We are saved that we may diligently serve Him. We are put into fellowship with God's feelings as to all that surrounds us as well as what surrounds Him. This is not our rest, but our scene of labor where people and things are estranged from God. We shall rest when we enter what is perfectly according to His nature and purpose. Hence now and here below is the strongest call to diligence, not to rest. The rest for our conscience sets us the more free to labor in presence of sin, misery, and death. For we are now by faith in the secret of God, and our eyes are opened to discern the deceptions of the enemy. The world no longer appears a pleasant place, but the great snare to hinder progress and to turn from the glory of God where Christ is. It is the scene of His rejection and sufferings; it had the guilt of crucifying Him. And from this guilt no one is purged, save by faith of His blood which brings us nigh to God, Whose love, too, calls us to be witnesses of Christ to sinners and saints, as our Lord was when here.

Let us then be diligent to enter into that rest, refusing every other. Israel is the great example of falling through not hearkening to the Lord. This is the fatal disobedience here spoken of. They stumbled at the word, being disobedient. And such is the danger of all Christians now, as well as of those immediately addressed. We stop short, grow weary, make difficulties, get preoccupied, distracted from God's objects, attracted by things that are seen and temporal. We are called now to the work of faith, and labor of love, while we patiently wait for rest in glory at Christ's coming.

Unbelief may work in us as in Israel as to both the way and the end. They were weary of the one, and they despised the other. Let us take heed that none of us fall into the same example of disobedience. Therefore had that generation to wander forty years in the wilderness instead of going peacefully into the inheritance of the Lord, that the unbelievers might fall, and a generation to come be led into the goodly land.

The word of God is the needed correction, as we see it here. Indeed it is the revelation of God to the soul. Hence it is spoken of in terms which so approach the person of Christ that many take the language here as pointing to Him. And beyond doubt there is the closest connection between the word written or spoken and the Word personal. Scripture habitually has Christ as its object direct or indirect, for it may be an analogy of contrast as well as of resemblance, as we see in Adam or Aaron, David or Solomon, or any other person or thing spoken of.

Now it is the flesh, self in one form or another, which, when unjudged, exposes to falling in the wilderness. If we walk in the Spirit as we live in it, we should be kept straight and go forward. For the Holy Spirit ever glorifies Christ, and acts by the word in us, as Christ when here lived by the word. It is the true path of dependence and obedience, which glorifies the God who gave it. So He defeated the enemy and did the will of God. Nor was it so only in the activity of His blessed life; but not less, yea, much more, in that death which was preeminently accomplishing the word of God.

And we are now following His steps in the same world which hated and cast Him out. And as we are kept by the power of God through faith, so it is His word that acts on and in us by the Holy Spirit. For this alone applies to us, the revelation of God's nature as seen in Christ, which nourishes the life we have received in Christ, and detects the working in us of all that is outside the life which would dishonor God and would defile and endanger us. “For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” There is no instrument so exquisitely keen and cutting to deal with what is opposed to the mind and gracious, holy, purpose of God about us.

Therefore do the true-hearted believers welcome the application of its edge; for, if not pleasant to nature, it is profitable to us and due to God. As we are further told, it is penetrating “even to dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and a discoverer of heart's thoughts and intents.” No word of man has any such effect. It may be instructive, or pathetic, or alarming, to say nothing of its lighter qualities; but the word of God has the energy of its source and its own unmistakable character. It arrests the conscience, it sounds the heart, so that feelings and motives can no longer be hid. Christ, its great theme, shines as the True Light and makes everything manifest that is not like Himself. And how much there is in that horrid thing, self, which was never for an instant in Him!

Thus God's word acts “to dividing of soul and spirit,” two things so closely allied and so resembling as to yield to no other discriminating means. “Of both joints and marrow” seems to be a figure of close physical conjunction, which are beyond the reach of human instrument, as “soul and spirit” still more impalpably. It is possible that both phrases go beyond severing one from the other, and mean that each is pierced by the word of God as nothing else could. For it is the life of the Spirit, and in no way an instrument of death, save to that which it expels as foreign and evil.

The word of God is also said to be “a discerner of the heart's thoughts and intents.” Every working within the heart is thereby judged. There is no sparing of our own will. This the believer can hail, having a new nature which hates evil and feels according to Christ, the only One Who, though man, never did His own will, and Who is applied as a test and pattern. Thoughts before they are articulated in word, intents not yet reaching action, are sifted and vanish. Now where spiritual integrity exists, this is just what is wanted and desired; for we, from our new birth, are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience of Christ; nor could it be otherwise, if Christ be our life. For life is prompt to act according to its nature, as we cannot fail to see, even in the bent of any animal according to

its kind. Only in our case we have still the old Adam in us, which is never good and in the Christian to be always refused, now that we have a new and eternal life in Christ, which alone the Spirit exercises and. directs, strengthens and cheers.

Even an O.T. saint ignorant of the superior power and privilege of the gospel could say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139). How much more should we not welcome that word which makes it good in us? The germs of mischief are thus detected and destroyed; what can be more gracious though the probe may be sharp? It is just because we are redeemed out of Egypt, but not yet in that rest where all will be according to the perfect love and glory of God. We are still in the view of this Epistle journeying through the desert, where God in His goodness is proving us to know and let us know what is in our heart. It may be humbling, but nothing can be more wholesome.

The final words are very impressive. “And there is not a creature unapparent before Him; but all things [are] naked and laid open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.” This is exactly what unbelief hates and shirks at all cost; anything but the presence of God, and the consciousness of all out undisguisedly and without reserve in His sight. How much there is that we fail to discern within us! Self-love, will, haste, zeal, constantly tend to blind us. He with Whom we have to do acts in His own absolute knowledge of all, and uses this or that to discover what is the moving spring or the hidden aim. Not only in vain is the snare set in the sight of any bird, but we have the comfortable certainty of God as it were speaking to us, and this in the most safe and solemn manner; for He has magnified His word above all His name. Those who slight His word, treating it as dead and powerless, unless you have an erring man to enforce it, forget that we have to do with a living God, Who abounds toward us in suited helps and mercies even in this day of weakness, declension, and scattering. And if all other things and persons fail, He cannot, but watches over us in a holy love that acts for His own glory. His word puts us morally before Him when His eyes deal with our consciences. And as there is not a creature hidden from Him, all things are bare and laid open to His eyes with Whom we have to do. It is verifying in us now what manifestation before Christ's tribunal will do perfectly by-and-by; and the effect is to deliver from settling down into a present rest of our own, that we may pursue our pilgrim path and labor of love, intent on His rest in glory to come.

Hebrews 4:14-16

The word of God, above all price, and powerful though it be, is not the only declared means for our safe conduct through the wilderness. No instrument is so effectual to sift and deal with not outward ways only, but all that is of man. Yet we need and have far more: even the active grace of Christ's priesthood, occupied with us in every sorrow and trial of our pilgrimage.

“Having then a great high priest passed, as He is, through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not a high priest unable to sympathize with our infirmities, but having been tempted in all things, in like manner, apart from sin. Let us then approach with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help” (ver. 14-16).

It is not surprising that Tyndale made the fifth chapter to begin with three verses which ordinarily conclude chap. 4. For such is their direct connection. Nevertheless, following up as they do, the power of the word in detecting the flesh even in its subtlest forms, which is the death of the spirit practically, one can understand their more usual position.

Here the “great high priest” is presented in His normal position, not exceptionally as in Hebrews 2:17. That extraordinary action, the effecting of propitiation, was the basis of all for God's glory and man's salvation; but here we have the only due place of His intercessional functions. We see Him gone on through the heavens, not simply “entered,” as in all the old English versions, save Wiclif who, adhering to the Vulgate, was here kept fairly right. Christ's immense superiority to Aaron and his succession is thus set out for the Christian's assurance. Hence is the great High Priest enabled most effectually to meet our every need, He being before God evermore on high, we encompassed with infirmity in the wilderness, exposed to trial, danger, and sorrow. But it is the same “Jesus the Son of God,” Who made purification of the sins He bore in His own body on the tree, before He set Himself down on God's right hand. The question of our slavery and guilt is therefore settled everlastingly for all that believe; as there was no claim of Egypt or its prince on Israel after passing the Red Sea.

Yet the wilderness was full of snares and perils, as is our Christian path through the world. Only we in a higher meaning and the fullest sense are the redeemed of the Lord, needing no more for the soul's redemption, awaiting that of the body at His coming. Still we are here in this wilderness, with nothing but the dreary barren sand if we have not God with us. Therefore to sustain us and sympathize with us in our weakness He has given us a great High Priest, Whose love to us we have already proved when there was nothing to love in us, Whose blood cleansed us from every sin, Whose death and resurrection set us free, and raised an impassable barrier against our old enemies, thus seen again no more forever. We are not of the world, as Christ was not, slaves of Satan never more through His victory.

But we are not yet, as He is, in the heavenly land. We are journeying through the dry and howling wilderness, and though we are not in the flesh (Rom. 8:9) but in the Spirit as the Spirit dwells in us,

none the less the flesh is in us, ever ready to listen to the tempter, if our eyes be not set on Christ so as to walk after the Spirit. Hence the all-importance of our blessed Saviour for us on high, to which the presence of the Holy Spirit in us answers here below. Without both we should fall in the wilderness, as in it all flesh is judged and perishes. Nor do we as saints want sympathy with the evil thing in us. We have learned to discern it by the Word of God, and to hate the mind of the flesh as enmity against God and death. We have learned too that self and will are always and only evil; and therefore, by grace, we sit in judgment on ourselves, as now able each to say, “I am crucified with Christ, and live, no longer I but Christ liveth in me; and that which I now live in flesh, I live by faith in [lit., of] the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2).

Here then we now need constant vigilance and prayer, as we submit to that word which divinely scrutinizes us and calls us to cut off every snare. But we have His gracious oversight where it is of chiefest efficacy, Who feels for and with us, the Sanctifier with the sanctified, in every difficulty, danger, and suffering, as at the commandment of God we halt or march. But the cloud of the direction, however precious, is not enough, nor the warning or winning and cheering voices of the silver trumpets. We need a living Person, inflexible for God's glory, unerring as to God's will, unfailing in gracious power for us in our weakness and exposure; and all this we have, and incalculably more, in Jesus the Son of God, passed through the heavens as a great High Priest. He is man as truly as you or any. He was not alone perfectly man, but the perfect man. He knows therefore by experience what the world is, what Satan is, but that evil in the flesh which He by His supernatural birth never had, He by dependence on God never let in for a moment. “The Holy Thing” born of Mary, He was and ever lived the Holy One of God.

Hence Him only could God make sin for us on the cross that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Hence now as the ever-living High Priest He is exactly and exclusively the One to intercede for us and to sympathize with us. Had there been (I say not the blasphemy of sin or failure on His part), but ever so little of what scripture calls the mind of flesh or indwelling sin in Him, it would have both tainted fatally the offering for sin and blunted that heart of holy love from its sympathies with us in our desires and opposition by the Spirit against the flesh. But there was absolutely none. Taking part in blood and flesh as we had both, in Him was no sin, as in us there is: not merely no acts, but no root, of evil. Satan found nothing in Him (John 14:30), nor God (Psa. 17:3). Therefore could He die effectually for our sins and for sin; therefore does He live to plead no less efficaciously for us and sympathize with our infirmities. Death, and His death alone, could avail against sin; and God has accepted it in the fullest way, setting Jesus (Who glorified Him in all things and in this the deepest of all) at His own right hand, and sending down His Spirit that we might know His estimate of its effectual value for us now and henceforth and forever.

But we want One who lives and every moment interests Himself in all our difficulties and weakness as now living to God in an evil world, and not yet divested of that evil principle, the mind of the flesh which was never in Him but in us. This draws out for us His sympathies so much the more, because we have, not only to resist Satan as He alone did perfectly, but an inward enemy, or traitor, which He had not. And He is absolutely competent, being God and Man in one Person, and this after Himself treading all the way through as completely as none else ever did or could in heaven or earth. For us then, passed as He is through the heavens, He pleads and feels with us perfectly. “Let us then hold fast the confession.” Such is the demand and the cry of the new man against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Had the Son of God been simply above the heavens, there could have been no such motive to simply hold fast, no such comfort in our trials as Christians. But here He lived, suffered, and died, knowing each and all as no one else ever did, or can, but Jesus the Son of God. Hence He was fitted, being man, and of unequallable experience. He is able, as none else, to sympathize, not with our sins which as saints we dare not seek but most heartily repudiate, but with our infirmities. Not even a Paul who gloried in them (certainly not in sins!) could do without His sympathy, Nay, it was because he knew and appreciated His sympathy so much better than we, that he could exult when we are too often depressed. It is not however in flesh or on the earth that He exercises these functions for us, but as passed through the heavens where neither sin nor infirmity can ever come. Thus does He bear us up, and with tenderest feeling for us, for each as truly as if none other existed to share it, being God no less than man. To allow a priest on earth, yea to conceive Him such, is to Judaize. Save for the wholly different work of laying the foundation of all in atonement, His priestly work is exclusively on high, as we are partakers of a heavenly calling and are called to hold fast that confession and none other.

But, in order to such a priesthood, Jesus had been tempted in all things in like manner, sin excepted. Here we need to be on our guard. For the foisting in of “yet” in the last clause is apt to convey a notion wholly contrary to the truth and most derogatory to Christ. Most readers would gather thence that, though Christ was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He never sinned. Now one may boldly affirm that this is altogether short of the true meaning and indeed quite another thought, so as to miss the mind of God in the passage. It is not sins or failures excepted, but “apart from sin.” We have evil temptations from within, from fallen humanity; Christ had none. This was absolutely incompatible with His holy person. By a miracle He was even as to humanity exempt from taint of evil, as no one ever was since the fall. And it is of these holy temptations that the Epistle to the Hebrews treats, not of our unholy ones. The Epistle of James distinguishes them very definitely in chap. 1. Compare James 1:2,12, on the one hand, and James 1:13-19 on the other. We know the latter too well, Jesus never. But He knew the former as no other before or since. He was in all things tempted according to likeness, i.e. with us, with this infinite difference, “sin apart.” He knew no sin, He had no inward sinful temptation. He is therefore the more, not the less, able to sympathize with us. For sin within, even if not yielded to, blinds the eye and dulls the heart, and hinders from unreserved occupation with the trials of others.

Having then such tender and efficacious intervention in our ever living Intercessor at God's right hand we are exhorted to draw near with boldness to the throne of grace. Carefully observe that it is not coming to Christ to plead for us, which supposes a soul not at ease before God and doubting the grace in which we who believe habitually stand through redemption. Christ did not go on high till all was cleared for us on earth, and ourselves, as we know from John 20, placed in the enjoyment of His own relationship with His Father and His God (His Deity of course always excepted), children, and saints quickened together with Him, being forgiven all our trespasses (Col. 2:13). “Let us approach therefore with all boldness unto the throne of grace.”

We are entitled thus to come with all boldness to God on His throne. To us through the redemption of Christ it is a throne of grace. Early in the Revelation we see a throne whence the expressions of judgment proceed. Toward the close it is a throne of glory, the throne of God and of the Lamb, whence issues a river of life clear as crystal; so will it be known when the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife has prepared herself. Need we add the solemnity of the great white throne, of

everlasting judgment? The throne of grace, though of the same God, has a totally different character toward the many sons that are being brought to glory.

To this then we are now told to approach with all boldness. Some prefer what they call “a humble hope.” But this is mere human sentiment or worse. In ourselves we have no ground even for the faintest hope; if we have Christ by faith, we wrong both His work and God's grace, now righteously and perfectly vindicated, if we do not approach with all boldness to the throne of grace. Is this to exaggerate the word of God? or is not that unbelieving? Alas, the unbelief of believers! And see what the aim is when we thus approach: “that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help.” Our weakness needs that mercy; and God's pleasure is that we, engaged with the enemy in His Name, may find grace for seasonable help. He sits there and invites thus that we may depend on Him for help in good time. Having such a Priest, let us approach the throne of grace boldly. God and His Son are pledged to bless us, as also we can look to Him without doubt or fear. Such is His word, no less than His will.

Hebrews 5:1-4

We now enter on the main doctrinal development of the Epistle, the detailed comparison of the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron, pursued with collateral truths to the middle of the tenth chapter. The aim evidently is to prove the incontestable superiority of Christ in this as in every other point of view. It was of the utmost moment for such confessors of His name as were Jews; it is of scarcely less importance for souls accustomed to the traditions and practices of Christendom, where an order of officials has been set up not always sacerdotal in name, but ever tending to fall back on that Aaronic order, though according to God it grew old and vanished away when the substance was established forever in Christ.

“For every high priest, taken as he is from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining unto God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, being able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and on account of this he ought, even as for the people, so also for himself also to offer for sins. And no one taketh the honor to himself but when called by God even as Aaron also” (Heb. 5:1-4).

The description is general, but with Aaron in view in order to bring in the glorious contrast of Christ. This has not always been seen, and the consequence is often disastrous. Such an oversight is inexcusable, because God has clearly revealed the infinite dignity of Christ's person and the grace of His work. Were these foundations of the faith held fast, they afford an invaluable safeguard for souls. Where it is not so, what is there to preserve from error of the deadliest kind? Christ is the truth. This scripture upholds, as the Holy Spirit is here to glorify Him and will never be a consenting party to His dishonor. And the Father's love is never tasted otherwise. For His complacency was ever there, and especially expressed to Him a man on earth, that we who believe in Christ might hear the Son and have fellowship with the Father.

Assuredly Christ is only viewed as priest, and only became such after the assumption of manhood, and indeed much more. As little can it be questioned that He entered on that office for the partakers of the heavenly calling, to sympathize with them, as well as appear and intercede for them in God's presence. But the language here employed does not refer to Him; rather is it to give point, by way of contrast as a whole, with that earthly priesthood whose highest representative was Aaron. Hence the language, however comprehensive, leaves out what is most distinctive of Christ, and expresses a ground in ver. 2 and a consequence in ver. 3 which faith ought to have regarded as intolerable in His case, because it is opposed to the truth of both His person and His work. The fact is that it is simply every case of human high priesthood which is set before us here, and not that of Christ, which follows subsequently, and is placed in marked contradistinction. Indeed the basis laid at the beginning of the Epistle refutes the inclusion of Christ; for He is carefully shown to be Son of God as well as Son of Man. His divine glory is carefully maintained from the first and throughout. It is this, as well as the accomplishment of redemption, that gives infinite efficacy to His office no less than to His sacrifice.

The opening verses of our chapter therefore set out the ordinary requirements of any and every high priest, however truly the Lord may have possessed some and superseded others by His surpassing and unique dignity. The real aim is to evince the necessary inferiority of a human high priest, great as the privilege was in divine things, even if the high priest were Aaron, the most honored of all; and thus to enhance the incomparable glory of Christ's high priesthood.

Every high priest was “taken from among men". This would be most inadequate if applied to Christ, but perfectly true of Aaron and his successors. They were but men, though taken from among them. So to speak of the Lord is to forget Who He is. The Word was made flesh. He became man, but God He was and is from everlasting to everlasting, the Eternal. An angel had been wholly unsuited, and is only employed in prophetic vision when the object is to express distance without losing the fact of priesthood as in Rev. 8. But in fact high priest was of necessity a man, though taken from among men. He was to represent man before God, and to represent God before men. His appointment was on behalf of men in things relating to God, and more definitely to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” What a meager statement, if Christ were in view Who gave Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor! It is on the contrary precise and full if the inspired writer were treating only of human high priesthood as distinguished from that of Christ.

Still more evident is the other side of high priestly functions; “being able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, since he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” He can feel and make considerate allowance for the ignorant and erring, being no more than a weak man himself, whatever be the exalted character of his office; he himself also is beset round about with infirmity. How true this is of every high priest without qualification needs no proof. But what guards and limitations and reserves are necessary if a believer essays to bring Christ within the range! That the Son deigned to become man is truth only secondary to His being God, perfectly man and perfect man. That He knew hunger, thirst, weariness, is certain, that He was crucified in (or of) weakness is revealed to us. Were this or its like all that is conveyed here, none ought to hesitate; for it is a wrong to the truth to detract from His real humanity, as of course from His proper deity. But to my mind the passage speaks of a mere man, such as every other high priest is necessarily, and grounds his ability to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring on his own besetment with weakness; whereas, when He is without doubt referred to, He is spoken of as “Jesus the Son of God” and thus shown in the power of divine nature and relationship, though partaking of ours to sympathize with us fully, in fact tempted in all things after a like manner with the momentous exception of sin. Of that class of temptation He had absolutely none, as it was incompatible with the integrity and holiness of His person as well as the efficacy and acceptance of His work.

But what absolutely precludes and expels this loose, erroneous, and Christ-dishonoring application is the pendent in ver. 3. “And on account of this [infirmity] he ought, even as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.” This is bound up with the verses that precede, and rigorously pertains to “every high priest” intended in them. All well-read men are aware that some scholars have dared to apply even this to Christ, following out logically the mistake that applies the passage to Him generally. They ought to have judged rather that, as it is a blasphemous falsehood that Christ offered for sins on His own account, the verses that precede describe high priesthood in general, but not His, which has a higher ground in His deity, a more glorious character, as

having power and efficacy intrinsic and eternal. The contrast here cannot be fairly denied. And it is the more striking because of the only point where resemblance is expressed, immediately following. “And no one taketh the honor to himself but when called by God even as Aaron also.” The call of God was essential, and one might have thought indisputably clear in Aaron's, and all the more after the gainsaying of Korah was answered in the destruction of himself and his rebellious companions. But the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and Christendom is apprised of that very woe in the solemn warning of Jude, no less prophetic than that of Enoch which he cites.

Hebrews 5:5-6

It is evident from the last verse under consideration that the priest is viewed according to God's mind and statutes, not as the facts had long misrepresented this in fallen Israel. For notoriously intrigue, corruption, and violence had reigned for many a year in Jerusalem, and the civil power had taken the place of God as things grew hopelessly, irretrievably evil. If the priests did not take the honor to themselves, it was because the power of the sword forbade any save its own nominee. Hence the disorder that prevailed when the word of God came to John, the forerunner of the Messiah, “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests,” not only two, but such a pair! Far different was the will of God even for the time of shadows.

From scripture we know that the early uprising of Korah the Levite with others not even of that tribe disputed the priesthood of Aaron. This gainsaying however God settled publicly and solemnly by a destruction without parallel of the ringleaders, and by a plague that cut off thousands of the guilty people, only stayed by the gracious and effectual intervention of Aaron at the bidding of Moses. Nor was this all. For Jehovah directed twelve rods to be laid up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, one for each house of their fathers, that He might cause that man's rod to blossom whom He chose to draw near to Himself on behalf of all the others. On the morrow the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi alone budded, and blossomed, and yielded almonds: the figure of a better priesthood, of life out of death, and fruit by the evident grace of God, of the One that ever liveth to make intercession. From Aaron the descent was fixed in his sons, not without striking dealings in good and evil that modified the succession according to the declared will of God. With Phinehas in the desert was the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; as it was manifest later when Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest and set Zadok in his stead, thus fulfilling the prophetic word about the intruding line of Eli. God alone was entitled to order it; and this He did, as He will by-and-by in the new age when all Israel shall be saved. Then the sons of Zadok reappear to minister to Jehovah, and stand in His presence to offer unto Him the fat and the blood, saith the Lord Jehovah. (Ezek. 44:15-31; Ezek. 48:8-14.)

But of this future restoration when temple, priesthood, and sacrifice shall be in force, never more to be misused but rather to remind Israel under the new covenant of their accomplished blessing in the Messiah, we hear nothing in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The habitual aim is to bring out what the believer has now in Him Who died and is risen and exalted at God's right hand. There are hints here and there of the age and habitable earth to come, of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, of good things to come, of the day approaching, and the like. There are those intimations which look onward to another state and for blessing to the elect nation. But it would have undone the object of the Spirit to have expatiated on these earthly glories, though enough is said to prove that they are in no way effaced or forgotten, but await their fulfillment when Christ appears. Yet the evident and earnest and urgent task in hand is to bring out a “better thing” already verified in Christ on high, for those who believe while He is hidden in God and have the Holy Spirit to show us the efficacy of His sacrifice as seen in the light of glory, and the present application of His priesthood to the partakers of a heavenly calling, and the heavens themselves as the only true and adequate

sanctuary, into which we are invited to draw near with all boldness in spirit. Hence the regeneration and its assured earthly privileges for Israel by-and-by stand in the background that the luster of present heavenly associations may be undimmed, and that those who now believe in Christ while the nation rejects Him may see and enjoy their portion as incomparably deeper and higher.

Accordingly, whether for vindicating God's glory on the one hand or for the soul's complete blessedness on the other, we are waiting for no work. The mightiest for both is already done and accepted; as the Person Who has wrought all is the guarantee of its absolute and eternal excellency. And it is all the more precious and admirable, because He previously came down into the reality of a race and a scene ruined by sin, suffering for it yet perfectly free from it. This place He accepted loyally with an entire submissiveness and an unswerving obedience, whatever it might cost. Never was such a servant. Divine dignity, infinite love, unfailing devotedness, met in Him Who took a bondman's place all through His life on earth, yea in the end was made sin where none could follow.

“Thus the Christ also glorified not Himself to be made high priest, but He that spake unto Him, Thou art My Son: today have I begotten Thee; even as He saith also in another [place], Thou [art] a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:5-6).

Truly He glorified not Himself in any respect, even when the atoning work was done. For His kingdom He waits, though Ruler of the kings of the earth. He is gone into the far country and on receiving it He will return. Meanwhile we have in Him a great high Priest, as we have seen. But in this too He “glorified not Himself to be made high priest.” He waited on Him that sent Him. It was for God to speak, as He did. And here Psa. 2:7 is again cited. The dignity of His relationship is acknowledged. “Thou art My Son: today have I begotten Thee” (ver. 5). Others were lifted out of their nothingness. God conferred as He would on such as were but men compassed with infirmity, like Aaron. He too deigned to be truly born of woman, but even so God owned Him His Son, as none else. To partake of blood and flesh through and of His mother was in no way to forfeit His title. Son of God from everlasting to everlasting, in time also as man He has God declaring “today have I begotten Thee.” His personal dignity, His relationship as Son of God, we hear repeated in connection with the office of Priest. Such is the true ground in contrast with every other. Undoubtedly the Word was made flesh to be made high priest; and He has been already shown truly Son of Man in this very connection (Heb. 2). Still there is the utmost care to reiterate the words of the second psalm, though cited long before, that we may remember the more distinctly Who He is that was made high priest in contradistinction with the highest human one of God's own special appointment.

Not till then have we the direct and explicit prediction from Psa. 110 “As He saith also in another [place]. Thou [art] a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:6).

Farther on we shall have before us the detailed application of this remarkable oath of Jehovah, the oath of which, it is added, He will not repent, the key to the scene historically introduced in Genesis 14. Suffice it here to say that the Spirit appears in this allusion to be simply drawing attention to the singular honor of the Christ, as in no way sharing in the order of Aaron, but giving force to that of Melchizedek, who comes before us long before as sole priest, without successor, predecessor, or subordinates. The order of Aaron was essentially successional, and for a reason

that attaches to man as he is, subject to death because of sin. Melchizedek is strikingly brought before us as a living priest, alone in His blessing the faithful man on God's part, and in blessing God most high on man's part: the eloquent type which the Spirit so often uses of the Christ, as the sole and ever living Priest on high.

Hebrews 5:7-10

We have had the first reference to the order of Melchizedek, which is repeated so often in the Epistle as to prove to anyone who reverences scripture its immense importance in the mind of God. It is a striking part of the typified glory of the Messiah, foreshown in Genesis 14, predicted and declared with divine solemnity in Psalm 110, applied and expounded with care and fullness in our Epistle, which can be examined as each reference comes before us. In the present chapter it is the peculiar and personal dignity which is insisted on in distinction from Aaron, however eminent by God's choice and appointment. But the Christ was God's Son, begotten in time according to Psalm 2, as in John's Gospel Only-begotten beyond time and above dispensation, being eternal no less than the Father. Such was His person; and His office was no less singularly glorious even if typified by a royal priest of early days. For, as the psalm cited puts it, He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. As Melchizedek stands alone, without predecessor or successor so far as the record speaks, the negative in his case becomes the positive in the case of Christ. And this the unimpeachably divine authority of the psalm lays down with all simplicity and assurance. And such will be the exercise of His priesthood for the earth when the days of heaven shine upon it in the future kingdom. Meanwhile, as our Epistle urges, He is priest after this order now, as forever. As He alone is Son, so He is exclusively royal priest without end, yet not glorifying Himself any more than Aaron, but a thousand years before so addressed by God, as the typical shadow met Abram not far from a thousand years before the psalm.

Here we are first directed to His earthly path, then to His heavenly place, and the blessed results. “Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and having been heard for His pious fear, though He was a Son, learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been perfected, He became to all those that obey Him author of everlasting salvation, addressed by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:7-10). Suffering was to be distinctively His portion. It had no place in Aaron any more than in Melchizedek. In the Christ it was altogether pre-eminent and peculiar.

Glory intrinsic and conferred is His beyond comparison: yet this is not all that grace gives in Him, nor yet all that we need, not merely as sinners but here especially as saints. Our sin and our misery but furnished the opportunity to divine love, and this is only shown and learned in Christ, in Him that suffered infinitely here below; and Christ alone from the mystery of His person was capable of such suffering. Thus has He glorified, and thus reached hearts opened by grace to feel in our measure the wonders of His love. In the days of His flesh we behold the surface and hear the sound of His sorrows which God alone was able to fathom. For this as for other reasons essential to the purpose of God and the blessing of man the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and obeyed unto death, yea, death of the cross. And if ever prayers and supplications, if ever strong crying and tears, were realities for the heart before God, His were. For His divine nature screened Him from no pain, grief, or humiliation, or suffering, but rather gave competency of person to endure perfectly, while all was accepted in absolute dependence on, and

subjection to, His Father. There was not a particle of hardness or insensibility in Christ. It was not a small thing. for His love to have hatred and contempt, to be despised and rejected of men; not only not to be esteemed by the people of God and His people, but to be esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; to be deserted by all His disciples, denied by one, betrayed by another; and, far the most terrible of all and wholly different from all, to be forsaken of God just when He most needed His consolation and support. But so it must have been if sin was to be duly judged in the sacrifice, if our sins were to be completely borne away, and God to be glorified as to evil adequately and forever. Gethsemane, and the cross, or the first part of Psalm 22, are the best comment on verse 7. It was equally in keeping with God that He was not heard while atonement was in accomplishment, and that He was heard when He poured out His soul unto death and Jehovah made it an offering for sin; for He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

Christ therefore, besides that which fell exclusively on Him as the propitiation for our sins in vindicating God at all cost sacrificially, knew as no saint ever did all that can befall holiness and love in a world and in the midst of a people alienated from God. As at the beginning Satan sought to attract Him from the path of lowly, suffering, and absolute obedience, by temptations subtly suited to the circumstances, so he assailed Him at the end with the terrors of death, and of such a death! But all was in vain. He suffered, but did not succumb. Though prayer characterized Him at all times, then especially in His sorrow and deep depression He is alone with His Father (even His chosen three left behind about a stone's throw), and fallen on His face deprecates that cup, yet in meek submission; and this a second time (while others could not watch one hour with Him), and a third time from that agony in which He prayed more earnestly. And if an angel appeared to strengthen Him, none the less did His sweat become as great drops of blood falling down on the ground. He endured the temptation and was blessed, suffering to the utmost; they slept for sorrow and, instead of praying, entered into the temptation and fell. And He was saved not from dying, but out of death. Whatever His inward and unwavering confidence, He could have no public answer till resurrection when He was saved and out of death. To be saved from death had left man in his sins, and Satan's power unbroken, and God's judgment in suspense, and His grace impotent. But the Son of Man was there to deliver from all evil and to set all good on an immutable foundation to God's glory, even while saving the lost. He was heard for His pious fear, but after unsparing judgment had taken its course. Though Son of God, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. We learn to obey as God's children, who were once sons of disobedience; He being Son was used to speak, and it was done, He knew not what obedience was. But when He became man, He took loyally that place: in the volume of the book it is written of Him, not of the first man, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Indeed He suffered it to the uttermost as well as did it in all perfection.

This being “perfected” means the completeness of His course through sufferings in resurrection and heavenly glory, as we may see far beyond controversy in Hebrews 7:28, where the word has a form to express permanent result, instead of only indicating the fact accomplished as here. Neither “sanctified” nor “consecrated” is the true force: other words signify this correctly. Nor would either suit this place when His completed work of suffering is in view, by which alone salvation could be. And the result is here affirmed in terms of triumph: “He became to all those that obey

Him author of everlasting salvation.” Thus on the one hand is His glorious position maintained, and on the other everlasting salvation is assured to all who own Him. He is none other than the prophet like unto Moses Whom Jehovah promised long ago to raise up. But He is far more, and more blessed. For instead of the threat of God's retribution to him that hearkens not, He is become author of salvation to those that obey Him; yea, in contrast with legal uncertainty, “of everlasting salvation to those that obey Him.” How indeed could it be otherwise if we believe in the glory of His person and the efficacy of His work? But all have not faith; and faith-obedience is the root of all other obedience precious in God's eyes, Who disdains to accept the homage that is proffered to Himself while making light of His Son and of His infinite sufferings. “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father Who sent Him.” “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.”

Hebrews 5:11-14

The rest of the chapter, and the following one, compose a long and instructive digression on the state of those addressed, the more to be blamed because they had had time to become mature. This it was forbade opening up the subject of Melchizedek as otherwise might have been happy. It even exposed souls to the danger of going back from Christianity, though better things were expected of themselves, seeing that grace already had wrought practically in them. Hence on the one hand they are encouraged to be imitators of those that through faith and patience inherit the promises; and on the other God is shown to have given strong encouragement to the most tried and feeble, by Jesus within the veil, the Forerunner gone in for us.

“Concerning whom [or, which] we have much to say and hard to be interpreted in saying, since ye are become dull of hearing. For whereas on account of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye again have need that someone teach you the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God and have become in need of milk, [and] not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk [is] inexperienced in [the] word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food belonged to fullgrown [persons], who on account of habit have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

There is no such hindrance to spiritual intelligence as traditional religion, and none then exposed to it so much as Jewish believers. The wisdom of the world is another great impediment, which drew out the censure and warning of the apostle to the Corinthian saints, especially in 1 Corinthians 2; 3, and in terms somewhat parallel. Both are hostile to that faith which is only nourished by the divine word, and is impaired by any human admixture. But of the two the religious rival is the more dangerous, because it has more seeming devotedness and humility, and so appeals, however groundlessly, to conscience instead of to mere mind. The effect is that growth in the Lord cannot but be arrested. Instead of becoming spiritual, souls abide fleshly and infantine. For the Holy Spirit is grieved, and reproves the state, instead of being free to lead on and strengthen by taking the things of Christ and showing them to such. We learn thereby how much the moral condition has to do with God's training of the saint; and we may well thank Him that so it is. For nothing is more dangerous than advancing in knowledge where flesh and the world are unjudged: the devil at once seizes his opportunity to overthrow the unwary and careless, and seek His dishonor Whose name they bear. But it is no remedy for the evil to be dwarfed by tradition or diverted by philosophy. The Holy Spirit has ample matter to convey; but if we are dulled and darkened by seeking to glean in other fields, the word of God becomes hard of interpretation to us. Hence it is added “Since ye are become” (not simply “are” as in the A. V.) “dull in your hearing” (the dative of reference, and naturally thence in the plural).

Our Lord had touched on the same difficulty and danger for His Israelitish hearers in the first Gospel. From every hearer of the word of the kingdom, if he understand it not, the wicked one comes and catches away what had been sown in his heart; as on the other hand the seed sown on the good ground is he that hears and understands the word (Matt. 13:19, 23). In Mark, as with a

view to service, it is a question of reception or not; in Luke, as looking on to strangers of the Gentiles, the point is believing and being saved, keeping the word and bringing forth fruit with patience. But the Jew, as being in continual contact with religious prejudice and tradition, was in peculiar danger of not understanding what was new and of God, the present test of faith.

The apostle now expostulates because of their backwardness in the truth (after professing it so long). “For whereas ye ought on account of the time to be teachers, ye again have need that someone teach you the elements” &c. Christendom lies open to the selfsame rebuke, and from similar causes. Romans 11 had pointed out a danger peculiar to it, and tending to as great if not greater self-complacency, the danger of conceiving itself secured forever, and so perverting the obvious admonition from the excision of the Jew into the proud assurance of immunity for the Gentile graft. It is indeed the very snare into which the Romish system has fallen beyond all others. Here it is only the stop put to their learning the things of God that is noticed. Instead of being teachers now, after so long bearing the Lord's name, they had need again to be taught the very rudiments. So in similar conditions it ever is. No man ever became mighty in God's word by the study of theology, though some theologians have grown in a measure in spite of what is calculated to obstruct and blind. It is the general effect which proves the character of what works for profit or loss. Now who can doubt the lamentable ignorance of God's word in Christendom at large? And is it not certain that the darkness is greatest where men are most shut up to tradition and least search the scriptures?

No doubt when souls are in this state, they need a powerful means to set them free; and this Epistle is a fine sample of the truth grace employs to that end. The Person of Christ has to be clearly presented, and their distinct and blessed association with Him through His atoning work, as well as His position and gracious functions for them on high. This alone dispels all earth-born clouds and extricates from the din and dust of human schools. Therefore was the apostle ministering these fundamental truths throughout in order to their deliverance. He implies, nay affirms, that they were spiritually infants needing to learn the elements over again. These, qualified as “of the beginning of the oracles of God,” mean what God gave in Christ here below, short of His redemption and His heavenly place, with the gift of the Spirit, which lend Christianity its true distinctive character and its power. The eyes of the disciples were blessed, because they saw, and their ears, because they heard, what many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear, but did not. The accomplishment of redemption and the new place of Christ in heaven went far beyond. Here they were utterly dull, not so much about the facts, as respecting their blessed import and results to faith, as well as for God's glory. The issue was that the very rudiments were rendered obscure and uncertain: so little can the Christian afford to waste his time in seeking the living One among the dead, and so injurious is the issue of turning from the actual testimony of God on our relationships to a vague and dreamy sentiment about the past. Not one thing is understood aright. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” It is never so, if we look not to Christ where God is now pointing us. In His light we see light. Failure here exposes the Christian now as then to become a person having need of milk, and not of solid food, of fare for babes, rather than for adults: a state quite anomalous since redemption.

This figure is unfolded in the next two verses. In no way is milk slighted in its due place. It is the most wholesome and suited of all nourishment for the infant; but the grown man requires quite different food for his developed state and appropriate duties. “For every one that partaketh of milk

is unskilled (or without experience) in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant; but solid food belongs to full-grown persons that have by reason of habit their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil." By "partaking" is meant having milk for one's share, in ordinary use, as a babe takes it; not for partial or occasional fare, as any one might. The word translated "fullgrown" is literally "perfect" and so given in the A. V. repeatedly to the loss of the true force, which is simply those come to maturity.

Now this is the present aim of the gospel, and its effect wherever souls submit to God's righteousness in Christ. We may see the same truth set forth in substance in Galatians 3; 4. Faith having come (i.e. dispensationally), we are no longer under a child-guide, as the law had been unto Christ; "for ye are all," says the apostle to the Galatian saints, "God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus." "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is an infant, differeth nothing from a slave, though he be lord of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. So we too, when we were infants, were enslaved under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, come of woman, come under law, that He might redeem those under the law, that we might receive our sonship. And because ye are sons. God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father."

We may gather therefore that to stop short of liberty and sonship is to abide in the bondage of law and to undo the privileges of the gospel. Further, we may note how indigenous to the heart is this fear of God's grace, which, even when the gospel is sounding freedom to the slave through faith in Christ, is ever prone to go back to what is annulled (2 Cor. 3); and this among Gentiles as well as Jews: a retrograde tendency which the apostle was combating always and everywhere. Whatever its source, whether worldly wisdom or legalism, it is an evil to which no quarter should be shown, more particularly as we have rarely to do with it now in Jews, for whom old and fond habits might be pleaded. But for the ordinary Christian, what extenuation can be offered? The risen and ascended Christ supposes the work accepted of God whereby peace was made; and every believer is justified from all things, from which none could be justified by the law of Moses. The Hebrews addressed had not gone on with the gospel. They were as infants needing milk, and unable to digest solid food. It was not God's will, but their prejudices and unbelief, which thwarted their growth. The believer, if simple, passes, we may say, at once into sonship; if occupied with self, with his ordinances, with his church, or with any object to engage his soul other than Christ, he remains an infant like those Hebrews, and in no real sense fullgrown any more than they. God is not mocked, nor does He suffer even saints to slight or doubt the gospel with impunity. It is to prefer bondage when grace is proclaiming liberty; and to need milk instead of that solid food which suits the fullgrown; and every Christian ought to be fullgrown. Christ redeemed him, even if a Hebrew of Hebrews or a Pharisee of Pharisees, to know the sonship of God in the power of His Spirit.

Hebrews 6:1-3

It is of the highest importance then that the believer should wake up to his due place according to the call of grace. Christ as He now is makes his relationship evident. By Him and to Him where He sits at God's right hand we are called. It is therefore in the fullest sense a heavenly calling. Old things, not evil things only, are passed away. We are by faith associated with the glorified Christ, Who, having accomplished redemption, is on that ground gone into heaven, so as to confer on the faithful a heavenly relationship. All that is distinctive of the Christian accordingly is in contrast with the ancient people of God whose position, associations, worship, and hope, were earthly though ordered of God. The danger of the Christian therefore, and especially for the Hebrew Christian, was a lapse into earthly things; which was the more easily done as the O. T. was no less divinely inspired than the New, and hence might plausibly be pleaded to justify such a return.

“Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us press on unto full growth [lit. perfection], not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God, of teaching of washings and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of dead [persons], and of everlasting judgment; and this will we do if God permit” (Heb. 6:1-3).

We could not be exhorted in any just sense to leave “the principles” of the doctrine of Christ. For first principles never become antiquated. Nor does the text really say so here, any more than it does in truth speak slightingly of “the first principles of the oracles of God” in Hebrews 5:12. “Principles” or “first principles” of Christianity it is of all moment to apprehend and hold fast; and in fact this the Epistle insists on from first to last. It was here the Hebrew confessors of Christ were weak. They had faintly if at all realized the truth that was wrapped up in the person of Christ and in the facts on which the gospel is based. They were occupied with whatever lay short of His death, resurrection, and ascension, with a Messiah known after the flesh. But these were such “rudiments” as were in keeping with Him on earth when the Holy Spirit was not yet given and the words the Lord spake were dimly understood. Indeed many things He had yet to say they could not then bear. This was but “the beginning of the oracles of God"; whereas “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” would better express that profound connection of truth with fundamental facts and Christ's person which characterizes the Epistles of Paul and John. What is really meant here is “the word of the beginning of Christ,” that which was revealed in the days of His flesh and in due time recorded as His ministry in the Gospels. To limit the soul to this, perfect as it was in its season and in itself, is to do without that blessed use of His redemption and heavenly headship which the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to preach and teach, and which we have permanently in the apostolic writings. His cross totally changed the standing of the believer. To ignore this is in fact to stop short of full and proper Christianity, to remain infants, where the Lord would have His own to reach their majority. Let us not slight the riches of His grace.

“Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us press on unto full growth.” The new status of the Christian depends on Christ dead, risen, and in heaven. The infinite sacrifice is already offered and accepted; and only so has Christ taken His seat on the right hand of the

Majesty on high. We cannot therefore go to elements before the cross for that which forms and fashions the Christian. We need the corn of the land, now that it is no longer a question of raining manna in the wilderness.

The various English versions are disappointing. Wiclif seems to have read or mistaken “immittentes” for “intermittentes” in the Vulgate, for he has the strange error of “bringing in,” &c., instead of leaving off. And Tyndale is loose indeed: “let us leave the doctryne pertayninge to the beginninge of a Christen man.” In result it is not far from the general sense, though intolerable as a translation. Cranmer's Bible, and the Genevese followed Tyndale less or more closely. The Rhemish, save in its servile adherence to the Latin, is more exact than any; for even the A. and the R. V., as we have seen, might mislead in the text, though precise in the margin. The Revisers rightly gave “full grown” for perfect in Hebrews 5:14; consistency would therefore demand “full growth” here. For it is not the quite ignorant who fail to understand that “perfection” means only that, the adult standing of the Christian, as compared with infancy before redemption. But the enemy has a hand in keeping believers back now, as this Epistle chides the Hebrews for the same culpable dullness in early days.

The statement in the chapter before, that Christ having been made perfect became, to all those that obey Him, Author of eternal salvation, helps much to see what perfection or full growth means here. Till then the saints could not rise above promise. Now whatever, or how many soever, be the promises of God, in Him is the Yea, and in Him the Amen for glory to God by us. Till redemption the Spirit of prophecy could say that God's salvation was to come, and His righteousness to be revealed. But the gospel declares that His righteousness has been manifested, and that the believer has eternal life and receives the end of His faith, even soul salvation, though we have to wait for that of the body yet. Meanwhile those that are Christ's are cleansed once for all, not only sanctified through the offering of Christ, but perfected forever (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς) as Hebrews 10 tells us unhesitatingly. The Holy Ghost, instead of keeping our guilt continually before us, testifies that through Christ's work God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. Thus for the Christian, with full remission, there is no more offering for sins; and hence he has boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Those that by faith seize this, the truth of the gospel, are no more under age, held in bondage (as the apostle says elsewhere) under the rudiments of the world. By the faith of Him Who died and rose we receive the adoption of sons, and through His Spirit cry, Abba, Father. So we draw nigh.

It was here the Hebrews were slow to hear and learn of God. They did not doubt that Jesus was the Christ; but they were dull to own both the full glory of His person and the present eternal efficacy of His work. This failure in faith kept them babes, and for this they are blamed; for God could not reveal more distinctly the dignity of Christ, nor could Father, Son, and Holy Ghost add to the fullness of what the cross is to God as well as to the believer. The Holy Spirit is come down from the glory of heaven to attest what He is there, and what that work has done for all those that believe in Him. Entrance into this portion is full growth.

It was really going back from heavenly glory and eternal redemption on the part of all who refused to go forward into the full privileges of the gospel, content to know no more than what the disciples had before the cross. All they had then did not give them peace with God, for it did not cleanse their consciences. The middle wall of partition stood unbroken. There was no access for them into

the holiest, nor had they the Spirit of adoption. Neither the sting of death was gone, nor the power of sin annulled. Full growth implies on the contrary all this blessedness, and more; and to this the Hebrews are here exhorted to go on. It is not attainment, but simply faith in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, in a word, Christianity. Alas, how many who call themselves Christians, as sincere believers as the Hebrews addressed, are no less than they looking behind, instead of moving on to the enjoyment by faith of the risen Savior, and of their nearness to His God and Father.

The next words give a sample of the things that occupied those who were not full grown, from which they are here dissuaded: “not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God.” It was all well to have laid such a foundation once; it was childish to be ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Repentance is indispensable for a sinful man; faith in God must ever be in a saint. But eternal life is now given, Christ sent as propitiation, and the Holy Ghost given to us. Is all this to leave believers where they were? Take again yet lower things, “of doctrine of washings and imposition of hands.” These had their place, as we know, and many heed them much now as then, external though they are and in no way perfecting the worshipper as touching the conscience. The “washings” may include John's baptism, or that of the disciples, though the word slightly differs in its form; and the laying on of hands was certainly an ancient sign of blessing, which we see practiced in various ways even after the gospel. But those whose hearts dwell in such signs and set not their mind on things above betray the symptoms of their infantile condition. God has provided some better thing for us. They are among the things whatever their teaching might be, which the light of the glory now revealed in Christ leaves in the shade. So again with the still weightier doctrine “of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.” No Christian denies either for a moment, but acknowledges both truths; yet he looks for his blessing at Christ's coming, as he knows from His own lips that judgment, awaits only those who reject Him, and that believers are to rise in the contrasted resurrection of life, and do not come into judgment.

Let souls beware then of labor in vain that diverts from better blessing. “And this we will do, if God permit.”

Hebrews 6:4-8

But another and urgent danger is set before the Hebrew Christians, not a little connected with obstinate clinging to old things, however infantine, or a yet more ensnaring return of affection for them after being apparently weaned.

God had put honor upon the Son of Man, not only here below (Acts 2:23; 10:38), but yet more when redemption had vindicated Him, and overthrown Satan, and made not only righteousness but heavenly glory available for man in sovereign grace. The consequence was an outburst of divine light and a display of power of the Spirit in man, such as had never been, and such as could never be otherwise. The time for the public deliverance of the world is not yet come, though Jesus the Lord of lords and King of kings sits at God's right hand. In fact another and still more intimately blessed work is in hand, the call of the heavenly saints, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, His body, and even to be His bride, though the marriage be not yet come. These He is gathering by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Meanwhile the Spirit could not but bear witness of the victory over evil and death and Satan already achieved by the risen and ascended Christ. Hence the power that wrought at Pentecost and afterward according to the promise of the Lord, a promise amply fulfilled.

For it was title not only to give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him, but over all flesh. And the Lord manifested this not only in the apostles, but in multitudes of others. It was never guaranteed to be all the days till the end with His servants, as His presence was. If we in these days cannot speak of it, let us have grace at least to feel and own why this is, and how little is the deliverance of His saints from that which dishonors Him and makes it morally questionable whether such a display could be now without compromising the truth. For how consistently could there be such a divine energy shed on all Christians after being gathered in one and scattered again to the shame of His name? How could one company be singled out to have such an honor conferred without the most imminent danger of self-satisfaction or of despite done to others? That grace works by God's word and Spirit, where-ever Christ is preached, is a proof of His faithful goodness and unfailing purpose; as also that faith may and ought to see His will for His own to walk together according to His immutable word and with becoming lowliness, so as to please Him, is ever true and binding. But it must be owned that the church is stripped of her ornaments, and justly.

Now this system of power and privilege had naturally great attraction in early days for the Hebrew saints, as for others, notably the Corinthians, as we may gather from the First Epistle. And those not born of God, who therefore would not appreciate aright either their own evil and ruin or the immense grace of God in Christ and His work, would naturally dwell much in that which so distinguished the Christian confession. Hence the Holy Spirit leads to a setting forth of a real and fatal peril for all who idolized visible power and slighted the far deeper wonders of unseen things. All other displays, though subserving the glory of the Lord, were altogether subordinate to the grace of God in which He tasted death, annulled Satan's power, made propitiation, and thus laid a

righteous and everlasting basis for all blessing to God's glory, but to each purpose in God's time, yet forever.

“For those that were once enlightened, and tasted the heavenly gift, and became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted God's good word and powers of [the] age to come, and fell away, [it is] impossible to renew again unto repentance, recrucifying for themselves as they do and putting to shame the Son of God. For land that drank the rain that often cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbage meet for those for whose sake it is also tilled, partaketh of blessing from God; but yielding thorns and thistles [it is] worthless and near a curse, the end of which [is] to be burned” (Heb. 6:4-8).

It is observable that we read here of enlightenment, not of new birth or eternal life. Undoubtedly the heavenly gift comes before us; and so it is not earthly like the associations of the Messiah, but “heavenly” because of contrast with Canaan hopes. How great a boon that God is now revealing heavenly grace! Further, it is not the old and essential truth of the Holy Spirit quickening a soul by the word, still less of now sealing the believer and forever dwelling in him. We must not forget that He was sent down also to constitute the assembly God's habitation; so that all introduced therein were in a general way partakers of the Spirit. Whoever bowed to the gospel tasted God's word as good, and received it with joy as of far different savor from that law which was a ministration of death and condemnation. Then the powers exercised in casting out demons, healing, and the like, were samples of the age to come when they will be fully displayed, under the reign of the Son of Man.

Now the substance of these privileges remains, and must as long as the church lives on earth and the gospel of Christ's glory is preached. There is real light of God shining on souls, not the dark or the dimness which could not but be before the gospel. It is still a heavenly calling, not an earthly one. Again, it is not of God to put forward His law when His Spirit is here still more fully to demonstrate sin, righteousness, and judgment to the world. And His word showing (not law nor promise only, but) accomplishment in Christ is surely “good,” and for all the baptized at least to taste that it is good, even if there be no longer the powers of the coming age, as we see them notably absent from the seven churches of the Revelation. But to give up all this, after having once profited by its wondrous excellence in the name of the glorified Jesus, is fatal. For what more can grace do or give to act on souls? If the Jews rejected the Messiah on earth, the Holy Spirit could and did meet them with a call to repentance and remission in His name exalted by and at God's right hand. But after having confessed Him on high and shared these privileges and powers, as members of the heavenly firm (which the baptized are, in privilege and responsibility), to fall away is to forfeit all. Yea more, there is no more resource in the treasures of grace. God has no fresh and higher way of presenting Christ to act on them for recovery. Therefore is it added for such as “fell away” that it is “impossible to renew such again unto repentance, re-crucifying for themselves as they do, and putting to shame the Son of God.” There had been Christ here in humiliation; there is Christ in glory above: what more, deeper, higher, has God to win the heart by?

There is no such hope now as a Messiah after the flesh. Him the Jewish people definitely cast out. If any had known Him so, henceforth He was thus known no more. He is the Christ dead, risen, and glorified in heaven. This is the Christian faith. To this the believer must go on, to Christ not on earth but on high, with its blessed consequences. To lay hold of Him thus is “perfection” or full

growth.

Carefully notice how the scripture before us guards us from confounding light and power with life. Not a word implies that those that fell away were ever quickened in the Christ, or sealed with the Spirit, or baptized in His energy into the one body. It is simply the case of disciples walking no more with Christ, stumbling at the truth or its consequences. So it was when He was here; so it followed when He sat on high with aggravation of guilt, as is here shown, for those that since fell away. Light shone, goodness was tasted, evidence abundant and undeniable; yet they fell away, through (not ignorance but) self will that could not bear God's will. They shrank from the tribulation through which we must enter the kingdom.

The illustration that follows confirms this fully. It was bad land fruitful only in thorns and thistles, instead of a good return for the rain drunk in from above. Only grace in an evil world makes the ground good to bring forth herbs or fruit meet for those for whose sake also it is tilled. The Spirit uses the word to deal with the ungodly, plows up the soul, as well as sows the incorruptible seed of the word of God which lives and abides. This is a wholly different thing from seeing the beauty and reasonableness of “the plan of salvation,” and still more the unanswerable proofs from evidence, from which people may and do fall away on pressure.

Hebrews 6:9-12

So it is now in Christendom. What is it generally but land that has drunk the rain that comes oft upon it, but, instead of bringing forth meet herbs, bears thorns and thistles? By God's word it is therefore rejected and nigh unto a curse (Luke 17:28-37; Rom. 11:21-22; 1 Cor. 10:1-15; 2 Thess. 2; 2 Tim. 3, 4; Rev. 17). Is not its end to be burned? See 2 Thess. 1:7-10. The power displayed has long vanished to zero; but the awful fact is that the classes and the masses are alike departing from the truth of the gospel into a superstitious aping of effete and condemned Judaism, or into a still more audacious return to heathenism in the form of its unbelieving philosophy. And the retrogression both ways in our day is amazingly rapid and unblushing.

But the apostle did not so think of those who stand, be it ever so feebly, while others go away. Continuance in good is of God, Who had not left His own without other tokens of life. For the trees are not dead which bear a little fruit. And to this we are directed in the encouraging words that follow.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded of you things better and akin to salvation, if even we thus speak. For God [is] not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed to His name, in that ye ministered to the saints and do minister. And we earnestly desire that each of you may show the same diligence in regard to the full, assurance of hope till the end; that ye become not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and long-suffering inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:9-12).

That we renounce all other dependence save Christ as our Lord and Savior is the faith that saves the soul, the one unchanging resting-place for every one conscious of his sins and of the evil of the nature that bore them, as ready as ever to break out unless we be kept by God's grace in the secret that we died to sin in the Christ, and hence are free to live unto righteousness. Others cannot see this, but they may and ought to see in the Christian the fruits of the Spirit; as here the apostle after so solemnly admonishing, could cheer the saints by the “better things” he was persuaded concerning them.

“Next” is a frequent sense of the term employed. Here it is modified by the context, as often in ordinary Greek and means not “following” but “pertaining to” or “connected with” salvation. God is love, and “love” is of God, Who has pleasure in reality of “work” rather than in the ideas which begin and end with man; and what is he to be accounted of? Cease ye from man, whose breath is in His nostrils. He Who alone avails is near to all that call upon Him. But if faith is the inlet of all that is divine, it works by love, and thus affords testimony to others. Nor is it only these that believe and love who hail every good fruit, but God is not unjust to forget what His grace produces in “our work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye ministered and do minister to His saints.” So will our Lord when He sits on His throne as Son of Man say to the Gentiles that are on His right hand, “Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, My brethren, ye did it to Me.”

But it is foolish to say that love can be without faith. The acceptable work, the love, is what is shown toward His name, and very especially in service to His saints. One may have all faith as a gift, so as to remove mountains, but without love one is nothing. Yea, if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if in courage and zeal I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Christ is the true touchstone. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” Then “whosoever loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him"; as on the other hand “hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do His commandments.” This may not be Aristotelian logic; nor is it science; but it is the sole true and divine charity. And as it had been known in these Hebrew saints, so the apostle sees it going on. For this love which is of God is not blind but discerns clearly, as the eye is single.

Yet was there a lack which he longs to see filled up. “And we earnestly desire that each of you may show the same diligence as regards the full assurance of hope till the end.” He was far from slighting hope any more than faith, because love is the greatest, abiding in fullest exercise when faith and hope vanish in the brightness of heavenly and everlasting fruition. For we are yet here below, though free of the sanctuary by faith, and entitled to regard heaven as our proper Fatherland; as Christ is there our life, and the Holy Spirit is here to give us present enjoyment, the earnest of the inheritance. Therefore do we need to be kept from the present things that are seen, by our eyes fixing on the glory that is eternal and unseen (2 Cor. 4). And we reckon wrong if we do not reckon with the apostle, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. Hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopeth for that which he seeth; But if we hope for that which we see not, with patience we wait.

It was here also that a failure was discerned, though pointed out with the delicacy of love, that they might show the same diligence as in what he delighted to own. So he here longs for the like “as to the full assurance of hope till the end.” So only does hope exercise its power. Earthly hopes indulged are as destructive to the divine hope God gives, as other objects trusted are wholly inconsistent with living faith. Nothing less than the full assurance of hope could satisfy the apostle's heart for the saints; as he adds, “that ye become not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and long suffering inherit the promises.” We need all whereby the Holy Spirit acts on our souls; and in this, as He employs the written word of God, so He is ever glorifying Christ and endearing Him to our hearts. We cannot afford to let our souls turn aside from what is revealed, nor even to make such a favorite in a part of what is revealed as to slight the rest. And assuredly the glory Christ gives is bright enough to call for full assurance of hope and to keep the blessed end in full view. Otherwise we become sluggish or dull where we ought to be earnest and keenly awake, “imitators” of the saints of old, “of those who through faith and longsuffering inherit the promises.” The present here, as often elsewhere, is not the mere historical force, but the ethical or abstract. The inheritors of the promises have their faith put to the proof and their long-suffering in habitual exercise. “Blessed is he that endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which He hath promised to them that love Him.”

Hebrews 6:13-20

The desire that the saints should imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises at once recalls the father of the faithful in a way intended to strengthen their confidence.

“For God having made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, swore by Himself saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee; and thus having patiently endured he obtained the promise. For men swear by the greater, and to them the oath [is] an end of all dispute for confirmation: wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, intervened by an oath; that through two unchangeable things, in which [it was] impossible for God to lie, we might have strong encouragement, who fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before [us], which we have as anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into the [part] within the veil; where as forerunner for us entered Jesus, become forever high priest according to the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 6:13-20).

When faith grows dim, earthly things take the place of the heavenly objects that once filled the heart. The danger for these believing Jews remains for others and indeed is urgent in the actual state of Christendom. A religion of antiquity has great attraction for some; so has social position for others. Both are of the earth, and irreconcilable with Him Who was crucified by priests and governors (the highest that the world then knew), and is now crowned with glory in heaven. The faith of Him thus presented (and it is the essence of the gospel) is intended to form the heart and life of all that bear His name. When the truth shines brightly within according to the word, the Holy Spirit makes it energetic; and the world is judged alike in its religious pretensions and in its external ease and honors. Doubtless there is far more revealed by and in the Savior than the patriarchs ever knew. Yet substantially the sight of Abraham a pilgrim as scripture points out was an appeal of no small power to act on the soul of a believing Jew, in danger of retrograding to that which was once his boast through losing sight of Christ in heavenly glory and the hope of sharing all with Him. Abraham possessed nothing in Canaan, having to buy even a grave; he hung on the promise of God. The Christian Jews were so far in a similar position; they were waiting to inherit the promises. Abraham and his son, and his son's son, (the most honored of the fathers in general estimation, and surely ancient enough to satisfy the most ardent of those who affected antiquity,) all died in faith, not in possession. They saw and greeted the promises from afar and confessed themselves strangers on the earth. Why should Christians repine when called to a like path? It is unbelief that despises the hope and craves some present enjoyment of an earthly sort.

Now God had even then given good ground of assurance to Abraham who led the way. He had added His oath to His promise: a blessed confirmation for the tried, even though they were far from being gainsayers. Only theorists would think lightly of such a gracious provision; only those who dream of pilgrimage in a palace and have no purpose of heart to live out the truth. When conscience is in earnest, our own weakness is felt, and the way of Christ seems difficult, dangerous, and repulsive. Hence the gracious wisdom of God gave His oath in addition to His

promise, as we may read in Gen. 22:17-18: a precious cheer to him who at that very time received back his son as from the dead in a parable.

Nor was it for Abraham's sake only or those who immediately succeeded that God gave this twofold solemn guarantee. He was minded thus to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel. Therefore did He mediate or interpose with an oath to lift up the eyes of all who believe from present and seen things to that hope which rests on His word confirmed by His oath. What loving condescension to those who march through an enemy's land! Such are clearly the “two unchangeable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie;” the application of which is made, not to the fathers of old, but to the children now, “that we might have strong encouragement, that fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”

Thus the chapter opens with a most serious warning. On the one hand the brightest light, the highest testimony, the participation of the Holy Spirit, the sweetness of the gospel, the powers of the age to come in token of Christ's triumph, are the chief external privileges of Christianity. Yet men might have them all, and utterly fall away so as to have no renewal to repentance possible. They are not life, eternal life in Christ; they include not the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given to us. Neither illumination nor power is the same as being born again, which is not said or supposed here. On the other hand, when the good cheer of divine grace follows, these closing verses point out the lowest faith ever described in gospel days, “those who fled for refuge” (an allusion to the beautiful figure of the man-slayer only just saved from his pursuers) enabled “to lay hold of the hope set before us": a truly “strong encouragement” for the weak and trembling faithful.

Nor is this all. The hope set now before the believer far transcends all that could be for the saints in O. T. times. We have it as “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil, where as forerunner for us entered Jesus, become forever high priest according to the order of Melchisedek.” Here the security is enhanced and crowned by One Who is God no less than man, Jehovah-Messiah the Saviour, Who is gone back to heaven for us, after having made the purification of sins and found an eternal redemption.

In Him and His work all is made sure. The rights of God are conciliated with His grace. Sin has been judged so as to vindicate the nicest regard for injured majesty and holiness. Mercy can flow freely, yet on a basis of righteousness, no longer sought in vain from flesh and guilty man, but established by God as due to Christ (John 12) and ministered by the Spirit in the gospel (2 Cor. 3). He Who is exalted in heaven is the promised Messiah, the object, securer, and dispenser of all the promises of God. Thus will the earth be best blessed in due time: but meanwhile those who believe in Him before He appears are associated with Him in a heavenly relationship even while they are here, that they too on clearer and fairer ground than Moses could occupy may account the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He as forerunner for us has entered within the veil—heaven itself: which none could know or claim till He had come here, suffered for sins, and been received up in glory. If this does not win the believer from an earthly mind, from a sanctuary of the world, nothing else can. He Who has loved us, our forerunner in heaven, being rejected of men, draws and binds our hearts to Himself where He is; and God reveals Him to us there to this express end.

Chapter 128

If Thou Knewest the Gift of God

John 4:10

The woman of Samaria knew it not, nor did the Jews a whit more; nor does the natural man in Christendom. It is wholly beyond the heart and mind till renewed from above. The heathen could not but regard their deities as the projected image of themselves, of like passions and lusts, envious of man's complete happiness. Had men known them to be as they really are, demons availing themselves of man's guilty conscience to set themselves up as gods and turn away their votaries from the true God, they would have understood that demons could only reflect the hatred and malice of the devil.

God is love, as well as light. In Him is no darkness at all; but being love He sent His Son to shine in this world darkened as it is through sin. Nor is this all the love He shows, but rather the beginning of what is infinitely superior to every difficulty and want. God is not demanding but giving, and only this, as regards eternal life and redemption. Both are His gift in Christ. Thus only must He be known by the sinner, not as a receiver but as the Giver. It would be beneath His majesty to take any other place; it denies His nature, falsifies the truth and leaves no room for love.

This was not at all manifested under the law. There man is prominent. “Thou shalt not do this,” “Thou shalt do that.” Man was by it required to do his duty to God and man, in order to prove that, being fallen, he could not; and so force him, if he had a conscience as to his own state and faith in God's word, to look to another, the Messiah, as all the saints did from Adam downwards. But the law, as it made nothing perfect, so it fell in with the natural thought of man that all depended on him, on the obedience he should render to God. As law, it excluded grace; and therefore those who saw nothing beyond the law stood on their own merits, not on the coming Messiah. All taught of God whether under the law or before rested their hopes on Christ, not on themselves. Therefore man as he is may admit the reasonableness of the law, as he doubts not his own competency to fulfill it; but grace he hates and understands not. The gospel flows from God's love in Christ to the world. It is not a call for man to love God, but the revelation that “God so loved the world.”

The Samaritans were only heathen who adopted somewhat of Jewish elements and were darker still than the Jews. But the True Light was that which, coming into the world, sheds its light on “every man,” not on Israel only, but on any, be they the vilest. This is the moral glory of Christ, as also of the gospel, God's testimony concerning Him and His work.

The woman who came and found the Lord sitting at the well was just the one to prove the virtues of grace. In truth He was there to find her as she was, and to bless her according to the riches of grace forever. It was not the time when women came to draw water. She was alone, and might well in her circumstances shun the society of others. She had ardently sought happiness in the flesh and had not found it. She could not now but feel herself degraded, despised, and wretched. But here was One yet more alone in the world He had made; with a heart toward all to bless them, but the loneliest Stranger through man's selfishness.

But grace sought her. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” He sought her wholly ignorant of Him, He perfectly knowing her, as He knew and knows all men. Bent on giving her “living water,” He asks a drink, as one wearied with the journey; for indeed though true God He was not less really man. She was astonished that a Jew would so humble himself. Ah! had she known that He was the Lord of glory; but this was as unknown to her as to the princes of this age, who crucified Him. No doubt He was athirst, but He sought an avenue to her heart and would not work a miracle for Himself. He would give the best gift, and have her learn that every good giving and every perfect gift comes down from above from the Father of lights.

Are not you as dull and dark as she of Samaria? Do you really know “the gift of God” any more than she did when the Lord accosted her? Do you believe in Him as a giver, and not an exacter? He is giving eternal life in Christ to every needy soul that hears the Shepherd's voice, as the Samaritan did. It is therefore without money and without price. It is wholly independent of the demerits it finds. Who could be more depraved than this sinful woman? God in the gospel is a giver of His best. What more blessed than eternal life? What more necessary to enjoy God and please Him, to serve and to worship Him here and in heaven?

This is Christianity. There may be and there is much more; but less than this is not Christianity. Beware lest you rest on some external sign, which your unbelief exalts into an idol to your extreme peril, perhaps to your utter ruin. Eternal life is inseparable from faith in Christ. “He that believeth hath” that life, and none else. Therefore is it of faith, that it might be according to grace, as every eternal blessing is. For God will not give up His love and glory as a Giver. When you have received life in Christ, He loves to accept your little offerings and to graciously put honor on that which lacks it. “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations,” said the blessed Lord to His feeble disciples. Why! to every other eye it was He Who deigned to continue with them, to sustain and uphold them in all pitiful love: else had they too gone back and walked no more with Him

Yes! Jesus our Lord alone vindicated and set out in attractive brightness the grand essential truth, so new to mankind in all states and ages— “the gift of God” —the truth that every soul needs to face and learn for itself—that God is the Giver and will be nothing else to sinful man. Our pride likes it not: rich or poor, high or low, we want to earn of Him, and are unwilling to be debtors to nothing but mercy in Christ. “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?” is the feeling of the heart now, as truly as of Naaman the Syrian. May you, if yet unblest, give up “Behold, I thought,” and, believing in Christ, be enabled to say, “Behold, now I know.”

Chapter 129

Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture: Review

In the April number of a popular periodical an article appears bearing the title of “The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture.” It comes from the pen of one who is unquestionably a leader of men in the sphere of politics, no other than Mr. Gladstone, the glamor of whose name is sufficient to dazzle the minds of many, and to clothe his remarks with an air that would silence most objectors. As the subject of his paper is of the highest importance, and has relation to man's eternal interests, I do not think it unbecoming, or presumptuous, to offer a few words upon what so vitally concerns one.

This paper which purports to be the first of a series has for the faithful a pleasing and high-sounding title; but we have not to wait for the last to know that the promise is only to the ear and eye. The reality offered is rather “the sand,” and utterly subversive of the truth of a revelation from God to man. For if imperfect comprehension, and imperfect expression characterized the “vehicle,” i.e., the man, who received the first communication from God, then we certainly have not God's word to man, but only man's word about God. Of the title “The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture” Mr. G. says “it sounds like a challenge.” And the challenge is to accept the scriptures, on the moral and spiritual and historical ground of their characters in themselves. What all this means, or the latent thought wrapped up in it, comes out soon. The challenge is as high-sounding as the title, but, when stript of its wordy garment, it stands before us in its naked repulsiveness as a challenge to accept the Bible as a Divine Revelation, after the critic has deprived it of all its real and peculiar authority and value.

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

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

trial of their title." Mark it well: the Bible (he talks of venerating it) is brought down to the level of any other book! If he really believed it God's word, would he dare thus treat it? That one of the shameless and morally despicable Oxford Essayists so spoke is the fact: but does the Anglican Mr. G. accept that rationalism as the truth? The holy scripture reveals to us man's sin and ruin, God's judgment, grace and redemption through Christ. Is that to be treated like any other book? But Mr. G. has applied "modern criticism," the shallowest quack of a day shallow in faith, which sits in judgment upon God's word, and leaves us—NOTHING! God's word proclaims its own title, and admits of no trial. "Thus saith the Lord." Mr. G., in charging the book with imperfections, &c., virtually denies it to be the word of God.

This is Mr. G.'s "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." Is language only to be used to conceal thought and to deceive? This is intolerable enough in the House, or at the hustings: what is it when one takes the chain of divinity with God's word as the theme? It will charm freethinkers of every shade. "The many diversified [= contradictory] utterances it contains proceeded from man." Is this true or false? Is it so, a believer speaks of "holy scripture"? Man's copies, and translations is not the point; for "the question whether through supernatural guidance [i.e., whether they were inspired] they were for this purpose more than men is to be determined like other disputable questions by the evidence." So then it is a "disputable question" whether God has spoken through men or not! Is it harsh to call this paper infidel?

"Thus the accuracy of the text, the age, and authorship of the books open up a vast field of merely literary controversy." How he confounds "holy scripture" with human copies and translations and external or subordinate questions! He owns his ignorance of Hebrew. Therefore the "accuracy of the text" is for him the accuracy of the translation, so far as the Old Testament is concerned. But it is enough for him that the chronologies of the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch are variant, to doubt the accuracy of the text, that is "holy scripture." Who says that the versions of the Bible are inspired? "And such a question as whether the closing verses of Mark's Gospel have the authority of scripture must be determined by literary evidence, as much as the genuiness of the pretended preface to the Eneid, or of a particular stanza in Catullus." How utterly absent from his mind is the thought that he is speaking of God's book! The pretended preface, the stanza, and the close of Mark's Gospel to him stand side by side. If the close of Mark's Gospel be not scripture, prove it if you can, but know that your canon of modern criticism is not sufficient. Can we wonder that infidelity so pervades the "masses," when the man who would pose as their champion, or advocate, can so write? The progress of infidelity is not more due to the lectures and writings of the avowed skeptic than to such as, professing Christianity, sap its foundation.

But there is more which cannot leave a doubt in any right mind, that the Bible as the word of God is denied. "I will remind the reader that those who believe in divine revelation, as pervading or as contained in the scriptures, and especially who accept the doctrine of literalism as to the vehicle of that inspiration have to lay their account with the following (among other) considerations, which it is hard for them to repudiate as inadmissible. There may have been, "and then follow the considerations, seven in number, which treat the text and the copies as the same, that effectually denies "inspiration," and if there is no inspiration there is no "holy scripture." But what are these weighty considerations? "(1) Imperfect comprehension of that which was communicated. (2) Imperfect expression of what had been comprehended." Now these two are essentially a denial of "holy scripture" as a revelation from God.

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

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

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

There is no insinuation, but positive statement in what follows, “that a portion of the prophecies included in the Book of Isaiah were later than his time.” So then we have quasi-prophecies handed

down to us under a false name, endorsed by the Lord and His apostles as we see throughout the N. T.! “Modern criticism” knows better. Is this God's book? Is it “holy scripture"? Is it an “impregnable rock”? For if the Book affirms such and such writings to be the prophecies of Isaiah when they are not, the character of the whole book from Genesis to Revelation is gone. It cannot be holy scripture when there is a lie in it. Think of a man passing as an advocate for the impregnability of the holy scripture, yet affirming that it contains falsehoods! Mr. G. must have drunk copiously from the pool of destructive criticism before he could calmly make such an assertion. He must be much of the same opinion as T. Carlyle—who said of the English people, “mostly fools” if he thinks that his readers can accept him as an advocate for the “impregnable rock” of holy scripture which he charges with falsehood.

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

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

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

Honest criticism (not of the modern kind) of what uninspired copyists have done is a helpful work to maintain the purity of the sacred text. It has long been known that some German skeptics, followed by some credulous Englishmen, say that the prophecies under the name of Isaiah are not his, but the work of an impostor; if it were truly so, the book, however wonderful, is not the scripture of God. There is not the slightest need for “specialists” to waste time and learning (!) upon a book that has long been known as an imposture. In the alleged case we may without fear let the true and the false Isaiah remain side by side within the same covers. How can these men explain that “the great unknown” rises if possible beyond the highest of prophets? (Yet set here and there in this paper are passages which lead one to think, yea to hope that the affections of the writer's heart are in conflict with the infidelity of his intellect.). Incontestibly there is nothing so sublime, nor such sustained sublimity, as Isaiah 40-66. Is there no key to such perversity of modern criticism? A simple, sufficient, and sure one. They start from the skeptical. premise that there is no such thing as true prophecy. They can allow more or less the early chapters to be Isaiah's, as the times were prehistoric. For them the historians must be heathen, or the Jewish of no real value, as writers long after the events. But as the grand strain of Isaiah 40-66, if genuine, is indubitable prophecy, prophecy not merely of Babylon destroyed by Cyrus, but, what is far more serious, of Christ rejected by the Jews, “modern criticism” will not have it. It is not Isaiah, but a pseudo-Isaiah! Q.E.D. But it was certainly even in Greek version long before our Lord was born and rejected by the Jews. How came a pseudo-Isaiah to write Isaiah 53? The “modern criticism” of

Mr. G. is folly as well as infidelity, though he may stop short of its logical and necessary consequences. R.B.

Chapter 130

Joseph: Part 1

For judging the history of Joseph to be typical or allegorical, like that of Hagar and Ishmael and a thousand others in scripture, we have clear warrant of the Holy Ghost. See Acts 7. But without this warrant, the use which in the New Testament is made of the Old Testament narratives, might authorize us to look for some mystery or “hidden wisdom,” in none of them so strongly marked as this.

I propose now simply to follow out the series of events in this history, as given us in these chapters, briefly unfolding what I judge to be their mystical or hidden meaning. May the Lord, in such sweet and heavenly labors, both enlarge and control our minds!

37—This chapter gives us the first part or section in the history.

Joseph here signalizes himself as the righteous or separated one, and as such provokes the enmity of his wicked brethren. The light makes manifest the deeds of darkness, and the darkness hates it, as Joseph's Lord was afterward hated of the world, for He testified that its deeds were evil. And this enmity is only further moved by tokens of the divine favor which are put upon the righteous one. Joseph was a younger son, no way entitled according to the flesh to distinguished favor; yet the Lord marks him out as the appointed heir of blessing and glory, and Joseph speaks of the goodness he had found, and of the high purposes of God concerning him But his brethren did not care for any divine purpose which interfered with their pride. He might be the one that was to receive the kingdom, but they said, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” As Cain had slain his brother Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous, so it is now. Joseph's brethren envy him; and again when in the field together, like another Cain, they take counsel together whether to slay him, to cast him into the pit, or sell him to strangers. And they do sell him for twenty pieces of silver. And they who could thus trespass against their innocent brother's life, easily deem it a light thing to wound their aged father's heart. “This have we found,” said they of Joseph's coat which they sent to Jacob besmeared with blood: “know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.” And thus was their offense of high and double bearing—they sinned against their aged father, and their righteous unoffending brother.

In all this we have the stiff-necked and uncircumcised Israel betraying and murdering the just one. His father had sent Joseph to his brethren to inquire after their welfare. But it was not as the bearer of kind tidings that they saw him or received him, but “behold this dreamer cometh.” “Come therefore and let us slay him.” So afterward toward the Greater than Joseph; it was not as the minister of grace and messenger of love, but as the envied Heir of the vineyard that they looked on Him with malicious heart, and said, “come let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” His love was refused, and for envy His brethren delivered Him unto death. For His love they were His adversaries. There might be one in the counsel who would plead for the prisoner, as Reuben did, who would not consent to the counsel and deed of them (Luke 23:51, John 7:51); but this could prevail nothing. Thirst for blood may yield tai covetousness, but the evil heart, in some of its desires against the righteous one, must have its way. For thirty pieces of silver they sold Him to

strangers. They crucified Him that was the Father's elect One, and all His delight. “They pleased not God, and were contrary to all men; they sinned against God and their brother.

38.—This chapter gives us the second part in the history.

The spirit of revelation here interrupts the course of Joseph's history, in order to give us a view of his brethren during Joseph's separation from them. And what is the view we get of them here? Just filling up the measure of their sins, making terms with the uncircumcised, and defiling the holy seed.

And so it is now. The holy seed has mingled itself with the seed of men, and all in Israel is corruption and uncleanness. They have profaned the covenant of their fathers as Judah here does; and the Lord has been a witness between them, and the wife of their youth. Judah dealt treacherously and profaned the holiness of the Lord, marrying the daughter of a strange god. He wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh passed from him. (Jer. 11:15.) So Israel has played the harlot with many lovers, and is now, while Jesus is separated from them, filling up the measure of their sins.

But while the Spirit of God thus for a moment raises the veil, and we see the abominations that are now done in Israel, we are given also to catch the faint glimpse of distant blessing. Judah is brought to know and confess his sin; the pledges of his full abomination are produced and owned by him in the spirit of a repentant one; and then “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” Pharez comes forth, and he is the second Jacob, the supplanter, who, in spite of fleshly title in his elder brother, gets the birthright. The kingdom suffers violence at his hand, and he takes it by force. And from this Pharez comes the true Inheritor of the blessing, the righteous Supplanter of every usurper, the one that shall prevail, and whose kingdom shall stand forever. (Matt. 1:3.)

(To be continued.)

Chapter 131

Joseph: Part 2

Gen. 39-41—These chapters together form the third part in the history.

Here we see Joseph filling up the measure of his sorrow, while his brethren are filling up the measure of their sins. He in exile preserves his purity and separation to God, like a Nazarite purer than snow and whiter than milk, while they at home are defiling the covenant. God is with him, and man against him. He takes his place in the cloud of witnesses, suffering for righteousness' sake. For conscience toward God he endures grief, suffering wrongfully. But the Lord is still with him. God shows that His covenant was with him, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed; for Potiphar first, and then the keeper of the prison, were made to prove this in their own persons. The archers are sorely grieving him, and shooting at him; but his bow abides in strength, and the arms of his hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. He may be persecuted of men, but God will not forsake him, but give him favor in the sight of strangers in spite of all the dishonor and humiliation to which the wickedness of his kindred and others may reduce him. And all this “affliction of Joseph” is made the discipline of God, Who loved him; for as we read, “the word of God tried him” (Psa. 105:19). This tribulation under the divine hand was made to work patience, and by it the crown was brightening for him

And we find Joseph not only distinguished with favor, but in some sense glorified also in his prison. For though power in the earth is not his yet, so that he could burst his prison doors, yet we see him glorified as a prophet, knowing the secret of God.

These dreams of the butler and baker were “according to the interpretation,” words which imply that they were of God. For dreams have two sources either God sends them, or the multitude of business (Joel 2:28, Eccl. 5:3). In them God may reveal His mind, or they may be simply “divers vanities,” the fruit of our own passions or necessities (Eccl. 5:7, Isa. 29:3).

And thus was it with the Lord in the day of His sorrow, and still with Him in measure in His sympathy for the church, for in that He is still saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” In Jesus, as in Joseph, it was clearly shown that, though in weakness and rejection, God's covenant was with Him, that He was God's object, all blessing passing through His hand, though in shame and poverty. And even beyond this. Jesus was in His day of sorrow, like Joseph, glorified as a Prophet (Luke 4:15). And so in His saints now in measure. They may be despised, but they “have the mind of Christ,” they are in the secrets of God, they know the love of the Father, the judgment of the world, and the coming kingdom and power of Jesus. And of these secrets they bear witness to sinners, as Joseph told of the secrets of God to Pharaoh, and his servants. They tell both of judgment and of mercy, as he did.

Such are the ways of Christ, and the saints now. They are among strangers, in a world that is but foreign to them, and where they have no citizenship. They may be poor, “silver and gold having none,” lonely, in prison, and forgotten there, like Joseph. But “God is with them.” Patience with self-denial, and a holy keeping of their Nazaritism or separation to God, is their calling, and their

present praise. But even in the humiliation, they have “treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in Christ. They can interpret the dreams that tell out God's purposes; the voices of the prophets and apostles are their delight and their counselors.

But in the close of all this we see Joseph not only as at the first comforted in sorrow, but brought out of sorrow—not only glorified as a prophet, but introduced into the full confidence of him who held the royal power, and authority in the earth. Pharaoh was then the lord of Egypt, and Egypt was then the lady of kingdoms; and Pharaoh gives Joseph authority to go over all the land, as the great executor of all rule, desiring that no man in Egypt was to lift up hand or foot without him. Joseph receives the king's ring, and rides in the second chariot. He is made lord of Pharaoh's house, and ruler of all his substance, to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom (Psa. 105).

He becomes the sole treasurer and dispenser of the resources of the whole earth, the one who alone could open and shut those storehouses on which his once injurious brethren, and all the world were soon to become entire dependents for preservation in the earth. Only in the throne was Pharaoh greater than he; and all this Pharaoh makes him and gives him, because he owned that the Spirit of God was in him, that he had been distinguished as “the friend of God,” knowing His ways, and was entitled to be called “the revealer of secrets.”

This was indeed glory among the strangers. The poor was thus raised from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, to be set even above princes. But this was not all. Joseph must have joy as well as glory among them, and the king gives him a wife, a lady of honor, and Joseph becomes the husband and father of a family in this strange land. Like Adam he gets Eve as well as dominion.

Such was Joseph now. And surely a greater than Joseph is here. Surely this is none other than Jesus the Son of God seated beside the Father on His throne in His full confidence and favor, and though cast out by Israel, receiving unquestioned title to all power, and made the Treasurer of all that grace and blessing upon which Israel and the nations are soon to draw for life and preservation in the earth. And all this because a right spirit was in Him as Pharaoh owned in Joseph. Jesus honored not Himself. “Do not interpretations belong to God?” said Joseph. “My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me,” said Jesus. Jesus was obedient, wherefore God has highly exalted Him. “Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee forever.”

And besides all this present glory on the throne, the Son of God has received a present joy, as we have seen Joseph did in Egypt. He has now received, from among Gentile strangers, a new unlooked for family. And Joseph's Egyptian family clearly typify Christ's heavenly family, or the church. For in the joy of His having received the church, the Lord has for a while forgotten Israel, as Joseph called his first-born “Manasseh,” for “God,” said he, “hath made me forget all my toil and all my father's house;” and his second son, he calleth “Ephraim,” for “God,” said he, “hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

All this a child might trace; but the Holy Ghost, Who graciously reveals “to babes and sucklings,” has Himself led us in this interpretation. In the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the rapture of the Son of man into heaven is given exactly the same place as the glory of Joseph in Egypt. The whole bearing of Stephen's words leads to this. He is drawing out the proofs, that Israel

had been always resisting the Holy Ghost; that as their fathers had done, so had that present generation been then doing; and thus that their treatment of Joseph and Moses (whose history as well as Joseph's he recites) were thus types of their treatment of the Just One. Joseph, it is true, was at last made known to his brethren, as we shall see presently, and at the last also Moses delivered his people. But during a long interval, both were separated from them. And so with Christ. In the end He will be made known to Israel, as their Redeemer and Brother, but for the present He is separated from them. And His separation is unto heaven, as Joseph's had been unto Egypt, and Moses' unto Midian. And wives and children given to Joseph and Moses, in the place and during the season of this separation, is thus necessarily the type of the gathering of the church to Jesus now.

But Joseph and Moses not only get a special glory and a peculiar joy in the separated place, but they are there also under preparation for becoming the future benefactors and redeemers of their unbelieving brethren. Joseph, as I have been noticing, is made the treasurer of those supplies on which Israel was soon to draw; and Moses gets the rod of strength by which he was soon to make a passage for Israel forth from the land of their bondage. But, till the appointed hour, Israel was in an evil case, filling up their sins, and knowing the service of the nations; as now they are a scattered and outcast people, and their sanctuary a disclaimed dishonored ruin, while He, Whom they have rejected, is in heaven. So perfect are the patterns of old, of the secrets which are now revealed onto us by the Spirit.

Chapter 132

Joseph: Part 3

Gen. 42-44. —These chapters give us the fourth section of the history.

In the preceding sections, we have seen, first, Joseph cast out by his brethren; secondly, his brethren filling up the measure of their sin; thirdly, Joseph brought to glory and joy in the midst of those strangers among whom his brethren's enmity had cast him. And all these we have seen setting forth Jesus, Israel, and the church.

But Israel is not always to lie in their blood or be forgotten. Their sins and iniquities are soon to be remembered no more, as soon indeed as sore affliction brings them to Jesus and to repentance, so here stress of famine in the land of Canaan leads his brethren to seek that help which was now laid for them on Joseph alone.

Joseph, however, had something more to do for them than simply to supply their present need. He must prepare not only a blessing for them, but them for a blessing. And though the method which he had to take may be strange in their sight for a while, yet love and wisdom were to direct it all from beginning to end. In order to bless them with real blessing, as he purposed, he must lead them to repentance; and he orders his behavior before them now according to this purpose. He had once come to them and they had said, “behold, this dreamer cometh;” they now come to him, and he says, “ye are spies, ye are spies.” He makes himself strange, and speaks roughly to them, and by this he calls their sin to remembrance. “We are verily guilty,” say they, “concerning our brother.” But he hides himself while all this is going on. He speaks to them by an interpreter. It was indeed his work, but it was his strange work; he was doing his act, but it was his strange act. He orders circumstances so as to let sorrow work repentance, but he does not yet show himself. For all this may be the way of his hand, but it was not the way of his heart. In secret, though unknown to them, he enters into the very sorrows that he was occasioning. In their affliction, like One that is better than he, he was afflicted. He would not have put on this rough mood, could he have helped it. But by this their iniquity was to be purged, and this was all the fruit to take away their sin. His love therefore must be firm and wise, as well as tender. They had once bound and sold their poor brother to strangers, and now a stranger takes and binds one of them. All this was fixing the arrow of conviction in their hearts, there to spend its venom, and lay the sentence of death deeply in them. He dismisses the rest with present supplies for their houses, charging them not to see his face again, except their youngest brother was with them. For he must know whether they had as yet the affections of children and of brothers, or whether they were still, as once, when he had known them, reckless of a brother's cries and a father's bereavement.

Ere they departed, however, he commands his steward to restore every man's money to his sack. But this was only to carry on the same work of repentance in their now awakened hearts. And so it does; for on opening their sacks, and discovering their money, “their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, what is this that God hath done to us.” The money in their sacks will not let them forget that, though they may now have turned their backs on that stranger in Egypt who spake so roughly to them, and called their sin to remembrance, yet God's eye was still

upon them, and God had still to do with them.

Thus the work goes on in their souls. They had been convicted, and godly sorrow was then working fear in them. And very soon much more than sorrow and fear is seen in them, for being returned home, and letting their father know that Benjamin's presence with them was the only condition on which they dared to hope for a fresh supply from Egypt, Reuben and Judah at once stand forth in the spirit of self-sacrifice. “Slay my two sons,” says Reuben, “if I bring him not unto thee.” I will be surety for him,” says Judah: “of my hand shalt thou require him.”

All this blessedly shows how repentance was yielding its meet fruit in them, but to aggravate their grief, and thus still to carry on the work in their souls. Jacob seems now for the first time to come to a suspicion that they had been guilty concerning Joseph. He had before said, “An evil beast hath devoured him,” but now it is “me have ye bereaved of my children.” He seems to say of them, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” All this must have stirred the arrow afresh in their hearts, that it might still be doing there its needed work.

But Jacob at last consents to let Benjamin go—and after all this exercise of heart, and with Benjamin in their hand, more prevailing than all the honey and balm and spices which they carried, they return to Joseph. On seeing Benjamin, Joseph is moved to new affections, and fresh kindness, and he gives his house commandment that all these men should dine with him at noon. But kindness or roughness works alike with an evil conscience. To the defiled and unbelieving is nothing pare. A shaken leaf might well frighten the brethren now, for conscience had made cowards of them all. “They were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house.” And other thoughts await them there. They are seated before Joseph, “the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth,” and they marveled one at another, while they ate and were merry. So wisely was Joseph calling in every passion of the mind, and weaving them together, wonder with fear, and gratitude with joy, that there might be a thorough renewal unto repentance.

Thus does the work go on, and prosperously too, but it has some way to travel, ere it reach the perfection that Joseph had purposed. He lays a farther plan for fully testing whether indeed a child's heart and a brother's heart were in them. Joseph's cup is put into Benjamin's sack, and they are again dismissed with fresh supplies. But now was the crisis. Benjamin, the cup being found on him, becomes forfeited to Joseph. This was the solemn moment in the whole proceeding; and the question is, how will the once murderous brethren, and the once thankless children, now carry themselves? Are they still what once they were, or has the heart of flesh been given them? Will the sorrows of Benjamin move them, with whom the cries of Joseph could not prevail? or will the thought of the grief of their aged father at home, plead with their hearts as once it refused to plead? These were the questions, and they get their triumphant answer. Judah stands before Joseph in the shame of confessed iniquity. They were all innocent touching the cup; but they were not so touching their brother, and this their sin only is before them now. “What shall we say? what shall we speak?” says he, “how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.” Joseph for a moment feigns as though their former iniquity, thus confessed, were nothing to him. Benjamin is his, and he must remain with him. Then Judah draws near, and again pleads as with the bowels of a son and a brother for Jacob and for Benjamin. “The lad” and “my father,” are the oft-repeated burthen of Judah's sorrows now. He is ready to abide a bondman

himself, only let “the lad” go back to “his father “; let the father's heart be comforted, and the brother's innocency preserve him, and Judah will be satisfied, come to himself what may.

Thus did Judah plead, proving himself indeed one “whom his brethren might praise.” And now nothing more is asked for. Joseph had not been willingly afflicting his brethren. All his way was only to lead them to this place of repentance. He meets them now not as a judge, but as a brother. His love could no longer hide itself. “Cause every man to go out from me,” said he, and then he made himself known to his brethren. He showed to them his thoughts how kind they were. He set free their evil conscience, and bound up their broken hearts. The channels were now cleared, and grace and blessing flow through in living, refreshing, and gladdening streams.

So it will be with Israel and the Lord. The Lord has now retired to His place, the place to which Israel's enmity had sent Him, but made to Him of God the place of honor and of family delights, as Egypt was to Joseph. But in their affliction by-and-by, they will seek Him in that distant place (Hos. 5:15), and He will then be found of them, and, in richer wisdom and love than even that of Joseph, lead them to repentance, sit over them as a refiner and purifier of silver, give them a broken and contrite heart, cause them to look on Him Whom they pierced, and then open to them a fountain for all their sorrows. For though He has spoken against them, He remembers them still, and in all their afflictions has been afflicted, and will then rejoice over them. Joseph no longer spoke to them by an interpreter, no longer hid himself as with a veil from his repentant brethren. “Your eyes see,” said he, “that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.” And so shall Israel's eyes see the King in His beauty, and the veil shall be taken away, and with a surer and readier love, than that with which Joseph fell on his brethren's neck, and kissed them, will Jehovah Jesus return to them (Lev. 26:40-42). “I will say it is My people, and they shall say, the Lord is my God.”

Chapter 133

Joseph: Part 4

45.-47. These chapters give us the fifth and closing section of our history.

The reconciliation, which waited only for the repentance, being now perfected, all was ready for the loading of the brethren with unstinted blessing: and Pharaoh's good-will is to be fully toward them, as well as Joseph's. They were Joseph's brethren; that was enough for Pharaoh; and Pharaoh will have their aged father brought down, and, with his households and his flock, seated in the fattest and choicest portion of the land.

All this was marvelous in Jacob's ears when he heard it. He “believed not for joy and wondered;” for this to him was receiving Joseph alive from the dead. But Jacob seems to tremble a little at the thought of Egypt. There Abram had sinned, and there Isaac had been warned not to go. Jacob might say, “Joseph is still alive, I will go and see him before I die;” but he seems to enter on his journey with some godly fear, for it was bearing him toward this Egypt. Accordingly, when he reaches Beersheba, he pauses in his way, and offers sacrifice to the God of his father. But the hand of the God of his father is now to appear to Jacob for his full confidence. He comes to him in a vision of the night, and adds His encouragement to that of Joseph's invitation and Pharaoh's desire. He enters into a covenant of promise with him, as He had done with Abram (xv.), giving him to know that Egypt was to be the place where Israel was to be made a great nation; and thus encouraged and commanded of the Lord God of his fathers, Jacob is fully ready, and accordingly goes down into the land of Egypt, and finds Joseph there of a truth and the place itself, the scene of Joseph's greatness and wealth-being thus given to prove that whereas he had thought all things were against him, all things had rather been working together for him; and in spirit he says, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

But Joseph was not only, as we have seen, to be made known to his brethren, but Joseph's kindred are also now to be made known to Pharaoh (Acts 7:13). Accordingly he presents them to the king. They were shepherds, it is true, keepers of cattle from their youth, such as were held in abomination in the land of Egypt. But what of that? “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He owns them in the presence of the king, and the king himself is of one mind with Joseph toward them; he owns them also, and honors them, and will have them regard the whole of his land as before them. And they are accordingly placed in the best of the land, in Goshen in the land of Rameses, and Joseph nourishes them and their households.

All this is great, and all significant. But this is not all. Joseph is to be the upholder of the whole earth in life and in order, and to secure the full honor of Pharaoh's throne, as well as to be thus the healer and restorer of Israel. He must seat the king in the dominion of the world with the willing homage of a preserved and happy people, who were to owe their lives to him. And this he does. He gives the Egyptians their lives out of his storehouses; but he gathers their money, their cattle, their lands, and themselves, all for Pharaoh. For himself he retains nothing but his place of honor and trust and service under the king. Every one, it is true, was to confess that he was lord, their deliverer and preserver, but this was to be Pharaoh's glory. “Thou hast saved our lives,” said they,

“let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.” It was into Pharaoh's house that Joseph brought their money; it was for Pharaoh alone that he bought them and their land. He settled the whole country, it is true, according to his wisdom, removing the people into cities from one end of it to the other; but the land was still to yield her increase, her holy portion, her double tithe, unto Pharaoh and his throne. This was the law of “the Joseph earth,” of that world that had now been brought back from famine and the curse.

There may be no speech or language here, but a voice is heard by the ear that is awakened. Joseph has now received his brethren, and enriched them with the richest of the land. He has also presented them without shame before the lord the king. He has preserved the whole earth, and secured the full glory of the throne of his master. And so will it be in the end of the days. The long-forgotten and then repentant brethren shall be seated in the true Goshen, the glory of all lands, and Jesus shall own them and present them as His brethren without shame, and the world shall then be established from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. God shall be merciful to Israel, and bless them, and the earth shall yield Him her increase, and the people, yea, all the people, shall praise him (Psa. 67). At His name every knee shall bow of things in heaven and things in earth, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I do not notice the remaining chapters of this history, for in them Jacob becomes principal again, and the place which Joseph occupies in them is of another character. But these chapters give us properly Joseph; and constitute one complete mystery, beginning with the rejection and ending with the kingdom of Christ, taking up, by the way, His union with the church and His heavenly glory. J. G. B.

(Concluded from page 50.)

Chapter 134

The Joys of Christ

We ought to think of the joys of Christ as well as His sorrows. Nothing shows where a man's heart is, and what it is, when oppressed, distressed, and full of sorrow, more than where his heart finds its joy, and if it finds a joy unreached by sorrow. We see these joys in Christ a secret comfort in the midst of His sorrow. He had meat which man knew not of. Besides His communion with His Father, there was the working of love to us. Paradise shone in His heart in comforting the poor robber. “Go in peace” refreshed His spirit in the house of the Pharisee. “She hath done it for My burial” justified Mary against the reproach of the selfish. “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes” was His joy in the sense of the heartless rejection to which the wickedness of man subjected Him. How blessed to the heart, besides learning where His joy was, to think that He found it in the working of love to us.

Chapter 135

Mr. Haslam's the Lord Is Coming

This little book, like others of the author, contains not a little truth put simply and earnestly, but a good deal also that is crude and misleading.

Part I. sets forth the coming of the Lord for His saints. The parable of the ten virgins is effectively applied. The church is imperfectly understood, though there is a true if vague glimpse of it far beyond current views. Our brother speaks of saints in pre-reformation times, after the church fell from its due estate, knowing “nothing whatever about the Lord's second coming” (p. 38). This is too strong. They all looked for His coming; but they were as confused about it as the great majority of believers are still who misplace it or overlook its character. The fact is that the same deficiency applies to all other truths, save perhaps the Trinity and the person of Christ. Therein even the darkest in most respects are firm and decided, which is a great mercy from God. Even God's righteousness is to them cloud-land, and God's church a mystery unknown, though revealed, as well as the personal abiding presence of the Holy Spirit: all has been and is at least as ill understood for near 1,800 years as the second coming of Christ.

It is in no way surprising that one who has been learning under difficulties and hindrances should err now and then. Of small mistakes we need not speak; but there are others more serious. It is wrong for instance (pp. 28, 29) to hold out a groundless hope to false professors, as if they may be reached by the “gospel of the kingdom” after the heavenly saints are caught up and before they with the Lord appear in glory. 2 Thess. 2:11, 12 warns very differently. Those converted by the gospel of the kingdom appear rather to be from the nations outside Christendom, certainly not among such as may have refused the gospel of God's grace that is preached now.

Nor is it wise to enfeeble 1 Cor. 9:24, 25; 2 Cor. 5:10; but these are common oversights among fairly instructed brethren.

So again it is a mistake to suppose that the emblems of a judicial sort in Rev. 4 characterize what the Lord is to accomplish as Son of man; for it is as Son of man that He will appear in glory when His saints accompany Him from heaven. And this is also His revelation (■ποκ■λυψις). The division of the book is therefore erroneous, at least Mr. H.'s making the “revelation” of Christ to be Part II. and His “epiphany” or “appearing” to be Part III. They are all in substance also “the day of the Lord,” as distinguished from His coming or παρουσ■α. The fact is that, after the seven churches, in the early judicial future that follows, Christ acts as “the Lamb,” not as Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven till the harvest in Rev. 14. He is revealed also angelically (Rev. 8-10). It is quite true that from Rev. 4 the saints now waiting for Him on earth are translated to heaven, and intermediate judgments set in.

So far in a general way Mr. H. is not astray. But the details are inaccurate. Thus to confound Revelation 1, 2 in any measure with Rev. 19:11 is outrageous. The first seal is conquest, and comparatively bloodless conquest, as the second prefigures a subsequent scene of carnage and civil war; then the third is scarcity in what is most necessary to subsistence on earth; and the

fourth is plague and other scourges of human life; and all these follow each other consecutively. The four horses and their riders may and do differ; but they are generically alike; and the Lamb, instead of being the agent of any of them, opens the four seals which represent those four initiatory forms of divine providence. They are all alike human instruments. The Roman empire is not revived till long after, as we see in Rev. 13 or at most Rev. 11. Hence the order of the visions is wholly upset by such an interpretation. Mr. H. sees important points, but does not at all understand the structure of the book, or its relative parts. His “plain narrative of prophetic events in their order” is, to be candid, plain disorder.

But there are dangerous doctrinal aberrations here and there. Take pp. 69, 70 as a sample. The gospel of the kingdom he contrasts with that of grace in this, that the latter sets before men Christ's finished work and reliance on the risen Christ to keep us to the end, the former tells men to show (as if we were not!) their faith by their works, and to endure to the end in order to be saved! the one offering the robe of righteousness that needs no washing, the other requiring men to wash their robes in the Lamb's blood! This is very unhappy. Difference there is. But no soul ever was, or will be, saved by his own faithfulness. Grace does find its richest display now. By-and-by, in the Apocalyptic period of judgment, less light and truth will be enjoyed; but salvation is of the Lord and of grace always. We, no less than they, are delivered from the wrath to come; but it is true that we look for Christ to come and take us to the Father's house apart from judgments, they look for deliverance by the execution of destruction on His and their enemies on earth.

Mr. H. ought to have known (p. 87) that the unquestionable text of Rev. 5:10 is (not “we,” but) “they shall reign.” It is the glorified rejoicing that these also are to reign who suffer after their translation. These are to have a higher place than either the sealed of Israel, or the palm-bearing Gentile multitude, or the followers of the Lamb on Zion, blessed as they each and all shall be.

The chief error prophetically is his confounding the head of the Beast or Roman empire with the Antichrist who is the head of the Jews in Palestine. No doubt the Western emperor will support the Jews, as the king of the north (the last representative of the Greco-Syrian power as in Dan. 8) will oppose them. Mr. H. makes the Western emperor of Dan. 7, the Eastern horn or king of the north, and “the king” of Dan. 11:36-39 to be the same individual. They are really three distinct persons, two of them allied, the other hostile. The little horn of Dan. 7 is the had of the revived Roman empire, and consequently the one answering to the Lucifer of Isa. 14; for Nebuchadnezzar was the first representative of that imperial system, of which the little horn will be the last. But “the king” who abruptly appears in Dan. 11:36-39 is the Antichrist, set up by Satan over the Jews in the land, and the object of assault to “the king of the north,” who is the same power that is symbolized in Dan. 8:9-12 and explained in ver. 23-25. It is the last Roman emperor who comes before us in Dan. 9:27, “the prince that shall come,” the future protector of the Antichrist.

What is said of the Ephah of Zech. 5 and of a future Babylon seems nothing but imagination, and derived from no good source. Assuredly Antichrist will reign not there, any more than in Rome, but over Palestine, and be attacked by both Egypt and the Syrian power. Such is the plain sense of the closing verses of Dan. 11 It is the Western empire that is represented in Rev. 17 as upholding, till with his ten vassal horns he turns and rends, “the great whore.” But this is not “commerce,” any more than a future city in the plain of Shinar. It is Rome, that idolatrous and corrupt system which, pretending to be the bride of Christ, committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and made

men drunk with her wine, and persecuted the saints to death.

The emperor of the West, and the Antichrist reigning in the Holy Land, are in the strictest alliance, but distinct, the one greater civilly, the other religiously, both the slaves of the dragon, the old serpent. It is the Antichrist, not the Western Beast, that is referred to by our Lord as coming in his own name, whom the Jews would receive, as they rejected Him Who came in His Father's name. The little horn of Dan. 7 becomes virtually the Beast, and is viewed in the Revelation as the last head of the Roman empire. “Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble,” not Antichrist but his enemy, the last king of the north (p. 151). See Dan. 11 Antichrist is the false prophet and king in the land. He does not attack his own people or capital; he is assailed by his north-eastern foe. And when the Beast comes to his aid, both are cast alive into the lake of fire, as is their great enemy subsequently. See the end of Isa. 30

As Mr. H. is not at all free from the confusion which prevails as to the evil powers then to be on earth, so he misunderstands the distinct righteous companies in the Revelation. Neither the sealed Israelites nor the palm-bearing Gentiles in Rev. 7 are martyrs or even dead but living men, as are those on Mount Zion in ch. 14. The earlier martyrs are seen in Rev. 6:9-11, the later in ch. 15., both raised in ch. 20:4 after the translated saints come forth and sit on thrones.

It is really grave heterodoxy that any saints “have to work and do for themselves what has been fully and freely done for us” (p. 138). This is no gospel at any time, but mere self-righteousness. What can Mr. H. (an evangelist too) be dreaming about? Is it not inexcusable error?

The sixth seal is wrongly applied to the Lord's appearing. It is quite an early judgment, which so alarms men that they say the day of His wrath is come. When it actually arrives, they are hardened and bold; but this is not till considerably afterward.

If these remarks wound, they are the wounds of a friend. If the flaws were corrected, the book would be much more helpful as well as a truer testimony in the Lord's eyes.

Luke 2:14

When the Word became flesh, the angels that celebrated creation acclaim, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men (not merely goodwill). It is the same sense as “In Whom I am well pleased.” Blessed unjealous praise of those holy beings—delighting in God's thoughts, even if others were the objects of them! For God's glory was their delight, and Christ eclipsed every other thought, and those in whom His delight was associated with Him.

Chapter 137

Man's Need and God's Grace

(Matt. 15:1-28.)

Here we have the wonderful contrast between the ways and actings of man's heart toward God, and the ways and actings of God's heart toward poor needy creatures. These two things must be brought close, the one to the other, and be shown as they rightly are. Men's hearts were not fully put to the test (before the Lord Jesus came, John 15:22-24, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now have they 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 have they, both seen and hateth both Me and My Father.” It was all fully brought out then; and what man's heart was, was plainly proved. When he saw God, he hated Him. Although God was present in the midi of Israel, He was not openly revealed. He was hid within the vail, within which the high priest, shrouded in a cloud of incense, alone approached His holy throne. Neither did man's heart come up there to see the holiness of it; nor did God come down fully, to man. It was not the full revelation of God. It was that which could leave man in a good deal of darkness, and God hid; and therefore could not clearly detect man's heart. Consequently He says “if I had not come, they had not had sin:” not that they had not sinned; but that God would not hold them finally guilty, until He had manifested Himself in Him of Whom He had spoken to Israel. But when God was made manifest, man hated Him. God had before revealed a great deal, but not Himself. He revealed much in the figures of the law, much which foreshadowed and veiled better things; and we find the use man made of it. I am not here speaking of the law, as trying man's conscience: though, in passing, we may notice that too, as bringing in, not sin, for this was there already, but transgression. The use God made of it was to prove maul a sinner. It was used to make manifest—in fact, to create—transgression.

To turn for a moment to the use man made of the law, in contrast with God's purpose in it. God used it, as we have seen, that the offense might abound—that sin might appear exceeding sinful. Man set about to make himself righteous by the very thing by which God was proving him a sinner, and sin exceeding sinful. This you are doing, if you are seeking to satisfy the demands of God's righteousness by your own ways. Man seeks to save himself by the righteousness of the law; but God's use was not that, for He never thought of saving any but by Jesus. When a child is forbidden by its parent, by an express law, and breaks that law, it not only makes manifest the evil disposition that is in its heart, but there is then positive disobedience, and the consciousness of sin, in that which the child does. It might have followed its inclination in many cases before, without consciousness of sin; but now not so; the conscience is affected and defiled; and by the law we are under condemnation and death.

To return to the figures and shadows of better things: men took those very ceremonies and sacrifices, which were typical of that One Sacrifice which sin had made necessary; and by them, their conscience nothing satisfied, tried to eke out their own righteousness. We know that there were a great many sacrifices for sin under the law; for God has tried this way, that we might know

its incapacity of bringing us to Him. Now it is mere superstition, and denial of Christ. Men first set about to be righteous by commands which they cannot fulfill; and then they seek to add ceremonies to eke out a righteousness of their own. That is the sum of the religion of so many, making an attempt at keeping the law, and adding ceremonial observances thereto; and then they tack the name of Christianity to it all, and thus God's truth is shut out.

Further, after all, the conscience never can be satisfied; because there will be the dread of that day when God shall make manifest the secrets of the heart. The soul is not on the road to have a conscience at peace with God. Traveling on this road, the man will go on from one thing to another; he may add ceremony to ceremony, and tradition to tradition, but he has only got farther from God; he has only got more between God and his conscience, and no forgiveness after all. The conscience gets satisfied for a moment or two, by man's dealing with it in this way; but there is no peace with God. When the sin is brought into the presence of God's holiness, the conscience, if not despairing, gets hardened. See what a state those Jews were in, who could go and buy Christ's blood for thirty pieces of silver, and yet have scruples of conscience as to where the price of blood should be put, refusing to put it into the treasury because it was the price of blood! Anything will suit man, provided it is not his conscience in the presence of God. Where He is detecting the heart, and making it know complete forgiveness, so that it can be in His presence without sin, it is another thing. Nothing is more simple than this, glorious as is the grace that has wrought it; indeed, it is too simple for those who are not taught of God to love the truth. Still, it is his conscience in the presence of God, and anything suits man rather than that.

Though God is infinitely high, He is very simple to man's wants, and to man's conscience. The washing the hands is not that which signifies or defiles, but that which comes from the heart. Here we have something more simple than all the intricacies of ceremony and tradition. God's light deals with realities; and God's purpose is, by the powerful light of His Spirit, to bring into the conscience of man all the different evils of his heart. When God's light shines in, that evil of which the conscience before took no notice—a vain thought or the like, that passed and was forgiven—is now made manifest. “That which cometh out of the heart is what defileth a man.”

God is dealing with realities. He wants nothing from man. He is showing him what he is. He is bringing into man's conscience what is already in his heart. When God's light shines in, it detects what is in the heart, and thus there is a manifestation to a man's conscience of all that comes out of his heart. Talk not of washing your hands: you may go and offer prayer, which is worse than a Jew offering his bullocks and his goats, for you have more light. That may have come out of your lips, “but the heart is far from Me.” “But out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts,” &c. There God's light comes in and shows what comes out of the heart. Take the first index of what is there, when seen and expressed in the light—an idle word, perhaps (James 3). He does not say, You have done this or that, but He traces it to the root. He traces the conduct or the words of man to some source; to what? To the heart! If there are idle and corrupt words, there is an idle and corrupt heart; and “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” That is, what his nature is, he is. So that, though men have the fairest conduct outwardly, God unmasks all their outward ceremonies as a means of eking out a righteousness of their own. He regards not the mere outward conduct of man, but measures the heart; and tracing all the evil to that, asks, Why is this? Because out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts (ver. 19), and there He closes with man; because His purpose by the use of all these things is to show what man is before God.

Then we turn to the other side of the picture, in which God's heart is brought out, in the case of the woman of Canaan, ver. 21-28. This woman had not the pride of human distinction in which the Jews gloried. She was neither a Jewess nor a Pharisee—quite the contrary; she belonged to a city which God had held up as a most reprobate city, Matt. 11:21. She was a Syrophenician, a Canaanite, of a race in the Old Testament condemned, whence nothing of repentance could be expected. The Lord comes into the coasts of Tire and Sidon. That is where grace ever comes ("cursed is Canaan"); and she was an outcast in the fullest sense of the word. She had no privileges, no claims. Well, she recognizes Him here as the Lord, the Son of David, and salutes Him as such. As such she knew what mercies He had brought among the Jews; and she comes and asks for blessing. He does not answer her a word. Retakes no notice of her whatever. His ear was closed to her request, at least so far that He gave her no answer. A repentant Jew might have pleaded (ver.. 24) "I am not come but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel": this He was in the place of promise which Messiah came to accomplish. But for this, there must be some claim to the promise. If you meet Christ on the ground of what He is as promised, you must have some fitness for the promise. If you are seeking by righteousness to get the help of grace, That is not my errand, says Christ, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Why is there no answer? the heart may say, for she had recognized His Lordship. She had, and could have, no claim on or connection with Him on that ground; with the Son of David a Canaanite had nothing to-do. The disciples were anxious to get rid of her by satisfying her hand, but He would not allow it; Beholds to God's order. If she came to the Son of David to get help, she must come as a Jew. But here (ver. 25) she vets a step further; she ceases to address Him as the Son of David (the ground on which she supposed, giving Him the due honor, she might expect something); and her sense of want constrains her to cry out "Lord, help."

Are there none here expecting that, because they entitle Christ aright, because they give Him His due title, and honor Him, He must answer them, and are astonished that He does not? The poor woman felt her sorrow; she wanted something, and there was the simple expression of her need; but, even then, He answers, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." My errand is from God; I do not go beyond that. Her owning— and addressing Him as the Son of David was in the way of righteousness, which was true. Her need still makes her go forward, and she says, "Lord, help me!" But He answers, I am come to the children, to seek for fruit on the vine which God owns. You might think God would own righteous, well-conducted persons, and that they might then take the fruits and blessing God attached to that. But you have no claim on that ground, you are sinners. As far as God's ways were revealed outwardly, the Jews were God's people. But she was outside everything—a dog. She is looked upon as a dog, and she now takes the place of a dog. What now, being a dog, could she hope for? Why not give up hope? Why? Because she abandons all title and claim in herself, but the need which cast itself on pure bounty; and there was, she asserted, an overflowing abundance of grace, which could even give some supply to the dogs. There was bounty in the house of God for dogs themselves. Be it, she was a dog; she made no pretense to take the children's place, and therefore it was no answer to her to call her that, because the Master could look beyond the children, and there was an overflowing supply of grace and fullness that did not leave even the dogs without provision (ver. 7). And such the poor woman's real state was. She knew the Master of the house was infinitely rich. She knew God and Jesus ten thousand times better than the disciples around. She knew that there was bounty and plenty enough in the Master's house, and from that super-abounding supply of grace

He could let the dogs eat. The vilest and the most hopeless could find food in the Master's house. The real understanding of God is according to our understanding of our total vileness and nothingness. Israel had never understood Divine love, as it was here exhibited to the dogs; fathomed by her need, fathomed by her wretchedness. She reached up to the source from whence even the children are fed, the fullness of the love of God Himself, which did not shut even dogs out from His bounty. She passed by all dispensation, even to what God Himself had done, seeing He had come down not to hide His holiness, but to show what He really was. And when the woman was brought to a confession of her own nothingness, He swept away everything between the sinner and Himself, as He did with the woman of Samaria.

She had arrived at what God was. He had done away with that which brought man a little nearer to i.e., ordinances, &c., for He now comes down to show what He is, and what man is; and when man comes to his true and real standing, God is there to meet him in all His unlimited grace. Law was given by Moses, and was but a vail; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The full truth of what man's heart is, is brought out by the revelation of God in Christ. Now there was nothing or one between God And man, to vail His holiness or conceal His love not even any oft repeated sacrifice, nor ever. a Moses with a vail on his face; but man must deal with God Himself—with God in Christ. And here you see, the Lord would not satisfy this poor woman on any other plea, but on that of her own real character. He calls her really what she was, and she understood that there was, in God's heart, all that the Lord Jesus Christ had seen in it when He was in heaven, for He was here to show it. And supposing she had been something more than a dog, would she have needed so much grace? It is our vileness which brings out that wonderful grace which is in God. For if she had been in less need, what would have been the consequence? Why, that there would have been less grace manifested on God's part.

And what is the great truth in Christianity that is brought out by all this? That the vail is rent from the top to the bottom; and that man, as he is, is in the presence of God, the man is there unveiled. What have we got in the cross? The first thing is, God dealing with man in His own presence. But how? Did He come to require anything? Nothing; how should He come and require it? In a certain sense He had required fruit from the vine: but there was none. What, then, did He come for? why did He come into a world made up of sin? what did He seek? He sought sinners! Did He come here ignorant of the extent of their sin? No; for He knew what was in man's heart full well before He came. He knew their sin well. Christ knew all that would come upon Him. But what stops the sinner? Not that he is to come to God—we see the Lord Jesus Christ come down to him in his sins. Is there anything between Him and the sinner? No, my friends; nothing; not even His disciples. They might quiet and get rid of importunity, but they neither show God's holiness nor reveal His love. It was the prerogative of His own love to come and touch the sinner without being defiled by the sin: just as He did to the leper. The leper exclaimed “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” The Lord puts forth His hand and touches him, saying, “I will, be thou clean.” And remember, if He came to show God's love to man in his sins, so that his heart might be won, and have confidence in God, He came to take away sin from man by taking it upon Himself.

The vail of the temple being rent from top to bottom, I see the holiness of God; but the very stroke which has thus unveiled the holiness of God, has put away my sin that would have hindered my standing in the presence of that holiness. I see what God, in His holiness, has done for us in the person of Christ. I see that the bruising has taken place. In Christ God Himself is coming down to

me, and I am enabled now to go back with Christ into the rest of His holiness. In the death of Christ I see the fearful vengeance of God against sin; and the rending of the vail, which displays God's holiness and love to man. And so the more the eye of God scrutinizes and searches me, the more it brings out the blessed truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. The light shows the whiteness of the robe that has been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

If I hesitate to stand in His presence, I am putting in question the value of Christ's precious blood. You may say, “I hope to be saved.” How can you hope Christ will die for you! It cannot be a matter of hope whether Christ is to die! The way the heart reasons is, ‘I am not hoping Christ will die for me, but I hope to get an interest in Him. I want a proof of His love.' When you question this, you question whether Christ has become the friend of publicans and sinners; and, further, you question the power of His blood.

Suppose you had a title to demand some proof of His love, what could you demand more than what God has given? He has given His own Son. You could not ask so much as He has already given. And if I am seeking that God should tell me something else, I am seeking some other revelation than what

He has given me. He rests my peace on believing the one He has given. The soul that has come to God knows that He is love, and it is to Himself we are come by faith of Christ.

The very way in which I know God, is through faith in His Son. I know His own love, that He thought of this and did it for me. Why is it some souls do not get this wondrous ample peace, to be in His presence without a cloud on His love? Because we are telling to God, and to our poor hearts, something short of this, that we are dogs. Grace is to the sinner, and to none other. If I can stand before God in my own righteousness, grace is not needed. He will bring down your hearts to your real condition. There He can act in the fullness of His grace, according to the need of the heart that has discovered its need in His presence. God is manifesting that grace, according to the value of the sacrifice, now that Christ is at the right hand of God. Not merely now that God can come to the sinner, but the cleansed sinner stands accepted in the presence of God—accepted in the person of Jesus. Therefore nothing stands between us and God. The Lord give us only to own the fullness of His grace, and see the way in which we are debtors to Him Who was willing to suffer all things, that He might present us spotless to God.—Amen. J. N. D.

Chapter 138

Thoughts on Mark 9:50

It is well known that the truest harmonies grow out of the strongest contrasts. The precepts of scripture are no exception to this rule. The connection is not obvious between a peaceable spirit and the discriminating zeal for God, which was doubtless typified by the salt of the sanctuary. But nonetheless is there a divine and necessary connection between the two. In short, there is no one-sidedness in scripture. There is a good deal in us. And we are too apt to cross the border-land of spirituality on the one side or the other, and consequently either to be particularly hard on those whose habits of thought, disposition, or training, lead them in a direction aside from our own; or else to think that to differ is a light matter. We are all aggression, or all yieldingness. We are either fain to call down fire from heaven on those who differ from us, or we call them soft names and hint, not obscurely, that after all we should not be so tenacious of doctrine; that Christianity shows itself in the charity that beareth and hopeth all things more than in the energy of the girded loins and burning lamp. In fact, they are just as essential the one as the other, and the blessed Lord in this concise verse links them in a divine harmony. Of course there are times for yielding, as also for bold defense of the truth. Subjection to God can alone teach us when and how. But though zeal be aggressive, it will be dominated by peaceableness; and if the occasion calls for peace pure and simple, it will not be invertebrate; it will be, so to speak, the gentle pressure of the strong hand. In proportion as this precept of the Lord is, by His grace, made good in our own souls, in that measure shall we be like Him Who, as one has said, “when meekness became Him, was meek; when indignation, who could withstand His overwhelming and withering rebuke?” So much for what seems to be the direct teaching of this verse; but does it not also admonish us that we are often needlessly wordy, and consequently pointless, seeing that so much truth is wrapt up in words so few and so simple? Such brevity is of course divine, but may we not follow the Lord in this also? R B Jun

Chapter 139

Thoughts on Matthew 11:27

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

Perhaps this stupendous fact is hardly sufficiently emphasized by any of us, not merely by those whose tendency is to recondite speculation, but by very many who fear lest by so doing their attention should be diverted from the atonement. It is not improbable that the fact that men are willing to descant upon the virtues of the Man Christ Jesus, and admit in a vague way a manifestation of the Divine in His Person, but who slight or ignore redemption, may in some measure explain the slender reference to this cardinal truth that prevails here and there. But our wisdom is to hold all truth, Johannean and Pauline, with equal hands. Doubtless he, who is jealous to hold both, will most effectually hold either. The dying recommendation of one who combined an adoring spirit with singularly acute and comprehensive knowledge will be remembered in this connection. Those who were in danger of becoming transcendental and losing Christ over Ephesian truth were counseled to study John.

But not even in the fourth Gospel is there a lovelier picture than in the passage under consideration. For, if the Person of the Christ be unknowable, if the Son reveals the Father to the sons who had strayed so far away, He calls upon us to "learn of Him." For what purpose but for this have we a fourfold portraiture? Why such a multiplicity of incident, each leading up to the central truth of the atonement, each laden with its special touch of grace, its peculiar ray of glory? Such pictures may well refresh the heart, and quicken the spiritual pulse as we "consider Him," when gathered to "proclaim His death till He come."

The divine and the human in our blessed Lord may be likened to a gold and silver thread, of which the strands are indissolubly united. His Person is to be adored, not analyzed. With Athanasius we say, “so much we know; the seraphim veil the rest with their wings.” R. B. Junr.

Chapter 140

Naaman the Syrian

The narrative in 2 Kings 5 has without doubt been used of God in blessing to many Its incidents are so truly evangelistic, the patience and the grace of God and His ways in blessing are so richly illustrated in His dealings with Naaman, that oft-times a simple, clear, and full gospel has been proclaimed from it. May He graciously owls and bless another attempt to use it for His glory.

The Spirit, after briefly describing his elevated rank and his distressing affliction, presents in a few words a striking instance of God's ways in providence. In a raid made by the Syrians, a little maid was brought away captive from the land of Israel, whom we find a slave in Naaman's house. Judgment had indeed been pronounced on Israel (1 Kings 19), yet the king still retained his throne, and it is a child that suffers. To us this seems mysterious, but how is it possible for man to understand the government of God? How little can we know of the scene He governs, and the working of in and of Satan in it? As Elihu told Job, “God giveth not account of any of His matters.” Yet we may surely learn in this case that, in the midst of all the oppressions and wrongs, the woes and sufferings in the world, God has an order of blessing for individual souls that we may long to enjoy. This poor child was, notwithstanding all, in the right place, at the right time, with the right object, and in the right spirit to do the right thing. All the happy results that followed turned upon her little word so fitly spoken, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy.” She seeks nothing for herself. Her master, with all he possesses, is more wretched than she, and her heart yearns over him for blessing. She knows the character of the plague that is destroying him, and that none but God can heal it. He is an idolater, and lost: and she longs that he should be with Elisha. Her philanthropy is of a high and far-reaching order. She says not, “Would God my lord were relieved of his misery,” but that he “were with the prophet.” That is the first thing; bodily healing would follow.

To all appearances how hopeless her desire, and (may we not say?) contrary to the feelings of nature, for the Syrians were frequently at war with Israel, and Naaman a captain of their host. But, as our Lord has taught us (Luke 4:27), God was acting by Elisha in free, sovereign, absolute grace, apart from all claim on the part of those who received it, nay, contrary to it. It is lovely to see a slave, in the spirit of grace, desiring the blessing of her master; a daughter of Israel, of an enemy of her nation; and even more, her intelligence that by the prophet alone he could be blessed, and her simple faith that, if with him, he would get blessing. The way the king of Syria took the matter up makes this the more striking. He naturally wanted to help Naaman and as naturally turned to the king of Israel to do it. Then, with this, comes the need of money, 16c. This, too, is got together, ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. So the poor leper is kept from Elisha, and that by those who expressed the deepest solicitude for his welfare. Is there much advance in some of the evangelistic schemes of our day? In mercy the word of the prophet came with power, “Let him now come to me;” and Naaman obeyed (compare Matt. 11:28), but at first with little of the simplicity and faith his slave desired for him. Yet he felt his condition, and was not without faith in the glad tidings concerning the prophet. He stood at his door, but he had his own thoughts of what his case required. It was difficult for him to come down to what he

really was—a leper. He was that, and something more, in his own eyes; hence he came with his wealth, his horses, and his chariot. Is this a very uncommon mistake? Do not many, while confessing themselves sinners, come before the Lord with all that riches, position, and even the state can supply? and can we wonder if many a really anxious soul is as far astray in his thoughts as this heathen?

The prophet refuses it all; he will not look upon it. Naaman may blind himself, but not Elisha. His misery is his true and only commendation, and God's grace refuses every other. The cold waters of Jordan—type of death—must receive him; and his style and retinue cannot follow him there. Alone, an exposed leper, a plague-spot in creation, polluted and polluting—he must thus learn his utter shame as well as lose his leprosy. But it is in Jordan, where once the ark stood in the midst. That is, in type, it is death with Christ—death freely, fully borne by Him when made sin for us—death, therefore, righteously inflicted by God-death that completely and eternally covers sin and cleanses the sinner-death, the measure and the pledge of the love of God in Christ Jesus, which, when once received, can never be lost. Naaman objected to such a humiliating remedy, as men to this day object to a personal application of the preaching) of the cross. To the unbeliever it is foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18-25), yet without it there is no Christianity and can be no Christian. “Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Christ” is essential to a true profession of Christianity (Romans 6); “I am crucified with Christ” is essential to an experimental enjoyment of it (Galatians 2:20).

The Lord has for our instruction given us Naaman's thoughts (verses 11, 12), and more deadly mischief his bitterest enemy could not do him than his mind was accomplishing at that moment. Does he stand alone in setting aside what the prophets have spoken and attaching such vast importance to his own thoughts? By no means. “I thought.” is lending many to eternal ruin, and hindering the peace of not a few. It is a serious and a growing evil, and should be faithfully dealt with.

The important question to be settled is this—Is the mind of man (whence are his thoughts) a safe guide in the things of God? or is it affected by sin, and therefore unreliable? All scripture affirms that it is so affected, and since the cross (the crowning proof of it, 1 Cor. 2:8) its statements are more explicit and precise as to this. For subduing the earth, and things connected with it (see Gen. 1:28), its powers may be undiminished and the results astonishing, but in divine and eternal things them is total incapacity. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians: 14). In Ephesians 2:3, the mind, as well as the flesh, is said to have evil desires. In Colossians 1:21, it is alienated and at enmity with God; and in 2 Corinthians 4:4, the minds of those who believe not the gospel are blinded by Satan. These are some of the statements of scripture, and more serious ones could not be as to the effects of sin on the mind, and they are confirmed by others which declare the effects of grace.

In 1 John 5:20 we read “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given, us” [believers] “an understanding that we may know Him that is true.” In 2 Peter 3:1 this is called a “pure mind.” In 1 Corinthians 2:16 it is said to be “the mind of Christ.” In Ephesians 1:18 the Spirit enlightens it, and in Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23 renews it.

It is evident then what ground the scriptures take on this subject; but men complain that this is to sacrifice the intellect. Is it not sacrificed already? Was it a sacrifice for Naaman to give up his own thoughts, which would have ruined him body and soul, in order to enter into the mind of God, by believing the word of His prophet? This he did, and was saved. He returned, not only recovered of his leprosy, but a worshipper of the true and living God. What a lesson for us!

Other details are given, and all interesting and instructive; but we have dwelt on this because of the danger of intellectual conceit. God is the God of patience and of all grace, but He will not suffer any depreciation of His word. He has said, “Whoso despiseth the word bringeth destruction on himself” (Prov. 13:13. R. V.). Let the slaves to thought consider this, and also God's estimate of us all. The mind of Paul was of no mean order, and not uncultivated; yet by the Spirit he thus writes—“We were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful [and] hating one another” (Titus 3:3, lit.)

Adolphe Monod remarks: “For a long while I found it impossible to admit this declaration; even now [on his death-bed] I cannot understand it in its fullness. But I have come by God's grace—very slowly indeed—to see this doctrine more clearly; and sure I am that, when this veil of flesh shall fall, I shall find in it the perfectly faithful likeness of, my natural heart.”

This is a touching confession of a dying Christian; yet how many could join in it! It is affecting, too, to see how the natural mind will hold out to the last against revealed truth, and how feebly faith resists and overcomes it, yet it does. Alas for the unbeliever! The tyranny of thought will soon have no restraint (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12). W.B.

Chapter 141

Obedience and Blessing: Part 1

One of the points on which the condition of the church of God hangs is whether obedience precedes blessing, or blessing obedience. Many are in some degree, though perhaps not by any means altogether, aware of the extent to which the principle has gone, that blessing must precede obedience where the will of God is ascertained; or how widely its influence is spreading. It is a strange point of connection between Irvingism and the subsisting systems. The directions (as far as they are apprehended in the minds of those concerned, which is the only way in which we are concerned in them), which have emanated from Mr. I. or those speaking with him, have certainly varied; but they have all borne directly upon retaining those subject to them in the systems current as religion in the world (though these are all asserted by them to be Babylon!), and upon the plea that they could take no step until they received the Spirit such as they themselves possessed. This has been frequently the result of direct instruction to persons who have gone to them.

Another principle has been adopted by a large body of the religious clergy, tending to the same point, that without tradition no step can be taken, because obedience becomes uncertain, and therefore dangerous. The result is wonderfully similar and seems to proceed from Satan: such uncertainty and difficulty of mind as leads a person to settle down in what is confessedly wrong and what he knows to be such. This, inevitably dulling the conscience, leads to a state of mind grievous to the Spirit of God, and necessarily lowering the moral energies of the parties concerned; for to him that hath shall more be given. The coalition between Irvingism and High Church principles in this respect has an astonishingly wide influence; and often so, when the persons concerned little suspect the source from which it flows; while it finds ample aliment in the natural feeling of timidity and unbelief, and assumes the justifiable principle of caution, and is never thought for a moment to be the result of man's disposition to acquiesce in evil, rather than act in trying circumstances.

In those who decline acting from the want of the power of the Spirit, it assumes the form of greater humility than usual and great dependence upon the Holy Ghost. On the other side it looks like great steadiness of character, and an indisposition to acquiesce in the movements unguided by principle, which the easily-led human mind is in so many ways making at the present moment. Thus certainly the fairest principles of conduct are brought to bear from such opposite and (but for this) mutually opposed sides, upon those who conscientiously do not acquiesce in the evil in which they find themselves placed. Nothing can be more opposed than the principles which lead to the conclusion on one side and on the other. In result. only they agree to stay where circumstances have placed them; which is just what the selfishness of unbelief will always do.

Now there is one thing only which can justly withstand the power over the mind of such nominally good views as these, so apparently opposed to evil; and that is obedience. There is nothing so humble, nothing so steady, as obedience; nothing which so marks the Spirit's presence, nothing so opposed to insubordination, nothing by which every ungodly voice must be so utterly silenced, as by obedience. I confess, when I see such very opposite principles leading to the same

conclusion—principles so diametrically opposite in conflict with each other, as resting on the presence of the Spirit and tradition, I am led to think that the result is not the effect of principles in either case, but of some entirely different motive; and that the only operation of the principles is to neutralize in either case some other principle which would act in moving those who plead them; and consequently, by so neutralizing it, to leave them where they were, without respect to the right or wrong of the case; which is precisely the result in the present instance. And such I believe to be the fact. But if God have any will in the matter, and this consequently terminates in disobedience, it becomes a very positive evil, most grievous to the Spirit of God (supposed to be, or waited for), and makes tradition, discoverable or undiscoverable, to be such as renders void the word of God. It is reserved for these days, among Protestants, to make tradition a necessary supplement to the word of God; for it is a very great mistake that it was ever used in the early church in the way now proposed. It was there, whether wisely or unwisely, a positive tradition, and in confirmation of doctrines avowedly taught and declared. A tradition that they had not yet, or did not know to be the security of the church, was an imbecility reserved surely for a state of hopeless decay.

But the assertion that obedience is the great principle to go on, obedience to known truth; not plans of our own mind, but obedience to known truth as the portion of a single-eyed, humble, simple mind; and that this is the way of these additional blessings, which are matters of God's gift, obedience to the order of which is then the part of every spiritual mind, is of very great importance. But in all cases, and under all circumstances, gifts or no gifts, obedience is the path of a Christian—the path of duty and blessing.

I would first show the essentiality of the principle, its deep essentiality; then, that it is the preliminary of blessing; and lastly, that it is the order of all special gift in Christ, the ■φ'■ on which it all flows forth. The first establishes the principle; the last applies it.

Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme—would cease to be God. God may show the impotency of the creature by turning all the rebellions it may be guilty of to His own purpose in blessing, and them that are adversaries bound to it in His own power. But the only rightful position of the creature is obedience: on this hangs all the order of creation; on this hang sin and righteousness. The definition of sin is lawlessness, doing one's own will. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

Let us see how distinctly this is brought out in scripture in its broadest lines. The first man, and the Second, the Lord from heaven, the great heads and types of ruin and blessing, are there distinguished as the disobedient and the obedient ones. “By one man's disobedience the many were made sinners; by the obedience of One the many were made righteous.” The first man, Adam, did his own will, and perished by it. He was just under a test of obedience. This was the critical point of the first man's standing and blessing. “Thou shalt not eat “: he did eat and was ruined Death, the wages of sin, came in, as the consequence of man's act, that not being the will of God; death was the wages of sin, and sin was disobedience, insubjection to God. Here its character and result were determined, the hinge of man's fate, the now wide open door to every evil; but at which mercy entered before man was excluded, that he might bear it with him into the desert into which he was driven, justly driven without.

Precisely the opposite was found in the blessed and perfect Savior. Would you know His character, His style, now that He is ushered in, in His own humble but holy and perfect

announcement? “Lo! I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me [His everlasting character], to do Thy will, O God.” I am content to do it; “yea Thy law is within My heart.” This was His constant character, His perfectness as man. So we read in the course of His life, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.” This character was stamped on every circumstance. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And as in life He did always such things as pleased His Father (for He sought not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him), so there was no limit to its extent any more than to its perfectness. For loving His own to the end, He became obedient unto death, the death of the cross; for though willingly doing it, this commandment had He received from His Father. He had now ears dug for Him (Psa. 40:6). The Lord God opened them, and He was not rebellious neither turned away back, but “gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair “; nor hid His face from all that obedience brought Him into, power or no power; for He was crucified in weakness, though He liveth by the power of God. His power was the powerful service of God, His weakness the patience of His will. So it was.

Obedience was the principle on which He acted in temptation. “It is written” was ever His reply to the tempter's suggestion; and when the tempter would thereupon have guilefully alleged the promise (“It is written, He shall give” &c.), our Lord met him by the answer, “It is written again “; an answer showing the principle of obedience as contrasted with that of assumption, of the assumption even of true privilege a most important truth, but of this more hereafter. Perhaps I have said more than is needful on this; for the one sentence, “Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God,” to the believer stamps the character, and fills up the principle of the life of the Holy Jesus. He was the type of obedience. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. The essential contrast to this is in antichrist, “the king [that] shall do according to his will.” This is his characteristic; not regarding any, “he shall do according to his will, and magnify himself.

(To be continued).

Chapter 142

Obedience and Blessing: Part 2

Let us now trace other parts of Scripture. In Exodus the word of the Lord to Moses is, “Thus shalt thou say, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself; now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed,” etc. And all the people answered together, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.” I speak not here of their competency to fulfill their undertaking, but of the principle of obedience—the only principle on which God could deal with man, or man walk with God.

So, in the blessing of Abraham in Genesis 22, the Lord closes with this— “Because thou hast obeyed My voice.” And Jeremiah (chap. 7:22) takes up the word of the Lord to Israel by Moses, “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.”

Such is the tenor of the covenant on which the existing comforts of the land were held, as detailed in Deut. 28, after they had broken the former. Such is the principle of the restoration—covenants of faith, when they had lost the fruits of the former, as given in Deut. 30, “thou shalt return, and shalt obey His voice, according to all that I shall command thee this day.”

So, in the apostasy of Saul, in 1 Samuel 15, we find the same hinge of judgment—"Why didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice;” even as we find its principle and its perfection in our Lord's constant walk. It is the character of the believer's sanctification—sanctified unto obedience and the blood of sprinkling (1 Peter 1:2). This is that to which the believer is sanctified; this the purpose, the object of his sanctification: so, where the contrary state is spoken of in Ephesians 2: “Wherein in times past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

Nor does anything ever affect this essential principle: nothing but sin can ever draw a man out of it. The doing our own will is always sin, always the acting of the old man, not subject to God (or it would do His will, not its own)—the nature which does not bring in God, but acts for itself. The object of obedience may be in question, but self-will is always wrong. Thus Peter, when charged before the high priest's council with disobedience to its behests, does not plead a right to do his own will—a right to do what he pleased; he had no such right. As towards God it would have been the expression of self-will; he would not have been honoring God therein. His word was not “I have a right to do what I like without reference to you;” but, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” It would have been really disobedience to have obeyed them. God would have been disobeyed in the result: Peter would have acquiesced, yea, taken a leading part in disobedience, as far as he was concerned.

Thus we find how the principle is preserved in all the trying circumstances of refusing subjection to human authority. It can be swerved from in no instance without breaking through the first and only

principle of accepted relationship to God; it is the only exercise, save praise, of life to God.

It appears to me that this principle is greatly lost sight of and abused by all religious parties. As to this, they are divided into two great classes—those who plead obedience, and those who plead liberty. Peter's answer, it seems to me, meets both. The dissenters, as a body, plead liberty rights—the title to do, as regards men, what they please. The churchmen claim obedience, and plead frequently the principle; but it is still to men, and not to God. “We ought to obey God” is the Christian's answer to both. “We ought to obey,” I say to the dissenter, who claims right; “We ought to obey God,” to the churchman, who pleads the principle of obedience in the defense of all the corruptions which rest merely on the authority of man and his ways. “We ought to obey God rather than men.” How perfect is scripture in setting in order the ways of men, the narrow path which no other power detects, as revealing the principles of the human mind, and judging them! Self-will is never right. Obedience to man is often wrong—disobedience to God.

The next thing in connection with this is, that the commands of God, though the literal circumstances of blessing associated with them may be gone, never lose their power; for they are always, unless as concerned with these blessings in detail, moral in their character, exhibiting and expressive of God, on which relationship to Him is necessarily founded. This is what the word in Deuteronomy, quoted by the apostle, means, “It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it.... But the word is very nigh unto thee in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mightest do all the words of this law.” Now the apostle calls this the righteousness of faith (Romans 10: 6), the force of which we shall see in a moment, if we examine the place where it occurs in Deuteronomy, and learn also the accuracy of scripture quotation; and that this quotation in Romans, like everything else in scripture, is the mind of the Spirit of God.

The statement of Moses in Deuteronomy was not the covenant on which, in literal obedience, they held the land; this would not have been the righteousness of faith, but the principle of Do, and then the blessing. It was besides the covenant that was with them at Horeb (29:1), and proceeds upon the ground of the total loss of the literal blessings, which bore the result of literal obedience in the land— “And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind, among all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey,” etc. That is, after the covenant of literal obedience has been so broken that they had lost the fruits of it in the possession of the land, and were driven out (at once the evidence that it was broken, and constituting the impossibility, in that exclusion from the land, of such literal obedience), thereon the Lord says, “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven,” &c. But it was nigh them, that which faith recognized in its power and principles, although, in exclusion from the land, its literal observance was impracticable.

Here the apostle took up the Jews, and planted them on the principle of the obedience or righteousness of faith (to them still “Lo-ammi”); that is, the confession of Messiah, at any time the great hope and comfort of their law to them, but especially while they were thus in bondage and sorrow. No other but a basis of faith could be available to them. This was its strength and surest object; while the obedience of faith for His name was withal spread to the nations also. The

obedience of faith, however apostacy is undermining the church, is still, and so much the more, the principle of all righteous individual conversation.

It is not the exactitude of literal observance which is here imposed—that may be impossible. It was so with the Jews when there was the highest exemplification of faithful obedience, as in Daniel for example; neither is the oldness of the letter the character of the Christian dispensation; that is not the obedience of faith. But the obedience of faith, in the newness of the Spirit, is always open, and finds its path according to the spirituality, and therefore spiritual discernment, of the persons seeking it; and upon this God rests it. Exact conformity to His mind may be, and surely was, accompanied by direct and immediate witness of blessing, such as we have not now, and could not have, because it would be the recognition of inconsistency which God could not sanction, whatever be His individual prerogative of mercy. It was God's testimony and sanction to that which was His moral witness in the world.

It is precisely in these circumstances that the obedience of faith comes in on which the blessing turns, as may be seen in Deut. 30; not the alliteration of literal ordinance, but the power of moral consistency, according to the expressed mind of God. Nothing can be more important than the position which this passage in the book of Deuteronomy holds in this respect, nor than the principle which it affords. The privileges attached to the dispensation were gone. Obedience, in the literal sense was impossible. The ark was gone; the Urim and Thummim were gone. The temple, where literal services could be accomplished, was desolate and burned with fire, where their prescriptive services alone could be performed; and they were captives moving to and fro. What then could be done? The word was nigh them, in their heart and in their mouth, that they might do it. Here was the principle of conduct which assured God's accepting favor; here is the principle on which alone, in darkness, men can walk acceptably with God. Compare Isa. 1; 51, where we have the application of this—the progressive triple link of obedience; and then, “Awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord!”

Chapter 143

Obedience and Blessing: Part 3

On the other hand the notion of tradition neither recognizes nor amends the state of things. It does not recognize it; for it assumes the literal state of things, but does not fulfill it. It does not acknowledge the evil and fallen state of the church. It assumes the continuance of that literal exactitude of services; and that, these being present, there is the security of the church. It acknowledges not that it has lost its glory in the display of present power to the world. It says, Give me my ordinances, and all is well; not seeing that it has just been deprived of power because of its moral departure from its constitution with God. It may have been God's wisdom so to order the dispensation: I speak merely of the fact. Neither does tradition amend it, but puts the church wholly on wrong ground. The spirit of obedience, the righteousness of faith, is that which we need, if indeed fallen. Though we had the most certain information of traditional forms of worship or ordinance, it would not make the, church of the living God. It is not the sign of, nor suited to the church in, its low and fallen condition. The perpetuity of ordinances is not its position is Babylon, but the spirit of humbled obedience—the word nigh it. The present spirit of obedience to the word nigh them is that which marks the spirit of faith and acknowledgment of God, not making haste. If we repent, we may (according to the word in Ezekiel) be shown more. To mock the fallen church with tradition is but a bitter and death-bearing substitute for the living power of the divine presence, or the obedience of faith, the only sure ground on which to stand, if we have fallen from the manifested glory of it.

But, tracing the other parts of the subject to show that it is the preliminary of blessing, few words after what has been said will be needed. “If any man will do His will,” says our Lord, “he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Now this is precisely the obedience of faith, and shows that moral preparation for blessing given is conversion of will in the spirit of obedience. It is not the literal fact of outward act, but the spirit of mind; which will be necessarily shown in outward acts when that will is set before him. The next point is to do God's will, then he shall know—the gift of knowledge founded on the spirit of obedience; for what would avail to confer gift on the disobedient, unless God should provide for His own dishonor?

I would refer also, without dwelling on them, to Luke 6:4-9, Matthew 3:15, John 13:16, 7, and 22:26. The same truth is very distinctly taught us in John 14:21-23, where love to Jesus is thus definitely laid down, and blessing marked as consequent upon it— “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” Nothing can be more distinct than the sovereignty of grace to the sinner, through the obedience of Christ: the sureness of blessing to the saint in the order of obedience to the word.

The chastenings of unchanging love I speak not of here. But the doctrine is very express in the word, as to the order of all special gift, that it is adherence to the obedience of Christ, that it hangs upon and finds its scope and exercise in obedience. There may be an extraordinary act of everlasting sovereignty, as Balaam and Caiaphas, but it is not ground that the church of God can

go upon. These are not given to the church as examples, unless they would associate themselves with apostasy as God's order. God may set light to His church upon the most dangerous rocks on the shores of destruction; there may be beacons all around them, but no attractive guide to the place where they stand, though we may bless the hand that set them there, a warning for none to approach, though a guide to all who pass. Unhappy people, the witness of the ruin that rolls around themselves!

One would have thought that it would have been amply enough to have seen the broad and essential principle on which the whole order of Christian truth is founded, to have determined the Christian mind as to its righteousness and judgment. One would have thought that its conclusion would have been intuitive, and the fruit of the presence and leading of the Spirit shown at once in the recognition of obedience as the path of the saint: that path which, as a saint led of the Spirit, is the only one in which the Spirit can lead. But the enemy of our souls is not met by the simplicity of truth, because of the want of simplicity of our minds; according as they are not spiritual, and in any sort affect anything not the object of, to which they are not led by, the Spirit. Therein the simplicity of truth fails to keep them, and the power of the enemy can avail itself of its subtlety against them. If there be any measure of positive though mixed spirituality, apparent rejection of the word would not be received. But Satan does not so proceed. He does not, therefore, propose disobedience, but modifies obedience, proposes preliminaries to it, or substitutes something instead.

Nor does Satan deceive the saints or those under the form of saints, with an open and simple lie: they are not the subjects of that—he has not ordinarily done so. If Satan said, “Ye shall be as gods (Elohim),” One far above all created beings repeated, “The man is become one of us, knowing good and evil.” But oh! what a store of accompanying evil and ruin come in upon the act of disobedience founded on this devil-used truth. Using it out of place, suppressing what went along with it, when man acted on it, was the foundation of the ruin that came upon the world. We must then meet Satan, not only by the simplicity of truth, which is the happiest way, which is happiness, but when our weakness and inconsistency open the way to his guile, by the wisdom of the word which applies to the case. This the unbounded and illimitable goodness of our God has provided for the weakness and necessities of His children, knowing the subtleties of their enemy, and providing for them who are assailable by reason of that weakness. Thus the Lord, far, most far, from inconsistency or evil, but assailed by that which would act on ours, met by the testimony of the word the subtlety of the enemy of our souls. What subtlety! An unconditional promise, a promise to Him, alleged to be His as Son of God, by virtue of His privilege. “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down hence, for it is written.” O highdrawn wit! a refinement of evil. Was it not true, and was not Satan a liar, and could it be Satan to produce a true promise of God? Would God be true to it? “If thou be Son of God,” act in faith upon this promise, claim its effect, show the power and glory which belongs to the dispensation. And how bright the glory, how fair the witness, how singular and suitable the testimony to what He was, what strength in His service, what foundation to claim the credence to the mission which presented Him in this very character Why not do it? What reason could be alleged? Must they not be the cavils of unbelief? Were the promises not true to the Son of God? Would God prove Himself a liar? It was the characteristic honor and place of Messiah: the ministering angels of the dispensation were to approve their Head in it. What could be more suitable or approved? But it was Satan's proposal—the Lord's total refusal. If a Son, He has yet made Himself a servant. There was no command on which to act.

Had there been, ten thousand temple's would not have stopped His course, be they ever so goodly, ever so high, adorned with ever such goodly stones or gifts.

It is remarkable, too, in connection with what we have said as to Deuteronomy, that all the Lord's answers were taken from it. The word Lo-ammi had never been erased from the badge of the Jewish people since the day of their captivity. They bore it still upon their forehead. But the Lord took the part of scripture precisely applicable in their present state. He took the phylacteries of God therein afforded, and bound them round His forehead, and Satan could not touch Him then. And here was another most important principle connected with this subject. The promises of God were true, and the gifts and calling of God without repentance. And the very passage refers directly here to these Jews. But they did not apply to their present state. Satan would have used them so, but the path of obedience was to understand the mind of God; and the Lord applied in their acknowledged apostasy that which God had applied to that state of things.

The Jews applied to themselves, without the recognition of their fallen state, and herein showed that they had not the Spirit of God, and by their application of these promises of God, came under the power of Satan, and were led by him The Lord declined them, and rejected and baffled Satan. He took and kept the path of simple obedience. He rejected tradition. He rejected the promises, aye, the promises needed in the path of obedience and the understanding of the divine word. The first evidence—the first point—of the teaching of God's Spirit, of His wisdom in Christ, is the recognition of the apostate state itself, where the church is fallen. Here is the key, at once the solution, of all the rest: where this is, it is and must be the first instruction of the Spirit to us in our church-acting capacity; and all our conduct flows from it. And God has expressly provided the obedience of faith for His own, never deserting His own wherever the apostasy may be; for He does not and cannot turn away, nor is His faith made of no effect. And in the time of these difficulties the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and are profitable, etc., that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work. O what a blessed word I what a blight on the holders of tradition as the pretenders to any light which would guide them farther than the perfectness of the man of God—the strength, the comfort, the wisdom of the divine word. May we be occupied with His commandments. J. N. D.

(Continued from page 180.) (To be continued.)

Chapter 144

Obedience and Blessing: Part 4

Let us turn to the third part of the subject, that obedience is the order of special gift. We have here direct and topical instruction of scripture on the subject in John 15. Of the principle of it we have an illustrious instance in Sampson and his history. There was one separated to God, sanctified for the Lord, and therefore put into the order of defined obedience: his hair was not to be cut. While the commandment and precept was observed, his strength was with him. There might have seemed little connection between long or uncut hair, and all-overcoming strength; but God was in it: and an obeyed, honored God is a God of strength. It was God's strength, and given to one so definitely recognizing Him: it was a gift hanging as to its retention on obedience, consistency with the undertaken vow of separateness unto God. This secret betrayed to the world—the corrupting influence which had wound round the deceived Nazarite, his locks were cut by one nominally his friend, and associate of the God-devoted man; in truth, the sure ally of the Philistines, and suited instrument of Satan's power. Once shorn of his strength, and in the Philistines' hands, his eyes are put out; and if in any sort he regains his strength, it is blindly to destroy himself with his enemies. That which I insist on here, however, is the sign of separation to obedience being the order and hinge of the possession of the given strength, the presence or absence of the one depending on the presence or absence of the other, however unconscious the unhappy victim was of the strength of others thereupon against him a sorrowful yet instructive history to our weak and wayward will.

But I have referred to John 15 as direct instruction upon the subject; and it is most exact as to it. The Lord had stated the truth as to personal blessing, the special gift of His manifested presence, as contrasted with the world in John 14. “He that hath My commandments” (how different from a tradition we have not got!) “and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him.” Here the broad principle of general blessing is laid down, and we may observe what is most important in it—"he that hath My commandments.”

Let us turn to chap 15:4. “Abide in Me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me.” This is practical abiding, or it could not be a command; abiding in Christ as the true Vine, not in anything else; as for the vine of the earth, its grapes shall be cast into the winepress of wrath. Again, ver. 7, “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;” and in ver. 10, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love:” that love from which all the gift and blessing grow, “even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” Would the church presumptuously assume a higher prerogative of the sureness of the Father's love than the Lord Himself, who says as to the order of its continuance, “As I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love”? Can anything be more definite and clear that the ground of assumption of blessing, the continuance of gift or blessing, is continuance in the words of Christ, of His words in the church? The assertion of it is not more clear than the ground of it is most plain and intelligible—the holy commandment. God's power, His glory, would otherwise serve as the

sanction of unrighteousness. So in ver. 14 (stating the ground on which the communications of His mind, special revelations, would rest), He says, “Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Nothing can be more definite, nothing more certain, than its thrice repeated accuracy of assertion.

The order of God to Christians is, not obedience upon blessing, but blessing on obedience; not to wait for blessing in order to obey, but to act on the command, and the blessing follows. And this is faith. There would be no faith if the blessing came first. Even Christ obeyed before He had the blessing, speaking of Him as the self-humbled man. So we are justified, and in our obedience are the consequent blessings: “to him that hath shall more be given.” It is the business of spirituality to ascertain His will, to be in our measure of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?” If it be said, Yes, but the church had to wait for the presence of the Spirit, before it could do anything, I answer, True, before, (properly speaking) it was a church, but when the Spirit was received, all that was so dictated became the subject-matter for obedience of all who were under the influence of the Spirit thenceforward; and it was denying the Spirit to say that we must wait for the Spirit to obey what the Spirit has taught. It was mocking the Spirit. The Spirit of God had revealed it, and spirituality of mind would discern; the holy purport of the thing would surely do so, and act on it according to the power given, waiting for all other gift. Such is the necessary consequence of spirituality, and anything else is only denying the Spirit, not waiting for it. He that is spiritual, says the apostle, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. And if so, what then? They are to be obeyed, as the occasion and skill of obedience arises. Used in obedience, the gifts certainly were to be received in it also, for we are sanctified to obedience. The church is sanctified unto obedience, becomes by conversion obedient that is the thing done with it in time. The man turned to obey God instead of doing his own will. “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” And it receives blessing, it walks in obedience—the obedience of love, and continues to receive a blessing; it disobeys and receives judgment, only for the long-suffering waiting upon its rebelliousness. (Continued from p. 204.)

Chapter 145

Obedience and Blessing: Part 5

On the whole, the scripture is plain, as the principle is uniform, that obedience is the way of blessing; and that we are not to wait for power to obey a command, but to obey it that we may find power. The Lord did not restore the hand that He might stretch it out and show it, but ordered the man to stretch it out, that it might be restored: and this is true in all possible cases. The Lord is obedient; therefore He is exalted to the place of power, to be Giver of gifts; He took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient, and that even to death: wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him. Now while the redemption of the church is herein complete (for by one Man's obedience, many shall be made righteous), in the work in the church, obedience always goes before the manifestation of blessing. Thus Saul, struck to the ground, says, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and the Lord answered, "Go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee what thou oughtest to do:" he went, and received comfort, and strength, and blessing, through the means of Ananias, there sent to him; he acted in obedience in the first instance.

So the poor blind man, in the days of the Lord, being, in the flesh, a pattern and type of the whole case—"Go wash in the pool of Siloam and he went and washed, and came seeing;" and having been faithful to this, he was able to teach his teachers, because he had obeyed the word; and being cast out for it, the Lord hearing this to be the case, finds Him, and reveals Himself to him. Is it then that we act without the obedience of faith? We are so led: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." "Go wash seven times in Jordan," is a humbling thing, instead of having the prophet's hand struck over the leper. But going and washing, proved that he believed the testimony of God—the Spirit of God to be in the prophet; it owned the Spirit, when it was in the obedience of faith, and the blessing came. So in the word we own the Spirit of God, the sure Spirit of God in the word, and act upon it; which shows that we own the Spirit of God, and that He is able to bless, and the blessing comes from that Spirit vindicating His truth. Whatever blessing is inconsistent with obedience, is not really a blessing in result, though it should have the form of an answer to claim on the faithfulness of God; as we see in the quails in the wilderness. Our whole inquiry must just be, What is the will of God? The blessing of the Spirit goes with it, for that is the testimony of the Spirit; and, taking it as the way of the blessing, is honoring the Spirit. Therefore the very acknowledging the Lord is made a matter of obedience. It is the command of God to acknowledge His Son (1 John 3:23), to honor Him as we honor the Father. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom. He hath sent." Yea, the Lord, while He showed that He loved the Father, yet, in His yielding Himself to death, declares, "This commandment have I received of My Father "; and the gospel is sent "for the obedience of faith of all nations for His name." The operation of the Spirit is to make us obey: there is no owning of the Spirit, but in obedience; and obedience is the evidence that we do acknowledge the Spirit, that we are led of Him—that which God will own, whether the world own us or not. And I suppose that the highest progress of spiritual life is not energy, but the enlarged discovery that all is within the sphere of obedience; and that all our efforts are so far profitable as they are within obedience—God's prescribed order; and that all without is the energy of our own will, and evil. Does the spirit of evil or our will lead us in

obedience? Clearly not!

We have only then to plead the word, and we necessarily plead the operation of the Spirit of God in us; its energy is but to enable us, and to reduce others to the same thing. Our having the commandments is the sign of an obedient heart taught of God—the communicated apprehension of the divine mind as in the word, spiritual communion with God giving that discernment; our keeping them, of a patient will under Him to follow on as led and established by Him, and in spite of, and overcoming the enemy: God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. To lean upon tradition is to prove that we have not His commandments; to wait, as men speak, for His Spirit is to prove that we are not inclined to keep them: both concurring to show that we do not really love Him; and the latter, the merest though most subtle sophistry, and making us deny obedience to the word of the Spirit, in order that we may obtain His presence! a, way as strange in its proposal, as it is contrary to the word of God, as we have seen in John 15 denying that we have it, whereby alone we can have it or obey it, whereby we have it more abundantly; a hiding of the talent in a napkin, as though God were an austere God.

Our whole dependence then is on the Holy Spirit of God, for we have no strength in ourselves; the object of our desires and prayers, the great and continual object. All hangs on His presence: for by it alone we recognize ever what the Father and the Son are to us in the blessed counsels of His will—we recognize it as a present thing. The Spirit is the immediate agent in all divinely-led human conduct, as indeed in all operation on creation. But the measure of the Spirit is known by the obedience of faith—the understanding obedience of faith, to that which the Spirit has laid before us in the word of truth—the true revealed mind of the Spirit of God. Whatever its power, we shall ever seek its increase as to its exercise under divine will. It will ever lead us on farther and farther into the path of obedience, and will unfailingly sanction all our previous footsteps in this way; for indeed, howsoever little known, itself has led us in them.

J. N. D. (Concluded from p. 218.)

Chapter 146

The Offerings: 1. The Burnt Offering—Leviticus 1

The sacrifices are connected with, and open out to us especially, the ground and the means of our approach to God.

The beginning of Leviticus goes through the different sorts of offerings, by virtue of which we have access to God, and then takes up the priesthood, which sustains the soul in approaching.

Chapter 1 speaks of the burnt-offering, chap. 2 of the meal offering, chap. 3 of the peace offering. Each of these has a distinct character. Chapter 4 treats of positive transgression in things against conscience, and the sin-offering to be offered thereupon. Chapter 5, as far as ver. 13, speaks specially of sins or defilements of different character, rather than transgressions in things which ought not to be done. From ver. 14 of chapter 5 to ver. 7 of chapter 6 we read of the trespass-offering, for anything respecting conduct in which wrong was done to God or man. The special value of these offerings is their representation of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our approach to God through Him. Many of the principles spoken of as regards Jesus Himself are in measure shown in the believer; again, that which He wrought Himself works effectually in us. One act of Christ fulfilled or consummated them all. He made the atonement; He was a perfect sweet savor to God when tried to the utmost; we have communion with Him, feeding on that which has been given for us. He bore our sins and effaced our guilt.

THE BURNT-OFFERING. Lev. 1

In this chapter, vers. 1-4, we have directions concerning the burnt-offering. Observe, Jehovah is not speaking from Mount Sinai: there a statement was given of what the law required. Before, however, the Israelites received the instruct ions from God in the Holy Mount, they had broken that covenant; so that when Moses came down, he found them worshipping the golden calf. They had departed from God, and were made naked to their shame before their enemies. Afterward the tabernacle was set up, where Jehovah would meet the people; and here we get the patterns of things in the heavens, “which patterns were purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices,” even with the sacrifice of Jesus. Now the patterns given to us in the tabernacle are for the unfolding of the manner of our coming to God by grace through Jesus Christ. We find the most holy place, where Jehovah met Moses; the holy place, for the priests' daily service; and the court without, where the worshipper first approached, where were the altar of burnt-offering and the laver.

The first place of approach to God is the altar of burnt-offering. It may be remarked here that, in the description of the offerings, they are in the order in which they regard God in their proper nature and value, our communion with God being introduced in the third. Then provision for positive transgression is made. In the application or use of them by sinners this last comes first, as it does really with the soul.

When Jehovah spoke to Moses from Sinai, it was to declare His righteous requirements from man on earth. God testified on earth what His righteousness required from man on earth. As to their

approach to God in their own righteousness thus prescribed, we see at Sinai itself how all failed. The authority of God was thrown off by making the calf; and thus the voluntary undertaking to do all that Jehovah required (Ex. 19:8; 24:3) was broken, and they had failed altogether. How then could man approach to God? The law given had just brought out the evil that was in him. Was God, then, to deal with them, acknowledging them in their wickedness? Was He to give up His character? If not, He must speak from heaven in grace. There was now no possibility of dealing with man upon earth. “They had refused Him who spake on earth.” The question then (as this had failed) was, How could man be brought into communion with God in heaven? “If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.” But full entrance into heaven was not then revealed, the veil was unrent; but the shadow of good things to come was given.

There must be a sacrifice; but where was such to be found as could cleanse man from sin, of which we have here the shadows? There was no such thing to be found in man as one willing and competent. This was not work for a sinner. But the Son of God said, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God; yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psa. 40; Heb. 10:5). “Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me.” This was the body in which He was to be the obedient One: “Mine ear hast Thou opened;” and we see Christ willingly assuming the body to do the will of God. We have in Him One fit to be a sacrifice, One Who took on Himself the form of a servant, and became obedient to the commands of Jehovah. It was His will to do it, and He was capable of doing it. “Thy law is within My heart.” But what was the object in doing this? Not only to keep the law which had been broken, but personally to be a sacrifice. To introduce sinners into God's presence, He must not only keep the law Himself, but become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He might preach righteousness in the congregation, but men hated it; He might work all works of blessing, but they envied Him, they derided Him. All the expressions of righteousness in Him were of no avail alone. He must also become a sacrifice, He must shed His blood. Now the burnt-offering represents Him as perfect in Himself, and offering Himself up to God.

In verse 3 it is said “he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before Jehovah”. Now as regards Christ, the act of offering Himself as a sacrifice is simply His own. “Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God.” We did not offer Him: He was the Offerer and the Victim. But when we have the Spirit of Christ, we enter into the value of the act as though we laid our hands on Him. Jesus offered Himself while on earth without spot unto God, presenting Himself as the burnt offering. In order that we might approach through Him, He must first be exhibited as giving Himself thus willingly. Thus in the account of the sacrifice we see the victim first brought to the door of the tabernacle and then killed. If we had merely seen the fact of Christ's death, we might have thought there was need of it as regarding Himself; but He is first shown to us as the willing offering, bringing Himself to the door of the tabernacle, and voluntarily offering Himself to God for us.

This was the sacrifice of atonement, not by anything imposed on Him, though according to the will of God, but of His own free will, as the spotless One, with no yoke of sin on His neck. As the righteous One, He walked up, so to speak, to the door of the tabernacle; and the prince of this world met Him, and His first effort was to hinder His exhibiting this perfect pattern of obedience on earth.

That which was singular in Jesus, what was in Him alone, was His righteousness. There was power; but this others have had also, though received indeed from Him. But simple, abstract, perfect, truth and righteousness, this Christ alone could exhibit; and if Satan could have made the Lord swerve in one tittle from this, there would have been no such thing exhibited on earth. Satan tried in the temptation to make our Lord exhibit power. But He was still the obedient One, and until the word came upon His ear, He would do nothing; for He came to be the Servant, the perfect pattern of obedience in all things. Satan first tempted Him to exercise His power in making the stones bread, then to question the providential care of God, and last, openly to take the world, which was His rightful dominion. Having failed in his object altogether, Satan departed from Him for a season, but met Him again to hinder His obedience unto death. The prince of this world came to Jesus as the head of religion and power in the world in the Jews and Gentiles. He cannot however hinder Him; but the word is still “that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do”. This is what we who believe know of Jesus—that the prince of this world had nothing in Him. He voluntarily submitted to be the sacrifice; and the act was perfect in giving Himself. Still if for us, it must be in the place of sin and atonement for sin; and what is so wonderful in the sacrifice of Christ is, that absolute, perfect obedience and self-devotedness to God and His glory were in the place of sin, when He was made sin for us. There was nothing available for us till He was put to death. See verse 5.

It is said that the priests, the sons of Aaron (not the high priest), shall bring the blood and sprinkle it round about the altar. Thus we who believe have an interest in this, while Christ presents Himself on the day of atonement. The priests have the blood in their hands, pointing out the way of participating in what had been done.

Let the fire of the Lord consume Jesus (so to speak), all is, and more especially therein, a sweet savor unto God. In us the fire finds things in themselves offensive: but all that was in Jesus is burnt altogether, a sacrifice made by fire for a sweet savor unto God. Noah's sacrifice typified this (Gen. 8:20, 21), taking of every, clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offering burnt offerings to Jehovah. And Jehovah smelled a sweet savor. The heart of God was governed by the offering instead of by the sin which it covered; so that God said He would not again curse the ground any more. He would look at the sinner in compassion, because of the sweet savor of the offering of Jesus; for it was such as the all-searching eye of God, when He took it all up in the fire, found to be perfect. This was Christ's own work: we could take no part in it; but we find it to be that which puts away sin, glorifying God when He is made sin.

“ Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” Who does not know among the saints the power of this love? While the work was done in a man, and as a man, it was done by divine love in Christ, even as He was given of the love of God to do it. This is a wonderful thing, that One should come having a body prepared, acting in perfect obedience, a perfect example of righteousness, giving Himself a willing offering in the fullness of divine love.

Thus for our full acceptance with God, Christ is the burnt offering. There the sinner meets God in judgment; but there he meets also Christ offering Himself and then made sin, and made sin in the very act in which His obedience was absolute and perfect, and so an absolute sweet savor in the very place of sin. God was perfectly glorified in Christ's obedience in that place, which was,

through death and atonement for sin, a perfect sweet savor to God. Bearing our sins comes in afterward.

Here therefore we find the ground of our free approach to God in the sweet savor of His burnt sacrifice. The court of the congregation represents the place into which Christ was lifted up from the earth; and here it is that His act meets the sinner as the means of approach. It is in neither the holy nor most holy place, but in view of the earth, though lifted up from it, that a perfect sacrifice has been offered to God, in which Satan could find nothing, but God everything—in which we could have no part or fellowship, save as a consequence in grace. It was a work between Christ and God, of which the saint alone reads its value; it was done before our eyes here, though He was lifted up from the earth (Jesus Christ being evidently set forth crucified, giving a testimony to the world, which leaves the world without excuse): our part in it was the sin that put Him to death. And if there be no other way to God but by Jesus Christ thus set forth in death, what is unbelief doing in despising and rejecting Him Who now in heaven is the Giver of every blessing to those that believe?

You may be busy and careful about many things, yet there is but one thing that God looks at: Christ, and Christ a sacrifice for sin. Has this love of God in His Son been but an idle tale to your hearts, while you have been eager in the pursuit after the vanity that presents itself here? Is your heart cold to the love of God, as though the place where the cross stood was a blank in the world? The natural heart hates the claim of His love and holiness; but the cross is the purchase-work of God to redeem the heart from the love of the world. Atonement, and perfect glorifying of God, and infinite acceptance in the sweet savor of Christ's offering of Himself, are found in the burnt offering.

Chapter 147

The Offerings: 2. The Meal Offering—Leviticus 2

The meal-offering was of fine flour mingled with oil, anointed with oil, and frankincense thereon, to be brought to Aaron's sons the priests, who had their portion of it. But the priest was to burn the memorial of it on the altar, to be an offering made by fire for a sweet savor unto Jehovah. It is a thing most holy of the offerings of Jehovah made by fire. (See vers. 1-3.) Here then is another offering made by fire. As in the burnt-offering, it stands the full proving of God, and all that comes out of it is a sweet savor unto Him. Now the fruits of righteousness are acceptable unto God, but we are not represented here; where we are spoken of, leaven is put in the offering. If we enter into judgment with God, no man living can stand. Our services are indeed accepted as the fruit of His Spirit in us through Christ.

We have in this, not an offering of the nature of Abel's (not atonement, that is) but of Cain's. Though surely very different in character from his, yet it is man in the life of nature offered to God, every natural faculty of man in Christ, and that fully tried by the fire of God. The church never could be thus offered as in itself a sweet savor, because in human nature it is not holy.

We shall see by-and-by that, when the church is represented, leaven is commanded to be put into the offering. In this there is none; it is perfect human nature without sin, mingled with oil (that is, born in its origin of the Spirit). Oil was poured upon it (that is, Christ as man was anointed with the Holy Ghost), and frankincense put thereon. The fragrance of grace ascends up to God. The remnant was for Aaron's sons. First, Jesus, as a man, is offered to God in His perfectness; and then we feed upon Him. The fragrance of His perfectness ascends while we feed. But this is only for priests, the true saints of God.

The ostensible anointing of Jesus was when the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the shape of a dove; but we find in the first ten verses of this chapter various other characteristics of the meal-offering to show the complete perfectness of Christ. “Thou shalt part it in pieces, and pour oil thereon.” In Jesus every part of His walk and acts, however minute, was of the Holy Ghost and in its power.

There was perfect human nature without sin, born of the Holy Ghost, and anointed with the Holy Ghost. Indeed every detail of Christ's path was in the power of the Spirit. It was offered to God; and as to all the frankincense, the sweet savor of grace in Christ, and His every motive, were for God alone; but saints as priests feed on all He was. The sweet savor of the frankincense might be enjoyed by the priests, but it was offered to God.

The wafers and the cakes were to be unleavened. In this, as in the sheaf of first-fruits waved before Jehovah (Lev. 23:10-11), we have the definite character of Christ without sin; for in the ears of corn there could be no leaven. But when the church is offered, leaven is to be used (Lev. 23:17). But the oblation of the first fruits(see ver. 12 of this chapter) was to be offered indeed, but not to be burnt, showing the difference in character from the previous offerings, which were all burned, and were to have neither honey nor leaven in them.

No effect of the oil could counteract the leaven; it was commanded to be absolutely without leaven. No power of the Holy Ghost in us counteracts the presence of evil, so as to set it aside and remove it, and thus make the subject fit to be an offering made by fire of a sweet savor. If there was leaven in its nature, it could not be an offering to Jehovah. Honey is also excluded from what is offered by fire to Jehovah. The feelings of nature may be sweet and rightly enjoyable, as honey on the top of Jonathan's rod; but it cannot be offered in sacrifice to God.

There are many things sweet and pleasant in themselves that can never be presented to God as an offering in a world of sin. Nothing can be offered to Him that is the mere satisfaction of nature. Simple natural affection, though right in itself (nay, it is a sin to be without it), is no offering to God. Our Lord's love to His mother was perfect: we see this in His remembrance of her on the cross; but when first He begins, and all through His ministry, He says, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? “

In Lev. 23:17 we have that which was typical of the day of Pentecost, on which day the Holy Ghost formed the church. When Christ ascended and presented perfect righteousness to the Father, as man in heaven, then He by the Spirit could work to bring out the result in the church as the first-fruits. Accordingly we find in this chapter 23. that which, as constituted and consecrated by the Holy Ghost, could be offered to God, but not burnt, because the old nature is still there. In Jesus however there is nothing of this; and in the meal-offering, therefore, there is to be no leaven, but oil mingled with fine flour, and oil poured on it; as none also was in the sheaf waved before Jehovah. So it was that Jesus arose, and was waved before Jehovah. But then, fifty days afterward, parallel with Pentecost, the two wave-loaves, oaken with leaven, were brought as the first-fruits to God. Remark, that there is a burnt-offering and a meal-offering offered with the wave-sheaf, but no sin-offering; whilst in verse 19 you will find a sin-offering accompanying the wave-loaves to meet the leaven in them. For the sin-offering is that which countervails the evil of the church, or it could not be accepted.

We have thus most satisfactory evidence that Jesus was offered without spot to God; and the knowledge of the blessed truth, that there was the absolute absence of sin in Him, both in nature and practice. On this account alone He could be an offering made by fire. There could be no offering presented to God for a sweet savor in which the holiness of God, searching by fire, could discover, by any possibility, anything that was not positively good—it would have hindered its being such an offering to G ed. All the fullness of the Holy Ghost could not effect this, for we see how it was on the day of Pentecost: there was the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but nevertheless sin was there.

The Holy Ghost, to give us peace, must come with a message of peace, even that there has been that presented in the offering of Christ by which God's grace can act toward us in righteousness. It is not that the act of Jesus turned God's mind toward us; but by virtue of it God can act according to His mind righteously and consistently. If God had done an act of grace without the suffering of Jesus, it would have been grace without righteousness.

It is, then, first proved that there is no righteousness in man, who has alike sinned, and broken the law, and rejected Jesus; but in presenting Jesus to God, in the world, the intrinsically righteous One, also fully tried and tested, and at the same time a sacrifice for man's acceptance by the cross, we find Him through Whom God can act in grace toward man. In Him we find the ground of

our acceptance, and the sure foundation of God's dealings with us. There is amazing blessing in looking at Jesus as the occasion of grace! The soul of the poor sinner can rest in the knowledge that grace reigns through righteousness. Thus I find myself a continual debtor to grace, because when I am daily offered to God, the value of the sin-offering is always available, without which I could not be presented; and God is thereby glorified and not man, inasmuch as it is only through Jesus that I approach.

Chapter 148

The Offerings: 3. The Peace Offering—Leviticus 3

In leaven we see the character of sin, not only in the act but in the abstract. It is well to distinguish between sins as the fruit of our evil nature, and sin. The Holy Ghost detects not only sins in fact, but sin in the nature. Thus we are led to the knowledge that we are all alike, all in one condition. The Holy Ghost lays bare that in nature which the law could only notice in its earliest actings. The moment I have a new nature, not only do I detect the acts of the old nature, but "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good doth not dwell "; but I have this comfort that, hating and judging the evil, I know that it is put away. Not that this should make us careless; no, our privilege is to judge it before it has brought forth the bitter fruits. Have you judged it thus in the nature? If it is there, it is condemned. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through. the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." As Jesus was presented in all circumstances like me, except sin, whatever I find in myself, not in Jesus, I know is this condemned thing, sin: but as Jesus was also a sacrifice for sin, it is condemned in grace to me, Jesus having suffered for it, though He had it not. If you cannot say you are without sin in your nature, living in all the spotlessness and purity of Jesus, you are in yourself lost; but recognizing Jesus as the offering for you (though in yourself a poor failing wretched creature), you can be presented to God even as He is, because you are presented in Him Who has glorified God in this very place as made sin for us. But, besides this, as a living man on earth all was perfect, and all was tested by the fullest trial of God, passed through the fire, and all was a sweet savor.

If you have thus seen Jesus, if you have found Him such, feed upon Him as upon the one object on which your soul can rest as perfect, the pattern in which you can delight to all eternity. This is the way of learning, in a sinful world, what is perfect in God's sight. Take Jesus, and as a thing most holy, offer it to God, delight in it. Study Jesus in the Gospels, in all that He was and did, as presented to us by the Spirit; and then you will learn to have your soul fashioned in its desires according to the riches of His unsearchable grace Who offered Himself without spot to God, knowing also that you shall see Him and be made like Him, seeing Him as He is.

Remark carefully the character of Jesus' perfection—no leaven, no honey; the salt of holy separation to God; all the frankincense going up to God. This is His practical example. The presence of the Holy Ghost, as to origin and power (the flour mixed with oil, and oil poured on), is an additional element; in the new man, this has its part of truth in us.

The first-fruits were to be offered but not burnt, because leaven was in them; and they could not be in themselves a sweet savor: hence a sin-offering was offered with them. (Lev. 23:17-19.) They represent the church, being (as tray be seen in Lev. 23) the offering of the day of Pentecost: not the church in the unity of the body, but as formed among Jews on earth on that day. The first of the first-fruits, the corn out of full ears, is Christ risen, offered on the morrow of the sabbath after the Passover; it represents Christ himself, and hence (Lev. 23) there was no sin-offering. If we look at it in Lev. 2, it is still Christ. Oil and frankincense are put on it. It is an offering made by fire without leaven. It is Christ looked at as man, tried by divine trial of judgment, but perfect to. be offered to

God. The expressions are somewhat remarkable—geresh carmel, “corn mature out of full ears “; it may be, produce of the fruitful field, the latter being the known sense of carmel; the meaning of geresh is certain. But the general meaning of the offering is pretty plain: Christ in His manhood, sinless and fully proved, presented to God with oil and frankincense of acceptable odor, the first-fruits—fruits of man to God. (concluded).

THE PEACE-OFFERING. (Lev. 3)

In the first chapter is the description of the burnt-offering representing the Lord's self-dedication and obedience, even unto death, first coming to do the Father's will, and then offering Himself up without spot unto God; and then, having so offered Himself, a victim of propitiation. In the second we have the meal-offering, which shows the perfection of His nature, in its origin and every result, even tried by the fire of God in death, and the detailed character of that perfectness, the memorial of it being offered before Jehovah, and the rest eaten by the priests, an unleavened meal-offering.

Chapter 3 touches on that part of the peace-offering which was offered to God. There is no mention of what was done with the body of the animal; we must refer to chapter 7 for this. The fat and the blood, which represent the life and energy of the offered victim, are said to be the food of the offering made by fire. They may not be eaten, but are presented to Jehovah, and all burnt, by a perpetual statute. The life belongs to God, and in Christ all was offered up to Him and for His glory.

We have, in the peace-offering, the same character as the two former; still a sacrifice made by fire of a sweet-smelling savor. The peculiar feature in this offering is, that it is that upon which Jehovah Himself feeds; it is not merely an offering, but food of the offering. This gives it a peculiar character, and introduces communion. The satisfaction and delight, the food of God, is in the offering of Christ. All He is finds its rest there and is perfectly glorified there; we find our food, our delight, in it too.

In chapter 7 we see that the remainder of the peace-offering was eaten by the worshipper, excepting the wave-breast and heave-shoulder, which were the priests. These three things, then, we may observe. The blood is sprinkled, and the fat burned for a sweet savor; the wave-breast was for Aaron and his sons, the heave-shoulder for the offering priest; and the rest for the worshipper to feed on, as an occasion of joy and thanksgiving before Jehovah. This practice of the offerer's partaking of his sacrifice was followed in the heathen sacrifices to which the apostle alludes (1 Cor. 10:18-21); part was offered to the idol, and with the rest they made a feast, being together partakers of it. Again, when the apostle is giving liberty to the Corinthians to eat what was sold in the shambles, he limits them to that which they ate in ignorance. “If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not.” They sprinkled the blood on the altar, and then ate the sacrifice; and therefore those who knowingly partook of it were held to be partakers of the altar, this being the way of showing communion, whether it were with an idol, or between a believer and God. And this has in it a blessed meaning.

Christ is not only here represented as the perfect burnt-offering wholly given up to God in death for His glory, but also as an offering on which we feed; not only is He God's delight, but He is that of which we can partake with Him. He is the subject-matter of communion. “As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by Me.” The communion is between all saints, the worshipper, the Priest, and God. Not only is it our privilege to see the sacrifice offered to God opening a way of

access to Him (as in the burnt-offering and others), but we find the Lord takes delight in communion with us about it.

The first thing to be observed in the peace-offering is the complete and absolute acceptance of the sacrifice, so that Jehovah speaks of it as His food, that in which His holiness could find intrinsic satisfaction. The inwards were presented for a sweet savor (as Jesus); they are tried and examined by fire, and found to be food for God Himself. The fat represents the spontaneous actings of the heart. The richness of an animal is its fat; we judge of its healthy vigorous state by this.

It is written, “Our God is a consuming fire.” This expression is sometimes wrongly interpreted, as if spoken of God out of Christ. We know nothing of God out of Christ. We may be out of Christ ourselves; and then indeed, as a consuming fire, the very presence of God would be destructive to us.

But also, as known to us who are in Christ, He is a God intolerant of all evil, of all that which is inconsistent with Himself.

The Offerings: 4. The Peace Offering—Leviticus 3

As the slain One, Jesus is that on which we must feed. He says, “The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world; whose eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.” (John 6) When we come to the knowledge of Jesus, we feed on Him as thus slain, having, as it were, His blood separated from His body. “My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.” “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” We feed on Jesus as having given His life; not on His life as life; but on Him as having given His life even unto death; not only as the incarnate One (that is, the bread come down from heaven), but as having given His flesh to be eaten, and His blood to be drunk. And here also is that which not only satisfied the justice of God, but also is esteemed, fed on by Him as His delight, and specially in the work by which Christ glorified Him in His death.

There, in the work which He did, Jesus was His delight; and on this, in the light of His countenance, and as the delight of God, we too have a, portion. It is the common food of those assembled as worshippers, to feast on before Jehovah. But if any were unclean who fed on this sacrifice, they should be cut off from the people (Lev. 7:20). It was only as clean persons they could meet thus with Jehovah. It can be only as those already cleansed and accepted that we can have this common delight in the Lord Jesus, given as a. common object of communion and enjoyment between God and us, and with one another. In this act, our worship is not simply as coming to inquire about our acceptance; but, having already access, it is to rejoice with God about the sacrifice, knowing the fruits of it. It was a thanksgiving-offering; praise was in it. All proceeds upon the conviction of full satisfaction having been previously made.

Often our worship has not sufficiently this character in it. We have intercourse frequently with God about our anxieties, our failures, our evil condition; but if this is all, we come very far short of the privileges that belong to us. Our religion should not be altogether a religion of regrets; but rather we are called to joy and rejoice, through the Spirit, in the perfectness of all that Christ has done; not merely joy because wrath has been intercepted, but there is that in Jesus which draws out constant love and delight from the Father; and we too are introduced into the place of communion with the Father about Him. Now, if we are associated in this worship, we are there as being clean, for ne unclean person is able to partake of it.

In the peace-offering the priest who sprinkled the blood had his part. He stood there as Christ, Who is the One that sprinkled the blood, and joys in the communion flowing from His sacrifice.

We learn, in these sacrifices, God in the respective ways of the Trinity, as well as in the abstract character of His holiness. If we look at God as the Father, we have the joy of His countenance as sons; but as God, we need a priest by whose presence we are encouraged to approach Him. As believing in Jesus, we stand so completely accepted in the immediate love of the Father, that Jesus says, “I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me.” At the same time we know that, as still in this body of sin and death, we have continual need of the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus; and this, indeed, in communion, we can

never leave out, even the joy of knowing the priest as having sprinkled the blood. In our joy we cannot exclude the priest: communion is a thing in common with us. God delights, we delight, and Jesus delights with us. Marvelous thought! The priest returns from the sprinkling of blood, himself to be a partaker of our secret joy in the holy place (Num. 18:8-11).

It is most important to see that we have no real delight of which the source and spring is not JESUS. So satisfied is God, and so cleansed are we, that we can come thus to enjoy the communion resulting from what Jesus has done, and as the priest, He feasts with us now in the holy place. “Where two or three are gathered together, there is He in the midst of them,” as the One Who has sprinkled the blood, to feast even now, while we are waiting for that; day, when in person He shall be present with us to eat and drink in the Father's kingdom. He said once, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.” He was not content without this last memorial of His love to them and association with Him. While the expectation was present with Him of the time when He would drink it new in the kingdom of God, He desired them to have continual remembrance of Him, “This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

The offering was to be eaten the same day, or at farthest on the second day; it was not allowed to be kept longer. This marks the communion to be necessarily spiritual, and only to be had in communion with the sacrifice of Christ, not in nature. If be the willing state of the soul itself through grace, this may be kept up a longer time; where it is thanksgiving for actual benefits, there is not the same power in it. It is only in the Spirit that we can have this communion with God. If the flesh comes in, all is spoiled; it must be burned with fire. The worshipper must eat his portion in connection with the burnt-offering, and the priests' portion. If eaten apart from these, having (as it were) from that separation lost the virtue communicated from the others, it becomes an abomination; and the soul that eats must bear his iniquity. Thus we shall continually find that joy in the Lord is apt to degenerate into that which is merely natural. For instance, if Christians in gladness of heart come to seek the Lord in communion, the Spirit is active, and they forget all grief: the communion between their souls and God is within the veil, and there is no sorrow there; but if they are not very watchful, their joy degenerates. It overlasts what is spiritual, and becomes joy in the flesh. The real test and power of this is its connection with the sacrifice offered.

In believers there will be differences in the power of this communion. Those who rest most simply in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus will have the most power of sustaining it. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 20, 21.) As we walk in the Spirit, we shall have power to continue in this holy fellowship and joy; but the earthly vessels are not competent to bear all the glory. There is always a tendency for the flesh to slip in. We may get full of our joy, and proud through it, or at least lose a sense of our dependence; and this at once opens a door to all the folly of our evil nature. After the apostle had been in the third heavens, so that he knew not whether he was in or out of the body, we find he was in danger of being puffed up. What was the remedy? Anything that mended the flesh? Not at all, but a messenger from Satan to buffet him. There is no mending the flesh; but we know this is not the place or condition in which we shall always be. For “He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” (Phil. 3:21.) (concluded).

Chapter 150

The Offerings: 5. The Sin Offering—Leviticus 4

The offerings in this chapter differ in character from the preceding, being sacrifices made for actual transgressions. Before, we had the offering of Christ as a sweet savor, and the communion of the believer upon it; but here there is altogether a new revelation. The three former were delivered under one revelation, which is marked by the words, “Jehovah called unto Moses, and spake unto him” (Lev. 1:1). The formula repeated at the beginning of this chapter. Accordingly we find, that, instead of the Lord Jesus being manifested to us as a sacrifice for a sweet savor unto God, we have Him here typified as bearing our sins in His own body—the sin-offering; Jehovah bruising Him on our account.

The SIN-OFFERINGS were consequent upon positive transgression; the accumulation of guilt was laid upon the head of the victim. We shall find under this class all the forms of man's evil are provided for. There are four different characters of sin-offerings. In chapter 5. to verse 13, sins are mentioned analogous in nature, but different in circumstance, and a trespass-offering commanded for them. In verse 14 of chapter 5. begins another revelation from God concerning the trespass-offering for anything done against Jehovah; and chapter 6. mentions trespass against a neighbor.

In the chapter before us (the fourth) we have instances of defilements of conscience concerning things which ought not to be done, being against the commandments of Jehovah. The natural conscience shrinks from murder and open sins; but there are other things which, although of a different character, nevertheless if committed bring on us defilement before Jehovah. There are things of positive requirement about which a soul may be ignorant, but neglect of which brings defilement; and, again, there are things which we know to be wrong, by means of the spiritual perception God has given us. We learn from these details, that trespasses against Jehovah, and wrongs done to our neighbor, though not all of the same importance, yet all require a sin-offering; all recall Christ to us as taking upon Him our sins. He is our sin and trespass-offering.

The first two cases are, “if the priest that is anointed do sin,” and “the whole congregation sin:” in either case the directions for the offering are the same. Some of the blood must be sprinkled “seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary;” —"and the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Jehovah in the tabernacle of the congregation.” This was done, that there might be no interruption to the general communion. For the whole congregation being identified with the high priest, his worship in the sanctuary at the altar of incense would be interrupted by their collective defilement: and again, the priest being the representative of the whole congregation before Jehovah, their exclusion was involved in his. Their sin is charged upon the bullock that is slain, which (the fat being burnt upon the altar) is burnt without the camp, and this is the ground of their renewed communion with God. Here is shown to us, not the perfectness of Jesus as presented to God, but Jesus bearing the defilement of our sin; yet we see the fat is still burned on the altar (ver. 8), and that has in it the character of the burnt-offering, showing that, though made sin for us, yet His offering to God therein was

intrinsically perfect; but the whole bullock is burnt without the camp, pointing out to us Jesus as cast out and bruised, on account of His having taken upon Him our sin, as in 2 Cor. 5:21: “He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin.” Having presented Himself in perfectness to God, He is then made sin for us, and it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. Marvelous word! Jesus, the Holy One, Who knew no sin, is cast out, and numbered with the transgressors.

If it was merely an individual that sinned, the order of the service could still be carried on, because the communion of the congregation was not thereby destroyed. In this instance, the blood was then only sprinkled on the altar of burnt-offering, because this was the place where God met an individual; for he must be reconciled, that he might have his place in the congregation, to hold communion with God. It is only because Jesus bore our sins individually, that we have communion. But He did it once for all.

Of this sacrifice we find the priest is commanded to take a portion (chap. 6:25-26), the fat and blood only being presented to the Lord on the altar of burnt-offering. We shall see in this the character of Jesus' work for us, and find the blessedness of it.

In many things we all offend, not only having sin in our nature, but doing things which conscience tells us ought not to be done; and in this state we could have no access to God for communion. These offenses render the offender unfit for communion; and while in this state he could not approach God. Observe in this chapter, it is not merely sin, but sins that are mentioned. And here, for a moment, I would speak of the importance of not misquoting. (as is often done) the passage, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” it is not said sins of the world, for if this were true, God could have nothing to charge it with.

It is indeed true, that the world as a system shall be restored to God: that place over which Satan has now gained such power, shall be redeemed, as it is said in Col. 1:20, “By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him [I say], whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.” In the hands of the second Adam, the sacrifice is the ground of the restoration of all that was alienated in the first Adam; so that not only His atonement forms a ground upon which every sinner may be addressed, but through it the world shall be restored to blessing. This result, however, is entirely future, as we know from the present dominion of Satan in this evil world; and, in the mean time, many despise and reject the blessing, for whom judgment is reserved; but to the believer present peace comes, though his be not a portion in the result yet.

In the offerings before us, there is not merely this general atonement, but the bearing of sins, the actual transfer of sins to Jesus, the free gift of many offenses unto justification of life. As in Isa. 53 it is said, “He bare the iniquities of many,” as well as “made His soul an offering for sin;” and here not only do we see Jesus presented as an offering to God, by virtue of which any sinner may be addressed, but the believer also finds that his sins are laid upon Him. And the church in anticipating the great result, finds that it is a saved body, and is brought into the knowledge of that which the apostle declares (Col. 1:21), “And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled,” etc. Thus we get full settled peace, for we know that not merely has Jesus borne some of our sins, but we get at this great general truth, that all our sins are laid upon Him and are blotted out. If we believe that by bearing our sins Jesus has justified us, then we must know that all our sins are gone from the presence of God, as He has said, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Jesus has endured the penalty. “He

hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling;" and faith is able to look at Jesus as the bearer of all sins for us, and the sin having been charged upon Him, the church is raised out of all the evil it had been in, being by one offering perfected forever. What He did was, that He bore the bruising due to us.

We can look at the work of Jesus in no other light than as thus complete; and we must, therefore, see all the sins of the church laid upon Him, and consequently all put away, and God righteous and just to forgive, because Jesus had already borne them. There can be no enfeebling of this—it would be doing it away altogether. If I say they are not completely taken away, then which of them remain? and where are the sins from which I am not justified? When is each sin to be separately atoned for? If it is not simply as a body He presents the church in perfectness of acceptance, what is forgiveness? If we are brought, by our sense of the need of this blood-shedding, to see the value of it, then we not only come to the mercy-seat, but find all our sins have been put away, and that He suffered the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It is, of course, only by the Spirit we are brought to know and value this, even that Jesus was our substitute, that "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree;" and that having done so, God is righteous to forgive. Nothing can be more plain than that, if Jesus did indeed bear our sins, then every believer is justified from all things (Acts 13:39).

We may look at it in all its breadth and compass; Jesus confessed our sins, bore them, and was bruised on their account. If He has opened your heart to believe in Him as bearing sins at all, then all your sins are put away; you must either deny that He was bearing sins at all, or you are justified. Here is the certainty of peace; and we stand justified from all things, and Jesus looks at us in this character, not at any particular time, but in order that He may present us to God. There is no question of past or future transgression, but He bore our sins. Hold fast this. There is, indeed, the frequent consciousness of faults. While faith says our sins are put away, still in looking at ourselves we see evil; and now we find how graciously the Lord provides for this defilement. The priest that offered the sin-offering was to eat it (chap. 6:26). As the worshipper and the priest ate the peace-offering together, representing Jesus as being identified with the joy of communion; so the priest takes part of the sin-offering, showing that Jesus is identified with the sin which hinders communion. Only priests ate it in the holy place, specially was the priest who offered it to eat his portion. Jesus is this priest; that on which the sin was confessed the priest ate, and identified himself thus with the defilement.

Now, in passing through the world we get disqualified by sin for communion; even though we know it not, we cannot take our blindness as the measure of God's holy requirements. The blindness of our consciences is not the blindness of God's eye, as man is apt to think. But the riches of divine mercy has provided a way, in which, although God sees it all, yet He sees us free from it, because He sees the sins all upon Jesus. He bowed His head under the weight, saying, "My sins are too heavy for me to bear." But in His resurrection we see they were actually and effectually put away, having been borne in His own body; so that we are justified from all things, perfected forever. He rose again, God having accepted the work by which we are justified, and thus bearing testimony to it. There are things which our consciences tell us ought not to be done; but of the sins of ignorance it is said, "Though he wist it not, he is guilty, he shall bear his iniquity." There is no folly like that of taking the blindness of our hearts as God's estimate for sin; but let evil and defilement be what they may, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, and grace restores communion.

In Num. 19 we have a special case of a sin-offering. There is this difference between Leviticus and Numbers. In Leviticus, we have the sacrifices in their great distinguishing characters; in Numbers, we have the particular application in the trials of a walk of faith, meeting the case of individuals falling into evil, or contracting defilement. In Num. 19 there was a red heifer taken, and burnt as a sin-offering, according to the description in the chapter now before us; “the ashes were kept for a water of separation, a purification for sin.” Any man unclean by touching death was sprinkled with it. This shows the power of the sin-offering, as brought by the Spirit to the conscience; it is not a fresh sacrifice, there is no shedding of blood, but merely the ashes sprinkled.

There are but three instances of blood being sprinkled on individuals, which are these: Aaron and his sons on the day of their consecration (Lev. 8:23, 30); the. leper on the day of his cleansing (Lev. 14:7); and the people on the giving of the covenant from Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:8). There needed, in fact, but one sprinkling, for, looked at in its whole character, “the worshippers being once purged, had no more conscience of sins.” But for the daily defilements there was the water of separation, the application of a past thing with present power to the conscience, as the case required. The sacrifice of Jesus is an act done long since. But when the believer, once cleansed by faith in His blood, contracts defilement in walking in this world, for this there is no fresh offering, but the sacrifice is brought to his remembrance by the Spirit. It is the blood that cleanses us from sin, and gives us our portion as sons by adoption; but, as regards the conscience in communion, it is the Spirit of God bringing to recollection what Jesus has done (as the ashes of the red heifer), so as to give peace and restore communion. These are the truths brought out in the sin-offering.

Since the whole church is concerned, Jesus is presented unreproveable and unblameable in God's sight; and being sanctified by the offering of His body once for all, and perfected forever by the same, the worshipper has no more conscience of sins. Thus the believer is introduced at once to the knowledge that all the church's sins were transferred to Jesus, and that in His resurrection the saints are completely justified. Let the sin be of whatever character it may, though you wist it not, yet whatever cannot accord with the holiness of God's sanctuary shall not come into it. His holiness never varies from itself; and the more we know of the value of the blood-shedding of Jesus, the more we shall see the impossibility of communion with God in sin. But if our conscience condemn us, what have we to do? We have the blessed perception through the Holy Ghost of that of which the ashes are the memorial, even the remembrance of that which has been done by Christ, bringing us again into holy communion.

The perception that Jesus has taken the defilement maintains the standard of holiness in spite of our sin. Nothing but Jesus charging the sin upon Himself could do this; and if we do not see the holiness maintained, we shall be making excuses for our sin, and thinking we can still have communion with God in it; and our estimate and standard of sin must of necessity be lowered. If my conscience cannot know the sin absolutely put away, I must give up communion, or seek it on some other and lower ground; but seeing Jesus a burnt-offering and a sin-offering, we see Him made sin and ourselves made the righteousness of God in Him. And we see that He loved us, and gave Himself for us, not for anything in us, but because of the prevalence of His love over all. What blessed thoughts must we have in this knowledge of the perfectness of His love! and what must he the blindness of those who count God to be such an one as themselves, seeing that He has given Jesus!

Chapter 151

The Offerings: 6. Trespass Offering—Leviticus 5

There is much that is important in the close of the account of these offerings. In the previous chapters the characters of the sacrifices were brought out. First, the perfectness of the offering of Jesus unto God: and, secondly, as outcast, treated as defiled, by reason of the sin that was laid upon Him. The trespass-offering partakes of the latter character. The Spirit of God is a holy detector and judge of all that is inconsistent with Himself: nothing of sin can pass unnoticed. The Spirit does not judge according to the natural conscience, but takes a standard according to the holiness of Jesus in the presence of God, so that our minds do not always discern that which He sees requisite to be judged. But whether we discern or not, the Spirit takes account of the evil in us; and if it were not for the sin-offering and the trespass-offering, we should be in a worse case than ever. For there is no atonement for sin made by the Spirit; this is no part of His work. The Spirit manifests all righteousness, revealing to us what Jesus taught; but we never read of the Spirit bearing our sins. This is a point of the utmost importance for our rest. The Spirit is the Spirit of testimony and holiness. In acceptance and in atonement Jesus alone has any part. Acceptance came in upon what Jesus wrought in the flesh—by His offering of His body once for all. “In the body of His flesh through death,” &c. The testimony of the Spirit is to unmingled holiness, bearing witness to our sins, showing us that in us good does not dwell, and also that peace and rest come by what Christ has wrought. The effect of this testimony of holiness would be to destroy peace, if the Spirit did not still reveal the efficacy of the blood-shedding; but while it is His office to exalt the perception of the holiness God requires, He still witnesses to us that “the blood of Jesus Christ... cleanseth from all sin.”

When we look at the variety of sin (for in spite of our ignorance we do perceive and know sin to be still cleaving to us), never could we have peace but through the testimony of the blood of Christ.

Supposing we have erred in the character of worshippers, ignorantly committing any of those things which are forbidden; here is sin, though we wist it not—the holiness of God is not limited by our conscience.

There are many things which would be sins upon the conscience hindering communion, were it not for the blood of Jesus.

The power and effect of the revelation of Jesus Christ is to bring us to God, to holiness. It is in vain, therefore, to reckon upon grace, if we do not see the place into which it brings us, even into the place of worship. The effect of grace is to bring us upon ground on which nothing inconsistent with worship will be tolerated.

In the chapter before us we have the different characters of sin, which without Christ could not be passed by. He will by no means clear the guilty. All that is inconsistent with Jesus within the veil is sin for us, and separates us from Him in communion. In the sixth chapter we see that God's eye notices sin against a neighbor, as well as against Himself; for the command is, “Receive ye one another, as Christ hath also received us to the glory of God.” With unhindered liberty we have

boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, even where all the holiness of God is displayed. The Spirit reveals many things in us inconsistent with this holy place, but we know that Jesus has offered both a sin and a trespass offering. “He was made sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him “; therefore the revelation of holiness reveals nothing to hinder our entrance into the holiest. Only we are increasingly purified from all the light of that place shows us.

If the holiness of God has been revealed, and you have swerved from the requirements of it, may the Spirit of God so reveal to you the offering made once for all, that you may be humbled as to yourself and then go on, resting upon the truth of the completeness of the sacrifice, assuredly knowing that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin”!

Chapter 152

The Offerings: 7. Leviticus 5—6:1-7

The sin-offering was a putting away of sin: ashant being what a man is guilty of toward God Whom it offends, his trespass; khata is rather his sin viewed as error from the right way. But the victim was identified with the evil to be borne from the offerer, and put away out of God's sight by the vicarious work He was pleased to ordain and accept.

There is an effect from the sin-offering full of blessedness. It introduces us to God's presence as well as purges man's conscience. By Him Who suffered once for all for our sins we are brought to God. This had its fullest expression in the blood of the offering for sin put on the mercy-seat on the day of atonement. God was glorified thus in the Son of man on the tree, God in His nature, justice, holiness, love, truth, and majesty; and by the same blood we who believe are brought into His presence holily and righteously. The gold within means His righteousness in that we are brought into God's marvelous light, made meet for His presence; as the brass is His righteousness where we are as men in this world, though Christ to effect it was lifted up from the earth. They are both the righteousness of God which justifies the believer; but in the latter sin is righteously dealt with, in the former is shown the object of God's delight and rest: the one governmental righteousness as to sin, the other intrinsic righteousness according to the perfection of His nature, and we are accepted in the Beloved Who sits at His right hand. In the victim burnt without the camp we see God coming out of His place and taking vengeance on evil; yet this very victim's blood was carried within, so that in both ways God was glorified even as to sin and for our sins.

It may be noticed in detail that there are here four classes of sin and trespass offerings distinguished. The first we have seen in Lev. 4, whether of the high priest, or of the congregation as a whole, of a ruler, or of a private person. They were for sin where natural conscience was violated. The second goes down to verse 13 of chap. 5, and consists of sins against the ordinance of the Lord, some through inadvertency even, so that they stood midway between sin and trespass offerings, and hence designated by both names. Then from verse 14 to the end of the chapter we have the full character of trespass or guilt, in wrongs against the Lord in His holy things; and again in wrongs done to one's neighbor in a variety of forms, as we may read in Lev. 6:1-7. In the two last chapters of proper trespass, the law is enjoined for the desecration done, and the fifth part, or a two-fold tithe added to the reparation made as a fine before the Lord. It was not only the conscience defiled as in that which required a sin-offering: there was a positive offense against Jehovah Who demanded special satisfaction. It was a maal, a treachery or perfidy against Him, direct or indirect; for He avenges wrongs done, not to Himself only in His service, but in breaches of trust, truth and honesty, especially when a lie is sworn to. Sin and guilt here coalesce. God is not mocked. And “our God is a consuming fire.” Least of all in the believer will He be a consenting party to evil.

How distinct the testimony He renders to His people of His abhorrence of evil in every form! The nearer to Himself, or the more important in human eyes, the offender, the more serious the offering. On the other hand, as no wrong is overlooked, so nobody was too obscure to be passed

over. Even if one knew not that it was a wrong, when it was committed, God took care to lay it on his conscience in His own way and time: “though he wist it not, yet was he guilty” and bound to offer, when he was forgiven as certainly as he had been declared guilty.

Chapter 153

The Offerings: 8. Their Laws—Leviticus 6:8-30 - 7

We have in this section supplemental regulations chiefly for the priests, but of great value for all because of much added truth. Communion with the offering where enjoyable is prominent, and the limitations laid down distinctly.

First comes the law of the burnt offering (vi. 9-13). That which went up wholly as a savor of rest to God has here as before the foremost place. The fire was to be ever burning, “all night unto the morning.” If divine judgment knows in itself no mitigation, nor cessation, the accepted offering is there to be altogether consumed. God thus established both the witness of unslumbering judgment according to His holy nature, and the offering that glorified Him even when sin made it imperative for fallen man. There was no offering or sacrifice to God in Eden. Some moderns understand place or fuel of burning, instead of burning — “upon the place, or fuel, of burning on the altar all night until the morning.” But the substantial sense abides the same. When men sleep, far away from God, He has ever His savor of rest. How true this is now of Israel during their long night, not yet alas! of penitent weeping. Yet the morning will come assuredly for them in the mercy that endures forever, the morning without clouds. God is faithful to them, if they have been faithless to Him. “The fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out.” “The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.”

Next is the law of the meal offering (vers. 14-18), with a special ordinance appended when it was an offering of Aaron and his sons on the day of his anointing (vers. 19-23), in which last case it was wholly burnt like the burnt offering, though in the more general form the priests had their portion of the flour or meal. In every case the frankincense was for God exclusively; but the saint who has accepted Christ is free to enjoy the perfection of Him as man. Our communion is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, though there be that which we own God only can appreciate, which is therefore for Him alone.

Then follows a new ordinance from chap. 5:24-30, the law of the sin offering; as also that of the trespass offering in chap. 7:1-10. Then following this we have the law of peace offerings (vers. 11-24). Nor is this all. A related ordinance is appended in vers. 22-27, denouncing the eating of fat or of blood; and then comes another and final one which begins with the sacrifice of peace offerings, and ends with a summary of all these laws (vers. 28-38). It will be noticed that the peace (or communion) offering here stands last, though preceding those for sin and trespass in the previous order of the offerings. There are privileges we enjoy simply as belonging to God; there are others into which we can only enter as in His presence, drawing in conscious nearness to Him (i.e., as priests, and not Israelites only). “All things are ours “; but we do not all or always enjoy equally. Hence we see that only the priests partook, as of the meal offering, so of the sin and trespass offerings. All the males among the priests eat it in the holy place, though here it would seem that the court of the tabernacle is so designated. The incarnation of Christ, and His propitiation are “most holy.” Man as such cannot meddle with either. They can be enjoyed only in God's presence. There they are food, but holy food. So it is the spiritual that the apostle exhorts to

restore a man overtaken in any fault or trespass. It supposes holy activity of grace, identifying themselves with Christ and His work in the sin before them, He of course alone efficaciously, they in divine love as one with Him, and near Him practically.

There is solemn instruction in the law of the sacrifices of peace offerings. Thanksgiving has not the same force as a vow or a voluntary offering. In the former case the peace offering must be eaten on the same day; in the latter it might be on the next after as well. Worship cannot be severed from the sacrifice of Christ with impunity; and purity is obligatory on the worshipper. How terrible is the failure of Christendom in both respects! It is in both forms the figure of communion which should be expressed in worship, though all that are of God may not enjoy it. All the life that is given up, all the energy of Christ, is for God; but Christ and the saints (Aaron and his sons) have special fellowship.

Chapter 154

The Offerings: 9. The Priesthood Consecrated—Leviticus 8

We have considered in detail the work appointed for Aaron and his sons, as priests to Jehovah; we have now an account of the manner of setting them apart for that office. They are first washed with water, this signifying their sanctification by the word. In it the high priest is identified with his sons; even as Jesus says, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Thy word is truth” (set apart as man in glory, the model of what we ought to be in holiness); and again, “By the words of Thy lips have I kept Me from the paths of the destroyer.” And when speaking of the church the language is, “He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word.”

This being done, the high priest alone is clothed in his robes and anointed; he needed not blood to admit him into the service of God. He was the representative of One whom God could receive and own as “His servant, His elect, in Whom His soul delighted.” Thus after His baptism we find the Spirit descends as a dove upon Jesus, and a voice comes from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” He needed no offering for Himself, but stood as the anointed of God without shedding of blood. Afterward Aaron identifies himself with his sons, when sacrifices are brought to be offered for them. Thus we see Jesus one person, as it were, with us, entering the holy place by His own blood, that we might be made “His fellows.” Thus it is that we are qualified to worship with Him. This enabled Him to say, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God.” And afterward we find that blessed association with the saints which made Him say, “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

We are thus marvelously introduced into the presence of God and the Father to worship in the holiest. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” But the high priesthood of Jesus is essentially connected with our introduction into the holiest of all and our worship there. The name indeed of Father carries us farther, as partakers of the Holy Ghost and life in Christ; we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The burnt-offering and sin-offering are offered, and also the ram of consecration; all the various aspects of the work of Christ, in the value of which we come to God, are presented to us in connection with the priests' consecration to God.

In the case of the leper's cleansing (Lev. 14) there is an analogy in the application of the blood of the sacrifice: only here it is consecration, there cleansing from sin; and further in the leper's case the application was individual, but here the whole church is presented. In the leper's case the practical cleansing belonging to the camp began by water, and was followed by blood put on the right ear, thumb, and toe, giving cleanness and the judgment and disallowance of evil according to Christ's blood in everything; and that likewise followed by oil, the Spirit. But before this, as two clean birds were taken, one killed, and the other, dipped in the blood, let fly, the leper was sprinkled with the blood over running water. This was outside, as the inward work followed in the camp. It was the proper efficacy of Christ's work in blood, death, and resurrection.

The priests' consecration was very peculiar. They do not stand outside as the leper. But they are washed with water, and the blood of the consecration lamb is applied as in his case. So far the fitting them by water and blood is the same: what does the one so does the other. But after this some of the blood on the altar was put with the oil, and all sprinkled together. The power of the Holy Ghost is effectual in making good in us, as dead to sin, and alive to God in Him, the consecration to God manifested in Christ's death, in giving Himself a sacrifice to God. So only are we cleansed in God's judgment according to His judicial estimate of Christ's death. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:10). “The law of the Spirit of life hath made me free.” “For what the law could not do” God did, when Christ was “for sin.” Then God “condemned sin in the flesh.” This is judicial, but it is deliverance through death. Verses 2 and 3 of Rom. 8 bring together the oil and the blood on the altar. Hence we present to God, our bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable. It is still the same judicial estimate of sin according to Christ's death, only looking to realization by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Aaron and his sons fill their hands with the offerings, and they are waved for a wave-offering before the Lord. They are qualified by the sacrifice, and priestly service becomes their privilege. The ear and right hand are sprinkled with blood, the great toe also, that nothing should enter into the mind, no act be performed, nothing should be found in their walk through the world, without being according to the precious blood of Jesus.

The church stands thus under the efficacy of the whole work of Christ. All that hindered from entering into the place of worship and service is done away; competency to exercise ministry depends upon our walking in the Spirit; but provision for this has been accomplished once for all, and. we cannot escape from the responsibility—a responsibility measured and guarded by the holiness of Christ's blood-shedding –entire death to sin and the world.

Let us remember, that whatever is unfit for us in entering the holy place, unfit for us as ministering priests, as worshippers in the sanctuary, must be put away. It is the privileged position of the church to be introduced to all the blessings of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. If we are made anything, we are made priests unto God; as a body we are looked at according to the estimate God has of the sacrifice of His dear Son.

There is no renewal of the consecration; the priests were only to wash their hands and feet, that they might carry no defilement into the sanctuary from day to day; so we have need only to have our feet washed. Let us be careful thus continually to cleanse ourselves from any practical unfitness that may defile us in our intercourse daily with an evil world. Jesus has begun the new song of praise, and puts the same into our mouths, as sprinkled with His blood, anointed with His Spirit, and feeding continually upon Him in the presence of the living God. Consider how far you have realized this as your standing, and be careful to cast away all that defiles you as a priest set apart for such a service. This is something far beyond walking half in the world and half with God, questioning whether even you do believe or not. Be assured, God would have you brought out of so miserable an uncertainty. He would have you identified with the sanctuary, entering into all the fullness of joy that results from intimacy of fellowship and service with Jesus. Kings and priests unto God, not only blood but anointing oil was upon Aaron and his sons, and his sons' garments. All within and without is consecrated. He “loveth us and washed us in His own blood, and made us

kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Chapter 155

The Offerings: 10. The Priesthood Consecrated—Leviticus 8

This chapter is occupied with the offerings of the eighth day when Jehovah appeared, manifesting the acceptance of all and displaying His glory in the midst of the people. But it is earthly blessing, not heavenly. The blood of the sin-offering was not carried within the vail, though the body was burned without the camp. It was sprinkled where God met—not the mediator, but—the people. The bearing away of sin was not less shown, but no entrance into the holiest. Sacrifice and sin-offering are seen in all their forms.

Aaron puts the blood of the calf for the sin-offering on the horns and pours out the rest at the bottom of the altar; be burns the fat, etc., thereon, and the flesh and the hide without the camp. Then he deals with the burnt-offering as prescribed, sprinkling the blood round about, and burning the body, etc., on the altar. (Vers. 1-14.) Then the people's offering is brought, the goat of the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the bullock and the ram of the peace-offerings with the breasts and the right shoulder for a wave-offering. (Vers. 15-21.)

“ And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces” (vers. 22-24).

This typifies not at all what we know as drawing near into the sanctuary, but the public recognition of Christ's sacrifice. Hence here Jehovah's glory appears, as it will to Israel by and by. No doubt it will be Christ, King and Priest; but He is and is owned as Jehovah in that day, and withal the Messiah Whom they had pierced.

Here Moses and Aaron enter the tabernacle for the first time; but this (not as in our case) is followed by their coming out and blessing the people, when Jehovah's glory appears. So it will be for Israel in due time. Our place meanwhile is to draw near by faith where Christ is in the sanctuary. But He will surely come forth, as indicated here in the coming out of Moses and Aaron. The blessing of Israel will be publicly displayed, and the outpouring of the Spirit will be for all flesh on the earth. But at Pentecost the Spirit was shed on the church and so abides forever while Christ is hid in God within. We are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies; whereas He will appear for Israel's blessing on the earth. Every eye shall see Him then. J. N. D.

Chapter 156

On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 1

It is remarkable how the Lord, when He has led us a little way by faith in simplicity of dependence on Him, provides for the exigency of circumstances which the failings of men produce around us, by the intervention of His gracious loving-kindness and guidance. He thereby teaches us to depend on Him for circumstances, as well as for ourselves; and keeping us (the great position of truth) in continual dependence, that we may in our feebleness learn the fullness of His resources, and the faithfulness of His love; His watchful care thus to keep us leaning on it, our only security from the power of selfishness and evil. Men, in all circumstances, shrink from the sense of dependence—dependence upon God. It requires faith; they are willing to trust upon man present, not upon God to their eyes absent; though a thing to be learned—the great lesson of the Christian dispensation—the character of all sanctity. It is true of righteousness in the Christian dispensation, and of course therefore ever in truth; and it is true in every circumstance of individual life, and of the necessities of the church.

The book of Numbers, the history of the Israelites, is a lesson of this—a lesson of faith. We get out of

Egypt, not knowing perhaps how, whither, or where we are going, only that we are leaving Egypt. But when Canaan is our constant hope, the wilderness is our constant way. Whether our journey be long or short, of vigor of attainment, or of self-earned weariness of unbelief, it is still through the wilderness. And God is there with us teaching us faith, teaching us to depend upon God, where there is nothing else to depend upon. There may be green spots from Him Who gives rivers in the wilderness; yea from our own souls rivers may flow, fed from the Rock that never fails. At the commandment of the Lord we may journey, at the commandment of the Lord we may rest awhile. Manna may daily surround our camp, surely fed every morning's early dawn; but we are still in the wilderness, in entire dependence upon God, learning to enjoy in the well-taught lesson of whence the enjoyment really comes. The losing the sense of this was the very mark of guilt for the Israelite in the land. A Syrian ready to perish was their constant confession in their faith, when they brought the first-fruits of that good land, a land of valleys, and watered with the dew of heaven, a land where the Lord's eyes continually were. This is our continual failing in the service of the church, namely, in the sense of entire dependence. There is nothing so hard to the human heart as constant dependence; when faith fails, we constantly find out where we are. It is the wilderness or God: nothing is so foolish as self-dependence; for in very deed it is God or the wilderness. Thus it is in the righteous position of the church's exigence: apt to loathe the light food, but conducted ever of God.

But there is another state of things far worse than this: when Babylon has carried the body of the people away, the reluctance of the residue to stay in dependence of faith, and their determination to go down into Egypt for help, where judgment would surely overtake them. Such is the continual tendency of the human heart, such help is the church therefore continually seeking. But the church is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. And how is Christ not of the world? Surely in

spirit and in character He was not of it, as an evil world, unholy, opposite to God. When His spotless excellency passed through it, it was unscathed, though passing through every scene that wearies, that bows down our frail and feeble hearts. But it was with other thoughts also that Jesus is not of the world, and so said He of His disciples. He was not of it, but of heaven, the Lord from heaven; and we are not of it, but from thence, associated with Him Who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and is now made higher than the heavens, now in manifested association (i.e., to faith), as the object of it there, in the accomplishment of what forms the dispensation in the heavens. The founding of the dispensation upon the accomplishment of the exaltation of its Head is of the highest importance, because it is the ground of ascertained righteousness and its extent, and the seal of the character of the whole dispensation. It belongs, as being rejected in its Head from the world, to the heavenlies.

But it is not merely in the result of the treatment of the Lord, and His being glorified, that the dispensation had such a character, and held such a place. In the purpose of God it had no other place. It was the secret of God hidden from ages and generations, and formed an extraordinary break in the dispensations, to the rejection for their unbelief of the proper earthly people of God, a forming out of the earth but not for it, a body for Christ; a heavenly people associated with Him in the glory in which He should be and should reign, when the full lime was come, over the earth, in those times of restitution which should come from the presence of the Lord. A system forming no part of the earthly system, though carried on through the death of Christ in the forming of its members in it, but that when all things are gathered together in one Christ, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, these should be associates of His glory, in whom it and the riches of His grace should be shown, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, according to the gift of the Father; a purpose formed for Christ's especial and personal glory before the worlds, and kept secret till the time of His sending down the Spirit after the actual glory was accomplished, after He had entered in risen manhood into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

The church has sought to settle itself here, but it has no place on the earth. It may show forth heavenly glory here according to that given to it; hut it has no place here, only in glory with Christ in heavenly places at His appearing. We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

This subject, as to the special distinctness of the dispensation, has been treated of in a former number, in an article under the title of “The Secret of God"; and therefore I do not enter into it at large here. I believe it to be the most important point for the church to consider now. Looked at as an earthly dispensation, it merely fills up (in detailed exercise of grace) the gap in the regular earthly order of God's counsels made by the rejection of the Jews On the covenant of legal prescribed righteousness, in the refusal of the Messiah; till their reception again under the new covenant in the way of grace on their repentance. But though making a most instructive parenthesis, it forms no part of the regular order of God's earthly plans, but is merely an interruption of them, to give a fuller character and meaning to them. As to the thing introduced, we are called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not the place or time of His glory. Our calling therefore is not at all here; but when Christ Who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. Ministration upon earth is merely to this purpose. The moment there is a minding of earthly things, there is enmity to the cross of Christ; for “our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile

body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." The system was a system of derived earthly authority, and, while the church was among them simply, it never lost its earthly character entirely. It was open at any time to the return of the Lord, and was formed upon the order of derivative authority from Him when He had not yet ascended into glory, though it was accompanied by the Spirit which enabled them to testify to His ascended glory. But they were Jews, and they maintained the character of the earthly system so far as it was associated with the risen Savior, the hope of Israel; for that which was identified with the resurrection of Christ was the "sure mercies of David."

Thus we find the Lord telling them, "But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness of Me, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." Accordingly we find the eleven choosing Jewishly by lot, before the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven, the Witness of the glory, one to be a witness with them of the resurrection; one who companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them. So in the sermon to those who came together on hearing of the tongues, we read, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses;" and then he uses the descent of the Holy Ghost as the Witness of His exaltation. Again in the sermon in Solomon's porch, "Whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses," and then goes on with a sermon purely Jewish. In Acts 5:22 the double witness is directly referred to and distinguished. So after the resurrection the Lord breathed into His disciples the Spirit of God, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye remit," &c. Subsequently they received the Holy Ghost, the Witness of exalted glory.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 157

On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 2

Thus the apostles became the heads of derivative power apparently, at any rate the existing depositary of authority, for derivative commission was never conferred upon them; and stood before the world the founders of the church among the Jews with commission to extend it to all nations. But the Lord, save in the testimony of apostasy by the apostle John in the Revelation, gives us no authentic account of any such transmission of it through the world. It formed no part of the record, nothing on which the church of God had to rest for its rejection. It is remarkable, too, that the prayer of our Lord in chap. 17. of John was literally fulfilled in the Jewish church (see the first chapters of the Acts of the apostles) in them who were one together, in the unity of those who believed on Him through their word, in their separation out of the world even to the surrender of their goods, and the witness thus afforded to it, praising God and having favor with all the people, great grace being upon them all. Here the scene all but closes: such we see not elsewhere at all. This was the church of those connected with Christ in the flesh, who had seen Him in the resurrection, and derived their authority from Him in earthly association, though endued with power from on high; ignorant of the times when the kingdom should be restored to Israel, but knowing that the heavens had received Him Who was able, and was to do it; and looking for the repentance of the people that He might return.

But they did not repent. Another witness was raised up when this witness of His resurrection was refused, and the power of the Holy Ghost in it rejected, to declare Jesus at the right hand of God; and to show demonstratively in His power, that they were doing as their fathers had ever done, resisting the Holy Ghost. But this was, in fact, a testimony against them in their rejection of the apostolic word and power recorded in the previous chapters, and is closed by the testimony of seeing heaven now opened, launching the church into a new scene, a scene of death to itself, but into which it entered by the perception of heaven open, and Jesus seen there. With this accordingly Jewish testimony to it, as a church, closed. Jesus was not now sitting as we see Him in spirit, but standing at once to receive His suffering church. Here the Jewish scene finally closed till they should say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah,” accomplishing this word of the Lord, and the view of Him in heaven thus opened to the church. Individuals might be converted and doubtless were, but the order of Jewish ministry ceased. Heretofore it had been confined to Jerusalem, and in regular witness by the apostles, eyewitnesses of His resurrection to the Jews, and filling up and arranging the necessary offices, as we read in the Acts. But death and the heavenlies were now the portion of the church of God; its earthly order and continuance gone. And though Peter preached among the Jews and the rest we know not from scripture where, succession and order as to them we find not in scripture at all. There is no authentic statement at all, save that Peter continued his labors as apostle of the circumcision, the only place he holds in scripture; and that the apostle continued at Jerusalem, as we find in the Acts and other parts of the apostolic writings.

But another scene now opened. The heavenlies we have now seen as the positive, known, and only portion of the church (for the earthlies were Jewish); and the Jews had rejected the testimony

of Christ risen and exalted by the Holy Ghost, from the apostles and Stephen. Stephen's ministry was suited to this. Chosen among the Hellenists, he formed the link, having purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness to bear witness, not as an eyewitness but by the Holy Ghost, of Christ. Accordingly this is entirely his charge: not “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard,” as Peter says to the rulers; but the witness of the rejection of the Holy Ghost, of which being full he saw Jesus in the heavenlies.

Thus he formed the link of Jewish rejection, and the position and state of the church which followed.

And what succeeds? Not Jewish order, but sovereign grace approving itself by the energy of the Spirit.

They were all scattered abroad except the apostles, lest it should seem derived from them; and they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Who sent them? Persecution. Who enabled them? The grace and Spirit of God: and it reached the Gentiles. There was no Gentile church but by what in those days is called irregularity; what is really the sovereignty of the grace by which any Gentile is called in the extraordinary and seemingly irregular act of God. For salvation is of the Jews. A Jewish Jesus is not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but a glorified Jesus does what seems good unto the glory of the grace of which He is now the indiscriminate, as to men, but sure distributor. But the character of the change which took place, is at once shown by this dispersion, and universal preaching wherever they went. The ordinary Christians preceded the apostles, that it might be plainly not derived from them. The whole matter then to justify anything was “The hand of the Lord was with them, and many believed:” a very irregular and out of the way thing for human nature, but which God has ordered as the way of salvation. Thus we find the instantaneous cessation of derivation arrangement in the Jewish rejection of the apostles, and the whole dispensation as carried on upon earth assuming a new character. This was the actual breaking of the earthly order, as the former seen with Stephen was the closing of the Jewish possibility of the dispensation.

But a new scene now opens, the regular Gentile form and order of the dispensation in the hands of the apostle Paul, the apostle of the uncircumcision, the apostle of the Gentiles. Did he then derive it from the apostles, or was he indeed a successor to our Lord by earthly appointment and derivation? No, in no wise. It was his continual boast that it was not so—his continual conflict with judaizing teachers, what was often charged on him as though lie needed it, with which they pressed his spirit, but which he as sternly and steadily refused, withstanding them who had such authority to the face. He is the type of the dispensation. Every dispensation has its character, from the manner in which Christ is manifested and introduced in it; and its order from Him under whom it takes its rise as to ministration.

God not yet known to the church in covenant, but the same God revealed as Almighty was the dispensation to Abraham called out to trust in Him, and gave its character to the path in which he had to walk in hope.

Christ, for now it was in covenant, revealed as Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was that under which Moses the leader in the wilderness, and Joshua in the land, led in succession the children, of Israel under the order of successional priesthood forever.

Christ manifested as Messiah, God manifest in the flesh, the end of the law for righteousness, the head of all Jewish order, was He Whom they should have received, Who could give and did give His derived authority to the apostles whom He had chosen. Christ risen, still a Jewish hope, the securer of the sure mercies of David, was He Whom they rejected, in spite of the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Christ glorified and supreme, the hope to every Jew scattered abroad and every Gentile sinner, is the witness of sovereign grace, whatever the failure in evil. Those in whom it was deposited, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, formed the characteristic of the time in which the Spirit wrought by them. So of the twelve, Christ was the true Vine (not the nominal Israel), and they the branches, deriving their authority from Him as the Patriarchs from Israel; the dispensation thus far taking its entire and orderly character from them.

It was a Jewish, though a Christian thing; that is, it was Jewish in its present order; it began at. Jerusalem; but this ceased as a line when the risen Christ was rejected. The grace of God flowed in through the sandy desert and wilderness of the world, to make green (where it flowed) what it found buried in evil in it, when no watering of the tree which He had planted could cause it to bring forth good fruit to His glory, and its own profit and acceptance.

And as the Spirit went as the wind where it listed, every one that was born of it was, according to the measure of the grace, the witness of the grace that he had received; for God had not lit candles to put them under bushels. Paul became the head and characterizing agent of the dispensation among the Gentiles, not derivative but efficient. Hence God made him so powerful and so tried against derivative mission. “I received it,” says he, “not of men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who raised Him up from the dead.” So of the gospel which he preached, he certified them, he was zealous of this point, he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ; and he gives this general character of himself, “Last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time,” as an ■κτρωμα; and this character attaches to the whole dispensation, an extraordinary arrangement and provision, something ektrormatal, born out of due time, for the time present till the earthly system is just ready to be restored, but belonging entirely to the heavenlies, having no earthly derivation or connection in its power with the succession of that order which was first outwardly established. It derived its stream higher up from the same source, though recognizing it in its place (see Galatians 2). If it had such succession, what was all Paul's reasoning about, or why did he take such pains to prove it did not derive itself? Why did the Spirit of God refute the notion of Paul's derivative character when he preached the same doctrine, and held the same truths? It was the grand testimony to the break of successional authority, which was Jewish; the church, as a separate thing for glory, being now set on this earthly footing on its own basis of apprehension of it by the Spirit. (Continued from page 99.) (To be continued.)

Chapter 158

On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 3

Accordingly the evidence which the apostle affords—of his apostolate is never derivative, or that he had Authority from others; but, “If I am not an apostle unto others, doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord: for though ye have ten thousand instructors, ye have not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel.” “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,...examine yourselves;...Know ye not that Christ dwelleth in you except ye be reprobates?” “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.” So his argument, as to dispensation, is, “When He ascended up on high, He gave some, apostles; some, prophets;” etc. Now the twelve were apostles, and had the express name from our Lord's commission before He ascended up on high at all. Yet they do not come into the apostle's contemplation in spirit at all (i.e., in any such character); because they did not, in that state, constitute a part of the dispensation of gift, authority by gift, of which he was minister and expounder. This was associated with the ascended glory of Christ— “When He ascended up on high, He gave.” Accordingly, when the apostle was called, he was called not as knowing Christ after the flesh (if he had, he would know Him no more); but as one who, as a Jew, in ignorance indeed, consented to that very act against Stephen which showed the rejection of the Jews; and was a killing apostle of the Sanhedrim who had been so guilty, to find any of those who called upon His name; he was identified, not with the believing, but with the unbelieving, portion of the Jews when the question was between them; and he was not a Christian at all while the church had this character. He was the witness of the calling of grace, and of the perception of supreme glory.

The manner of his call was declarative of both. He was in the career of opposition to Christ, and arrested to be the witness of His glory, and of whatever had been revealed to Him—not of His earthly career (to that he had been a spiritual stranger); not of His fellowship when risen with His brethren (from that he had been a careless outcast, or a bitter opposer to it), but of His ascended glory; not the patient tracing with slow under standing the unfolding of the Man Jesus conversant among them, till it followed Him, through the apparent death of all their hopes, by the resurrection, seen of Him forty days, into the known certainty of His exaltation, following Him to the clouds in which He should one day appear again so coming, and the witness of where He was, because the Spirit had been sent down from the Father. But the sudden and unlooked for perception of the heavenly glory of the Lord, above the brightness of the sun, and finding that this was Jesus; that is, beginning at the glory, the heavenly glory, and aware that he saw and heard the Lord speaking from heaven, he asks and finds that this glorified One, this glorious Lord, was Jesus, Whom he was persecuting.

Hence the mission of Paul was wholly of the glory in its source, not a witness of the sufferings and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, but a witness of the glory and a partaker of the sufferings; and so ever preaching this mystery among the Gentiles, “Christ in you the hope of glory.” This then was the calling of Paul, a sovereign calling by grace, revealing the Son in him—one born out of due time; and this when the church was entirely heavenly, entirely underived, and necessarily

rejecting derivation, or he would have denied the character of his calling, and lost the authority of his mission, for the Jewish things would have remained. It was heavenly, underivative, of grace, and by revelation, and this of the glory; and drew all its character and all its evidence from this. And this is carefully insisted on by him, and urged by the Spirit of God. The ordination of the apostle stamped the seal on the same truth. First, it was secured by the divine counsels that he should preach and testify within and without the synagogues and congregations concerning the Lord Jesus. Without anything further than the calling spoken of, he preached the faith which he had once destroyed; as he himself expresses it, “as it is written, I believed and therefore I spake, we also believe and therefore speak;” as the other apostles, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

And so is the energy of the Holy Ghost ever, whether it be the sure resurrection of Jesus, the revealed glory of the Lord, or with Jeremiah, in derision daily because of his words to the people—it is in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones; he was weary with forbearing and could not. If in liberty, there was the rejoicing as being counted worthy to suffer shame; if reluctant and tried by the abounding iniquity in a state ready to be judged, the word of the Lord was more powerful than the fear, though on every side: he believed and therefore spake. The glory of the Lord must be vindicated.; and it becomes a positive responsibility. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set upon a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, neither was anything kept secret but that it should come abroad: and it is our business to manifest it in the truth and energy of the Spirit. Therefore “If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear;” and “Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you, and to you that hear shall more be given.”

Hence we also find the apostle declaring, “When it pleased Him Who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the apostles saw I none save James the Lord's brother.” Fourteen years after, he went up, but it was by revelation; and in conference he found that those who seemed to be somewhat added nothing to him; and this was the point with him. It was no haughtiness of spirit, and he was willing to try his word by theirs; but he found they could add nothing, and they owned the grace that was in him; though lie derived no authority from them, the appointed apostles of the Lord, and recognized none in them save in the sphere which God had allotted to them; and they owned the grace of God which was in him. When need was, he withstood them to the face, because they were to be blamed who were insisting upon the old ordinances. To such things he would give subjection, no, not for an hour.

And what after was his career because of the glory revealed to him, his ordination as men speak, if he did not go up to those who were apostles before him? The energy of the Spirit consequent on the revelation of the Lord still held its character in securing the breaking through the apostolic succession. There was no derivative link from the Lord; there was the revelation of the Lord and mission by Him, but no human ordination; and in this he worked long: not only was preaching or teaching strangers, but Barnabas, having gone to Tarsus to find him, brings him to Antioch; and it came to pass that for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much

people. Who settled this? Who appointed them here? Who, Paul? Who, Barnabas? The grace of the Spirit of God wrought effectually in them, and so the apostles, as we have seen, had to judge; they perceived the grace of God that was given to him, and they gave them the right hand of fellowship.

But still in public mission had they no derivative authority from some human ordination? Or was not abstract apostolic mission the ground on which it rested? Long had it been so, for God was securing, in every way, that human dependence, human derivation, should be broken in upon, for its place, was gone in the earth. The dispensation was one born out of due time; it must prove itself by its energy from on high; so it had been proved both in preaching Christ and teaching the church. But now Barnabas and Paul were to be sent out on a definite mission, and of course they had derived authority now. Whence? Everything still is made to depend on the energy and calling of God. “As certain prophets and teachers were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Did the apostle derive his authority, his apostolic authority, from his ordination? That would be a strange assertion; for he says he had it neither of men, nor by man.

If this had been his first going forth to preach, it would have been almost impossible to have hindered the conclusion that it had its source in this, and the apostolate would merely have been from the church at Antioch. Therefore the Lord, to maintain the character of the dispensation, makes the apostle not” confer with flesh and blood, but immediately preach on his calling, and afterward separates him merely to the particular work to which he was called, thus securing its underivative character. Its value was the energy of the Spirit of God, because of the glory to be revealed, and the heavenly character of the dispensation which had its place in the glory (to be revealed), not here at all, and so ordered of God. Otherwise apostolic authority is derived from laymen, by modern theory, self-ordained men, and the apostle's assertion of his apostolate falsified. But it was not; it was the Holy Ghost's separation of him to Himself for the work to which the Lord had called him; not the conferring a gift as if his apostolate depended on. that mission, for this the apostle denies at large in the Epistle to the Galatians, and passes by this going forth from Antioch entirely in the account of his mission which he gives to them; not the derivation of authority, for this he is equally earnest to deny.

In Paul then we have the founding of the service of this dispensation, resting on the fully recognized apostleship, but caused in the way it is founded to be, entirely of a heavenly character, springing from the Lord known then in the glory, having its working and energy by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and breaking in upon the derivative character of the apostolate in the Jews by every careful arrangement of God; and the laying on of hands made little of as regards the apostolate, and coming not from superior derivative authority, but entirely—collaterally, that every link of the sort should be broken. And we may add, failing as to its earthly position, the moment the energy of the Spirit failed, the moment the unstained godliness failed which kept out evil, and left the operations of the given Spirit free. Because the witness of the glory among the Gentiles was not to take the place of the glory, any more than the witness of the resurrection among the Jews was to take the place of the resurrection-glory (and it was only a witness, and therefore shown only to the apostles and teachers among the Jews, and Paul for the Gentiles); but having been witnessed, to fail as regards holding any place here, though effectual by the Spirit to

them that believe, that they abounding in hope through it might have an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, when He shall be manifested as the risen and glorified One, and sorrow and trial pass away.

And though the filling up as it were was in the ascended glory, of which Paul was the special witness, and therefore he labored more abundantly than they all, as the full testimony was to be given to the world in him, the continuous Gentile dispensation, yet, though he sustained it (by the energy of the Spirit) during his life, he knew well that it would end then, that is, as thus corporately held together. “I know this, that after my departing—shall grievous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them.” It was not that God, in the word of His grace to which He commended them, as able to build them up, would not both gather out, and sanctify souls. But he felt and knew well that Ichabod was written on the dispensation, as on every other; till He comes Who could sustain it, enduringly in the present power of a manifested life, Satan being bound from before Him. So it was among the Jews, the resurrection-denying Sadducees being raised against the testimony of that, as the self-righteous Pharisees against the ministry of the Righteous One. So it was among the Gentiles, false teachers bringing into disrepute the energies of the Spirit of God, and thus devouring the flock, because of the feebleness of the shepherds. Oh! how little does the church know the service of crying and tears, the humility of mind which accompanies the watching the fold of Christ against the inroads of the enemy—of Satan. But it is gone. Yet there is One that is ever faithful, Who, be the shepherds ever so cowardly, does not let His scattered sheep be plucked out of His hand.

(Continued from page 117.)

(To be continued.)

Chapter 159

On the Character of Office in the Present Dispensation: Part 4

Let us turn to what we have afterward of the maintenance, for a little season, of the order of the church of God before the re-assertion of the human derivative claim came to take the place of the Spirit of God. Let us take a glance at another part of scripture, connected with this laying on of hands. The Priesthood of Christ is the great characteristic of this dispensation, hereafter in glory manifested for joy and praise, now for the intercession and gifts of grace, still the same in person. It is ministering by the Spirit below, that it might be a witness to the world of what it was in Christ, the Father of what He was; and this is what is brought out in John 17, not the thing itself till the glory comes, and Christ appears, and we appear; but a witness of it by a supply of grace from Him who will appear, and we with Him, the fullness of this (of both, that is) being in Christ. Hence is it that Paul (the Spirit as in the ministry of Paul) addresses the Hebrews, not the minister of the circumcision as speaking to them in their place, but as calling them out of that into the consciousness of the heavenly calling, speaking to them from the glory of the Son, so speaking, and sustaining them in the present failure of the dispensation in them, by the security of an enduring Melchisedec priesthood. “Wherefore,” says he, “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession;” such a High Priest became us, such as was not only harmless and undefiled, but separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. “If He were on earth, He should not be a priest.” He is gone, not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. But this was not all; for, as we have seen, when teaching the understanding of the mystery among the Gentiles, we find His ascending up on high was leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; “and He gave,” etc.

So we find many of the worthies said to act by faith in Heb. 11, the great point then of trial to the Christian Hebrews, testified of, as led by the Spirit, in their history in the Old Testament. But this is not the point I rest on here, but the comparative use he makes of the Priesthood in its Melchisedec character with the very circumstances here spoken of. “Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us,” he says, “go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, and of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment; and this we will do if God permit.” From ver. 4th to the 6th, he then speaks of those things which are the proper portion of the church emerged out of its Jewish shape, the word of the beginning of Christ—that failure from this is irremediable after such patience of God; and in the rest speaks not therefore of the blessings of the given Spirit, save as to the danger of apostasy, but what, while Aaronical intermediate intercession indeed subsisted, their portion under the Melchisedec priesthood would be according to the word of the new covenant. Of this the Holy Ghost was present witness. It is not my purpose to open this out now; I refer to it to show the contrast of what were the first principles, or the word of the beginning of Christ, and the going on to perfection, i.e., the knowledge of the priesthood of Christ—the heavenly priesthood now witnessed to us by the presence of the Spirit. This is given in this Epistle, on account of 6:4-6.

But we find thereby the way in which the Jewish elements are treated, not as though they had not their place, but the place they had explained; and they are Jewish elements. These they are—The dead, we admit, will be raised. Eternal judgment will be, or guilt, more properly, will be judged. Repentance from dead works is acknowledged to be needful. Baptisms and laying on of hands we have heard of as existing. But they constitute not the glory and power of the dispensation. The exercise of the church's mind about them proves its return to Judaizing principles. The notion of derivative authority is a positive lapse into the order of the dispensation broken in upon by God, in its losing its Jewish character, and becoming the spiritual witness of the heavenly glory and fullness of Christ. Who is Paul's successor? I have heard of the successors of Peter, the direct and remarkable witness to the character of the association with derivative authority. It is all identified in the Gentile church with Peter, who was not the apostle of the Gentiles at all. It is the Judaizing of Gentilism; and the whole structure and fabric of the church rests upon this. Paul, as the apostle of the circumcision, held the witness of the character of this dispensation. Where is his successor? Of what see was he head Was it Rome, the source of the present derived authority? And of what character then is all this derived authority? Where is it in scripture? Let us see the facts a little further.

It is not to be denied that Paul and the presbytery laid their hands on Timothy, and a gift was in Timothy by the laying on of Paul's hands. The same does not appear in Titus at all, neither was he circumcised, which Timothy was; and Timothy, it appears, also laid hands upon others, for he is desired to do it suddenly on no man. They were thus special temporary deputies of Paul for setting the churches in order in the things wanting, and appointing elders. That they were not permanent episcopal superintendents is clear, because when Paul passed by Ephesus, he addresses the elders or bishops there, so as to demonstrate them not to be under the care of Timothy as from apostolic derived authority. And, in the second Epistle, he charges him to come to him, as he bids also Titus to come to him at Nicopolis, wanting them to be with him; they were his chosen assistants in ordering the churches, not his successors in them, unless he himself was bishop of both. We find John subsequently exercising the care under Christ, apostolically, of the Ephesian and other churches in those parts, quite inconsistent with the notion of Timothy's episcopacy derived from Paul. The energy of the Spirit then, using whom it thought fit in an authority of office, we find, in the conception of the church; derivative authority and jurisdiction no where. There was the conferring of gift, there was the ordering by those enabled to order, there was the appointment of elders in every city by those raised up to do so, and the committal of doctrine to faithful men, there was every care of the church; but no apostolical derivative authority, except the false derivation of Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, not of the uncircumcision, and whom the scriptures only so recognize.

I would only add a few words as to the term “Ordain.” There is no such word in the scriptures in the modern sense of the term. Laying on of hands, to have been used in given instances, I do not at all deny. We have seen an apostle ordained by laymen, afterward conferring a gift by the same ordinance, and Timothy charged not to do it suddenly; but as we find the whole energy of the church continually and long carried on without reference to it, so the word translated “ordain” has never, in scripture, any connection with laying on of hands. Used or not used, it does not so state it, foreseeing, I am persuaded, the apostasy of the latter day.

In Acts 1:22. The expression here is merely an assertion of the translators. See the original, where it merely is— “must one of them be a witness of the resurrection.”

The other passages are Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5: in the one “chose” or “selected elders “; in the latter, “appoint” (χειροτοι■ω and καθ■στημι).

There is no evidence that Timothy was left for such purpose. The apostle states it to have been to guard doctrine, not for the purpose of appointing elders. It is a general instruction as to his conduct in the church, and it does not appear that laying on of hands was peculiar to any such office. It may have been used in it: they are never so connected in scripture. When elders are spoken of, laying on of hands is not; when this is spoken of, they are not. It may have been used: there was no scriptural identification. Probably it had a much wider scope. It was clearly used among the Jewish Christians for sickness and miracles, and by the apostle for conferring gifts.

Further, I would remark that while the present care of the church was exactly what would be consistent with the looking for the coming of the Lord, which possessed the mind of the apostle, the arrangement of prospective provision by derivative authority for future ages was wholly inconsistent with it. When he was passing by Ephesus in the consciousness that his personal care was closed, he warns the elders himself on their own responsibility, although long before Timothy had been left to watch the place, though it would appear he did not stay there long. But the charge to Timothy was doctrine.

All present care was as to the way in which they would wait for the Lord, and committal of trust to those called and gifted where needed. But the arrangement of derivative authority would have been positive unbelief. Accordingly we find it broken among the Jews, where it had this character, never attempted among the Gentiles where the glory was manifested; but taken nominally from Peter, when he was gone who withstood these things to the face. Our present duty is every possible care of the churches which God by His Spirit may enable us to take; using (with all diligence, humility, and energy, with crying and tears, in which we surely may expect to use it) whatever He give us to keep out Satan and feed the flock of God, where we may be or He send us, but lean in constant dependence for the constant supply of the Spirit of His grace, as our only ground of strength, and when we fail, commend them to God and to the word of His grace which. is able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified. He who knows this in spirit will well know its sorrow, and how near it draws one to God. But all this is God's provision, and not for the wickedness of man, but for that failure which in man's foolishness shall cause all to center in the glory of the Lord.

But there is one further point with which we must close. To the mere laying on of hands, if done spiritually, I know of no objection; but reference, reference of the heart, to derivative authority has quite another character. It is Judaizing. It is, if insisted on, the principle of apostasy, as denying the power and calling of the Holy Ghost, or His competency to send, bless, and sanctify. Wherever we return to Jewish practice as an imposed necessity, we return to the idolatry of the world. There was a special sanction of worldly elements to a given purpose; and worldly elements, and glory and honor had their place while so ordered. The principles of the human heart, which sought them, were dealt with on their own ground and terms though in God's way; because, till the rejection of Christ, man and the world were not treated with as dead in trespasses and sins, as lying in wickedness, as at enmity with God; and riches and honors and worldly things accompanied the

love of wisdom, and human principles were dealt with.

But in Christ's rejection the truth was brought fully to light, the system of the world was set aside as to all its elements as evil: God's sanction of it in any form or sort ceased. Its friendship was enmity with God. It was convinced of sin, and righteousness was set up not there but in the heavens, hid with God, revealed to faith. Judaism had been the place of righteousness, but iniquity was found in it; and being set aside, its principles became merely the simple worldly elements, without any sanction of God at all, and with merely their own worldly character; and the return to them became apostasy, return to the mere evil world. This is the apostle's statement, the force of which is by no means in general sufficiently estimated. Writing to the Galatians he says, “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe etc. That is, Gentiles become Christians, and looking to Jewish principles, were returning to their own old Gentile state; for what else was Judaizing now? It was simply joining the world, the ungodly world, which had not the Spirit of God in it, ending in the flesh. So the apostle argues in Colossians. 2:19-23, especially 20.

Wherever then we turn to what is Jewish (a right thing while God's work was of this world), we have the principle of apostasy in us. These things have the rudiments of the world in them, and the world we shall more or less join which has not the Spirit, which is at enmity with God. And where, I would ask, has the church looked at this derivative character as essential and necessary that it has not joined the world? Receiving the principle of the world into its bosom, it soon fell into its practice, and this is the character, the form, of apostasy; and the absence or subversion of justification by faith, and maintaining the doctrine of works for salvation, derived authority and the church in the world have astonishingly gone together. However this may be, I refer to it here merely as a fact; certainly the church so fell, at first gradually. Of this we may be sure, wherever we join any Jewish principle of ordinance now, as that which is our order, or obligatory on us, we join the world in its rejected state; for these are now demonstrated the profitless elements of the world, and nothing else, and the apostasy of the church is involved in principle. With whatever patience we may bear with those subject to them while they are under them, their imposition as though needful is the snare of Satan leading us back whence we are delivered; for our conversation is in heaven. History will prove it, as to facts, to be the apostasy of the church, though the Spirit of God can alone prove or show the principle. I do not reject conferred authority from God where it can be shown in the grace of its exercise; derived authority from man I believe to be most evil, and to have apostasy in its character and principle.

The preceding observations may seem protracted; yet I think the importance of the principles warrants the deepest consideration of the subject: my own mind is very clear upon it in principle though I may have much to learn in detail. I have endeavored, under the Lord's mercy, to confine myself to the principles, to hurt no one, the matter being not of controversy but of deep and everlasting truth. It is a remarkable thing that, while almost all the churches, more or less, hang on derivative authority; where it is settled as a system, we may note, first, human derivation is its first basis as a principle; secondly, it is connected entirely with Peter, and the succession from him, and in conferring the authority, it uses the words used by the Lord in conferring it on His Jewish apostles, previous to His ascension. J.N.D.

(Concluded from page 131).

Chapter 160

Orpah and Ruth

The Spirit of God does not detain us with many details as to Orpah, but devotes the book to the history of her sister-in-law. Yet, as we may be sure, no injustice is done. Naomi's good account of her is recorded. She fully and gratefully owns her kindness to the dead and the living. As a wife and as a daughter-in-law, in marriage and in widowhood, Orpah had conducted herself womanly and well. This was her due, and it is a right thing in the sight of God to appreciate and to acknowledge what is loveable in any. What an example of this we have in our blessed Lord Himself (Mark 10:21)! But natural amiability, however sincere, has never brought the will into subjection to God. The flesh is always opposed to the Spirit. Naomi's affliction had quickened her desires after something better than Moab, and she would retrace her steps, and return to the Lord, Who, in His unchanging love, had again given His people bread. This tested Orpah. Her heart was in Moab, and she could go along with Naomi there; but let Naomi's heart be set on God, His people, and His dwelling-place, and her real condition is disclosed. She broke the link with all she seemed to love, and went back to her people and her gods; yet, kind as ever, with the tenderest expressions of affection at parting. Self, however unsuspected, gained the victory. It was thus with the rich ruler, though he sorrowed over it; for the people of the world, however amiable, never rise above the principles of the world, though the people of God may sink woefully below the principles of God.

This was true of Naomi at first. She was, as we know, full of complaint as to her lot, and tried to dissuade her daughters-in-law from sharing it. They would have better prospects, she urged, in Moab than with her. In Canaan, and among her people, they would be but strangers, and she had no more sons to restore the link which death had broken. Why should they go?

Dangerous doctrine, perilous ministry this! In it the soul is made of no account, eternity is forgotten, and God, His goodness and His grace, are wholly left out. Alas! it suited Orpah well, but was it not her ruin? How many a conviction of sin has been stifled, how often has an awakened conscience been overcome; how many a young heart has been deceived and turned aside by Christian parents through the hope of some worldly advantage for their children; “Putting their sons and even their daughters into the lion's mouth,” as William Jay (of Bath) said, “yet praying God that he may not devour them.”

Ruth, with singular firmness and decision, refused her mother's counsel. She looked not on her destitution, but on the Lord and His people to whom she was going. Her heart's desires were there, and her lips confessed in beautiful terms her resolve (Ruth 1:16-17). It was the happy decision of faith, and God blessed her. He led her on, and finally revealed His purposes of grace in the unlooked-for blessings of redemption, made hers, though a Moabitess, by His will and by the faithfulness and love of Boaz.

And here we may be permitted to call attention to a way in which the word redemption is used in scripture, that we may the better understand the practical teaching of this book. In Isa. 29:22 we read: “Thus saith the Lord Who redeemed Abraham.” The undoubted meaning here is, “Who

separated Abraham." The context and Gen. 12:1 prove it, and so the Septuagint translates it. Again, when the Lord God would in a public way own His people in Egypt, before they were delivered from it, He said to Pharaoh, "I will put a redemption [translated "a division "] between My people and thy people" —and this He in grace did (read Ex. 8:22, 23, margin). This primary meaning it is important to seize; for, since the entrance of sin into the world there is no return to God save on the ground of redemption, and it is a return. This is seen from Abel onward. Of course, separation is not the only or the chief meaning of the word. Its more frequent use is to express rescue, or deliverance, because of a price paid in satisfaction—the ransom.

This digression, though unnecessary perhaps for most, will not be without profit if it recall this practical truth, that, while unspeakable blessings flow from redemption, the separation or division that God puts between the redeemed and the world is all important. In the case of Christians, the prayer of the Lord Jesus in John 17 should be decisive as to this.

Ruth thus had a right judgment of Moab from the first. There was no thought in her mind of making the best of both worlds. She chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, and manifested, not only the firmness but the patience of faith, in toiling as a gleaner for daily support. It is here she meets with Boaz; and from that moment the whole interest of the story turns upon him. But he is only a typical person. We must study the four Gospels to learn the surpassing grace and glory of the great Antitype. This narrative testifies of Him (John 5:39).

The exceeding tenderness and kindness of this mighty man of wealth from Bethlehem shine out in all his words and ways to the poor Moabitish woman. His whole attention is concentrated upon her, and his unqualified grace goes "to her heart", as she says (chap. ii. 13, margin). Yet she presumes not on his goodness. There is no familiarity, no license in word or way. He has, in grace, come down to her; but this only leads her to exalt him and humble herself. She bows to the ground before him, and owns her unworthiness. She is "a, stranger and not like his handmaidens", yet she accepts with meekness and wondering admiration all he does for her and all he bestows: a worthy sister of many in the Gospels. Has this no voice for those who make the name, the precious name of Jesus, as common as a street song? Or, still worse, dare to subject the sacred mysteries of His Person to their unhallowed scrutiny? Even in the dim light of a type they might learn to be more reverential.

But there are further discoveries to be made as to Boaz. It is clear from Ex. 17:14, Ex. 24:3-7 and Deut. 31:24-26, that before this time the laws and ordinances of the Lord given to Moses were written by him. This we know on the infallible authority of Jesus Christ Himself. (John 5:46, 47). When Naomi was away from the debasing influences of Moab and heard of Boaz, she remembered these ordinances. Lev. 25 and Deut. 25 assured her that the Lord God, in His mercy and wisdom, has provided for their case. Boaz was the "goel", the kinsman spoken of in those ordinances, and Naomi at once uses them to instruct Ruth to make the claim on him which the word of God gave her the warrant to make. That is (and note it well), she, a simple woman, needed nothing beyond the written word of God to put before this poor Moabitess in her distress; and that word alone gave to Ruth divine authority and sanction to do as she did—to go at once, to lie at his feet, and to claim himself as her redeemer, and with himself all the results of redeeming love and power. It was an exceedingly high and bold claim, but, by the revealed will of God, a righteous and a holy one. It is a glorious truth! There was no intermedium. She went herself. There

was no roundabout way, as good John Bunyan describes in his “Pilgrim's Progress”. She went at once—and Boaz did all: she had but to “sit still”. Her conduct, of course, has been sharply criticized, as was that of the woman in Luke 7:36-50; but the Lord defended and blessed them both, as He will all who imitate their faith.

Redemption accomplished, “the deep things of God” can be disclosed. Ruth, no longer a destitute gleaner in the harvest field, no longer “the wife of the dead", but purchased by Boaz to be his wife, can survey, as her own, all that he has redeemed, yea, all his wealth; and know that her former links with Moab and with death have ceased forever. She is one with the living one in whom is strength. Introduced thus into the royal line, she becomes the mother of Obed, who in due time begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David, of whose seed, according to the flesh is Jesus, Emmanuel, Heir of all things. Thus the purposes of God are accomplished. The tiny rivulet of grace, traced in this story, opens out into this boundless ocean of eternal glory. Who but the living God could cause it to rise in such a place as Moab? Yet there His work began in this poor widow. These things may lie a little beyond the range of the thoughts of some Christians; but let them prayerfully study such scriptures as 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:7-9; Rev. 21:9, etc., and by God's grace their thoughts will be enlarged.

If thus far we have been enabled to trace the broad outline of the picture, there are yet many minute and delicate touches which the spiritual affections in each believer will discover. None can read the Bible for another. A great end is gained if a busy mind, calmed by the Holy Spirit, is drawn to search it, and to find in personal application how great is the reward (Psa. 19:10-11). W. B.

Chapter 161

Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 1

“ God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14).

To treat with apparent lightness of spirit anything that concerns the church of God I hold to be a great sin; and though there are a few occasions, very few, and those not connected with the humiliation of Jesus, in which the folly of evil may be brought before the eyes of the many, yet my present subject, although absurd to the moral mind, leads me to no such feelings, nor do I desire to treat it in any such spirit. Looking upon it as a matter wherein the Holy Ghost is grieved and dishonored, if I speak under the influence of that Spirit, I shall feel grieved also: and such is my feeling whilst observing how much of that which wears the fairest appearance, and ranks highest in ordinary estimation—nay, which is considered as the very triumph of Christian skill, and perfection of ecclesiastical arrangement—is actually at utter variance with the mind of God, and consequently with essential beauty and truth, which are only expressions of that mind.

It is often thought that the complaint of the church is a wild feeling, taking the dissatisfaction of self-will for the freedom of God's Spirit, and seeking licentiousness under the name of liberty, and in defiance of order. But, where principles are not assumed (which is often the unsuspected foundation of many a pile of well connected reasoning), it would not be difficult to prove that such a complaint is not necessarily fanatical or visionary, and that the plain and practical path of obedience is marked out on the other hand by nothing more than common spiritual discernment, and common honesty of heart toward God. Now it appears to me that the present circumstances of the church have destroyed order, as well as liberty, which two things, at any rate while man is a sinner, must go together; and this is shortly proved.

Take the existing state of things in its broad lines: it is not order, that all or the majority of those called pastors should be, instead of pastors, unconverted men. Yet this is admitted, even by many who acquiesce in the circumstances which have of necessity produced this fruit. It cannot be called order, that they should be appointed by man (by men perhaps not members of God's church) and not by God. This is not order, nor does it produce order but dissent and schism and confusion. But this is a fact not only in its results, but in its principle—namely, that in what is called order the appointment of the pastors flows from men not members of God's church at all. Succession, in whatsoever degree it may be rested upon, comes not from Christ the minister of God's power, but from the prime minister.

In days of infidelity or indifference it must be immediately evident to any one, into what danger this at once throws the church, as far as it depends on this succession. Nor is this a speculative apprehension; for the danger is oven now in full operation, and by no means a mere probability, but in fact working in its worst possible form, namely, in showing itself as the instrument of evil principles, not of good. Where such a fact is evident, and that on all sides, it may seem superfluous to reason on the principle of the succession itself, for we have its legitimate results before as; but as many who are children of God hold by it, and seek to defend it, it may be of some service to the truth to state it on their own principles.

The ordinary arguments against all objections are usually these—that in theory the appointers are members of the church of God, that in this view only they can look at it, and that the actual evil is no ground to go upon. But, as will be seen, Christians will often find themselves in strange situations who disregard actual evil on the assumption that the system which produces it is theoretically correct; for in this manner there may be no limit to the measure of practical wickedness which will be tolerated, while conscience satisfies itself on the plea of an abstract excellence which may turn out to be a mere shadow, or worse. Such, however, is not the path of sound and Christian principle, which at once pronounces that the actual evil is the ground to act upon. God acts upon it, even though the system may be His own, as in the case of the Jews. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities:” and the church is bound to act upon it, having the intelligence of God's Spirit to discern the evil. The distinctive character of the church, of the individual informed by the Holy Ghost, is this, “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity;” but the argument used admits the actual evil, yet, whilst avowing the name of the Lord, does not depart from it.

I ask high churchmen in particular, is it not iniquity that pastors, chief pastors, should be appointed, not by the church, by Christ, but by men, be they what they may? Is not this the fact? and if so, do they then depart from it? Is it the church that appoints them? If the predicament into which they are forced by this question is sought to be evaded upon the plea that the Congo d' elire saves them, (a drowning man will catch at a straw) the answer does but further prove the iniquity of this system, from which men should depart. For it assumes that the persons in ecclesiastical office have the power to elect, or the argument is null; and consequently shows only the uniform betrayal of the interests of Christ by them into other hands than those of the church. They are thus driven to an extremity, where choice is to be had only between two conclusions; the last of which, i.e., the surrender of the power if possessed, exhibits the constant iniquity of the church: whilst on the other hand, if not possessed, the church is proved no longer to exist in the exercise of its habitual and necessary functions. Indeed practically, it seems most honest and simple to say that the sovereign appoints to the bishopric. In Ireland even the poor excuse of the Congo d' elire is taken away, for the bishops are appointed by letters patent openly by the crown. I have touched on this ground because refuge is sought in it by some who feel conscientiously upon the subject. Let us return to the plain facts of the case.

The minister of the crown appoints the pastors to the flock of Christ; but churchmen defend themselves on the plea that it is still the church that does it. The simple answer is this—it is not so now, even in theory. No religion is necessary to the prime minister, nor does it practically constitute part of the theory of the state at all. But even on the supposition that it did, and that all the persons appointing were churchmen and Christians, it is not as such that they have to act in the capacity of appointers. But supposing it still further to be so, what at best is the state of things? We have Christians and laymen (I speak upon the church theory) appointing to the highest ecclesiastical offices, the superior pastorships of the church, because they have secular office which the church, save in civil subjection, knows nothing about. Now I say this is disorder and not order: the real bishops of the Established Church are the king and ministers of the day; for there cannot be a more important function of the church in its order, than the appointment of fit persons to feed the flock.

I can see nothing which seems to me Christian order in such appointments of bishops or chief pastors of God's flock; it presents nothing but immense disorder. I cannot recognize the hand of the church in the bishop of Exeter, or the archbishop of Armagh, though I do the church's responsibility. He may, through God's mercy, be a very good man, nay, he may have eminent qualities for the pastoral or, Episcopal office. Yet there is no order of God's church in it, but the order of the prime minister of England, or the lord lieutenant of Ireland, who are not God's constituted officers for the appointment of the bishops of His flock, in any church order. In point of fact, the necessary consequences have resulted in confusion and discord in the church of God. For while there was nominal order to which holy minds might desire to be subject, there was at the same time the complete amalgamation of the church and the world, which the Spirit of God loudly testified against, and holy men must separate from, and the professed church become the great author of schism.

Chapter 162

Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 2

And here we must note what is a great fallacy in the notion which the Church of England desires to give respecting her own constitution. It carries a falsehood on the face of it. We are referred to the articles, or canons, and prayer-book for her constitution and order; but she has not said a word there about her constitution and order, or what she has said is false. The constitution and order of the Church of England and Ireland is, that the king and his ministers, or other analogous persons, appoint to all the pastoral offices in the country. Where is this stated in these fair-spoken documents? Would churchmen who hold fast by these documents state and avow this, that laymen, it may be ungodly men, should appoint to all the pastoral offices in the country? Is this what they mean to plead as order, church order? Yet church order it is. They state indeed that they only ascribe to their princes to rule with the civil sword all estates of the realm; but they ascribe a great deal more. This was a most godly ascription; but if they have only ascribed this, their princes have ascribed a great deal more to themselves (and they acquiesce in it, though they have not put it in the book; and yet it constitutes the special difference of the system, and makes it the church, or, as some say, not the Church of England); and that is, that these individuals, who might be in excommunication, appoint nearly all the pastors in the country.

I would ask if there is any order in all this? We have an eminent instance of the system in principle and practice latterly, when, with one fell swoop, a minister, and not the king at all, but a House of Commons (and who are they in the church?) strikes off ten or twelve bishops of a country. That is, he not only is the appointer of the persons, but orders the whole internal arrangement of their superintendence, saying how much is a proper extent of Episcopal care, and who shall exercise it. But the great point which strikes at the root of all the church order (of which the documents state nothing, and therefore are a false witness for the church) is, that the pastoral appointments have no connection at all with the church. The succession is from the crown, from the world and its power, not from God at all; so that the great distinctive difference of the Church of England would not be found on the face of her own account of herself at all. But that distinctive difference destroys the principle of a church.

But while the church does not honestly state its character, the principle of disorder goes a great deal farther, and all real order is destroyed by the system. By virtue of this system a number of persons are appointed as clergy or ministers of parishes. There is no reference whatever to the various offices flowing from specific gifts. The scripture indeed speaks on this wise, “He ascended up on high and gave gifts unto men,” “and gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” the beautifully ordered and united means by which the body is perfected and built up.

But this is trampled under foot for a fancied succession which is denominated clergy, a body of men not appointed to offices in the church, but to the exclusive government of a geographic district. That is, the offices of the church, the legitimate channels for the exercise of the combined

gifts by which Christ ministers to its edification and the perfecting of the saints, are thrown to the winds: so that even when the clergyman happens to be a godly man, the saints, if there be such in the place, are deprived of the ministration of their offices through which Christ has provided for their edification, by virtue of the system which calls itself order, but the principle of which is to throw the appointment of even nominal pastors out of all order into the hands of secular men. The same individual must be evangelist, pastor, teacher, and every other office necessary for the perfecting of the saints and edifying of the body of Christ, or the ministry must be crippled and maimed, and the results accordant. And this is the principle of the system. Christ has ordered certain gifts for the edifying of the saints; men have ordered the placing of certain persons, who may not even be Christians, in a given place, with the sole ordering of the church in that place.

The argument then is brought to this point: either the system must assume the possession of every gift by all the individuals it pleases to appoint, and exclude all others from them; or it is proved that their system is at variance in principle with the right order of Christ's church. But they can assume no such thing, for the Spirit distributes to every man severally as He will. This is His prerogative. The system is proved, therefore, to be at variance with the order of Christ, and that in its vital object, “the perfecting of the saints.” It is at variance with the actual order in which He declares that He ministers it, for He gave some, evangelists; some, pastors and teachers.

But no! we must make all of them everything, or the system violates Christ's order in its very objects; and this the apostle controverts (how much more may we in these days), “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?” But no! Christ gives gifts as He pleases; and man gives authority as he pleases, and then calls this order! It is the devil's order, a turning of things upside down, and exhibits a state of things justly calling forth righteous indignation no less than of godly sorrow. Surely “it is yet a little while.” So that on the whole the principle of the system is at variance, not only with the derivation of grace and knowledge (seeing that the selection is made by the crown and its ministers, not by the church of God), but also necessarily with all office in the church, by which the body should be ministered to, according to the gift which Christ had given to every man for the effectual purpose of that ministry.

I speak now of the theory, passing by all charges on the state of facts in parochial ministrations; and I affirm that the theory precludes the exercise of the offices which Christ has instituted for the perfecting of the saints. A man is appointed a deacon for the purpose, perhaps, of being an evangelist, and would justly, it may be, refuse to attend to tables. God may have called out, by the ministry of this individual, another eminently qualified to be an elder in the church of God, for which, though gifted as an evangelist, the former may be eminently disqualified. Nevertheless the same person now perhaps transferred to the order of a presbyter or priest, without the least change of gift, becomes elder there with no qualification, to the exclusion of one who is qualified, having, it may be, his usefulness as an evangelist quite destroyed by his being put in an office for which God never qualified him But it must be so, because he is the clergyman. Thus again we find in principle, that the offices of Christ's church, by which its order is kept, are altogether avoided by this system which is called order; yea, that the offices and the system are incompatible. For the notion of the individual who was called to it being presbyter, or of any one being presbyter whom God has qualified for it, is precluded; for some one is called the clergyman of the place.

Again, reverse the case. A godly man well qualified to be the pastor and edifier, it may be, of saints, a terror of the ungodly, and healer of them that are wounded, a warrior against Satan's entrance into the fold, is set in a place where, from neglect, there is scarcely any practical knowledge of Christ. God has not gifted the man as an evangelist: what is the consequence? He has no saints to edify, and his heart is discouraged at his utter uselessness; he might have been a signal blessing to the church of God somewhere, if such a system had never existed.

But let us look a little farther. One whom God has gifted as an evangelist comes in and exercises his gift in the same locality (it must not be a clergyman—that would be disorderly, nor is evangelizing properly a parochial ministration); but he is irregular. The godly pastor without any flock is a bar, on the system of the Church of England, to any of God's ministry being carried on; and, if he be consistent with the system, he opposes God's ministry in the place, and, while perhaps a real saint himself, has none of the church of God around him to which he might be useful. Thus a schism is created, or, it may be, the other qualified to be an evangelist is constituted by the people to be a pastor, to which God never called him at all; and he who would have been a blessing to them is despised and neglected, because of the system of the Church of England, which necessarily involves the subversion of all the offices of the church of Christ. Indeed it does not proceed on the recognition of them: the country has been secularly divided into districts, and the clergy appointed, without reference to the state of the people at all, in their respective districts. The effect of this is only to place any one besides, who exercises the office which is necessary there, in the position of a schismatic. It is quite clear too, that, in a vast number of instances, being a secular interest, the appointment is made by those who have no church principles at all for temporal reasons and motives. And if we are then told “the church is not to blame,” and the question is asked, “how can the bishops help it?” I answer not at all, and therefore the church is fundamentally wrong in principle; it avows it cannot help evil, and how could it, since the heads of it are appointed on the same principle?

But supposing the bishops to be godly pastors of Christ's flock, and to appoint to offices according to Christ's institution, evangelists, and teachers, and pastors, or to recognize any other office in the church, they would at once be in schism as to the whole present constitution of parochial arrangement. That is, the system, if recognized, is irretrievably at variance with the admission of offices in the church of God, by which the saints are perfected, and the body edified; and the effect of it is to give the character of schism to all those who exercise the office to which God has ordained them. And this is called order—it is the most heinous and wicked disorder!—in God's church. Let me be ever such an evangelist, gifted like an apostle, I am disorderly in exercising it. Nor would ordination in any way mend the matter; for my exercise of the gift would be disorderly because of a nominal pastor in a given place: all is pre-occupied; and evangelizing has no place, and becomes irregular. (Continued from page 37.)

Chapter 163

Parochial Arrangement Destructive of Order in the Church: Part 3

The conclusion therefore which is forced upon our minds is, that the system is not only evil in the disastrous results of so many being called pastors who have no pastoral qualifications—a consequence flowing from the system of appointment; not only mischievous as restraining the exercise of liberty in the people of God (a restraint indeed which is often very right if done according to godliness), but as being destructive of all offices in the church of Christ, and subversive of the principle on which they rest; and moreover that, under the parochial or rather clerical system, the offices of the church of Christ cannot be exercised, at least in order. Nor does the system of dissenters appear in this respect at all different: they equally confound the order of the church, with the difference only of having no local limits, which so far prevents the notion of schism; a system of local limits having by the way no possible consistency or warrant from scriptural order of churches.

I am not entering now on the question of diocesan episcopacy, but it is quite clear that in its origin it went by churches, not by geographical limits; that is, a bishop governed the churches in such a limit, i.e., those who might be gathered out from heathenism—but that was all; and within such district, all the offices above mentioned might be exercised with gladness of heart and profit to those who were gathered. But parochial clericalism cannot in any way combine with this. It is absolutely without consistency with any order in the church. An individual is appointed (at three or four and twenty) to a curacy or parish, and he alone may be the elder (an office for which it is clear that he is seldom qualified), teacher, pastor, evangelist, if needed. He is the shut-door to the exercise of any office in the church, whether he himself have any gift or the contrary. If God's Spirit is to work at all, then He must be a schismatic; and this is the hateful evil and disorder of such a system—it makes a schismatic of the Spirit of God.

The office of an evangelist is not a parochial office. It may in given instances be exercised within the limits of a parish, but the office knows no such limits; nor does the exercise of such an office imply qualification for being a pastor; nay, in its ordinary exercise it necessarily disqualifies for being an elder. But the notion of a clergyman, which is wholly unsupported by scripture, summarily settles the whole question, and removes all the offices at once; for it assumes all within the limit to be Christians, and decides that the person (having the sphere of his service prescribed by men, though his ostensible commission is from the laying on of the bishop's hands) who is thus considered as being over his flock, is to have the title to exclude the exercise of office which he may not happen to possess, though it is evident that even if a good man (most frequently not the case) he may be gifted for no office at all, and clearly cannot be assumed in every instance to possess them all.

And now suppose the Spirit thus grieved and dishonored should begin to work in sovereign mercy, will it be exclusively confined to the system which has dishonored it, and haughtily domineered over all its order and grace? It cannot be so; He works where He may work, blowing where He lists. Some of those who, unconscious of the evil, are in the system, may be quickened into energy

by His influence; and though in extreme irregularity and disorder (an evangelist exercising the office of a pastor here, and a pastor exercising the office of an evangelist there, and both unprofitably), yet in some measure they may work within their respective limits. The system however itself is unmended. Some of those who are without may be raised up into energy. They at once see that the system is essentially wrong; they wish not to be schismatic in any sort. Labor they must—yea, exercise pastoral care if God has committed it to them; but these individuals with the very same class of gifts are stamped at once dissenters and schismatics. And what is the meaning of this but that the system which gives the name schism is such as to preclude the exercise of God's gifts as far as it can?

Let us suppose for farther exemplification of our argument a large district without the gospel preached in it. An individual is raised up of God, a stranger to the place, who preaches there. A thousand souls are converted: what is to be done? Of the number thus awakened five are specially gifted of God for the office of pastor, or teacher, or elder. The question at once arises, Are these thousand souls to be left shepherdless, because men have chosen to appoint persons called clergymen, who turn out not to be Christians at all—nay, who, it may be, belie the gospel of Christ? I will suppose that, to prevent heresies and confusion—a point surely of material import in these days—some or all of these five practically act as pastors. Ordained for it according to the church system they cannot be, for the clergy are there already; but the love of Christ constrains them to do the best they can for the sheep. They are at once set down as censers of division: that is, the whole church of God, as far as this place is concerned, is denounced as schismatic.

In a word, the effect of the Church of England system, instead of being godly order, throws into schism in reputation nearly the whole church of God. And this is anything rather than an imaginary case. Afterward, it may be, a saint becomes a clergyman in the district; he draws some back to the church, or is the instrument of converting others; and thus two systems are formed in which saints within one and the other are thrown into opposition. And of the whole of this part of the evil the Church of England system is the original cause; however it may be perpetuated by the other system which its evil may have generated. The mischievous results are endless; but while these are abundantly sufficient to act upon, the truth is that the principle of the system is irreconcilably at variance with the order, the discipline, and the efficiency of the church of God; while it excludes the recognition of all offices in the church, and infallibly perpetuates schism. And such has been its effect.

The point to which I now specifically allude is, that it has been the author of, or has at least perpetuated, the destruction of all offices in the church of God, by which the saints are to be perfected, and the body edified; which are absolutely incompatible with the notion of that scripturally unrecognized and actually undefined office—a clergyman. By casualty it may have happened that one gifted for office may have had a limited opportunity of its exercise, but in no case can it have been exercised according to the order of the church of God. It does not appear to me that the dissenting body has at all emerged from this snare, office with them being equally confused. I will now give its effects even within the system, where there are godly ministers, under circumstances in which it is practically reduced to the limit of dissent as a system—the private choice of ministry, which is the common practice in large towns. I give it in the words of one who, being a godly high churchman, forms an unexceptionable witness to its practical effects.

“ It is one of the sad consequences of our divisions and disunions, and of the neglect of pastoral superintendence, that the oneness of interest which ought to prevail among the members of one church, and especially of one flock, is very much weakened, if not lost sight of. Each man looks to his own things, his own edification, his own comfort, his own progress, so that a kind of selfishness has sprung up in our religion itself. The injury which this has done in the church is incalculable. It leads to endless divisions. Each man is tempted to seek a ministry adapted to his own state. If he be only a little way advanced in his perception of divine truth, he will go where he can hear taught the early lessons of the school of Christ. If he be further advanced, he will go where he can hear deeper things; and the temptation arising from this to the ministry is, that it should ever be accommodated to the state of the hearers, thus checking all growth in grace, and destroying all symmetry in the body of Christ. Hence it arises that we have some congregations who are only babes in Christ, and content to remain so; and others more exclusively strong men in Christ, who, forgetting their own former weakness, are apt to be filled with self-sufficiency and pride.”

The statements I have made are neither an exposition of abuses (though abundant room might have been afforded for it) nor indefinite, though I have reasoned on the principle, because the soundness of this is alleged when abuse is admitted. I say “abundant room for exposing abuse,” for the computation of the most sanguine evangelical ministers is that two-thirds of the pastors so-called of the church are not merely without specific gifts for given office, but do not preach the gospel at all. Surely it is a strange state of things, and one which flows from the system they are anxious to vindicate; whilst the perpetual use of this criterion of preaching the gospel shows the want of any apprehension of the difference of offices in the church, which the habits of their system have generated: a system, I repeat it, subversive of all specific office in the church of God.
J. N. D. (Concluded from page 52.)

Chapter 164

The Death of the Wife of Phinehas

1 Sam. 4

If the affecting circumstances of the death of the wife of Phinehas lead to a deeper apprehension of the ways of God, and of His infinite grace in seeking to dwell with men, we shall find that they have not been recorded in vain. In the holy sensibilities of a regenerate heart, this, pious woman must have known much of the comfort of His presence to have felt so keenly the loss to Israel when, after long forbearance, it was withdrawn. In that loss all their glory was gone (Ps. 68:59-64), and her grief because of it became too great for her weakened frame to bear. At the time of her death, having brought forth a son, a joyless mother she named the child Ichabod (no glory), saying, “The glory is departed from Israel.” And again she repeated, “The glory is departed from Israel.” Ought we to refuse to consider the meaning of this, her dying testimony?

We need but a moderate acquaintance with the effects of sin to know that fallen man shuns the presence of God. This was seen at once in Eden; and in the case of Israel it had to be learned that, apart from the work of Christ, His presence must be judgment. When the Lord passed through Egypt, He smote the firstborn of all who had not fled for refuge under the sheltering blood of the Paschal lamb (Ex. 12). Then, those who were thus saved from judgment found His presence in grace indispensable (Ex. 13). Veiled in measure in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire to give light by night, it was nevertheless displayed at times in effulgent glory. There was thus a visible manifestation of His presence. The children of Israel saw it (Ex. 13). Assured from the commencement of their journey of divine guidance, they soon found they needed more. They had enemies with whom it was impossible for them to cope. The Lord therefore became their defense, and at once “the glory” took up a position between them and their foes: to the one salvation, to the other destruction (Ex. 14). And this was not enough. Their poverty was as great as their ignorance and their weakness. All their supplies were a few cakes of unleavened dough, soon eaten. This also became the object of divine care. “Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.” Here again “the glory” was seen (Ex. 16). Thus far the presence of the Lord was manifested to Israel in constant and unmingled grace. Nothing was required from them, neither sacrifice nor legal obedience. But at Sinai the question was raised, not of the sufficiency of God's grace, but of the ability of fallen man to keep the righteous judgments and statutes of God's law. The people, with unhumbled hearts, at once undertook to do this. It was indeed their duty, and, if fulfilled, would have produced great happiness among them. But God alone could be the Judge of their obedience as He was their Lawgiver, and His presence, therefore, at this turning-point of their history took a judicial form. The Lord descended upon the mount in fire (Ex. 19). The people heard His voice out of the fire: they were in terror that the great fire would consume them (Deut. 5), and all the time “the glory of the Lord” was on the mount, it was like devouring fire in their eyes (Ex. 24). How perfect must that obedience be that could bear the holy judgment of consuming fire! Blackness, darkness, and tempest, also accompanied the fire. Not one ray of joy or peace could break in on any soul that looked on “the glory of the Lord” on the mount of law. Did the dealings of God in unmingled grace humble their unregenerate hearts? No. Did the terrors of Sinai subdue

them? So far from it, that, in the very presence of that mount, “they made a calf and worshipped the molten image, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.” We are tracing, be it remembered, the path of “the glory of the Lord” from Egypt on to the time of its departure from Shiloh, so mourned by the wife of Phinehas. The application of this history to a heavenly people, so perfectly given in the Epistles of the N. T., is beyond our present scope.

In Israel we have a public demonstration, on a scale to arrest general attention, of the magnitude and extent of the ruin that sin has effected. We are to learn by all the past dealings of God with men what the flesh is, that is, what we are. With advantages so many, so great, so far beyond any other nation, and with the presence of the Lord as their distinctive glory, what has been the result? Have they been better than the heathen? Indeed, no. “The name of God is blasphemed among the heathen through them, as it is written” (Rom. 2:24). Are they a happy and a great nation now? No. They are scattered in all lands, without a king and without a sacrifice.

Grace, then, unmingled with requirement, and requirement unmingled with grace, have both been publicly tried in their case, and in vain; but the effect of the latter was hopeless ruin, save for the absolute sovereignty of God. This, at the intercession of Moses, became the ground of hope.

The Lord proclaimed His name, and Moses besought Him to go in the midst of the people. His intercession was heard, and the people are commanded to make the tabernacle and its furniture according to the pattern sheaved to Moses in the mount. Henceforth grace and requirement were to be combined; the Lord would take cognizance of the sins and trespasses of His people; but whoever failed would find that the brazen altar at the door of the tabernacle was for his need and for his use. The priests found still more in the provision of the laver; while within, where it was their privilege to serve, all was purity, all perfect light, perfect order, and perfect sustainment. In the holiest of all, hidden by the veil, there was the ark and the mercy-seat, with the cherubim overshadowing it. There “the glory of the Lord,” leaving the mount of law, could dwell; because all judicial questions, raised at Sinai, were typically met by the blood of atonement sprinkled on it and before it, and by the daily sacrifice. The rights of God were thus respected: it was His throne. The need of sinners was met: mercy was secured to them by atonement. Jehovah was their King to be obeyed: they were His people to render obedience. This was the relationship of Israel with God from the wilderness of Sinai. Has it continued? Let us See.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons in connection with the tabernacle, their vestments, their separate position, their sacred office and the provision made for them, show what an important place the priesthood had in entertaining this relationship. There were no consecrated priests when all was grace or when all was law. When these were mingled, the priesthood formed the link between “the glory of the Lord” within the sanctuary and the people without. No service to God could be rendered, no spiritual need of men could be met, without them. This, we repeat, was the relationship of God with Israel. The greatest honor was put upon the priests, but the gravest responsibility attached to their position. The Lord would be sanctified in them that came nigh to Him (Lev. 10). To trace the course of their failure would carry us far beyond our limits. Some things have been noticed in the papers on Hannah, but it was the lot of the wife of Phinehas to be a daily witness of the unrestrained wickedness of the house of Eli. The law was violated and the holy things profaned before the people, whose unregenerate hearts were not slow to follow such examples. Destitute of faith, they became bold in superstition, and put confidence in a symbol

when they had none in the Lord. With hardened consciences and blinded minds they would intrude upon the ordering of the house of God, and dispose of the ark according to their will— “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto us” —and they brought it into the camp with ringing shouts. Judgment then took its course. Stroke upon stroke fell. The people were given to the sword, the priests were slain, the ark was taken, and, at the news, Eli fell, and his neck brake and he died. These were the beginning of sorrows. The departure of “the glory of the Lord” made the void complete, a loss this godly woman did not survive. What was there left to her people? What were vestments and formularies, altars and sacrifices, lights and incense, when the presence and blessing of the Lord were gone, and the mercy seat was in the hands of the Philistines? Who was there to represent the people before God? What could be done on the day of atonement? Outwardly all was lost, but divine grace had wrought in Hannah before the blow fell. She, discerning by faith the impending judgment, fell back on the revelation made to Moses of the absolute sovereignty of God (the only hope for any of us). “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” She pleaded this, “O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt look on the affliction,” etc. On the ground of justice there was no hope, on that of sovereign mercy there was.

In the wife of Phinehas we have submission to the righteous judgment of God according to the proclamation of the name of the Lord to Moses. It is instructive to see how these simple. but pious women understood the principles and the ways of God's dealings as revealed in the wilderness of Sinai. Hannah pleaded the former. The wife of Phinehas bowed to the latter. Ichabod (no glory) tells us how clearly that dying woman realized the stroke that had fallen on the priesthood and the nation, a loss that it took twenty years of discipline and Samuel's ministry to bring home, even in measure, to the people (chap. vii.).

A few words more as to the future of Israel seem to be called for. Under the promised new covenant, the Lord will give to them a new heart, and a new spirit will He put within them: He will also forgive their iniquity and not remember their sin any more (Ezek. 36; Jer. 31). Then their long rejected Messiah will bring back “the glory” to that nation, and establish His throne in the earth in their midst, when all that offend and them that do iniquity shall be taken away in judgment. Then shall “the glory of the Lord be revealed and all flesh shall see it together “; yea, “the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. Amen and amen.”

In the meantime, by the gospel, God is taking out of the world a heavenly people, who own the earth-rejected Jesus as Savior and Lord. They, by faith looking up to Him in heaven, behold “the glory of the Lord,” and His love constrains them no longer to live to themselves, but unto Him Who, for their sakes, died and rose again. This is the secret of true happiness in a world of sin until He come (2 Cor. 3; 4; 5).

Chapter 165

Promise

The promise, without condition, is given of God and must surely be accomplished; but it does not raise the question of righteousness, nor satisfy it either: and while we lean merely on promise, we cannot have peace. Conscience is before promise; not only responsibility but knowledge of good and evil, or right and wrong.

Hence man cannot really meet God till his conscience be purged, or by meeting feel the absolute present need of it—not of help, but of present purging, his state being made sensible to him by God's presence. The law raises the question of righteousness in claim on the conscience, and condemnation on God's part necessarily if not fulfilled. The promise here depends on man's fulfillment of the condition; but the question of righteousness is raised. The promise may encourage, but it has nothing to do with satisfying the claim of righteousness.

Christ comes (man rejected also the fulfillment of promise in Him); He purges the conscience and accomplishes righteousness, making us the righteousness of God in Himself. The fullness of the effect of all promises is in Him (2 Cor. 1) and is the testimony and accomplished proof of divine love, which indeed lifts the church above all promise. Conscience, promise, law, all find their close in Christ; only promise rests on the same basis as He that is absolute, perfect, sovereign grace. J. N. D.

Chapter 166

The Promise of Life: Part 1

Titus 1

It is at the beginning of this chapter that the Spirit of God marks with an especial character that on which I desire to speak—the eternal thought of God toward us which we find in verses 2, 3. Evil had come in; the Spirit takes notice of it; and the effect in a most remarkable way is to throw us back on the whole mind and thought of God from the beginning. As evil progresses, and corruption comes in, the apostle turns back to the origin of all, and coming from the divine nature itself (and all that could meet the evil, and convey us on, must come from that); that is, the eternal life which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the foundation of the world; that which was in the mind of God as to the thing itself before the foundation of the world; that which God had in His mind, the counsel of God for us before itself was created. It just shows us what we are, and what man is, with and apart from that eternal life.

In Ephesians we find it in connection with Christ (chap. 3. 3-7): a mystery hidden through all ages in God until Christ was raised up as Head of the body, the bride. It is not on this I would dwell. I am not going to speak about the church, but would turn back to what the life is, and would dwell on this thought, the promise of life in the mind of God before the world ever existed. Before that, I say, this life existed in a person, Christ, the One Who was in the beginning with God, and was God; that is the Christ with Whom my life is hidden with the Father. Being in Himself life, He came into the world as the Life, and manifested the Life. The thing was embodied in the person of the Lord as Man; and there it was—the life of man, not of angels. That which was specially God's divine thought toward man is shown out when Christ becomes Man; and this life is communicated to us, the instrument used being the preached word of truth. This divine life had been manifested here in a Man—the Lord Jesus. He having given it to us, it is now manifested in our bodies. It has the character of godliness in its manifestation. It tells you what you are. It is in a poor vessel, and where there is a wretched will; but it tells you what you are, and what the world is; it throws out an additional light to show what man is as a creature totally departed from God.

Morally speaking, the world has grown up in departure from God; that is, the world we live in—all that we see around—has sprung up from the creature having got away from God. But the life we have existed before the creation of the world; and this portion of scripture is very full of the simple, quiet, blessedness of what that life is, practically manifested and given in Christ. A great deal of evil had come in. Satan was corrupting the truth by the wild reason of man's mind. The apostle specially warns Timothy and Titus, and throws them back, not on common Christian profession, but on the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness. They were to be as those who knew what were the thoughts and mind of God, and were cast on Him. If I have got divine teaching, I can say I know the Shepherd's voice; and if it is not His, I shall know that too. The truth which is after godliness is not only acknowledged, but is marked and stamped as of God by a man living to and for God. Godliness is what a man would do if instigated by God; and what a man would not do if God were close by him, it is clear, would certainly not be for God. A man daily

taught by the knowledge of God how to be living for God would do everything to manifest the ways of godliness, knowing those ways because of God. I speak not of doing right instead of wrong, or of conscientiousness. A believer clearly ought to be righteous with regard to others; but I speak of godliness. You never can be for God without knowing what God is. I cannot walk worthily of God if I do not know Him. I cannot walk with God without that, though I may walk uprightly with man. Here it is walking worthy of God, the loins being girded (affections tucked up). This applies to all revealed to us in Christ. A believer, as to his motives and life, has Christ's mind revealed to him, to show him how to guide himself through all circumstances. Sorrow could draw out His heart in divine love, but in motives and all circumstances He was always Himself (perfect, of course). It is the mind of Christ that believers are to have. What a wonderful place we have got! Only as we are taught of God can we get hold of this; that is, the hope of eternal life promised by God before the world began. Mark that; for as to the Adam life, it never could be that, but a divine life in those who are saved—a life for heaven. We have got it now, and we shall be there on account of it. There will be its full manifestation, everything there, every word, and all praise will be according to the presence of God. As participators of the divine nature we shall be in fullest blessedness there, where nothing inconsistent with the divine nature can exist, but everything will be in accordance with that life, and ourselves as possessors of it in the highest and most blessed perfection. We belong to that place now, whilst our bodies are down here. The life we have got came down from thence, and has its only full sphere of blessing there.

The promise of God before the world began, this life was in the mind of God for us before ever the world existed. I do not speak now of predestination, but of the thing itself in the mind of God before ever the world existed. If we turn to 1 John 1 we see how this Life came down. What “our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (ver. 1-3). It is a real Man. The Life which was with the Father was manifested down here in the person of Christ. In many you will find great vagueness of thought in connection with this life. It is Christ Himself. “When He Who is our life,” &c. Before He speaks of the communication of life, He speaks of its manifestation. John could see what it was down here, amongst friends and enemies. He says, “We have looked upon, and our hands” &c. The Life which was with the Father is the life promised before the world began. I get what it is perfectly displayed. I see this life in One Who, in due time, fully manifested it as Man. The last Adam is the Man in Whom its perfection is seen; a Man in this world, in all points tempted like us; a perfect Man, without sin, walking in the world in meekness and holiness, a pattern set before us to follow.

2 Tim. 1:9 shows the way it was given us in Christ. God connects the two things here: saved by Christ according to His own purpose and grace given us in Him before the world began. In this life we see a thing that has its display in heaven. We have got it now, and in a place where it is hindered. It leads my thoughts and feelings to be ever in heaven, where it is as before the world began. Though displayed in all perfection down here by Him Who has abolished death, and has brought life and incorruption to light, the life was in heaven before it was manifested here. Wonderful truth!

For the power of this life Christ has gone through death and annulled it. Death is an abolished thing for saints. It takes us out of all the misery of the first Adam. It was not so with saints in the Old Testament. They could not say, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” It was all death to them. Elijah was taken away for a testimony without passing through death; but Christ passed

through it and annulled it, rose and went up to heaven; and life and incorruption are thus brought to light. Turn to John 1:4: “In Him was life.” You never could say that of a saint. God gave us to have that life in His Son. If in ourselves we might lose it, but if He is my life I cannot. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

He is the life and light of men, not of angels. This is an unutterably humbling truth for us. If God was exercising life-giving power, it was to be manifested in a man, and therefore the Son of His love becomes Man. God displayed it by the incarnation of the Word—the eternal Son. He was given in promise to us before the world existed: and He came into the world personally. The Word, made flesh, dwelt among men in all the circumstances in which we walk. He goes down into the death of the first Adam and abolishes death, bringing life and incorruptibility to light, and goes up to the right hand of God as the display of this life in a Man up there. What a thought! That eternal life in this world—a man, a poor man, a carpenter, One Who had not where to lay His head. The life promised before the world began now has been made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in due time manifested to those who believe through preaching. Christ Himself is the great firstfruits of the life that we, as saved ones, have in Him—He the firstfruits of the great harvest of God. I repeat, this life, given in promise before the world existed, was manifested by the Christ, Who in the power of it passed through death; and in heaven it is now manifested in the risen Man Christ Jesus: while down here it is manifested in those who believe through preaching.

That is how we get it. It is preached in the world now. And what does the world make of it? That is the solemn thing for your consciences. If we take the world, we get not the Second Man, but the first. Turn back to the garden of Eden, and you get the clue to the present state of the world and how it began. Man, created in responsibility to keep his first estate, was commanded not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. He eats it, doing his own will, and is cast out of paradise. And the world begins where paradise ends; and that is the world we live in, only it is a thousand times worse, because it has rejected Christ. Yes, the world around us sprang up when man was driven from paradise. A man in a state of responsibility, departed from God, made the world what it is. And what a world! Solemn as is the responsibility of man in it, for us who have life it is only by-the-bye. True, we have to go through it; but it has nothing to do with the eternal life we have, except as being the place where the eternal life has been manifested and brought to us. I would ask, What is man departed from God about? Making the world a scene of delights for himself by cultivating the arts and sciences. (You will find among the heathen the most beautiful exhibition of the arts and sciences.) I repeat, man is making a scene for developing and displaying faculties that have nothing to do with God (the best as well as the worst have nothing to do with Him). (To be continued.)

Chapter 167

The Promise of Life: Part 2

Well, it is in this world that the eternal life has been and is manifested now. Is it by first mending and reconstructing man, by setting the world right, that God gives eternal life? Is life to be got by reforming the world, by modifying the evil of the ways and the tastes of man away from God, by improving man first without God?

What is man? A responsible being that has never been lost! A responsible being, I repeat, away from God, and in departure from God, he has built up for himself a world without God. Bring God into all the fine things that man is doing, and what would be the effect? Most of us know it as a matter of fact that this world, with all its pleasures and things delightful to the flesh, does not let God in, nor Christ, Who is the eternal life; and I get it as a thing that comes in between. Eternal life has come down here, and I have it in a world that has all its life from the first man; in a world entirely departed and alienated from God—a world that had its origin in man having been turned out of—a world that, when Christ in divine beauty and grace was in it, spat in His face and turned Him out. That is the world I am in now.

But where does my heart go to out of the world? To that blessed life I have in Christ. I may have got it but yesterday, but the thing I have received was up there for me before the foundation of the world. I have got Christ as my life: “the life I live is by faith of the Son of God;” and it was in God's mind to give me this life before the world was. “He that hath the Son hath life” —a life not of man at all; and having got it I am to show what is the effect of it, and from whence I got it. What is the life I got from the first Adam? All sin; if put under law, not subject to it; a life with lusts and a will of its own. I judge it altogether. When Christ was here, the tree being bad had judgment pronounced against it. The flesh is a judged thing. I find only sin and condemnation in connection with it, but I get God dealing with this sin in the flesh: “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Mark, it is not only sins remitted, but sin condemned. Oh, I say, sin is in the flesh; I have got it, and I hate it! It is lusting in me, making me dislike what Christ likes whilst my heart is set on Christ. But I find God has dealt in judgment with it, and put it away on the cross. He condemned it where it was put away, and that is where I find I am. I have sin, but I am not to be judged for it—Christ was of God made sin for me. He, in grace, has taken it. My soul in the power of this truth gets perfect peace. I have no more conscience of sins; I am no longer dreading God's judgment, because I am forgiven; all has merged into the deliverance Christ has given. I have perfect liberty; sin has not dominion: I judge this flesh of mine, and all its lusts and will entirely, because it is a judged thing. I am crucified with Christ; I stand in a new condition; I have eternal life in me, Christ being my life. I have liberty and joy by His going through death; I have died, and am risen with Him. This is where I am brought by grace.

I have not only a life of him that departed from God, but as a believer the life of Him Who came into the place where I was away from God, to bring me back to God. I belong to Him; I am risen with Him, where the eternal life is to be displayed. In spirit I am up, there now whilst in the body waiting for Him to come. I am in a world that is merely by the bye to me, only a thing I have to pass through; not of it, even as Christ was not. He passed through and left us an example that we should follow, walking in His footsteps. I am to reckon myself dead. “As we have borne the image of the earthly, even so,” etc. A believer does not belong to the first man, but to the Second. The life of Christ is his, and that is all be owns as his life—that life so blessed, so divine, that the world would not have it, and shrunk from it because it was so perfect, and God took it up and put it on His throne as the only place fitted for it.

Christ down here displayed everything that characterizes this life. I should like to mark one or two traits of it. One is that quiet confidence with God that springs from, and is the fruit of, divine love, that which can trust God and is capable of enjoying blessed communion with God, enabling one through all things and circumstances here to walk confiding in God. One could not have had that confidence if Christ had not died to put away sin, and brought me into relationship with God. Having a purged conscience, I can delight in God; and as regards my walk through this world, Christ is my life, my all. I am consciously dependent on Him. As we pass on through this world we have to overcome. How? “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Life has this especial character. It avoids evil, and walks in grace through the world. If I have the life of Christ, I am to walk down here as He walked, in practical life, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord,” etc. with the consciousness that it came from God, promised before the world was.

We shall most surely find defectiveness in this from not having self-judged, and the spirit free to enjoy Christ. We have to watch that things of this world do not narrow up the life that is to be made manifest. Do we not find continually that we get under the power of circumstances, by which the heart is often narrowed? How often we have to say, I did not think of that at the right moment! But if always bearing about the dying of the Lord, it would be always easy to manifest His life. If the heart be full of Christ, it will always be ready for Christ. The tendency of saints is to have the heart narrowed up—not ever ready for God and their neighbor. It would not be so if we could only get the heart exercised under a deep consciousness of what the life we have got is, and what the world is, what a. poor, little, wretched thing it is. Having hearts exercised to discern good and evil whilst down here, we should pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers, having cleansed consciences able to judge the flesh as being only the old thing. Life being given, the world (grown up from man rejecting God) is the place where this life is to be exercised, and we get various exercises. See what Paul passed through “We who live are always delivered unto death,” etc. He gloried in tribulation and in infirmities if only the life might be manifested. I desire that your hearts should get hold of what this eternal life is, so to live in the power of it, that you should see how it came into the world revealed in Christ.

Seeing all its blessedness and beauty in Christ, the heart clings round it. In Him the life was the light of men. What a thing—in the place where Satan rules to have God's own life given to us in His Son, and that we live in Christ only, but ever remember that this life has no affinity with the world! We have to manifest the light of life in the midst of the world that will not have Christ; and, alas! how constantly everything tends to make us live by sight instead of by faith. But whatever we

fail in, we shall certainly find that God has given us everything in Christ.

Oh, may He give us to know more and more what that eternal life is which was promised in Him before the foundation of the world! J. N. D. (Continued from page 117.)

Propitiation

It may help souls, in danger of being perplexed by words as unintelligent as they are confidently uttered, if it be clearly understood that the same Hebrew expression for “atonement” is used throughout Lev. 16, and that this finds its counterpart in the Greek verb which the Revisers correctly render “make propitiation” in Heb. 2:17, and its derivative substantive “propitiation” in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.

It is a characteristic of the N. T. that there alone do we find “reconciliation” in the sense of divine grace. The Septuagint never uses καταλλ■σσειν or καταλλαγ■ with any such force. Indeed the verb only occurs in Jer. 48:39, the substantive in Isa. 9:5, the one meaning “changed” and the other exchange or “restitution “: so remote is the application from its N. T. usage. We can easily understand that, as with other words, so Christ's presence and work of grace gave K. an entirely new and blessed character. God was in Christ reconciling, not merely the Jews, but the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them—the very thing the law must do. But the world, though made by Him, knew Him not: its wisdom was its darkness. The Jews more guiltily received Him not. In result both crucified Him. On that cross Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us. This is atonement; for no ignorance can be more pitiable than only looking for the bare word. God has graciously revealed the thing in all variety of forms, for which faith praises Him On the cross the Savior was charged with sin and our sins, and bore the judgment of all unsparingly, that we might become God's righteousness. Thus the reconciliation which unbelief and hatred refused is now made good; and God has not only reconciled to Himself us who believe, but given as the ministry of reconciliation. Grace reigns through righteousness here also. What do we not owe Him?

Now the fact already stated as to Lev. 16 proves—the utter fallacy and sheer heterodoxy of denying that propitiation applies to the blood of the cross, and of limiting it to putting within the sanctuary. For in that chapter, which is the main ground of course of the N. T. references, call it atonement or propitiation, one and the same term, is used of all the work of that great day. So we find it employed in general, ver. 6, as none can deny, without the least restriction to the sanctuary. It is striking that it is next expressly said of the scape-goat, Azazel (ver. 10), where such a limitation is manifestly absurd. Again in ver. 11 it occurs with presenting the bullock for sacrifice. Afterward it is said, as all agree, of the sanctuary in ver. 16, 17, whatever be judged of ver. 18. What is more, the same term is applied as elsewhere to the burnt offering for the high-priest and for the people. In short the Holy Spirit applies the word for making atonement or propitiation to all the sacrifices of that day, and to each part without no less than within (ver. 30-33,) so as completely and without the least arguing to demolish the human theory that restricts propitiation to the sanctuary alone, and thus excludes the work on the cross from that expression.

The N. T. speaks with no less largeness; and “to propitiate” or “propitiation” there means that God-glorifying; work as a whole, not a part only. To limit it to an act in the heavenly sanctuary, to deny propitiation to Christ's work on the cross, is therefore flying in the face of the truth of scripture

without the smallest warrant, and to the deep dishonor of that which gave its righteous efficacy to the blood before God, or to the dismissal of all sins into the land of forgetfulness.

If any one were to say that the Lord on the cross failed to make good the type of the blood put within the holiest., &c., such teaching on Lev. 16 ought surely to be refused as unsound. To set forth the efficacy of Christ's blood in figure, Aaron had to bring in some of the atoning blood, as well as when he came out to lay the sins on the scape-goat for their total removal out of sight. But the substance of the atonement or propitiation was the sacrifice offered to God. The slaying of the victim, the carrying in of the blood, the dismissal of the confessed sins (to say nothing of the incense at an early point and of the burnt offerings at the close), were each and all aspects of the same one work. What is so painful and new to most of us (certainly to myself in general fairly informed) is the singling out the intermediate portion of this instructive ritual as alone propitiation or atonement, in the face of the scripture which itself so speaks of all the parts composing it. To me this is an irreverent anatomy of atonement, as dangerous to faith in His work as the severing of His person in which other speculators have unholily indulged. All sound in the truth hold that the propitiation or atoning work of Christ is a whole, and “finished” here below as Himself said. And a most serious slight of His infinite sacrifice I cannot but regard it to deny that to be propitiation wherein sin was judged and God forever glorified as to it.

But the new doctrine goes farther, and by a mischievous putting together of Heb. 2:17; 8:4, and 9:12, assumes that Christ went on high after death and before resurrection (of course therefore in the disembodied state) to effect propitiation; and that this alone did it! Nov His sacrifice on the cross instantly owned before God, as the rent veil testified on earth! Propitiation was not even begun then, whatever the Lord cried! The new doctrine boldly tells us that He in the separate state and in heaven alone made propitiation for our sins. Is this the truth of God? or a cheat of the enemy? He that rests in the simplicity of faith on the atoning sacrifice of Christ as prefigured in Lev. 16 rejects the hypothesis of these separate stages of life and death, of earth and heaven. The true force of the types he sees in their combined value, as the inspired text carefully impresses on every soul subject to the word. The interpreting of the blood taken within, as alone propitiation, and never verified till after Christ died and was a separate spirit on high, not only shocks the spiritual sense but dislocates scripture, disparages the cross, and invents a strange unheard of propitiation in lien of that which God's elect have hitherto believed in. Familiar as perhaps one may say I am with what has been written on propitiation since the church began, it has not been my lot to hear a whisper of the kind till some four or five years ago.

But what say the N. T. scriptures whence we are entitled to look for the fullest final light from God? Does Heb. 2:17 give a hint of a work done after death to propitiate? We hear very simply of Christ “a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation (or atonement) for the sins of the people”: a clear reference to Lev. 16 and as clearly fulfilled in that complete work in which He stood representatively on earth for the exceptional work of atonement, the basis of all that blots out sin, and glorifies God, before interceding for the saints in their temptations and sufferings. But not the most distant hint of a disembodied priesthood before He was made perfect, saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and forever set down on the right hand of God.

Does 1 John 2:2 or 4:10 give cause for the scheme? The first text simply declares Christ the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the whole world. Thus the essential requirement, the foundation of all the rest based on it, is the death and blood-shedding of the victim; for apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. Now the truth includes what is meant by putting the blood before God, but it insists on the sacrifice as the absolutely necessary and most integral part of propitiation. This spurious novelty on the contrary as absolutely excludes it from being itself propitiation, which is conceived to be a special action by Christ's presence—in heaven for a little while after His death. Just think of the boldness of trusting a bit of reasoning against the plain and large bearing of God's word in order to pick out, not Jehovah's lot nor the people's, nor yet the bullock, but a manifest result however interesting, instructive and momentous, and contending that this alone is propitiation! Certainly 1 John 2 is ominously silent on any such point.

Still less does 1 John 4:10 help the desired inference. It appears distinctly and decisively adverse. The love of God was manifested in our case, that God, hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Such was the first want of man morally dead, even life Godward; and this life is in His Son. But however precious and eternal, it is not all we want, for we were guilty and lost sinners. Therefore another proof and gift of His grace— “Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins.” He sent Christ to be such. The heterodoxy to gain the least show requires His going to heaven after death, for the purpose. As far as it speaks, the intimation here is altogether in favor of the large, full, and sound view of propitiation, and against the notion of a retreat to heaven to effect it. And scripture cannot be broken. Whatever added light may be from other texts (and I am dead against limiting our view to where the mere word literally occurs), no other can undo the certain and simple intimation to our faith that God sent His Son to be propitiation, instead of the dream that He went back to heaven after He died and before He rose for any such purpose. We know that He was that very day of His death in Paradise, and the converted robber too; but what scriptural link has this with making propitiation? If ever a time and place could be supposed to forbid such an association, Lev. 16:17 excludes it. The triumph of grace is seen in such companionship in Paradise. Whatever the importance of our Lord's passing through the separate state, nowhere does scripture connect it with effecting propitiation. And as for Heb. 9:12, what can be stranger than to lower that grand entry once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption, to the imagined brief errand to make propitiation? To say that it is not ascension is the merest assumption.

I am not ignorant that some complain because I do not set out other views of the author, such as his faith in the Lord's sacrifice, bearing the curse and judgment, and dying for us. This seems to me wholly unreasonable. I did allow of much truth, and truth altogether inconsistent with his error. The statement that “expiation was made on earth, for Christ suffered on earth, died on earth” (Help, 63, 4), overthrows his system completely. For every scholar knows that expiation means at bottom the same thing as propitiation, and that any real difference is imaginary. In Greek and Hebrew it is the same Word.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, by those who feel a difficulty of seeing how the dismissed live goat fills so weighty a place in the rites of atonement, that Aaron was expressly to take the “two he-goats for a sin-offering,” and to set both before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting (Lev. 16:5, 7). Indeed it is added, as if to forestall any objection of this kind, that the goat upon which the lot fell

for Azazel shall e set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement over (or, with) him, to send him away as (or, for) Azazel into the wilderness." The removal of our sins, though thus typified, as truly hung on our Lord's death on the cross as the witness to the efficacy of His blood in the sprinkling of the sanctuary. To deduce separate acts of Christ, at distinct times and different places, and even in another condition of His person, is foreign to Christian truth.

What I affirm (in the face of all special pleading to minimize a mere fable which lowers the cross by denying its propitiatory value, and draws the mind away to itself from the solid truth of God's word) is that all which is peculiar to Mr. C. E. S. on the most solemn of subjects is unquestionably false. Therefore I envy not the human feeling that essays to put forward other things that are true in order to weaken the just indignation which rejects and resents such an error. An outcry from any beguiled by the, heterodoxy is natural. What can one think of an apology for it from any that reject it? With such human liberalism one cannot sympathize. God is light and God is love. To predicate of Christ as propitiation a false scheme which diverts from the revealed truth is to my conviction beyond measure grave, though I do not expect to convince all that may read this protest. To palliate it by a show of argument in order to justify fellowship with those in such et or one can leave the Lord to judge.

When we are subject to the scriptural testimony to Christ and His work, there is no difficulty. If we take it up in a human way, there is nothing to save us from error one way or another. But it does seem marvelous that one imbued with N. T. truth should fail to see that what gives character to all the accessories of Lev. 16 is the offering to God, the great sin-offering of Aaron, not more the center of the book than of the entire Jewish system. No doubt therein were many measures and many manners; but it formed, specially to the Christian eye, a unity without parallel among these types. We may study with profit the distinction of the goats from each other, and of the bullock from both (5-11); so also the censer with its burning coals causing the cloud of incense to cover the mercy-seat, the witness of the personal acceptance of Christ when ever so tried by divine judgment (12, 13); again, the sprinkling of the blood, not only of the bullock but of the goat upon the mercy-seat and before it, and the cleansing and hallowing of the holy places and altar (16-19). We may weigh the dismissal of all the confessed iniquities on Azazel to a land of separation (20-22). We may consider the resumption of the ordinary garb of the high-priest instead of what marked the exceptional action in the previous verses, and the offering of the burnt-offerings as well as the fat of the sin-offering (23-25). But not even a pious Jew would have singled out one of these many parts as exclusively atonement or propitiation, whilst he would simply, unequivocally, have viewed the sacrifice as not only the grand basis but that which in the highest way gave an atoning character to all that followed.

That Aaron had to enter the sanctuary in order to put some of the atoning blood there according to the word of Jehovah is true. That Christ had to enter heaven before He rose to do something analogous is to beg the question altogether; just as it is to overlook the type of Aaron's coming out again for the transaction of the scape-goat. The force of this last is evaded by making it solely prophetic of future dealings with Israel at Christ's appearing. For it figures what Christ did atoningly, as the ground of that mercy to guilty but repentant Israel by-and-by. It is the removal, rather than the forgiveness, of the iniquities confessed. The two goats are regarded together as a sin-offering.

And when the Christian looks at Christ on the cross given in infinite love, yet withal abandoned of God, His God, drinking the cup His Father gave Him, suffering infinitely for sins, sin itself judged on His person—there it is that both conscience and heart rest by faith according to the fullest revelation of the word. He believes without hesitation that all was made good there and then. He does not limit the work any more than the person of our adorable Savior: it immediately penetrated heaven, and is the ground of a reconciled universe for eternity. He gladly interprets the shadow of the incense, and of the blood put in the holiest as the highest witness to Christ vindicating God for His own presence, but this solely because the essence of the propitiation was in the sacrifice. He does not admit for a moment another act in the Antitype for the necessarily separate and the subsequent stages of Aaron; and he points not only to the scape-goat as the manifest disproof of it, but to the burning of the fat of the sin-offering as well as the burnt-offerings as assuredly fulfilled in the one great sacrifice of Christ. All were parts of the atonement, as the chapter clearly shows save to a reasoner bent on his own will and indifferent to the N. T. key which God graciously affords us in our weakness and ignorance.

It is this holy and beautiful and solemn unity which is infringed by the delusion lately broached of the blood in the sanctuary being alone propitiation; and this in the face of the express statement of the chapter itself which applies the same word, call it atonement or propitiation, to the entire work of the high-priest on that day. So arbitrary a restriction has the effect of denying the sacrifice itself, the ground of what follows, to be propitiation. And this not only does the greatest wrong to Christ's work on the cross, but opens the door for the will-o'-the-wisp of a distinct action of Christ in heaven after death and before resurrection which alone claims to be propitiation.

It is by more than one said that in pointing out the unscriptural temerity of this false teaching I am attempting to fasten heterodoxy on its author. But this seems wholly unfounded on their part. Nor am I in the least unfair or one-sided, as they are who set the true things the author says to screen the error from the abhorrence of all who glory in the cross of Christ. Nothing is easier than for a partisan, if he will, to give good excuses for a bad thing. It is the invariable way of human alliance faithless to Christ and the truth. I have briefly enough exposed a novel intrusion into a foundation of the faith, which is refuted by the scriptures alleged and would supplant the revealed propitiation by a fable. Nor has the author or any friend title to complain of its summary and decided exposure, after venturing in his “Recent Utterances” to attack the faith of all save his own small following, as if they denied propitiation or made it impossible. For in this respect Mr. P. differs not substantially from all saints known to me. The aim of the enemy is plain. If the only propitiation be something that followed Christ's going to heaven after death, the sacrifice is robbed of that value which scripture gives it in the faith of all outside the Reading fraternity, and must sink into a subordinate place. Some who accept the dream may continue in a measure old habits of speech notwithstanding; better still some having real faith underneath their new creed may retain honor for the cross of Christ. But inevitably where souls are formed only on this notion, they must eventually sink to the level of the heterodoxy that Christ's sacrifice is not the essence of the propitiation, which last is a mysterious and subsequent sprinkling of His blood by Himself in heaven after His death and before His resurrection. To state the view is its truest and strongest condemnation to all single-eyed believers. And any effort to. fritter away its seriousness by putting forward other things the author states is in my judgment not of God.

It is a fact that the N. T. does not expressly say that God was propitiated, but speaks of Christ expiating our sins, of His being a propitiation for them and sent for this purpose by God. Admiring the wisdom that avoids language which heathen, ignorant of divine love and holiness, might from their old habits seriously misunderstand, I believe it quite another thing to deny that God needed propitiation. For herein the offended majesty and violated will and outraged nature of God were vindicated. It is therefore profoundly erroneous to confound it with reconciling love. The gift of the Son in God's love, in no way negatives the necessity of Christ's blood, as a propitiation: it is unbelief to array them in opposition. Therefore one hails these words of C. E. S. in Dec., 1888 (only just seen), “God requires propitiation to he made, because men have sinned, that He may in righteousness be propitious to them,” even though the N. T. may not so express itself. But they seem quite inconsistent with, and surely corrective of, the expressions reprobated in “Help and Instruction,” which shocked souls by setting the letter against the spirit of all scripture. For the essence of propitiation is Godward, on man's behalf indeed, but in the unsparing judgment of his evil, the ground of divine righteousness as we see so plainly declared in Rom. 3:25 and elsewhere. Nowhere was it said, thought, or implied, that the author believed not in Christ's sufferings on the cross. But this doctrine was judged, whatever else was right, to be ruinously wrong, first, in eliminating propitiation from the sin-offerings of atonement to confine it to the blood carried and sprinkled within the sanctuary; secondly and worse, in insisting that. Christ only made this type good, and Heb. 2:17 true, by going into heaven after death and before resurrection, to make propitiation for our sins.

To me it seems no honor to brethren beloved, but a real indignity to the Lord, that every question of moment seems of late to drive so many to a departed and honored brother, as to their living oracle. Have we no Bible? or can Christian men not interpret it in the Spirit? are they cast on the safeguard of his tradition? No man had a greater horror of such unbelief in God's word, such idolatry of man. And perhaps I may be allowed to express my personal grief and shame, the more for having given not a few laborious years to collecting and editing what is being so painfully abused. But it seems unobjectionable and called for to say, now that his name is so often invoked for what he detested, that J. N. D. has repeatedly left on record under his own hand (what his life-long ministry proved to all that knew it) his distinct faith that Christ's making propitiation for our sins was here below on the cross (Heb. 2:17), and by no means after death and in heaven as an action of His priesthood there. Any one who has access to his Collected Writings can verify this without doubt by examining Doctrinal iii. 484, 5, iv. 325. From this conviction I never knew a single godly man in or out of fellowship, still less a teacher, dissent; and if it be true that the Reading error appeared ten or twelve years ago, I can only presume that no man of discernment had read the articles, almost all such at that time being absorbed in the then impending or occurrent sorrow.

Chapter 169

Few Words on Propitiation or Atonement

It has been attempted to say, there is no appeasement of wrath with God. The words ■λ■σκεσθαι, ■λασμ■ς, ■λαστ■ριον, all have exactly this sense. They meet the qualities or attributes in God which are necessary, and must be maintained; or He is not God as He is (or not God at all), to maintain what He is, His holiness and righteousness. But He is supreme in love.

No doubt the true love of God in this attracts man by grace, but that is not the meaning of propitiation. I propitiate an offended superior, or render him propitious to me. Does God do that to man? To a horn, as the offended person, was the blood always presented and offered? It is revealed to man that it has been presented to God, and accepted; so that we may come boldly to God through faith in it. But it never was presented to man.

This marks the two parts of propitiation, man's responsibility, and access to God given according to His glory and nature: in the sins borne and put away—the scapegoat, God judging evil according to what man ought to be; and [in] access to God according to what He is. The last specifically characterizes the Christian; but the former was necessary and accomplished for every one that believes: both by the same work of the cross, but each distinct; judicial dealing according to man's responsibility; access to God according to His nature and holiness.

Propitiation, then, meets our sins through grace according to God's holy nature, to which it is presented, and which has been fully glorified in it. It meets the requirements of that nature. Yet it is perfect love to us—love indeed only thus known as wrought between Christ and God alone, the only part we had in it being our sins and the hatred to God which killed Christ. But it does more, being according to God's nature and all that this nature is in every respect. It not only judicially meets what is required by reason of our sins—man's failure in duty and his guilt, but it opens access into the presence of God Himself known in that nature which has been glorified in it.

It is not true therefore that wrath cannot be where there is love. A father full of love may be rightly angry with his child……There is no hatred in God to man assuredly. Yet God is a righteous judge; and God is angry with the wicked every day and ought to be so.

But peace had to be made when there was wrath, and the sovereign love that saves is not the favor which rests on those reconciled (Rom. 5:1). God loved us when we were sinners; He loves us without any change when we are cleansed. But we are cleansed, reconciled.

Glorifying God was the first grand object, and not merely love to us. This was part of the glory no doubt, but not all. It is not simply that God was putting away our sins, but there was a Mediator with Whom He was dealing about sins. God was making Him sin, and dealing with Him in the way of a curse because of it, when He had “offered Himself without spot to God.” Curse and wrath have been executed; and thus peace has been made.

God smelled a sweet savor, the odor of rest, and said, I will no more curse; and this is called “■λασμ■ς, ■λ■σκεσθαι, and the mercy-seat ■λαστ■ριον in the New Testament. Now these

words refer to God. They involve forgiveness and favor, but favor obtained by the sacrifice of Christ presented to God. I do not say love caused, for it was infinite love gave the Son to be the Lamb of propitiation; but that love wrought by a work which maintained the righteousness and holiness of God in forgiving and justifying; and though the word may be used for its effect, it is applied to God in the New Testament, and its meaning is “propitiation,” or “appeasement.” “Reconciling,” which is applied to believers, is a totally different word, καταλλ■σσω, καταλλαγ■. The ■λασμ■ς was offered to God, ■λαστ■ριον was where the blood was placed on God's throne, and it was God Who was the object of ■λ■σκεσθαι., man of καταλλαγ■ (1 John 2:2; Rom. 3 25; Heb. 2:17); and as to καταλλ■σσω, see Rom. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Col. 1:20, 21.

And it is an unhappy thing, because the effect of the atonement (when wrath would justly come on against us) is to cleanse and reconcile us, to weaken the truth of that righteous wrath, and its being righteously arrested by the precious blood presented to God, and that bearing of sins which makes it righteous in God to justify the ungodly and forgive their sins. Appeasing God, ■λ■σκεσθαι, placare, let the word be what it may, is not changing God, but glorifying and satisfying God's righteous judgment; so that He may say, “When I see the blood, I will pass over.”

I add that, though the priesthood of Christ be now in heaven where He appears in the presence of God for us, yet all His life was in every sense a preparation for it. He had so taken up man that it became God to make Him perfect in that heavenly place through sufferings. He was tempted, He suffered being tempted, that He might succor them that are tempted. Not only so, but He was made like to His brethren in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. And so, in chapter 5 of the same Epistle, comparing Him with the Jewish high-priest, though showing the difference. And it is clear that the priest represented the people before God, confessed their sins on the scape-goat, and went into the sanctuary for them, as Christ has done into the true sanctuary for us. The priesthood of Christ is no doubt for believers; but to deny that He represented men, stood there as man for them before God, and that on the cross (as in Heb. 2:17) as man, alone indeed but for men, is ruinous error. J. N. D.

Chapter 170

The Psalms Book 1: Introduction

The Psalms are divided into five books or volumes; and this not by external marks only, but by internal distinctions full of interest. The first closes with Psa. 41 where a conclusion is manifest; the second, with Psalm 72, the last three verses marking closure; the third, with Psalm 89, of which verse 52 is the end; the fourth, with Psalm 106, with verse 48 concluding; the fifth to the end of all. (Psalm. 107-150) The internal characters which distinguish these five books will appear as we pass on.

There is no part of scripture more evidently inspired of God, none more frequently cited by the Holy Spirit throughout the N.T., none more important for the believer to understand by divine teaching, so as on the one hand to enjoy truth needful, fertile, and strengthening for the affections, and on the other hand to keep clear of mistaken applications which might darken and even destroy all right sense of our proper relationship as Christians. The latter danger is not a mere apprehension; in fact it has caused ruinous mischief since the second century, and is no less rife in our own days, and nearly as prevalent among Protestants as among Romanists and others who profess to represent the ancient Catholic church. On scarce any question is Christendom more at one than the assumption that the Psalms compose the most fitting help for Christian comfort and devotion, and the best, because divinely purposed, expression of church worship. The evil result of what is miscalled spiritualizing is the handle it gives the Romanists. If Judah and Israel, if Zion and Jerusalem point to the church, men logically infer that the righteous destruction of the enemies, wicked, etc., warrants the office of the inquisition, and the punishment of heretics even to death.

Yet one may fairly suppose that no believer has ever used them thus, privately and publicly, without finding himself face to face with unanswerable difficulties, to escape which he is continually exposed to the evil of “accommodating” and perverting God's word. Compare Psalm 5:10; 7:6; 10:2,12,15; 17:13, 14; 18:37-42; 28:4; 31:17, 8; 35:1-8; 40:14, 5. In the second book are portions no less energetic for the destruction of enemies, as Psalm 68:12, 23; 69:22-28; 70:2,3; 71:13. Nor is it otherwise in the third book: see Psalm 74:11; 79:6,10-12; 83:9-18. So, yet more sparingly, in the fourth book, as in Psalm 94:1, 2; 104:35. So, to say nothing of 109, the last book, as Psalm 129:5,6; 137:8,9: 1378 8,9, 140:9,10; 10; 143: 12; 144:6; 149:6-9. Thus uniformly earthly judicial righteousness is the atmosphere, not heavenly grace according to which the Christian is called now to feel, and pray, and walk. Far be it to say that all is not right. It was what characterized the saints in Israel of old; it will be so once more in their midst when the former dominion shall come still more gloriously in the day of the Lord, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem. But we, called out meanwhile from Jews and Gentiles, and composing the one body of Christ, have the privilege and the duty of showing forth His grace Who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We are not Jews, even if once we had been, but members of His body Who is rejected by the world, exalted at God's right hand, and Who sends the gospel to His foes, all the time of our calling. Communion with Him thus is Christianity, and hence the church and the Christian (objects and channels of grace, in His energy Who rests on us

as the Spirit of glory and of God) make and sing their own suited psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). For it is demonstrable that these mean Christian compositions, and in no way the Psalms of David.

Is it meant that the Psalms are not most precious to the believer? If divinely inspired, as indeed they are, how could it be otherwise? No part of the Bible is more redolent of Messiah; and this too, not so much facts and doctrines, as His heart's experience in all circumstances, and His innermost feelings not only about His people, but about and to God Himself. The Psalms not infrequently present His entering into earthly sorrows like His own, besides that in which none could be found but Himself, suffering for our sins; and in both His absolutely perfect affections and expressions, not merely those of Moses, David, Asaph, or any other. This is an inestimable boon for us who, besides what is peculiar, have our earthly path of trial and sorrow, and know His sympathy in this intimate way, as Israel will another day. But it is Modified by the relations to the Jew supposed throughout, and by no means rises up to the unfolding of what is distinctly heavenly as in the Gospels and N.T. in general.

Hence Bp. Home labors in vain, and indeed to his own loss as well as that of all swayed by his thoughts, in seeking to mitigate the spirit of imprecating vengeance in many Psalms. He says that “the offense taken” at this ceases immediately if we change the imperative into the future, and read, not “let them be confounded,” etc., but “they shall be confounded,” etc., of which the Hebrew is equally capable! In this unwarrantable boldness he follows Dr. Hammond, as the latter no doubt was led by others. He is compelled to allow that the N. T. preserves the imperative form, instead of changing it into the future. For this he tries to account, as well as to explain away the impression, as no more than a solemn ratification of God's just judgment. But the criticism is as bad as the doctrine; and the phraseology undoubtedly stands in Hebrew as in English, and no doubt in all other languages. It is the difference in divine dealing which clears all up without violence. When God is judging enemies as of old and by-and-by, His people share it in measure. Now He is displaying sovereign grace, and another spirit of action becomes them, as the N. T. conclusively proves as to the Christian and the church. For all that the Psalms are a rich treasure to the believer. The Spirit of Christ ever speaks therein, though it be not Christ personally save in such as 2, 8, 16, 18, 22, 40, etc.

Psalm 1

The book begins with the beautiful picture of man blessed in dependence and obedience. His character is as marked as his happiness. He has not walked in the counsels of wicked men, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of scorners (ver. 1). With evil in any form he has had no fellowship. But, positively (vers. 2), the law of Jehovah is his delight, and in it he will meditate day and night. In no way is this inconsistent with Gal. 3:10. For he was not “of the works of the law,” as the principle of his standing before God: all such are and were “cursed.” They never repented and never believed. They which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham, as they are truly his eons. No more in the O.T. than in the N.T. is a man justified with God in virtue of law; as the prophets prove only less clearly than the apostles. None but those who looked by faith for the Messiah walked blamelessly in God's ordinances. Still more evidently is it so with the Christian. “The law” here, as usually in the Psalms and elsewhere, means God's word then revealed. This is ever the delight of the believer, as well as his directory.

Hence in verse 3 we see the issue in the righteous government of God; and to this the book points as the rule. “And he is [or will be] as a tree planted on streams of water, that yieldeth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf fadeth not; and all that he doeth prospereth.” There is life, fruitfulness seasonably, abiding beauty, and unfailing prosperity. This will be manifest in the kingdom only; now it cannot be more than morally true.

The contrast appears in the second stanza of the third verse. “Not so the wicked, but are like the chaff that the wind driveth away” (ver. 4). They are worthless and vanish under pressure. The N.T. adds the divine judgment as burning by unquenchable fire. “Therefore the wicked shall not rise in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” (vers. 5). When judgment comes (and the Book of Psalms as a whole contemplates it), the present mixed state will give place to a manifest severance, and an execution of God's sentence on earth before the final one for eternity. This is no secret to faith which enters into His mind and will before that day. “For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish” (verse 6).

Plainly then the Psalm describes ideally rather than as a fact the just Israelite, as compared with the wicked mass. It is therefore the Spirit of Christ in the righteous remnant, not Christ personally, though He was the sole absolutely Righteous One. Thus is refuted at the starting point the fond and inveterate delusion of the people that every Jew had a good and true title in God's sight. On the contrary not all are Israel which are of Israel. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.

PSALM 2

This again is prefatory like the first (to which its structure corresponds, only with double the length), and both not only to the first book (1-41), but to the entire collection. Here the Messiah is as evident and express, as His own are in the preceding psalm. The antagonistic Gentiles and their kings are in full view, not the wicked as such, though wicked indeed those are.

“ Why are the nations tumultuously assembled, and do (lit. will) the peoples imagine vanity? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers consult together against Jehovah and against His Anointed (Messiah). Let us break their bonds and cast away their cords from us.” Such is the first stanza of three verses in which the godless revolt against Jehovah and His Christ is set before us, with no less amazement than indignation. In Acts 4 it is applied to the rebellious union of Romans and Jews, of Pilate and Herod, against the Lord.

But Jehovah's counsel stands, and He answers the fool according to his folly, with a strikingly parallel reference to the rebellious agitation of the peoples and their rulers (4, 6). “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord (Adonai) shall mock at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger, and in His wrath terrify them: And I have anointed My King on Zion, hill of My holiness.” Those doings and sayings in each case are an exact counterpart.

The constituted earthly royalty of Messiah in Zion opens the way to the next strophe (7-10). “I will declare the decree: Jehovah said to Me, Thou [art] My Son: I this day have begotten Thee. Ask of Me and I will give nations as Thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a scepter of iron; as a potter's vessel Thou shalt shiver them.” It is the Son of God born in time, the Messiah; neither eternal Sonship as in John's Gospel and elsewhere, nor

resurrection as in Paul's Epistles. Sonship on earth and in time suits the kingdom here announced. But that kingdom, though with Zion its center, embraces the uttermost parts of the earth, and so the nations or Gentiles. It is the Messiah of Whom Solomon was but a type like David. But here the Christ only is described throughout. It is exclusively future. He had not yet asked the earth, but is occupied with relations above it, of heaven and for eternity. Soon He will come in His Kingdom, and receive the world at His demand, when He will rule with the rod of iron, (how different from the gospel!) and shiver men as a potter's vessel. What can be more contrasted with beseeching men and building up His body, the church?

And now, O kings, be wise; be warned, O judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way, for soon His anger burneth. Blessed [are] all those trusting Him" (verses 10-12).

Even here kings and judges are before us, for it is strictly a Messianic psalm. But it is the Son about to execute vengeance on a hostile and haughty world. Yet is He a blessing, the only blessing object of trust for any or all: the secret spring, at the end of Psalm 2, of the blessings for the righteous proclaimed at the beginning of Psalm 1. These are unquestionably a pair, and in the only place suitable, were we to search for one in all the hundred and fifty. Ed.

The Psalms Book 1: 3-8

Having Christ clearly brought in as the hope in Israel, as well as distinct from the mass the happy or blessed man, just and one of those justified by faith in Him, we have next a series (from Psa. 3), which concludes with the Lord Jesus, not merely Son of God born here below and King on Zion, but Son of Man, and so humbled and so exalted on high over all things. (Psalm 8)

Here the Spirit of Christ expresses the feelings He inspires in the righteous remnant as experiencing rejection like that which was His portion in an infinitely greater degree. Circumstances are sad in the extreme; for these bitter but blessed lessons are learned among God's people when alas! alienated and hostile. Christ entered into it as none ever did; but His Spirit it is that works in the godly, directs their hearts, and expresses aright what ought to flow from them in the same path.

PSALM 3

Here, though it be only the general principle, it. is a momentous starting-point. The historical fact that gave occasion is stated in our title, the first verse in the Hebrew: “a psalm of David on his fleeing from the face of Absalom his son”. No enemy is so trying as the traitor in the midst of God's people; and the nearer to the king, the more of pain, sorrow, and shame. The king had known more than one profound humiliation, never one so heart-breaking, yet so public, as this. But in him it was far from being unalloyed; in Christ it was in every sense pure sorrow. And His Spirit operates so that His own may unaffectedly and without presumption make His words. theirs. The first word settles all questions, silences all fears: “Jehovah!” No doubt the dangers look great. “How have my persecutors multiplied! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying concerning my soul, There is no deliverance for him in God. Selah" (ver. 1, 2). But the righteous one is calm, far from the least self-reliance. His one feeling is confidence in Jehovah. “But Thou, Jehovah, [art] a shield round about me; my glory and the lifter up of my head” (ver. 3). Nor is true confidence silent: “I cry [with] my voice unto Jehovah, and He answereth me from the mountain of His holiness. Selah” (ver. 4). Then and there the saint can rest and rise unperturbed. “I have lain down and slept, I have awaked; for Jehovah sustaineth me. I will not be afraid of myriads of the people which round about have set themselves in array against me” (ver. 5, 6). It is not doubt but faith that bade him say, “Arise, O Jehovah, save me, O my God; for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies [on] the cheek; Thou hast broken in pieces the teeth of the wicked” (ver. 7). His confidence anticipates, and, in the spirit of prophecy, sees the end from the beginning. “To Jehovah [belongeth] salvation; Thy blessing [is] upon Thy people, Selah.” The Christian can sing in still loftier strains. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

PSALM 4

This is inscribed “to the chief musician on stringed instruments: a psalm of David.” It appears to spring from the same occasion, but goes out more in expostulation to others, with directions for the godly; and was meant for public service, as the companion Psalm 3 seems rather private or

personal. It breathes no less confidence in looking to Jehovah, but pleads righteousness also. There is a practically good conscience, no ground of standing before God, but good for his appeal: “When I call, answer Thou me, O God of my righteousness; in adversity Thou hast made room for me; be merciful to me, and hear my prayer. Sons of man, how long [shall be] my glory for a shame? Ye love vanity, ye seek a lie. Selah” (verses 1, 2). It was not merely evil done to a man, but to him whom God had set over His people, to be His king. Yet their heart went out to a worthless thing, their zeal was spent on a false object. So we can say that he that does the will of God abides forever. Here the word is, “But know that Jehovah hath set apart him that is godly for Himself: Jehovah will hear when I call up to Him” (verse 3). If he prayed, he counted on the answer. It is not the offended dignity of the king, nor yet the claims of the separated priest. The object of grace looks for grace, even if he were a king; and all the more, because Jehovah set him apart to Himself. How Christ entered into this, who can tell? Nor does Jehovah fail to direct the gracious godly one: “Tremble and sin not; commune with your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Sacrifice the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in Jehovah” (ver. 4, 5). Thus self-judgment, integrity of worship, and confidence are cherished. “Many are saying, “Who will show us good?” The saint's answer is ready and it is a prayer of faith and love, “Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, O Jehovah. Thou hast put joy into my heart more than at the times their corn and their wine were increased” (ver. 6, 7). What are men's passing benefits to compare with the light of Jehovah's countenance? He alone is peace and security too, and the godly man loves to have it thus. So the close is, “In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for Thou alone, O Jehovah, causest me to dwell safely” (verse 8).

Psalm 5

This goes farther, and is also “for the chief musician with the Nehiloth” (which some regard as wind instruments): “a psalm of David”. It expresses the cry of the godly to God for judgment; a characteristically Jewish sentiment, and righteous altogether when the day approaches for the vindication of His people. The nearest approach to it from Christ's life as the Sent but Rejected One is in John 17:25; for the “Righteous” Father was and is not indifferent to the world's wickedness. But “Holy” Father expresses His actual ways, as the Christian should well know. In its due time He will surely hear and judge the wicked on the earth when His public kingdom comes. His righteousness is everlasting, but there is a fitting season for its display, and this in and by Jesus His rejected King, which will fill the remnant by-and-by with just confidence. As they look to enjoy the earth under His reign, they rightly, when God livingly works in them, cry for judgment. We one with Christ in heaven look for Him to fetch us there where He is, and pray for grace as He did, even for His blinded murderers. “Give ear to my prayers, O Jehovah; consider my meditation. Hearken to the voice of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to Thee will I pray. O Jehovah, in the morning Thou shalt hear my voice, in the morning will I set [it] in order to Thee, and will look out. For Thou art not a God delighting in wickedness: evil dwelleth not with Thee. The proud shall not stand before Thine eyes; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou wilt destroy all those that speak lies: a man of blood and deceit Jehovah abhorreth. But as for me, in the greatness of Thy mercy I will come into Thy house, I will worship toward the temple of Thy holiness in Thy fear. Lead me, O Jehovah, in Thy righteousness because of mine enemies, make Thy way straight before me. For there is nothing certain in his mouth; their inward part [is wickedness; an open sepulcher is their throat; they make smooth their tongue. Treat them as guilty, O God; they shall

fall from their counsels; in the multitude of their transgressions cast them down; for they have rebelled against Thee. But all those that trust in Thee shall rejoice; forever shall they shout for joy, and Thou wilt protect them, and those who love Thy name shall exult in Thee. For Thou, O Jehovah, wilt bless the righteous; like the shield with favor Thou wilt encompass him" (ver. 1-12). For their joy and blessing they must await His deliverance, when judgment falls on His foes before all the world.

Psalm 6

As the three psalms just looked at are a cluster marked by growing confidence, the next two express the heart's experience in sorrowful trial. Divine anger is deprecated, and mercy appealed to, in the sixth; with the prayer in the seventh which spreads before Jehovah their persecutors' ways and the remnant's in view of desired judgment.

Psa. 6 is "for the chief musician on stringed instruments upon Sheminith," or the octave. We must bear in mind that David was a great inventor of musical instruments (Amos 6:5), and that they will most appropriately celebrate Jehovah's praise in the kingdom when it comes for the world (Ps. 150, Rev. 11:15). Meanwhile we worship in spirit and in truth, as true worshippers of the Father, and are to sing with the spirit and also with the understanding (John 4; Cor. 14)

" O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger, and chasten me not in Thy hot displeasure. Be merciful to me, O Jehovah, for I am languishing; heal me, O Jehovah, for my bones are terrified. And my soul is greatly terrified; and Thou, O Jehovah, how long? Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul; save me for Thy mercy's sake. For in death there is no remembrance of Thee; in Sheol who shall praise Thee?" (ver. 1-5.) How plainly it is Jewish sentiment, true, holy, and proper for a people "living in the world," as the apostle reproaches the Colossian saints that they were doing; whereas, as he insists, our relation to God is wholly and blessedly different, having died and being raised with Christ to seek and set our minds on things above. "I am weary with my sighing; all the night make I my bed to swim; I cause my couch to flow down with my tears. Mine eye is consumed through grief, it has grown old because of all my adversaries. Depart from me, all workers of iniquity; for Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weeping, Jehovah hath heard my supplication, Jehovah will receive my prayer. All mine enemies shall be greatly ashamed and terrified; they shall turn back, they shall be ashamed suddenly" (ver. 6-10). Thus, though nationally the Jews had deserved Jehovah's anger and wrath, the remnant know He has heard and will deliver.

Psalm 7

Here we have a wider range, not mourning like its predecessor, but pleading their justice with their adversaries. It is more manifestly as Jews that they pray for Jehovah's arising in His anger against the wicked, their enemy. For the desire is that not Israel only but the congregation of nations compass Jehovah about. Then would be His judgment of the peoples. "Shiggayon of David which he sang to Jehovah because of the words of Cush the Benjamite" is the title. It is a song on occasion of wandering: whether Saul or Shimei is meant may be questioned under Cush.

" O Jehovah my God, in Thee have I trusted; save me from all those who persecute me, and deliver me, lest like a lion he tear my soul, tearing it in pieces, and there is none to deliver. O Jehovah my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have recompensed with evil him that is at peace with me; if I have spoiled mine adversary without a cause; let the enemy

pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him tread down my life to the ground, and let him cause mine honor to lie in the dust. Selah. Arise, O Jehovah, in Thine anger, lift up Thyself because of the wrath of mine enemies, and wake up for me the judgment which Thou hast commanded. And the congregation of nations will encompass Thee; because of it return Thou to the height. Jehovah will govern the peoples: judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity [that is] on me. Let now the evil of the wicked come to an end, and establish Thou the righteous: even One that trieth the heart and reins (art Thou), O righteous God. My shield [is] on God who saveth the upright in heart. God judgeth righteously, and God is angry every day. If one turn not, He will whet his sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready. And at him He hath aimed the weapon of death; He maketh His arrows burning. Behold, he travaileth [with] iniquity, and he hath conceived mischief and brought forth falsehood. He dug a pit and enlarged it, and he falleth into the pit which he maketh. His mischief shall return on his own head, and upon the crown of his head shall his violence come down. I will praise. Jehovah according to His righteousness, and I will sing forth the name of Jehovah Most High" (1-17).

This is not the Christian glorying in tribulation and suffering with Christ that he may be glorified together with Him. It is the zeal and prayer of a Jewish saint appealing to God's sure judgment at the appearing of Christ.

Psalm 8

This closes and crowns the series founded on the two prefatory psalms, the righteous man in the midst of the wicked (Jews though they were), and the Messiah the object of his trust and of the opposition of Gentiles and peoples, both the righteous and the Christ assured of God's favor and establishment in blessing and glory according to promise. But even the Messiah was rejected beyond all, and the righteous meanwhile share His experience, to which His Spirit gives a voice as He directs their hearts purified by faith as they pass through varied trials. This we have been tracing in Psa. 3-7. Psa. 8 is "for the chief musician on Gittith: a psalm of David". Learned men suggest an instrument invented at Gath, or an air of the vintage festivity: a holy but happy season for a pious Jew. Fürst regards it as a hollow instrument from the verb "to deepen." It is, however, sensibly distinct from the psalms before and after, as the anticipation of God's counsels, and specially cited as such in the N.T. for the exaltation of the glorified Man over all things after His humiliation even to death.

" O Jehovah our Lord, how glorious Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy majesty above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou established praise because of Thine adversaries, to still the enemy and the revenger. When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established, what [is] man that Thou rememberest him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him? And Thou makest him a little lower than the angels and (with) honor and glory Thou crownest him. Thou makest him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put everything under his feet, sheep and oxen, all of them, and also the beasts of the field, birds of the heavens, and fishes of the sea, [that which] passeth the paths of the seas. O Jehovah our Lord, how glorious Thy name in all the earth" (ver. 1-9).

The Psalms Book 1: 9-15

Here also two psalms (9-10) open a new series which follows them, as Psa. 1 ii. prepared the way for those which last occupied us. It is not here the great principles of man righteous and the Messiah, with the experience of sorrow and trial to which this leads, and the heart's expression to God which it forms, and the greater glory that results at last (as in Psa. 3-8). The new prefatory pair treats of the actual circumstances which the remnant are called to face (Psa. 9-10), which plunges us in the crisis of the latter day, leading to the experience suitable to them and formed by the Spirit of Christ in the righteous accordingly (Psa. 11-15). This may serve to show what divine order reigns in that which might seem to a superficial reader the least consecutive or mutually connected book of all scripture, and how much more light from God is given than those look for who are verbally familiar with them every day.

Psa. 9

The title is “To the chief musician Muthlabben (or, death to the son), a psalm of David”. This singular term is supposed to be the name of an air.

It is a striking distinction from the New Testament and its links of truth, that the glorification of the rejected Messiah, which is there followed by the formation of the church, His body, here instantly brings in the troubles at the end of the age which lead to His setting up His throne in Zion. Jehovah is the covenant name for Israel, Most High that indicative of the Kingdom in power when heaven and earth are displayed as His. Christ identifies Himself with the righteous remnant to make His cause and His right theirs (ver. 4). Whatever the mischief from the enemy Jehovah sits forever. And meanwhile He is a refuge for an oppressed one in times of trouble. But Zion is His eventual dwelling, and judgment (not the gospel) settles all questions.

“ I will praise Jehovah with my whole heart; I will recount all Thy marvelous works, I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing forth Thy name, O Most High. When mine enemies turned back, they stumbled and perished from before Thee. For Thou hast maintained my cause and my right; Thou satest on the throne a judge of righteousness. Thou hast rebuked the Gentiles, Thou hast destroyed the wicked, their name hast Thou blotted out forever. O enemy, the desolations are completed forever, and thou hast destroyed cities: the remembrance of them hath perished. But Jehovah sitteth forever; He hath established His throne for judgment. And He it is will judge the world in righteousness, He will judge nations in equity. And Jehovah will be a refuge to the oppressed one, a refuge in times of distress. And they that know Thy name will trust in Thee; for Thou hast not forsaken those that seek Thee, O Jehovah. Sing praises to Jehovah Who dwelleth in Zion; tell among the peoples His doings. For He that inquireth after blood remembereth them; He hath not forgotten the cry of the afflicted. Be merciful to us, O Jehovah, look on mine affliction from those that hate me, lifting me up from the gates of death, that I may declare all Thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Thy salvation. The Gentiles are sunk into the pit they made; in the very net they laid is their foot taken. Jehovah is known; judgment He hath executed. In the work of his own hands the wicked one is ensnared. Higgayon (or Meditation),

Selah. The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, all the Gentiles that forget God. For the poor one shall not be forgotten forever, nor the hope of the humble perish everlastingly. Arise, O Jehovah, let not man be strong; let Gentiles be judged before Thy face. Put fear into them, O Jehovah: the Gentiles shall know that they are but men. Selah" (1-21).

Any one acquainted with O. T. prophecy will recognize the allusions to its predictions, especially when the rod of Messiah's strength shall be sent by Jehovah out of Zion, and He strikes through kings in the day of His wrath and judges among the Gentiles. What a change from His sitting at God's right hand waiting to crush His foes, and meanwhile gathering His friends and joint-heirs!

Psa. 10

This untitled psalm, dependent on the preceding one, of which it is the supplement, is occupied with the wicked internal enemy that hates and afflicts the righteous Jew. As Psa. 9 looks at the Gentile oppressors generally as the object of Jehovah's judgment at the close, so this details the enemy within, though it binds up with the expected judgment the perishing of the Gentiles from His land (ver. 16) when Jehovah is King forever.

" Wherefore, O Jehovah, standest Thou afar off? Hidest Thou Thyself in times of distress? In the pride of the wicked he doth hotly pursue the afflicted. They are taken in the very devices they devised. For the wicked boasteth of his soul's desire; and the covetous he blesseth; he despiseth Jehovah. According to the pride of his countenance, the wicked seeketh not: all his thoughts [are], There is no God. His ways are firm in every season; Thy judgments [are] a height away from him; all, his adversaries—he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; to generation and generation I shall be in no adversity. Of cursing his mouth is full, and of deceit, and violence: under his tongue is mischief and iniquity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages; in the secret places he slayeth the innocent; his eyes lurk for the wretched. He lieth in wait in the covert like a lion in his den; he lieth in wait to catch the afflicted; he catcheth the afflicted when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, he boweth down, and the wretched hath fallen by his strong ones. He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten, He hath hidden His face, He will not see forever. Arise, O Jehovah; O God, lift up Thy hand; forget not the afflicted. Wherefore hath the wicked one despised God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require. Thou hast seen; Thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with Thy hand; the wretched committeth himself unto Thee: of the orphans Thou hast been the helper. Break Thou the arm of the wicked one, and for the evil, seek out his wickedness [till] Thou find none. Jehovah is King forever and ever: the Gentiles have perished from His land. The desire of the afflicted Thou hast heard, O Jehovah; Thou strengthenest their heart, Thou causest Thine ear to hearken, to judge the orphan and the oppressed, that man from the earth may be terrible no more" (1-18). When the wicked one rises up from character to a person, it will be realized in the antichrist of the last days and in the midst of the Jews as here. As the Lord is from heaven, so he is emphatically from the earth, frail man but energized by Satan. The Psalm answers much to the cry of the elect, according to the parable of the importunate widow, whom God at length avenges.

Psa. 11

The psalms that follow to the fifteenth give the experience proper to such a crisis Gentile and Jewish, and have the form of results.

The first of them is inscribed “to the chief musician, by David,” and expresses the resolve not to flee. To the righteous it was a question of absolute trust in Jehovah whatever the ungodly might do or say. If every recourse failed, it was but the moment for Him to act for Himself and His own.

“ In Jehovah put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee to your mountain [as] a bird? For lo! the wicked bend the bow, they have fixed their arrow on the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations are broken down, what can the righteous do? Jehovah [is] in the temple of His holiness, Jehovah—His throne [is] in the heavens. His eyes behold, His eyelids prove the sons of men. Jehovah proveth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind, the portion of their cup. For Jehovah [is] righteous; He loveth righteousness; His face beholdeth the upright” (1-7).

There is no wavering. Not only Jehovah abides immutably, but faith cleaves to His house; and whatever come of His representative on earth His throne is in heaven; and He governs on earth in the face of appearances, though His public Kingdom be not yet come. Hence in due time is condign punishment for the wicked, while the saint knows all the while that He is righteous, loves righteousness, and regards the upright.

Psa. 12

This is “to the chief musician on the octave, a psalm of David”, as in Psa. 6. It is the plaintive prayer of the gracious man in presence of growing lawlessness; then comes in the value of Jehovah's words before Himself arises to judge. Wickedness increases where righteousness was looked for.

“ Save, O Jehovah, for the godly hath ceased, for the faithful have failed from among the sons of men. They speak falsehood, every one with his neighbor: a slippery lip with a double heart do they speak. Jehovah will cut off all slippery lips, a tongue that speaketh great things, who have said, With our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord to us? Because of the oppression of the afflicted, because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith Jehovah. I will set in safety him at whom they puff. The words of Jehovah [are] pure words, silver refined in a crucible of earth, purified seven times. Thou, Jehovah, wilt keep them, Thou wilt preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk around when vileness is exalted among the sons of men” (1-8). Such was the dreary state when Christ Himself was on earth, Who speaks of “this generation “: clearly a moral estimate which still abides and will be found more and more till judgment overtake. It has nothing to do with a human life or chronology, as the context here unequivocally proves. Compare Psa. 14:5.

Psa. 13

Here things are no better, but the heart is more urgent, and “How long” is the key-note. It also is inscribed “To the chief musician, a psalm of David". If deferred hope makes the righteous sick, confidence grows up to joy and gladness.

“ How long, O Jehovah? wilt Thou forget me forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I lay up counsels in my soul, grief in my soul daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Behold, answer me, O Jehovah my God, lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the

[sleep of] death; lest the enemy say, I have overcome him, [and] mine adversaries exult when I am moved. But I in Thy mercy, have trusted; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation? I will sing unto Jehovah, for He hath dealt well with me” (1-5).

It is the patience of the saints, waiting for the Kingdom in power and praise.

Psa. 14

This raises the question what Jehovah has to say of the people on whom His name is called. The psalm is inscribed “To the chief musician by David". It is really a dirge.

“ The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. They have corruptly acted; they have done abominably [in] work; [there is] none doing good. Jehovah hath looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there were [one] acting wisely, seeking God. They have all turned aside, they have together been corrupted; [there is] none doing good, not even one. Have they not known, all the workers of iniquity, eating My people [as] they eat bread? They call not upon Jehovah. There were they in great fear; for God [is] in the generation of the righteous. Ye put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, because Jehovah [is] his refuge. Who shall give out of Zion the salvation of Israel? When Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad” (1-7).

It is for the substance the same as Psa. 53 with differences which strikingly illustrate the two books in which they respectively occur. Yet in the due place it will be shown that the apostle in Rom. 3 cites the later of the two, not the earlier before us. But they both speak of those “under the law”, that is of the Jews. The heathen were self-evidently wicked. It might have been argued that the Jews were not, as latterly they eschewed idols. But no, exclaims the apostle, What the law saith, it saith to those who are under the law, and quotes from the psalm what He says to and of His ancient people. It is thus emphatic and overwhelming. I doubt not that prophetically it looks on to the age when antichrist and his followers are in question. But the truth is that the first coming of Christ brought out morally what will be manifest at His second. This is man at his best estate without Christ and denying God; and the Judge on earth pronounced on him. He is lost; not merely man carried away after every vain folly, but man under priesthood, law, sacrifice, temple, and every other religious privilege conceivable. Remnant there is, but they renounce man and rest on Christ from God, as all saints since man fell. But it is salvation out of Zion they look for, and this to gladden Israel: not the indiscriminate mercy of God (His righteousness withal in the gospel) to any poor sinner as we know now.

Psa. 15

Here we have the moral qualities of the remnant, the spared ones, when righteousness governs with Zion as the earthly center. It is simply entitled “a psalm of David”.

“O Jehovah, who shall sojourn in Thy tent? Who shall dwell in the hill of Thy holiness? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he slandereth not with his tongue nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against him that is near him; in his eyes a reprobate [is] despised and the fearers of Jehovah he will honor; he hath sworn to his hurt, he will not change; he hath not put his money to usury, and a bribe against the innocent he hath not taken. He that doeth these things shall never be moved” (1-5).

These are “the wise” in contrast with “the fool” of the preceding psalm. It is not the sinner converted to God by grace, as we may see even in Psa. 25; 32 It is the character that grace forms in the remnant for the Kingdom, described positively (2) and negatively (3), and this again (4, 5). The heavenly life which should be in the Christian (and this not dissociated from earthly duties) is not here before us; but the relative responsibilities which a Jew (or any other) would surely neglect without the true fear of God; and the more in a religion of outward observances.

The Psalms Book 1: 16-18

Psa. 16-18

Next follows a deeply affecting group, in which Christ appears, more evidently perhaps than in Psa. 8, and as distinctly as in Psa. 2 This is marked in the first and last of the three.

Psa. 16

“ Michtam of David “: a heading of doubtful import, which means “golden” or “jewel,” or both, according to many. It is without doubt David's writing, but of Christ, Who is here seen taking His place personally with God among the godly Jews here below. “Preserve Me, O God [El], for in Thee put I My trust. Thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou [art] the Lord, My goodness [is] not to Thee; unto the saints that are on the earth and the excellent, all My delight [is] in them” (ver. 1-3). Deigning to be man, He is the perfectly dependent and trusting One (compare Isa. 8 and Heb. ii.). He identifies Himself here with the saints and the excellent on the earth, as we know He did when He took His place to be baptized in Jordan, to the astonishment of the Baptist; as to which Matt. 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18 afford inspired illustration, one might say comment. Jehovah is loyally owned as the Lord. This is what Christ said to Him. In the place He had freely taken, the bondman's place, He would not put Himself on a level with the Master; He said, “My goodness [is] not to Thee.” He was here to obey, not to assert co-equality. So He would not be called “Good Master” by one that knew not who He is, only what He became. None the less, but the more, was His heart with the feeblest of Israel who turned to the God of Israel in genuine repentance, though He needed none, but John rather to be baptized of Him. Therefore said He to such, “All My delight [is] in them.” “Their sorrows shall increase [who] have hastened after another: I will not pour out their drink-offerings of blood, and will not take their names upon My lips. Jehovah is the portion of Mine inheritance and My cup; Thou maintainest My lot. The lines have fallen unto Me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly portion. I will bless Jehovah Who hath counseled Me; also by night My reins have instructed Me. I have set Jehovah before Me always; because He is at My right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore My heart hath been glad and My glory [tongue, or soul] rejoiceth; My flesh also shall lie down in confidence. For Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol, Thou wilt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life, fullness of joys in Thy presence, pleasures at Thy right hand forever” (ver. 4-17.). It is Messiah's trust in Jehovah through life and death into resurrection and glory. Associated with the saints, He had His hope in God only and forever, and was shown the path of life, resurrection-life, and joy. It is glory in His presence for Christ.

Psa. 17

Here consequently Christ takes His place with the godly in contrast with the wicked and oppressive. It is rather righteousness before God and from Him, than grace in dependence on Him, and being with Him. “A prayer of David: Hear the right, O Jehovah, attend unto my cry: give ear unto My prayer [which is] not out of lips of deceit. My judgment goeth forth from Thy presence;

Mine eyes behold that which is right. Thou host proved My heart, Thou hast visited Me by night; Thou hast tried Me, Thou shall find nothing; have purposed, My mouth shall not transgress. As to the works of men, by the words of Thy lips I have watched the paths of the violent [maul, to hold fast My feet in Thy paths; My footsteps were not moved. I have called upon Thee, for Thou answeredst Me, O God [El]; incline Thine ear unto Me; hear My speech, distinguish Thy mercies [O Thou] Who by Thy right hand savest those that trust from those that rise up [against them]. Keep Me as the apple of the eye; Thou wilt hide Me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked who oppressed Me; Mine enemies in soul will surround Mc. They are shut up with their fat; [with] their mouths they speak in pride. [In] our steps they have now surrounded us; their eyes they set to stretch over the earth. His likeness [is] as a lion: he longeth to tear in pieces, and as a young lion sitting in secret places. Arise, O Jehovah, go before his face, cause him to bend down: deliver my soul from the wicked [man], Thy sword; from men, Thy hand, O, Jehovah, from men of the world (age): their portion [is] in this life, and with Thy treasure Thou fillest their belly; they are satisfied with sons and leave their abundance to their babes. As for Me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied in awakening with Thy likeness" (ver. 1-15).

It will be observed, that though right is appealed to, there is no vengeance any more than self-seeking, but reliance on Jehovah. As regards the saints, it answers to Rom. 8:2-9, as the preceding psalm to Rom. 5:2. The one is more inward, the other rather display; but both are entire trust in God. Hence deliverance is looked for here, not in Psa. 16

Psa. 18

" To the chief musician, by a servant of Jehovah, by David, who spoke to Jehovah the words of this song in the day Jehovah delivered from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul; and he said, I will love Thee, O Jehovah, My strength. Jehovah [is] My high rock and My fortress and My deliverer; My God [El], My rock, I will trust in Him; My shield and horn of My salvation, My refuge. Worthy to be praised will I call Jehovah, and from Mine enemies shall I be delivered. Pains [cords] of death encompassed Me, and streams of Belial terrified Me. Pains of Sheol surrounded Me, snares of death fell upon Me. In my distress I called upon Jehovah, and unto My God I cry for help; from His temple He heareth My voice, and My supplication before Him cometh into His ears. Then the earth shaketh and trembleth, and the foundations of mountains are moved; they are shaken because He was angry. Then went up a smoke in His anger, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. And He boweth the heavens and cometh down, and darkness [is] under His feet. And He rideth upon a cherub and flieth: yea, He flieth upon wings of the wind. He maketh darkness His covering, His tent round about Him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him the thick clouds passed away: hail and coals of fire. And Jehovah thundereth in the heavens hail and coals of fire. And He sendeth His arrows and scattereth them, and lightning in abundance and discomfited them. And the beds of the waters are seen, and the foundations of the world are made bare through Thy rebuke, O Jehovah, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils. He reacheth forth from above, He calleth Me, He draweth Me out of great waters. He delivereth Me from strong enemies and from My haters, for they were stronger than I. They fell upon Me in the day of My trouble; but Jehovah was My stay. And He bringeth Me forth into the wide place; He delivereth Me because He delighted in Me. Jehovah recompenseth Me according to My righteousness; according to the cleanness of My hands He requiteth Me. For I have kept the ways of Jehovah and have not wickedly departed from My God.

For all His ordinances were before Me, and I did not put away His statutes from Me. And I am upright before Him and keep Myself from Mine iniquity. And Jehovah requiteth Me according to My righteousness, according to the cleanness of My hands before His eyes. With the merciful Thou showiest Thyself merciful, with the upright man Thou showest Thyself upright. With the pure Thou showest Thyself pure, and with the perverse Thou showest Thyself contrary. For Thou savest an afflicted people and lofty eyes Thou bringest down. For Thou lightest My lamp; Jehovah My God enlighteneth My darkness. For by Thee I run [through] a troop, and by My God I leap over a wall. [As for] God, His way is perfect; the word of Jehovah [is] tried: a shield [is] He to all that trust in Him. For who [is] God beside Jehovah? and who is a rock except our God? It is God [El] that girdeth Me, with strength, and He maketh My way perfect. He maketh My feet like hinds, and upon My high places He causeth Me to stand, instructing My hands for the war; and a bow of brass is bent [by] mine arms. And Thou givest unto Me a shield, Thy salvation; and Thy right hand upholdeth Me, and Thy meekness maketh Me great. Thou enlargest My steps under Me, and Mine ancles have not slipped. I pursue Mine enemies and overtake them, and I turn not back till they are destroyed. I break them in pieces, and they are not able to rise; they fall under My feet. And Thou girdest Me with strength for the battle, Thou causest to bow down under Me those that rise up against Me. And Mine enemies—Thou turnest their back to Me; and My haters—Thou wilt destroy them. They cry for help, but there is no deliverer—unto Jehovah, but He answereth them not. And I bruise them as dust before the wind, and as mire of the streets I pour them out. Thou deliverest Me from the strivings of the people; Thou makest Me the head of Gentiles: a people that I have not known serve Me. At the hearing of the ear they obey Me; sons of a stranger feign submission to Me. Sons of a stranger fade away, and they tremble out of their enclosed places. Jehovah liveth, and blessed [is] My rock, and exalted the God of My salvation, the God [El] that avengeth Me and subdueth peoples under Me, My deliverer from Mine enemies: yea, Thou hast lifted Me up from among those who rise up against Me, from a man of violence Thou deliverest Me. Therefore I give thanks unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the Gentiles, and unto Thy name I sing praises. Great deliverances He giveth to His King, and showeth kindness to His Anointed, to David, and to His seed forever" (vers. 1-50).

Here again we have the Messiah, and this not so much as having His joy in God, or looking for righteous vindication in resurrection glory, but as identifying Himself from first to last, with Israel's history from Moses to David, and to His own reign yet future as David's greater Son. Thus viewed (and less or other than this is not the truth) it is a grand close and complement of the two psalms before it. It is strictly Jewish, as any unprejudiced must see. Even "Mine iniquity" in ver. 23 (Heb. 24) is no real difficulty, as it is allowed to mean, not indwelling sin which it never does, but that evil which was in His way, from which He absolutely kept Himself. Others indeed were naturally prone to it, He never and in no respect. We see how truly the suffering Christ is the final and full Deliverer of Israel, and the Head of the Gentiles too—glories to come. But in all their affliction He was afflicted, and in association with Israel, (not only in atonement for us) knew the sorrows of death. The psalm however contemplates Him as the delivered One at the beginning long before He delivers at the end. This the Jews have failed and refuse to see. The veil is still on their heart. But the day is at hand when their heart will turn to the Lord, and the veil be taken away. Meanwhile we who now believe in the rejected but risen and glorified Christ triumph in that grace which has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ; and so we await the day when Zion's light shall come and the glory of Jehovah rise on her. Surely He Will hasten it in

its time.

The Psalms Book 1: 19-21

Psa. 19, 21

The next group of Psalms has the common character of testimony, culminating in Psa. 22, which however, as expressing the expiatory sufferings of our Lord and their results may be viewed apart. Here again after the introduction of Psa. 19 the Messiah is prominent.

Psa. 19

It is inscribed “to the chief musician: a psalm of David.” “The heavens [are] telling the glory of God, and the expanse [is] showing the work of His hands. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. No speech and no words—their voice is not heard. To all the earth their line is gone forth, and their speech unto the end of the world: in them hath He set a tent for the sun; and He [is] a bridegroom going forth from his chamber; He rejoiceth as a mighty man to run the race. From the end of the heavens [is] His going forth, and His circuit unto their ends, and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (ver. 1-7). It is the witness of creation, especially of what is heavenly, and therefore universal. The heavens, with the day, the night, and the sun, bear their testimony for God to all mankind. Here we may note the beautiful propriety of the apostle's citation in Rom. 10 for sovereign indiscriminate mercy in the gospel; as of our Lord in Matt. 5:45 when enjoining grace to the worst independently of desert and in contradistinction from legal injunctions. Here therefore “God” only is spoken of. Man is in view.

But there is another testimony to the greater value and more restricted character, of the law of Jehovah, which is set out in the rest of this striking psalm. “The law of Jehovah [is] upright, restoring the soul; the testimony of Jehovah [is] true, making wise the simple. The precepts of Jehovah [are] right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah [is] pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of Jehovah [is] clean, standing forever; the judgments of Jehovah [are] truth, they are righteous altogether, to be desired more than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the dropping of the honey-comb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned, in keeping them [is] great reward. Errors, who discerneth? Cleanse me from hidden [ones]; moreover from presumptuous [ones] keep back Thy servant: let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright and be clean from great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before Thee, O Jehovah, my Rock and my Redeemer” (ver. 8-15). Here not the work of God is in question, but His word Who has covenant with His people on earth. It is the godly man's estimate of what was divinely given to act on the conscience. Its excellent powers are confessed, not only in its intrinsic qualities but as expressive of God's nature and authority, and hence above all pleasant and prized. There is needed admonition, God's people being what and where they are, and serving Him withal. Hence one cannot discern his wanderings, but desires cleansing, and entreats to be kept from what is presumptuous, feeling that secret snares unjudged expose to great transgression, and that what is acceptable to God in word and heart is above all to be cultivated. But if He be Rock and Redeemer, why distrust?

Psa. 20

This, again, is the personal Witness for the God-fearing Jew, Messiah in the day of trouble. “To the chief musician, a psalm of David.” “Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble: the name of the God of Jacob set Thee up on high; may He send Thee help from the sanctuary and sustain Thee from Zion; remember all Thine offerings and accept Thy burnt sacrifices (Selah); grant Thee according to Thy heart and fulfill all Thy counsels. We rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God set up a banner: Jehovah fulfill all Thy petitions” (ver. 1-6). It is not Messiah as Jewish unbelief and carnality conceived, but Messiah in the day of distress. How could it be otherwise if He were found in an ungodly people? But He is ever, whatever come, the faithful Witness: and God takes care to have those who see Him thus and love Him the more for it; whose heart is drawn to Him because He is so unworthily hated and despised. Hence the outburst of confidence which closes the psalm. “Now I know that Jehovah saveth His anointed [Messiah]: He answereth Him from the heavens of His holiness with the might of the salvation of His right hand. Some of chariots, some of horses, but we of the name of Jehovah our God make mention. They have bowed and fallen, but we have risen and keep ourselves upright. Save, Jehovah: may the King answer in the day we call “ (ver. 7-10). Thus the godly remnant in the latter-day trouble see Christ as their object and hope, where the ungodly are to fall under the deceit of the enemy and a willful king after their heart, son of perdition for himself and them. In the Messiah that disdains not but enters into Jacob's trouble they discern the Anointed of Jehovah, appreciate His piety God-ward as well as His desires and counsels which embrace them as His own. Hence their assurance of His triumph as identified with Jehovah's name and glory, and of the King's hearing them. They were learning the secret of His person.

Psa. 21

Here we have the answer to their desires, perhaps we may add to His also, as far as they could enter in. It too is “To the chief musician, a psalm of David.” “The king rejoiceth in Thy strength, Jehovah, and in Thy salvation how exceedingly doth He exult! Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips. Selah. For Thou hast met Him with the blessings of goodness; Thou hast set a crown of pure gold on His head. He asked life of Thee: Thou gavest [it] Him—length of days forever and ever. Great [is] His glory in Thy salvation: majesty and honor Thou puttest on Him. For Thou gavest Him blessings forever; Thou makest Him glad with joy by Thy countenance. For the King trusteth in Jehovah; and through the mercy of the most High He is not moved” (ver. 1-8).

As it was into their trouble the remnant saw the Messiah enter, and therefore prayed that He might be heard of Jehovah, so now in the Spirit of prophecy they behold in His deliverance and exaltation the answer to their petitions as to His. Indeed they see more—that Jehovah had not only heard and given, but gone beyond, and of Himself anticipated with the blessings of goodness, and, if He with death before Him asked life, gave length of days forever and ever. We may observe how completely Messianic all is, and bounded by Jewish hopes: not at all the far deeper truth of His eternal glory that dawned through the clouds of His rejection on those who so feebly followed to the cross and learned all better in the light of His heavenly place and of His person. This is our portion, and therefore should we be the last to slight and the first to understand the very distinct relations of the godly remnant of Jews who are to succeed us and take up His testimony for the

earth when we shall have passed to heaven. It is the confusion of the earthly and the heavenly, of Jewish expectation in the Christian, that hinders our intelligence of either. Thus the enemy wrought from the beginning, first to hinder, then to darken and corrupt, the church; as all recovery, for such as by grace discern God's mind to do His will, is by seeing in Christ the key to all, for He is the Head of the church in the heavenly places, as surely as He is Messiah of Israel and Son of man to rule all nations. Distinguishing things that differ (and the difference is immense) is the secret of learning by the word and Spirit of God.

So we see that the second part of the psalm anticipates Messiah's proper action on His earthly foes. “Thy hand shall find out all Thine enemies; Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. Thou shalt make them as a furnace of fire at the time of Thy presence; Jehovah shall swallow them up in His anger, and the fire shall devour them; their fruit shalt Thou destroy from the earth and their seed from among the sons of men. For they stretched out evil over Thee, they devised a wicked device, they could not accomplish [it]. For Thou makest them to turn their back (lit., shoulder), when Thou preparest Thy bow-strings against their face. Be exalted, Jehovah, in Thine own strength; we will sing and celebrate Thy power” (ver. 9-14).

Thus the opposition and enmity of those who would not have Him to reign over them are met by their overthrow and destruction before all; and Jehovah and His Anointed are identified, not more in public exaltation, than in the fire that devours their enemies. Messiah's sufferings at the hands of men bring sure and unsparing judgments on them, as surely as His glories follow His sufferings, though, none of Israel understood but the godly who merged in the church and rose to higher hopes and better blessings by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. So there will be godly ones to understand in the latter day after those who now compose the church are translated to meet the Lord. For when the heavenly counsels are fulfilled, at least virtually, the question of a godly people for the earth has to be solved; and these are the souls who will take up and make good the Jewish aspirations in that day, that the Lord may have not only His blessed associates on high, but hearts to welcome Him on earth for long eclipsed Zion.

The Psalms Book 1: 22-24

Psa. 22-24

Though this group has been well regarded as associated with the three preceding psalms, they may also form appropriately their most impressive supplement and crown.

Psa. 22

In the first of them we hear Messiah bemoan His going down into the depth of suffering where none can follow, that shame and butt of man, the forsaken of God on behalf of guilty man, and very especially for the most guilty of all that said they saw, but rejected Him Who shone in fullness of light and love even for the blind that felt their need and cried to Him. Here it is not “the day of trouble” merely, but of God's abandoning His elect and beloved Servant that He might abandon none who repent and believe, and that He might proclaim pardon to the vilest in His name. It is Christ made sin; and then from the middle of 21 the resulting grace triumphant, as unmingled as the judgment which had befallen Him without mitigation, as described in the previous verses. It is therefore most fittingly His own voice exclusively that is heard, first in His lonely sorrow, then in the joy that imparts the fruits of His deliverance in an ever-widening circle: “to My brethren,” and “in the midst of the congregation” (22); next “in the great congregation” (25); then “all the ends of the earth” and all tribes of the Gentiles share the blessing and praise; and this abidingly. How striking the contrast with the result of Psa. 21! Both are perfectly in season.

“ To the chief musician, upon the hind of the dawn, a psalm of David. My God [El], My God [El], why hast Thou forsaken Me? [Why] far from My deliverance—the words of My roaring? O My God [El], I shall call by day and Thou wilt not answer, and by night and no silence for Me: and Thou [art] holy, inhabiting the praises of Israel. In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and Thou deliveredst them. They cried to Thee and were delivered; in Thee they trusted and were not ashamed. But I [am] a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised of the people. All those that see Me mock Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head: Roll Thyself on Jehovah; let Him deliver Him because He delighted in Him. For Thou [art] He that didst bring Me forth from the womb, causing me to hang from the breasts of My mother. Upon Thee was I cast from the womb: from the belly of My mother Thou [art] My God [El]. Be not far from Me, for trouble [is] near, for there is no helper. Many bulls have surrounded Me; mighty ones of Bashan have beset Me round. They gape upon Me with their mouths—a lion ravening and roaring. Like water I have been poured out, and all My bones have been separated; My heart is become like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength has been dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue is cleaving to My jaws; and in the dust of death Thou settest Me. For dogs have surrounded Me; a congregation of evil-doers have encompassed Me; they pierced My hands and My feet. I number all My bones. They look, they stare upon Me. They divide My garments among them, and upon My clothing they cast lots. But Thou, Jehovah, be not far off, O My strength, haste to My help. Deliver My soul from the sword, Mine only one from the power [hand] of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth. Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes Thou hast answered Me!” (ver. 1-21).

Here is the transition. At this point when He is transfixed, the Lord is conscious of being heard. He bows His head in death, His blood is shed. So it must be in atonement. Without this there would be no adequate offering for sin; but He Who so died can commend His soul to His Father, and say, It is finished. The verses that succeed express the deep joy of a deliverance out of such a death, commensurate with a death so unfathomable, which He first sings in the midst of those who share His rejection, and pursues with enlarging circles of blessing into the kingdom, though the fellowship then will not be so profound as that which is immediately consequent on His death and resurrection. Compare John 20:17-23; John 20: 26-29; and John 21:1-14.

“ I will declare Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. Ye that fear Jehovah praise Him, all ye the seed of Jacob glorify Him, and fear Him all ye the seed of Israel. For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and He hath not hidden His face from Him, and when He cried unto Him, He heard. Of Thee [cometh] My praise in the great congregation; My vows will I pay before those that fear Him. The humble eat and are satisfied; those praise Jehovah that seek Him your heart shall live forever. There shall remember and turn to Jehovah all the ends of the earth, and there shall bow down before Thee all the tribes of the Gentiles. For the kingdom [is] Jehovah's, and He ruleth among the Gentiles. All the fat ones of the earth have eaten and bowed down; before Him shall bend all those that descend to the dust, even he that kept not alive his soul. A seed shall serve Him: it shall be declared for Jehovah to the generation. They shall come and show His righteousness to a people that shall be born, that He hath done [it]” (ver. 22-31).

Such is this wondrous psalm; the sufferings that pertain to Christ, and the glories after these. Ne voice is heard throughout but Christ's; none could be with His atoning cries to God, though we may join in praising God and the Lamb, and are well assured that the truth that He was alone in those sorrows is the guarantee of that efficacious work, whereby all our evil is annulled and we stand in His acceptance as believers in Him, Who contrasts Himself with those before Him that cried and were heard. And how different all since, who if they fear have only to praise! Nothing but grace flows out of His atonement.

Psa. 23

Here it is not sufferings from man answered by judgments from God executed by Messiah; nor is it sufferings from God issuing in His blessing and His people's praise, yea from all that fear Him; but Jehovah's constant and tender care when death is still ravaging and the enemy not yet expelled, not His blessings only but Himself, proved and tested, faithful and good now and evermore. Though Christ was the Shepherd, yet He traversed the path Himself alone, absolutely dependent and perfectly confiding in His Father.

“ A psalm of David. Jehovah [is] My Shepherd: I shall not want. In pastures of tender herb He maketh me lie down, by the waters of rest He leadeth me. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou [art] with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest before me a table, in the presence of mine adversaries: Thou hast anointed my head with oil: my cup [is] overflowing. Surely [or only] goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in Jehovah's house to length of days” (forever) (ver. 1-6).

Whatever the present power of evil, and the consequent trials of the faithful, Jehovah does not, cannot, fail in His love and care, but rather makes the things directed against His own the occasion of proving what He is for and to them, as He will forever.

Psa. 24

Lastly the One Who was really the Shepherd, but Who trod the wilderness in a trust and obedience and lowliness without parallel, is shown to be Himself Jehovah, the King of glory, when the earth and its fullness are manifested to be His on the overthrow of all hostile power.

“ A psalm of David. To Jehovah [belongeth] the earth and its fullness, the world and those that dwell in it. For upon the seas He founded it, and upon the rivers He establisheth it. Who shall ascend into Jehovah's mount, and who shall stand in the place of His holiness? The clean of hands, and pure of heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity and hath not sworn unto deceit. He shall receive blessing from Jehovah and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This [is] the generation of those that seek Him, that seek Thy face [in] Jacob (or [O God of] Jacob). Selah.” (ver. 1-6).

Thus we have all the earth in His hands Who suffered here, not only for righteousness and in love, but once for all for sins And here is proclaimed who is to be near Him in the day of His power here below: not Jews as such, for the mass were and are ungodly, nor of course Gentiles still more gross; but only the righteous whoever they may be, while of such Jacob according to immutable promise has the pre-eminence on earth.

Then follows the outburst of triumph. “Lift up, O gates, your heads, and be ye lifted up, O everlasting doors; and the King of the glory shall come in. Who [is] He, this King of the glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. Lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up yourselves, O everlasting doors, and the King of the glory shall come in. Who [is] He, this King of the glory? Jehovah of hosts, He [is] the King of the glory. Selah” (ver. 7-10). It is evidently the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ come in that day of dominion without limit or end, when the holy Sufferer is owned beyond dispute to be Himself Jehovah, the King of the glory which then dwells in the land of Israel, Jehovah that shall fight for them on their last siege as when He fought in the day of battle. Zech. 14

The Psalms Book 1: 25-28

Psa. 25-28

Now that Christ's place in reference to the godly Jewish remnant has been fully developed from the position He took on earth till He be owned by-and-by in His glory as Jehovah (16-24), we have the experience formed by that revelation, and pre-eminently by the prophecy of Him crucified and atoning as made sin (22). This opens the heart to God as nothing else can. Only then can our sins be confessed without disguise or doubt.

Psa. 25

“ Of David. Unto Thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul. My God, in Thee have I trusted; let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, all those that wait on Thee shall not be ashamed; they shall be ashamed who deal falsely without a cause. Make me to know Thy ways, O Jehovah; teach me to know Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou [art] the God of my salvation; for Thee have I waited all the day” (vers. 1-5). Such is the introduction: the God-fearing wait on Jehovah, in contrast with the deceitful who shall know shame and everlasting contempt. Then follows the plea of mercy.

“ Remember Thy tender mercies, O Jehovah, and Thy kindness, for they [are] from everlasting. The sins of my youth and my transgressions remember Thou not; according to Thy mercy remember Thou Me for Thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah. Good and upright [is] Jehovah; therefore He teacheth dinners in the way. He guideth the meek in judgment, and He teacheth the meek His way. All the paths of Jehovah [are] mercy and truth to those that keep His covenant and His testimonies. For Thy name's sake, O Jehovah, Thou wilt even pardon My iniquity, for it [is] great” (vers. 6-11). Can anything surpass this in the confidence of divine peace? It is the prospect by faith of Messiah suffering for sin that casts wholly on God's mercy; and the very greatness of the sin is openly urged as the reason for His pardon Whose thoughts are not ours, any more than our ways are His. He can well afford through that cross which emboldens the believer. Man's sin is too great for any one but the God that saves through Christ.

“ Who [is] this—the man fearing Jehovah? He teacheth him in the way He chooseth. His soul abideth in goodness, and his seed shall inherit the earth. The confidence of Jehovah [is] for those that fear Him, and His covenant, to instruct them. Mine eyes [are] continually unto Jehovah, for He bringeth forth my feet from a net. Turn Thyself unto me and be gracious to me, for I [am] desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have been enlarged: bring me out of mine afflictions. Look on mine affliction and my travail, and forgive all my sins. Look on mine enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with violent hatred. Keep my soul and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I have trusted in Thee. Integrity and uprightness shall preserve me, for I have waited on Thee. Redeem Israel, O God, from all his distresses” (vers. 12-22). The sinners whom Jehovah guides and teaches, as He forgives, are the meek who are to inherit, as they only have uprightness and integrity. This last is the burden of the companion psalm that follows. Psa. 25 is the first of the

alphabetical psalms, though not strictly such; for two verses begin with the first letter (Aleph), and two with our R, two being omitted, and the last as well as the title being outside this order.

Psa. 26

“ Of David. Judge me, O Jehovah, for I have walked in mine integrity, and in Jehovah have I trusted; I shall not slip. Prove me, O Jehovah, and try me; purify my reins and my heart. For Thy mercy [is] before mine eyes; and I have walked in Thy truth. I have not sat with vain men, and with dissemblers I go not. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers, and with the wicked I sit not. I wash my hands in innocency, and I compass Thine altar, O Jehovah, to proclaim with voice of thanksgiving and to declare all Thy marvelous deeds. O Jehovah, I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners nor my life with men of blood; in whose hands [is] an evil device, and their right hand is filled with a bribe. But for me I walk in mine integrity: redeem me and be gracious to me. My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregation will I bless Jehovah” (vers. 1-12). Integrity is the inseparable accompaniment of pardon. So will it be with the Jews in the end of the age: so it is with the Christian now. If there is faith, there is also repentance. The feast of unleavened bread goes with the paschal lamb. But sense of the need of grace is thereby deepened, not lost or lowered, for all born of God.

Psa. 27

Here, we begin exercises of heart corresponding with the remnant's view of Messiah thus known in measure; for it is only after they have seen Him and the Spirit is poured out afresh that they will enter into His work in power. It is the confidence inspired by the Spirit of Him Who was all alone in His sufferings for them. Now that there is integrity of heart as well as a purged conscience, they can boldly face the enemy.

“ Jehovah [is] my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? Jehovah [is] the stronghold of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? When evil-doers draw near against me to eat my flesh, mine adversaries mine enemies unto me; they, stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, my heart cloth not fear; though war rise up against me, in this [am] confident. One [thing] I asked from Jehovah, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of Jehovah and to inquire in His temple. For in the day of evil He will hide me in His tabernacle; in the secret of His tent will He secrete me; He will set me upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me, and I will sacrifice in His tent sacrifices of joyful noise; I will sing, yea I will sing praises unto Jehovah” (vers. 1-6). Such is the starting-point, simple-hearted confidence in Jehovah, be the enemies who or what they may.

But there is trial felt and prayer poured out to Jehovah. “Hear, O Jehovah, my voice [when] I call; and be Thou merciful unto me and answer me. To thee My heart said, Seek ye My face: Thy face, O Jehovah, I seek; hide not Thy face from me, turn not away in anger Thy servant. Thou hast been my help: leave me not and forsake me not, O God of my salvation. For my father and may mother have forsaken me, but Jehovah receiveth me. Teach me Thy way, O Jehovah, and lead me in an even path because of watchers for me. Give me not unto the will of mine adversaries; for false witnesses are risen up against me, and he that breatheth out violence” (vers. 7-12). Such is the cry of distress, but of confidence withal funded on Jehovah's heart saying, Seek ye My face: a plea

somewhat obscured in both the A. and R. versions as elsewhere. There is some difficulty because of Jehovah's call suddenly remembered and acted on; but when duly weighed, the resulting sense seems decidedly good and striking, whereas the ordinary way is confused and pointless.

The closing aposiopesis (as the figure is called) is beautiful. “If I had not trusted to look upon the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living! Wait for Jehovah; he strong and may He strengthen thine heart; yea, wait for Jehovah” (vers. 13, 14).

PS. 28

This is a still more distressful cry, and more judicial in experiencing what the ungodly are. “Of David. Unto Thee, O Jehovah, do I call; my rock, be not silent to me, lest Thou be silent to me, and I become like unto those that go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the doers of iniquity, who speak peace with their neighbors and evil is in their hearts. Give unto them according to their deed and according to the evil of their works; according to the work of their hands give Thou to them; return their desert to them. For they regard not the deeds of Jehovah nor the works of His hands: He will destroy them and not build them up” (ver. 1-5).

Then comes the prophetic answer, on which they lay hold and rejoice. “Blessed [be] Jehovah, for He hath heard the voice of my supplications. Jehovah [is] my strength, and my shield; in Him hath my heart trusted, and I have been helped; my heart also exulteth and with my song do I praise Him. Jehovah [is] strength to him, yea a stronghold of the salvation of His anointed [is] He. Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, and feed them and lift them up forever” (ver. 6-9).

The Psalms Book 1: 29-31

Psa. 29-31

These psalms fall fitly together: not only so, but the first of the three appears to be an answer to the call in Psa. 28 For the encouragement of the faithful, Jehovah is proclaimed mightier than the mightiest, who are challenged to give Him glory. We see in the beginning of Job how the elements of nature as well as human passions may be left for a moment in the enemy's hand; but God is over all, and is faithful to His people; and all things work together for good to those that love Him.

Psa. 29

“ A psalm of David. Give unto Jehovah, ye sons of the mighty, give unto Jehovah glory and strength. Give unto Jehovah the glory of His name; bow down to Jehovah in the beauty of holiness. Jehovah's voice upon the waters! the God [El] of glory thundereth—Jehovah upon many waters. Jehovah's voice in the power! Jehovah's voice in majesty! Jehovah's voice breaketh cedars in pieces; Jehovah even breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; and He maketh them skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young buffalo (a son of buffalo). Jehovah's voice heweth out flames of fire. Jehovah's voice shaketh a wilderness, Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. Jehovah's voice maketh the hinds to calve and layeth bare the forests; and in His temple every one (or everything) saith, Glory! Jehovah sitteth upon the flood, and Jehovah sitteth King forever. Jehovah giveth strength to His people, Jehovah blesseth His people with peace” (1-11). Magnificent in its range, it is a triumphant assertion of Jehovah's power asserted to bless Israel. But He has a temple where everyone says, Glory!— a center for His people who know His name, the revelation of what He is to them.

Psa. 30

Death however is beyond the powers of nature. There all ends, now that sin is come in, and with consequences yet more awe-inspiring and agonizing to the spirit. Hence the danger, for man who trusts human thoughts, of utter moral degradation in present enjoyment, with nothing but the darkness of despair before him. It was not so with the godly Jew who clung to God in hope of Messiah, though he too shrank back from death before the Advent; he had not passed that way heretofore. Yet it was his shame to doubt resurrection, whether of just or unjust, though his longing was for His reign Who annuls the power of death: even the book of Job clearly reveals the two resurrections, separate in time as well as character, as may be seen in chaps. 14 and 19. Altogether different and far superior is the ground of the Christian who in the death and resurrection of Christ reads his justification, is dead and risen with Christ already, and awaits with joy His coming to present him with Himself in the Father's house. Here it is but the deprecation of death, while the Jew learns the deliverance of Jehovah to be better than any prosperity He gave, or the strength He established in His favor for his mountain: a lesson of enduring praise. “A psalm and dedication song of the house, by David. I extol Thee, O Jehovah, for Thou hast drawn me up, and hast not made mine enemies to rejoice over me. O Jehovah my God, I cried unto Thee, and

Thou hast healed me. Thou, O Jehovah, hast brought up my soul from Sheol; Thou hast kept me alive from going down to the pit. Sing praises unto Jehovah, ye His holy (gracious) ones, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For a moment [is] in His anger, a life in His favor: at even weeping lodgeth, and at the morn rejoicing. And for me, I said in my prosperity I shall not be moved forever. O Jehovah, in Thy favor Thou hast established strength for my mountain; Thou didst hide Thy face, I have been confounded. Unto Thee, O Jehovah, I call, and unto Jehovah I make supplication: what profit [is] in my blood, in my going down to corruption? Shall dust praise Thee? Shall it declare Thy truth? Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious to me; O Jehovah, be a helper to me. Thou hast turned my lamentation into a dance; for me Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and Thou girdest me with joy; so that glory may sing praise to Thee and not be silent. O Jehovah my God, forever will I give Thee thanks" (1-13).

Psa. 31

It is not triumph over the grave here, but the heart exercised in distress, and the Jew dying in the confidence which the proved knowledge of Jehovah gives. Hence the Lord did not hesitate to adopt its words for Himself at that moment (Luke 23:46), only substituting as became Him "Father" for Jehovah; as now He risen from the dead authorizes us to do in the faith of His redemption, as later the Spirit of adoption was given to be its power. But it is not as a whole His utterance, still less in resurrection power.

" To the chief musician; a psalm of David. In Thee, O Jehovah, have I trusted; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Thy righteousness. Incline Thine ear to me, deliver me speedily; be a rock of strength to me, a house of defense to save me. For Thou [art] my rock and my fortress, and for Thy name's sake Thou guidest and leadest me. Thou bringest me forth from the net which they hid for me, for Thou [art] my fortress. Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah God [El] of truth. I have hated those that observe lying vanities; and for me I have trusted in Jehovah. I will exalt and rejoice in Thy mercy, Who hast seen mine affliction; Thou hast known my soul in distresses. And Thou hast not shut me up in the enemy's hand; Thou hast set my feet in the large place. Be gracious with me, O Jehovah, for I am distressed; consumed with grief [is] mine eye, my soul, and my belly. For my life is wasted in sorrow and my years in sighing; my strength hath been feeble through mine iniquity, and my bones have been consumed. I have been a reproach among all mine oppressors, and especially to my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintances: they that saw me from without fled from me. I have been forgotten as a dead man from the heart: have been as a perishing vessel. For I have heard the slander of many; fear is round about when they consult together against me; they devised to take my life. But I have trusted in Thee, O Jehovah I have said, Thou [art] my God. My times [are] in Thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies and from my persecutors. Cause Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; in Thy mercy save me. O Jehovah, I shall not be ashamed, for I have called on Thee; the wicked shall be ashamed, they shall be silent in Sheol. The lips of falsehood shall be dumb, which speak against the righteous one insolently with pride and contempt. How great [is] Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for those that fear Thee, [which] Thou hast wrought for those that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou hidest them in the secret place of Thy presence from the plots of man, Thou concealest them in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed [be] Jehovah, for He hath made His mercy wonderful to me in a city of defense. And for me, I said in my haste, I have been cut off from before Thine eyes; surely Thou hast heard the voice of my supplication

when I cried unto Thee. Love ye Jehovah, all His holy (gracious) ones. Jehovah preserveth the faithful, abundantly requiteth the proud doer. Be strong, and He will strengthen your heart, all ye that wait for Jehovah" (1-25).

The closing rise of the soul from verse 20 is very fine after varied trials, with solemn sense of the judgment awaiting persecuting foes and the haughty wicked. He realizes the pavilion of the divine presence, and the great goodness laid up for the God-fearing. It is the Spirit of Christ in the tried and delivered soul, rather than Christ personally.

The Psalms Book 1: 32-34

Psa. 32-34

There is another want of the soul still deeper than the distress we have seen, deeper than death; the need that transgression be forgiven, that sin be covered by God, and that Jehovah should impute no iniquity. Thus only is guile effaced from the spirit. This is now prophetically announced; for it is not actually enjoyed till they look on their pierced Messiah: see Zech. 12 xiii. Self-justification on the contrary hinders all blessing.

Psa. 32

“ Of David: instruction. Blessed the one forgiven [as to] transgression, covered [as to] sin. Blessed the man to whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in his spirit guile is not. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day. For by day and by night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture hath been changed into the droughts of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity I covered not. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah, and Thou, forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Because of this shall every godly one pray unto Thee at a time of finding: surely in a flood of great waters unto him they will not draw near. Thou art a hiding place for me; Thou preservest me from distress; Thou surroundest me with shouts of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go; I will counsel—Mine eye upon thee. Be ye not as a horse, as a mule, [in which] there is no understanding: with bit and bridle his mouth is to be held in lest one come near unto thee. Many sorrows [hath] the wicked; but he that trusteth in Jehovah, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in Jehovah and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye upright of heart” (vers. 1-11).

It is indeed an “instruction.” The Jew had long resisted genuine confession without which as there is no truth of heart, no integrity, so also there can be no sense of divine forgiveness, though of course all were vain without Messiah made sin on the cross. But at length he does confess, and Jehovah forgives plenteously, verses 3, 4 showing how painfully he was forced by grace to that point. If verse 7 gives the heart's consequent expression of confidence in Jehovah, verse 8 is the consoling and strengthening answer. Verses 9, 10 are an exhortation which the assured Jew addresses to all around, closing with a call to the righteous and upright in heart to rejoice and be glad in Jehovah. We know how the apostle in Rom. 4 was led to use the introductory verses in the most unrestricted way to illustrate the gospel of God. Its blessedness through Christ dead and risen comes on all that believe. It is in reserve for Israel in the latter day, when they bowing to Jesus at length confess their sins.

Psa. 33

This is clearly a pendant on its predecessor and begins where it left off, carrying on the joy and praise.

“ Shout for joy, ye righteous in Jehovah: praise [is] comely for the upright. Give ye thanks unto Jehovah with the harp; with a psaltery of ten strings sing ye praises unto Him. Sing unto Him a new song; be skilful to play with shouting. For Jehovah's word [is] upright, and all His works in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment. The earth is full of Jehovah's mercy. By Jehovah's word heavens were made and by breath of His mouth all their host. He gathereth together as the heap waters of the sea; He putteth deeps in storehouses. All the earth shall fear because of Jehovah; all inhabitants of the world shall be afraid because of Him. For He said, and it was; He commanded, and it stood. Jehovah hath made void the Gentiles' counsel; He hath broken the devices of the peoples. Jehovah's counsel shall stand forever, His heart's devices to all generations. Blessed the nation, whose God [is] Jehovah, the people He hath chosen to Himself for an inheritance. From the heavens Jehovah beheld; He saw all the sons of Man. From the place of His dwelling He looked upon all the inhabitants of the earth, He Who formeth their heart together, Who considereth all their works. The king is not saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. Vanity [is] the horse for safety, and by greatness of his might will he not deliver. Behold, Jehovah's eye [is] toward those that fear Him, to those that hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in the famine. Our soul hath waited for Jehovah; He [is] our help and our shield. For in Him our heart shall rejoice, for in the name of His holiness have we trusted. Thy mercy, O Jehovah, shall be upon us according as we have hoped in Thee” (vers. 1-22).

When deliverance, and especially of an inward sort, is known, joy flows. Jehovah in word and deed is manifest and celebrated. The nations, once dreaded, are nothing before Him. Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, Whose counsel alone stands when theirs is made void. He saw all, when it seemed not. His eye is toward those that feared Him and hoped in His mercy, as the remnant did. He would have His people happy in the knowledge of Himself; and Israel will know Him in displays of power on their behalf here below. We ought to know our God still better, viewing the cross of Christ in the light of His heavenly glory. Compare John 15:9-14.

Psa. 34

This again is a distinct advance on the preceding psalm, beautiful and seasonable as it is. For here it is the heart rising from the most abject circumstances, if we heed the title, to bless Jehovah at every season; as the afflicted are expected to join when they hear. It is full of encouragement founded on proved deliverance.

“ Of David, in his changing his judgment (i. e., feigning madness) before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he went. I will bless Jehovah at all times, His praise continually in my mouth. In Jehovah shall my soul glory; the afflicted (or poor) shall hear and rejoice. Magnify ye Jehovah with me, and let us extol His name together. I sought Jehovah, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him, and they shone, and their faces were not confounded. This afflicted one called, and Jehovah heard; and out of all his distresses He saved him. Jehovah's angel encampeth around those that fear Him, and delivereth them. Taste ye and see that Jehovah [is] good: blessed the man that trusteth in Him. Fear Jehovah, ye His holy ones; for there is no want to those that fear Him. Young lions have been in want and hungered; but those that seek Jehovah shall not lack any good thing. Come, ye sons, hearken unto me I will teach you fear of Jehovah. Who [is] the man that desireth life, loving days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue

from evil, and thy lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Jehovah's eyes [are] upon the righteous, and His ears toward their cry. Jehovah's face [is] against those that do evil, to cut off their remembrance from the earth. They cried, and Jehovah heard, and from all their distresses He delivered them. Jehovah [is] near to those of a broken heart, and He saveth those of a contrite spirit. Many [are] the distresses of a righteous one, and out of them all Jehovah delivereth him, keeping all his bones; not one of them hath been broken. Evil shall destroy a wicked one; and those that hate a righteous one shall incur guilt (or condemnation). Jehovah redeemeth the soul of His servants, and none of those that trust in Him shall incur guilt" (ver. 1-23).

It may be noticed that vers. 6-10 appear to be, not so much a continuation of what inspired David had been drawing from his experience, as an episode of the Spirit of Christ confirming and deepening all. From ver. 11 the psalmist pursues his task with a heart now the more inviting others to join the chorus of praise. Ver. 20, we know, was literally true of the Lord, though Ex. 12 seems rather the scripture referred to in John 19

The Psalms Book 1: 35-37

Psa. 35-37

These psalms are occupied with the evil, not only so hostile to the righteous, but so wicked in God's sight and against His rights, as we see in Psa. 35 As usual, it is the Spirit of Christ guiding the remnant in feeling and estimating all relatively to their state and position. It is not at all Christ personally simply suffering all to God's glory, nor the members of His body as now in the power of the Spirit having the moral mind which was in Him. Here He pleads for judgment on the wicked which will surely come to deliver the Jews. We have His portion as caught up to heaven entirely apart from it, and previously suffering with Him and it may be for Him.

Psa. 35

“ Of David. Strive, O Jehovah, with mine adversaries; fight with them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and arise for my help, and draw out the spear, and shut [the way] to meet my pursuers: say unto my soul, Thy salvation [am] I. They shall be ashamed and put to shame that seek after my soul; they shall be driven backward and confounded who devise my hurt. They shall be as chaff before the wind, and Jehovah's angel overthrowing [them]. Their way shall be dark and slippery, and Jehovah's angel pursuing them. For without cause have they laid for me a pit, their net; without cause have dug [it] for my soul. Let destruction come upon him unaware, and his net which he hid catch him; in to destruction let him fall. And my soul shall rejoice in Jehovah and be joyful in his salvation. All my bones shall say, O Jehovah, Who [is] like Thee, delivering a poor one from him that is stronger than he, and a poor and needy from him that spoileth him? False witnesses rise up; they ask me things which I know not. They requite me evil for good, bereaving to my soul. And for me, when they were sick, my clothing [was] sackcloth; I humbled my soul with the fasting, and my prayers returned into my bosom. As [to] a neighbor, as a brother to me, I behaved myself. As mourning a mother, mourning I bowed down. But in my halting they rejoiced and were gathered together; the slanderers were gathered together, and I knew it not; they tore and ceased not, with profane mockers for bread gnashing their teeth upon me. O Lord, now wilt Thou see? Restore my soul from their destructions, mine only one from young lions. I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation and in a mighty people I will praise Thee. Let not mine enemies rejoice over me falsely, [nor] my haters without cause wink the eye. For they speak not peace; and against the quiet ones of the earth (or land) they devise deceitful words. And they opened wide their mouth upon me; they said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen. Thou hast seen, O Jehovah; be not silent, O Lord, be not far from me. Arouse Thyself and awake for my judgment, my God and my Lord, for my cause. Judge me according to Thy righteousness, O Jehovah my God, and let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their heart, Aha our soul! Let them not say, We have swallowed him up. They shall be ashamed and confounded together who rejoice at my hurt; they shall be clothed with shame and reproach that magnify themselves against me. They shall shout for joy and rejoice that delight in my righteousness, and they shall say continually, Jehovah be magnified Who delighteth in the peace of His servant. And my tongue shall celebrate

Thy righteousness, Thy praise all the day” (ver. 1-28).

Psa. 36

This Psalm follows up the last in the expression given to the enormous evil of the wicked, but with the comfort of the still richer, deeper, higher, blessedness of what Jehovah is for His own. Why then doubt or fear?

“ To the chief musician; of Jehovah's servant, of David. The transgression of the wicked one uttereth in the midst of my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes, For he hath flattered himself in his own eyes to find his iniquity hateful. The words of his mouth [are] falsehood and deceit; he hath left off to be wise, to do well. He deviseth falsehood upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way [that is] not good; he abhorreth not evil.

“ O Jehovah, Thy mercy [is] in the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness [is] as the high mountains (of God, El), Thy judgments a, great deep: man and beast Thou preservest, O Jehovah. How precious Thy mercy, O God! And the sons of men shall trust in the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be drenched with the abundance of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee [is] the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light. Continue Thy mercy to those that know Thee, and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come unto me, and let not the hand of the wicked move me. There have fallen the workers of iniquity: they have been thrust down and are not able to rise” (ver. 1-13).

Psa. 37

This beautiful psalm is a moral and, one might say, aphoristic application from the wicked and his doom to the profit of the righteous who can abide in Jehovah. It has an alphabetic order not carried out perfectly.

“ Of David. Fret not thyself at the evil-doers; be not envious at the workers of iniquity. For like grass they are speedily cut off, and like the greenness of the tender herb they fade. Trust in Jehovah, and do good; dwell in the land (or, earth) and feed on truth (or faithfulness). Delight thyself also in Jehovah, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart. Roll thy way upon Jehovah; trust also in Him, and He will do [it]; and He will bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in (or be silent to) Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him; fret not thyself at him that prospereth in his way, at the man that doeth wicked devices. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself—only to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off; and those that wait for Jehovah, they shall inherit the land. And yet a little, and the wicked one is not; and thou considerest his place, and he (or, it) is not. And the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundance of peace. The wicked one deviseth mischief against the righteous one and gnasheth his teeth upon him. The Lord laugheth at him, for He hath seen that his day is come. A sword have the wicked drawn, and they have bent their bow, to cause the poor and needy to fall, to slay the upright in way. Their sword shall come into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Better [is] little to the righteous one than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Jehovah upholdeth the righteous. Jehovah knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. For the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of Jehovah as the fat of lambs; they have vanished, into smoke they have vanished. The wicked one

borroweth and payeth not, but the righteous hath compassion and giveth. For His blessed ones shall inherit the land, but His accursed ones shall be cut off. By Jehovah the steps of a man are established, and He delighteth in his way. If he falleth, he is not cast down, for Jehovah upholdeth his hand. I have been a youth, I have also become old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. All the day [is he] gracious and lending, and his seed for a blessing. Depart from evil and do good, and dwell forever. For Jehovah loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints: forever are they kept, but the seed of the wicked is cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and shall dwell forever upon it. The mouth of the righteous meditateth wisdom and his tongue speaketh judgment, The law of his God [is] in his heart; none of his steps slide. The wicked lieth in wait for the righteous and seeketh to kill him. Jehovah will not leave him in his hand, and will not condemn when he is judged. Wait for Jehovah and keep His ways, and He will exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see [it]. I have seen the wicked strong and spreading himself like a native tree green; and he passed away and, behold, he was not; and I sought him, and he was not found, Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the latter end to [that] man [is] peace; but the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the latter end of the wicked shall be cut off. And the salvation of the righteous [is] from Jehovah; [He is] their refuge in the time of trouble. And Jehovah helpeth and delivereth them; He will deliver them and save them, because they have trusted in Him" (ver. 1-40).

As the preceding psalm rises as far as was possible under the law, though of course only in faith, to enjoy mercy and loving-kindness in God, yea the fatness of His house and the river of His pleasures, wonderfully suggestive of what is our portion as Christians—the communion of the Father and the Son in the power of the Spirit, here we are shown the blessedness of faith in the moral government of God, which delivers from fretfulness no less than envy—a government which is yet to be displayed in "the land" as nowhere else. But it is ever true in its principles, though for the Christian now in a less visible way. Hence the allusions to the psalm in the N. T., as citations from Psa. 34 in 1 Peter 3. The Lord Himself refers to it in Matt. 5.

Chapter 180

The Psalms Book 1: 38-39

Psa. 38-39

These two psalms constitute a pair, distinct from and rightly following those that precede, and as duly followed by Psa. 40; 41 They do not express the path of the just sustained by trusting in Jehovah, and tried in the face of confident prosperous enemies, with the land in full view spite of all. Here it is the far deeper distress under Jehovah's anger because of sins. Nevertheless God is unhesitatingly looked to in the sense of His arrows and utter corruption in themselves. This is carried out yet more in the companion psalm, where it is rather the sense of self, and man at large, being mere breath or vanity, and all under God's consuming hand; but the hope is in the Lord, as before in Jehovah.

Psa. 38

“ A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance. O Jehovah, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. For Thine arrows have entered into me, and Thy hand hath come down upon me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; there is no peace in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities have passed over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds have stunk, they have dissolved, because of my folly. I have been bowed down, I have been brought low to the utmost, all the day have I walked mourning. For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no goodness in my flesh. I have been feeble and broken to the utmost, I have groaned because of the groanings of my heart. O Lord, before Thee [is] all my desire, and my sighing is not hid from Thee. My heart hath panted and my strength hath left me, and the light of mine eyes—even they are not with me. My lovers and my neighbors stand aloof from my stroke, and my kinsman have stood afar off. And those that seek after my soul have laid snares, and those that seeking hurt have spoken mischievous things, and all the day do they meditate deceits. But I as a deaf [man] hear not, and I am as a dumb [man that] openeth not his mouth. And I am as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in Thee, O Jehovah, do I hope: Thou wilt answer, O Lord My God. For I said, Lest they rejoice over me! at the moving of my foot they magnified themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my pain [is] continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity, I am afflicted because of my sin. But mine enemies of life [i.e., deadly ones] are strong, and those that hate me falsely [i.e., without a cause] are multiplied. And those that render evil for good will oppose me because of my pursuing good. Forsake me not, O Jehovah; O my God, be not far from me. Make, haste to my help, O Lord my salvation” (ver. 1-23).

Though there is no right ground for ancients or moderns applying this psalm to Christ, yet His Spirit breathes unequivocally through it as through all. Indeed without questioning the peculiar comfort it will prove to the godly Jew when awakened in the latter day to feel its value, it is most suitable to the Christian suffering under the chastening hand of the Lord for folly and sin. Then is the time to cherish confidence in Him, as the Christian may do even more deeply and dropping all thought of enemies save of a spiritual kind. We can cry even then, Abba, Father.

Psa. 39

“ To the chief musician, to Jeduthun; a psalm of David. I said, I will keep my ways, from sinning with my tongue; I will keep a muzzle for my mouth, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb in silence, I held my peace from good, and my sorrow was stirred. My heart glowed in my midst; in my meditation the fire burned: I spoke with my tongue, Make me know, O Jehovah, mine end, and the measure of my days, what it [is]; let me know when I shall cease. Behold, spans hast thou given my days, and my age as nothing before Thee. Surely all a breath [is] every man standing firm. Selah. Surely in an image doth a man walk; surely a breath are they disquieted; he will heap up and not know who shall gather them. And now what wait I for, O Lord? My hope [is] in Thee. From all my transgressions deliver me; a reproach of the fool do not set me. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; for Thou hast done [it]. Remove from me Thy stroke: from the conflict of Thy hand I am consumed. With chastisement for iniquity Thou correctest man, and consumest like the moth his vanity [or, delights]; surely a breath [is] every man. Selah. Hear my prayer, O Jehovah, and to my cry give ear; at my tears be not silent: for a stranger [am] I with Thee, a sojourner, like all my fathers. Look from me, and let me brighten up, before I go and am no more” (vers. 1-13).

As the saint felt nothing before God, and therefore checked himself in presence of the wicked, so much the more could he speak, when the fire burned, in turning to Jehovah Who was using His stroke for correction, and this of iniquity. He owned himself a stranger and sojourner like saints of old, his fathers. To be strong and great here below was not his desire, but in his weakness he would be dependent on Jehovah. This closes the exercises of heart expressed to God by the tried godly. A vast change appears when Christ is introduced personally, as we shall see in the psalms that follow.

The Psalms Book 1: 40-41

Psa. 40-41

Here again we have a pair of psalms, where Christ appears unmistakably, even if the latter be not so exclusively personal as the former, in which Christ chants His deliverance in connection with Israel and the earth. Hence Psa. 40 is more mixed with judgment at the close than we hear in Psa. 22. But His coming as incarnate to do God's will in the setting aside of the sacrificial system by His own obedience unto death is as plain as all-important.

Ps. 40

“ To the chief musician: a psalm of David. Waiting I waited for Jehovah, and He bowed to me and heard my cry. And He brought me up from a pit of noise, from the miry clay, and set my feet on a rock; He fixed my steps. And He put in my mouth a new song, praise to our God: many shall see and fear and trust in Jehovah. Blessed the man that hath made Jehovah his trust and hath not turned to proud [men] and swerving to falsehood. Great things hast Thou done, O Jehovah my God; Thy wondrous deeds and Thy thoughts toward us none can set in order unto Thee: would I declare and speak, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; Mine ears didst Thou dig; burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not ask. Then said I, Behold, I come—in the roll of the book it is written of Me—to do Thy will, O My God; and Thy law [is] within My heart. I published righteousness in the great congregation. Behold, I will not refrain My lips, O Jehovah, Thou knowest. Thy righteousness I hid not within My heart; Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation I declared; I concealed not Thy mercy and Thy truth from the great congregation. Thou, O Jehovah, wilt not withhold Thy compassions from Me; let Thy mercy and Thy truth always preserve Me. For evils innumerable compassed upon Me, My sins have overtaken Me, and I am unable to see. They are more than the hairs of My head, and My heart hath forsaken Me. Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver Me; O Jehovah, for My help hasten. Ashamed and confounded together be [those] that seek after My soul to destroy it: driven back and disgraced be [those] that delight in My hurt; desolate for a reward of their shame be [those] that say to Me, Aha, Aha. Let all that seek Thee be glad and rejoice in Thee; let those that love Thy salvation say always, Jehovah, be magnified. And I poor and needy—Jehovah thinketh on Me; My help and Deliverer [art] Thou; O My God, delay not” (vers. 1-18).

Psa. 41

“ To the chief musician: a psalm of David. Blessed he that payeth heed to the poor one; in the day of evil Jehovah will deliver him. Jehovah will preserve him and keep him alive; he shall be blessed in the land [or, earth]; and give him not up to the will of his enemies, Jehovah will sustain him on the couch of languishing; all his bed Thou hast turned in his sickness. As for me, I said, O Jehovah, be merciful to me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die and his name perish? And if he come to see, vanity he will speak, his heart gathereth iniquity to itself, he goeth abroad, he speaketh. Together against me, all that hate

me whisper; against me they devise my hurt. A word [or, matter] of Belial is poured into him, and he that lieth down will no more rise. Even a man of my peace, in whom I confided, eating my bread, lifted up [or, magnified] the heel against me. But Thou, O Jehovah, be merciful to me, and raise me up, and I will requite them. By this I know that Thou delightest in me, because mine enemy shall not exult in me. And as for me Thou upholdest me in mine integrity and settest me before Thy face forever. Blessed [be] Jehovah the God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen" (vers. 1-14).

That this psalm embraces Christ as betrayed by Judas is beyond dispute. He indeed was the One Who being rich made Himself poor for His own.

Chapter 182

Punishment and Reward

Q. Believing that the rejectors of God and His Son and salvation by grace will be everlastingly punished in hell, I ask will it be varied in intensity? We know that there will be degrees of reward in God's kingdom. Does this principle apply equally to punishment? W. F. U.

A. It is revealed distinctly that men will be judged according to their works. Old and New Testaments are equally clear. “For all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Eccl. 11:9). “For God shall bring every work into judgment with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil” (Eccl.12:14). “God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16). “The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books according to their works... They were judged every man [each] according to their works” (Rev. 20:12-13). Such is man's portion, death, and after this judgment; for he is sinful and lost. But grace has intervened after the sin and before the judgment. God has sent His Son to save all who believing receive life in Him Who died and bore their judgment on the cross, and who manifest life in a fruit-bearing course here below. Hence the Lord Who is to judge has Himself ruled that the believer comes not into judgment. Even while here he has passed out of death into life. But none the less must we all, the whole of us absolutely, be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things [done] by the body, according to what he did, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5. 10). This will be true of all, saint or sinner, not all at the same time, but each at the time and in the way and with the aim as well as result laid down in other scriptures. The careful reader will note “manifested” is the word where the faithful are included, “judged” is confined to those who refusing divine mercy in Christ must own judgment to be righteous.

But along with this, scripture speaks of “reward” for work done (1 Cor. 3) and declares in many forms and occasions that God will not forget work and love shown toward His name. Similarly, as saints will differ, not as to salvation or heavenly glory, but in special recognition of fidelity, so surely (judgment being according to works) the Lord will mark His unerring sense of special iniquity, though all the lost be forever in the lake of fire. He is righteous altogether, always, and everywhere. Cf. Luke 12:45-48. But every spiritual mind will appreciate the comparative silence of scripture in a matter so harrowing to the affections, and so appropriately left in His hands, Whose judgment unbelief must solemnly prove, as we have mercifully proved His grace by faith.

2. “TRANSGRESSION,” “SIN,” “INIQUITY,” AND “GUILE.”

Q. What is the distinctive force of the various terms for our evil mentioned in Psa. 32:1-2, and translated “transgression,” “sin,” “iniquity,” and “guile” in both the A. and the R.Vv.? I.C.

A. The English versions seem to one more exact than the Greek Septuagint or the Latin Vulgate; so that it would be vain to look for a closer reproduction of the Hebrew original.

“ Transgression” (not sin) is the violation of a known and imposed law. With this the psalmist begins. It is what would first act on the conscience of a Jew, and blessed indeed to know it “forgiven.” Where no law is, as the apostle teaches us in Rom. 4, there is no transgression. There

might be sin. The law was added, as he tells the Galatians, because of transgressions. It works wrath. It is the power of sin, forcing out into manifestation what otherwise was latent, that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful. “Sin” is then the evil root which is uncovered to the conscience, that it might be “covered” of God by the blood of atonement, as here. Verse 2 brings forward a great accession of blessing: not only the past evils effaced and gone, but the consequent present state of absolute non-imputation of iniquity by Jehovah. This at once opens the heart, and takes away all “guile” from the spirit. There is no desire to hide the least evil. Because He imputes no iniquity, no guilt, there is no guile in one's spirit, no wish to extenuate or deny. The psalmist then shows how far from this he had been. God had wrought to bring the Israelite to acknowledge his sin, and not to cover his iniquity. When he confessed his transgressions to Jehovah, Jehovah forgave the iniquity of his sins. The psalm itself is a fine comment on the words. How a learned and pious scholar could say that ■νομ■α, lawlessness, is never in the N.T. the condition of one living without law, but always the condition or deed of one who acts contrary to law, is marvelous. Rom. 2. 12 should have corrected the error. It is just the word to describe the lawlessness of a Gentile ignorant of law, no doubt sin, and iniquity, but most precisely “lawlessness.”

Etymologically the Hebrew words mean respectively, desertion or revolt, missing a mark or error, perversion, and deceit or fraud. But the usage sanctioned by the Spirit is the true criterion.

Chapter 183

Rahab As Cited in Hebrews and James

The case of Rahab is one of deep interest. The Spirit of God uses it in the N. T. in two very different ways: in Heb. 11 to encourage believers; in James 2 to convict “vain” —that is, hollow, empty, foolish—professors. Hebrews shows us that faith is the only door of escape from certain and imminent judgment; James, that saving faith is never barren, neither is it ashamed to declare itself, as some would teach. Her interesting story comes in during the progress of events of momentous importance to this earth, but rather as a digression than as arising necessarily out of the course of the narrative. May the object of God in giving it not be lost on us.

Years before, the Lord had sent an arrow of conviction into the conscience of many a Canaanite. For centuries they had been going on wickedly, filling up their iniquity, and in her day the limits of the long-suffering of God had been reached. Rahab's description of the effect of the drying up of the water of the Red Sea for Israel, and of the more recent overthrow of their near neighbors, the Amorites on the other side of Jordan, enables us to realize something of the terror that had fallen upon them. The Spirit of the Lord was striving with men, evidently with her. But alas! it is possible to stifle convictions. Can we not all bear witness to this? Satan deceives. The heart deceives.

Appearances deceive. To sight Jericho was impregnable; perfectly able to hold out against any besieging appliances of that day, and Satan has the fatal power, if he cannot entirely dissipate fear, yet of giving such an outward appearance of security that men say “peace and safety” in spite of secret misgivings. Rahab's words are as descriptive of the state of things in this the boasted nineteenth century, as of her own time. What her own exercises of soul were, or how long, we are not told, but this is clear: she had no rest, and could have none, but from the Lord. But here all seemed hopeless. There was no word for her; no apparent way to get one; no link with His people; and, indeed, as looked at naturally, they were her enemies.

It is a dark picture: far darker the reality must have been to her as, day after day, the danger drew nearer.

Whatever the thought of Joshua in sending two men into Jericho, a mission of no small danger, as it proved, we are left in no uncertainty as to the purpose in their going, nor as to His leading them. How full of love, of tender compassion, He is for His creatures! How able, how willing to save, let the longing soul be where it may! It is a precious truth, and full of encouragement to those who have loved ones walled in, as it were, by place or circumstances, and bound in affliction and iron. With this bright (may we say, brilliant?) exhibition of the ways and resources of God, who need be cast down by difficulties or by seeming impossibilities? With God there are none: why then to those who believe in Him?

It is interesting, and not without instruction for us, that in Hebrews the men are called “spies,” and thus, to nature, foes; yet knowing this, the scripture says “she received them in peace.” Faith had caused her to change sides before she got assurance. In James they are called “messengers” (angeloi) and the Spirit notices her self-sacrificing care of them; for James had to teach that faith

wrought with works, and how simple the truth as seen in her. To her they were the Lord's legates, not Joshua's, and their people were the people of Jehovah. Their then condition, without a possession, wanderers for years in the desert, did not deceive her. Jehovah was their God. “I know,” she said, “that the Lord hath given you the land.” And “the Lord your God is God in heaven above and in earth beneath.” She unfeignedly bows to the judgment on her own people. It was as truly on her and her kindred, and it was too late to attempt to better them. She begs life from God for herself and for them, otherwise it will be utter destruction. It was indeed a very real cry— “Deliver our lives from death,” and the ready reply of the men confirms the thought that the Lord used them as His messengers. “Our life for yours,” was the immediate and assuring answer, and her salvation was secure. They leave her a token— “this line of scarlet thread,” an apparently insignificant one, the meaning of which few discerned; but whoever did, whoever gathered by faith to the shelter of it, was saved.

This secret revealed to her by the men changed Rahab's life. Whatever her pursuits before, the terrors of the judgment that was corning, and the assurance of salvation for all beneath that God-given token, constrained her to use the little time remaining well; and the Lord worked with her, so that her father, her mother, her brethren, all her kindred, were delivered (Joshua 6:23). How absorbing this one chief object of her life! How varied the condition of those she sought to save! How simple the way of their salvation—faith in God as to this secret, “the scarlet line! “

Having left the token the messengers returned to the host. They were in the place of power. Rahab and those dear to her were in the place of safety. What then was her hope, her daily anticipation? Jericho, and all it could boast of, were gone to faith. Death was written on everything there, but Joshua was coming. The one who would visit with the unsparing judgments of God all outside the token was the savior of all beneath its shelter. Under it then, and true to those who gave it, her case is full of instruction and encouragement to all, however varied their experience, that are sheltered by the blood of Christ. There was then, as now, but one token, and the lineaments of living faith are so simple, yet so clearly delineated in her, that there is no need to trace them even for the youngest.

If we read verses 39, 40, of Hebrews 11 we shall find there is more than salvation from judgment. She is numbered with the patriarchs among the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:35, 37), and is one that will be found to be Christ's when He comes, an heir of eternal glory (1 Corinthians 15:23). Because of this, the Spirit of God in James, though writing to Jews who naturally would have very exalted thoughts of their father Abraham, puts her side by side with him, a beautiful illustration of Paul's word to the same people— “The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12, 13). There is no difference before Him One question it may be needful to answer. Is the emphasis that James puts upon her works, intended to throw the soul upon a self-searching examination to discover whether it be justified or not? Far from it. The severe language used by him is not addressed to an anxious soul. Such an one the Spirit would not describe as a “vain man” (verse 20); for the word implies, as has been said, an empty, hollow, foolish, person. Just one who says he believes (as thousands do in reciting the creed, “I believe” etc.), and yet there are absolutely no results in conduct. Will this hollow empty statement of his belief avail him? The contrast is readily seen. Rahab really believed that judgment on them all was certainly coming, and could know no rest till assured of deliverance. She cried earnestly for it. The “vain man” says over and over again,

that he believes that Christ is coming to judge the living and the dead, yet is totally indifferent to it all, an indifference which even devils do not share (verse 19)—a very solemn fact.

May then all who really believe the gospel be encouraged and confirmed in their faith (be it ever so simple, and they ever so timid and anxious) by this most striking and faithful narrative, and may the indifferent professor of most solemn truths, the “vain man,” be warned by it. W.B.

Chapter 184

On Receiving

Feeling increasingly our responsibility in receiving to the Lord's Table, I wish to make a few remarks upon the subject. Surely our hearts' desire is that we should not keep any away unnecessarily, nor admit any the Lord would not have there; because we are to receive “as Christ also received us, to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). So the blessed Lord, Who knew we should feel this great responsibility, has given us this precious promise in connection therewith, “I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:19). Do we always avail ourselves of this promise when receiving? Might not the want of such dependence be often the source of trouble afterward? But I do not wish now to enter into the question as to who should be received, but rather to attempt to define from God's word who holds the authority to receive, and how reception is carried out. I write because of some little differences of thought, and with the desire that we may “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

It seems to me then that the word teaches us that the responsibility of receiving lies with the assembly (translated “church” in the A.V.). The assembly binds and looses (Matt. 18:18); judges them that are within (1 Cor. 5:12); puts away (1 Cor. 5:13); and forgives, after the punishment inflicted has had the desired effect (2 Cor. 2:6, 7). To individuals it is written, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). Where then is the authority to judge? It is vested in the assembly when gathered with the Lord in the midst. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together (ye being gathered together R.V) and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 5:4, 5). With a jury the principle is the same. There is authority when gathered together as a jury, which the individuals have not. The simile is imperfect, but it gives the principle as to when and where the authority is.

Assembly responsibility is local— “where (= in what place) two or three are gathered in (unto) My name” (Matt. 18:20). “Tell it unto the church” (Matt. 18:16), means, of course, the local gathering. Each gathering must act for itself, though of course acting not independently but in unity. Gifts belong to the whole church, and brothers may come to the place to exhort, teach, admonish, and the like; but the Corinthians must cleanse themselves. “In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear (pure) in this matter” (2 Cor. 7:11).

So it is now with the few gathered as at first. Some beloved brothers who argue that, because they belong to the one body, they are right in taking part in the responsibility of receiving or rejecting in any gatherings, do not, I am sure, realize the result of such a course. We have seen it worked out to our shame and sorrow. Hence the importance of insisting upon the order of God's word, which distinctly appoints the authority (Matt. 18:18-20; 1 Cor. 5:4, 5, 12, 13). Upon the danger of using the doctrine of the unity of the body for opposing local responsibility, which doctrines are in perfect harmony in the word, I hope with your permission, dear Mr. Editor, to make a few remarks upon a future occasion.

But I hear some say, “Why make so much fuss? If Mr. So-and-so is satisfied, we are satisfied.” I answer, No doubt such a thought, or the wish to avoid responsibility which was father to it, was one cause of the existence of “our Minister” who does all this sort of thing for us in the present day. Nevertheless it is written, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). Oh! if God's order had been kept from the first, how much trouble would His people have been saved!

If the foregoing be admitted, the carrying out will not be difficult. As soon as a believer expresses a desire to be received at the Lord's Table, the fact should be made known to all those gathered to the Lord's name in the place, and the assembly called together as such, with the object of going into the matter, in dependence upon the Lord (Matt. 18:19), and with His authority (Matt. 18:18-20; 1 Cor. 5). Of course a time should be arranged convenient to all, yet those who do not attend are still responsible. It is often done at the end of the prayer meeting. Simply giving out the brother's or sister's name at the Lord's Table is not due reception.

I add, to avoid misunderstanding, I fully acknowledge that a brother may be used of God in applying the word to the particular case, and so far speak as the oracle of God (2 Cor. 4:2), and this is the farthest from over-ruling the church (1 Peter 5:3, margin); the rather will he, as Paul did with the Corinthians, press their responsibility upon all the gathering. Pressing this upon saints seems very generally required in the present state of things.

That there may be increasingly among us the longing to carry out His every wish Who loves us so much is, through mercy, the desire of

Yours affectionately in Him,

C. O. A.

[It is necessary to take into account the present scattered state of Christ's members; for it is not a question now only of accrediting souls brought to God from the world as at the beginning. Suppose a known godly confessor wish to break bread: are we to refuse? or even to treat a well-proved saint as if he were a novice who had to be recognized by the assembly? Surely neither. In every case the assembly acts on adequate testimony and welcomes those whom the Lord has added to the church. But we have to distinguish, on the one hand, between novices or unknown persons who seek fellowship And ought to be carefully visited by those who inspire confidence; and, on the other, those well-seasoned Christians, already better known and on better evidence than if, as persons unknown, they were seen during a week or fortnight by two or three visitors. But on introducing such there ought to be so distinct a statement of their known Christianity as to satisfy all right-minded souls in fellowship. It would be a mistake, in my judgment, to subject such to the ordeal necessary for novices or unknown people. On these principles the most intelligent servants of Christ have ever acted in our day, as I trust they ever will. ED. B.T.]

Chapter 185

Religious Societies: Part 1

There are two great subjects of interest to which any one taught of God most necessarily be awakened—the glory of God, and the necessities of man. In Jesus we perceive the most acute sensibility to the wretchedness of man: He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—sighing, groaning, and weeping at the dominion of evil and misery over man. But whilst He met it in all the sovereign power of relief, He so met it that men should glorify God, and thus made the occasion of ministering to man's necessities, the occasion of bringing glory to God. In this as well as other particulars He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are apt to have a much quicker perception of the necessities of man than of the glory of God. It is the Spirit alone which can make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, while our own natural selfishness enables us in some measure to enter into man's necessities. We see them as being ourselves in them, as those which personally affect us. Jesus saw them indeed, as in them, but yet with the judgment of One Who saw them from above. Hence it is, that whenever the church has been awakened to a sense either of the pressing necessities of the world around it, or of its own deficiencies, it has in the one case been busy in doing, rather than zealous to repent; and in the other, more ready to engage in some active exertions to mitigate or remedy the pressing necessity, by the means it found readiest at hand, than to ascertain what might be God's way of meeting it. The end proposed has alone been to remedy the destitution felt, or misery discovered; and if this end has in any wise been answered, by God's blessing vouchsafed, the church has been satisfied, and too often has rested in complacency in its own efforts, and made them the criterion of its prosperity, instead of finding the evidence of its failure, both in the necessity which called them forth, and in the dereliction of many important principles of truth which the exertion of those efforts has entailed.

It is impossible not to trace the origin of the many Religions Societies, which have arisen within the last hundred years, to an awakened sensibility about the spiritual destitution around us. Nor can we deny that it was the Spirit of God which put the desire into the hearts of the good and holy men from whom they originated. They were begun in faith and prayer, and little perhaps did any of their founders anticipate to what a magnitude they would grow. One can hardly now, except by history, trace the origin of the Bible Society to the concern of an obscure individual, in the principality of Wales, for the pressing want of the Scriptures in that part of the kingdom. The want when made known became a palpable object, and led to the discovery that many other places were equally destitute of the Scriptures. Many were the motives that induced to a co-operation in such an undertaking. But the object, though in itself confessedly good was only to meet the necessity discovered. For this many were associated; but when the test of that very word was applied to them—to own God in their associate character, it was discovered not only that many would not, but that they could not; for there were those associated together who did not worship the same God. Notwithstanding the question raised on this point for a moment seemed to shake its stability, yet the Society still continues, because its immediate object is answered: translations of the Scriptures are multiplied, and Bibles are widely distributed.

That good is done is not denied, and that God works in the sovereignty of His grace by all means is most fully allowed. But the real question to be considered is, how far the children of the kingdom should rest satisfied with any religions society, with any society where moral influences are exerted upon the minds of men, unless it be simply based upon the principles which the apostles have developed, as those which are to regulate the association of the children of God. And how far will God be satisfied with anything short of this for the accomplishment of His end? This, while it includes man's blessing, is always His own glory. A society so constituted, would be the church in its varied work and labor of love. And is not this the deficiency, the necessary deficiency of all religious societies—that they fall short of what the church is, and therefore can never effect that which the church can only accomplish?

Whilst therefore the many societies which have arisen, based on more or less catholic principles, have evidenced an awakening desire among many Christians for unity in service, have they not very much tended to blind the mind to the simple truth, that such a desire can only be answered by God's own plan—the church? Now the very differential character of a (so called) religions society, is, that it need not be a communion of saints. The end proposed does not necessarily require that it should be. It is in its very constitution an appeal to the world, and therefore must needs meet the world's principles. Now the world's judgment is never the judgment of faith. They expect results, and will not labor except when the object can be commended to their minds as plainly attainable and worthy. Hence it necessarily follows that, in addressing the world, success is to be looked for and proved, in order to establish the utility of the effort; and thus the great moral feature of the church's obedience—viz., to walk by faith, “to go out not knowing whither,” when God's glory calls, is altogether lost, and expediency usurps the place of uncompromising obedience to the word of God. It is not therefore the defects in the constitution of any particular religious society, which render it questionable how a Christian can rightly unite in its efforts. But the obstacle is this, that such societies are in themselves objectionable, because they are not the approved mode of God's agency, however we may rejoice in their objects. That they may succeed in part is possible and likely.

God is accustomed to compassionate our ignorance and to bless the endeavors of His people, so long as the light which He dispenses is faithfully obeyed; and He may have blessed these societies in removing many stumbling blocks which hindered the progress of the saints, and in leading them to a less exceptionable basis of co-operation than they had previously attained. Nevertheless, while they are societies formed on self-chosen principles, for the attainment of one particular end, and whilst they judge of their prosperity as that end is, or is not, obtained, they have not the character which the word of God requires; they fall short of that real union of brethren which is good and pleasant—good in the sight of God, and pleasant to the saints themselves. This may further be illustrated by facts. The question raised as to prayer in the Bible Society, opened the eyes of many to perceive, that, whilst they were associated for a. religions object, they were not pursuing it in a religious way. This led to a separation. And the same object was pursued by those who separated in a way of prayer, and of confessing to the name of Jesus, by requiring faith in the Trinity, as a necessary requisite to membership. The great difficulty generally understood to have been found by the pious individuals engaged in forming the new society, was the danger of forming a church. That the effort of forming a society on really Scriptural grounds had this tendency, was made very apparent by the fact of some of its first able and zealous promoters

drawing back when they perceived whereunto it would grow, and that they were in that instance really acting on a principle which condemned themselves.

The very same principle contended for, separation from heretics, and godly co-operation as needful for the pursuance of an end where God's glory was concerned, was ably turned against the promoters of the new society by the advocates of the old. We cannot but mark the hand of God in this, in making the effort instrumental in opening the minds of many to a more just apprehension of the fellowship of the saints, both in worship and service. But the fears of the founders of the society were groundless. There was one hindrance to approximation too closely to a church form; and this was, that there was something besides the possession of the one spirit necessary to membership—money. The subscriber of a certain sum fixed as minimum, if he would confess to the Trinity, was registered as a member; and thus whilst a barrier was raised against the free admission of every saint who might desire to co-operate, but could not by reason of his inability to pay the required sum, the door was sufficiently widened to admit the worldly professor, or even the profane.

Allowing the zeal and piety of the managers of this society, it may be asked, have they not reversed the order of their most blessed motto, and given to beneficence towards man the priority over God's glory? and if we waive the objection as to the non-exclusion of the worldly or profane, and suppose that they can meet as those who in sincerity worship and serve the Lord, there is yet one very simple way in which it may be shown, that this society (for the institution of which we may we thankful) does still stop short of the one great principle of union. The society meets, its scriptural character is set forth, its principle is extolled for its catholicity. The souls, it may be, of many are refreshed by the fervor and spirituality of those who address them; but if the question were put, Can those who seem so united meet together in the Lord's appointed ordinance of fellowship—the Lord's supper, the answer is, No! For the object of man's necessities primarily, and God's glory indeed remotely, they can unite, but for God's glory in His own appointed way they cannot; and why? Because they are a society, whose end is answered stopping short of this; but where God's own glory is concerned—that is, in the oneness of His children, where His own appointed way is proposed, immediately difficulties arise, and a sectarian spirit is still manifested, and the landed catholicity is found to be ill-grounded. (To be continued.)

Chapter 186

Religious Societies: Part 2

(Continued from page 13.)

From this brief statement it is hoped that the question may be raised in the minds of some, not whether a society be properly constituted and properly managed, but whether it is God's own means of acting; and to help to form a judgment there are some few considerations to be added. Only let it be again repeated, that in anything said here it is not intended to deny that God has blessed and owned them. But since their principle is unchangeable, if this is faulty, we are not to set down that to the society which is only ascribable to the sovereignty of God's grace, using any means according to the good pleasure of His will. And first, these societies have doubtless been very useful to the church in setting before it those works on which it ought to be engaged, and in stirring up much individual energy. But this has been greatly counterbalanced by the use which has been made of them, as if they had arisen from a healthy state of the church, instead of owing their existence entirely to its failure in its own bounden duty. The existence of so many societies for religious purposes has been hastily and unwarrantably assumed to be a ground for congratulation; whereas the object of them all would have been attained by the healthful state of the church in itself, in holy separation from the world, through the energy of the indwelling Spirit dispensing the streams of life. Men have united and concentrated their power for some present temporal object; and Christians have followed their wisdom, and have almost practically forgotten that, although worldly objects of pursuit may be obtained by worldly association, yet is there one thing, without which Christian service can never be fully, or other than partially effective, and this is the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is very much to be feared that an active and busy zeal, stirred up by the means of societies, has helped on very fearfully the error of the church in rejecting virtually its present portion, the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost. “Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.” It is the necessary consequence, when we are looking to our own multiplied means, to say we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and not to know that we are poor, and blind, and miserable, and naked. It is an important consideration, exemplified in the conduct of the Jews during our Lord's ministry, that there may be much bustle and activity even apparently about the things of the Lord, and yet Luke warmness in reference to the Lord Himself, and rapid progress toward the consummation of apostasy.

Connected with this is another evil, which is, that the society instead of a means soon becomes an end. It is its prosperity that is looked to. The end of its agency and ramifications is, that the society may flourish. Now if a society be not God's way of advancing His own glory, however excellent it may be for the end it proposes, the moment that it becomes the object to sustain and to support, an opening is made for the flesh in all its rivalry and self-seeking. Besides, the maintenance of the society, being almost unconsciously the object of its agency, must lead to a certain kind of worldly prudence which would conceal its miscarriages, and only put forth its success. For example, we read of one case it may be of deep interest, and are and ought to be thankful for it; yet that one

case is stated in an isolated manner, and we have not before us at all a fair statement of the proceedings of the society. Now in the church, if it flourishes, it becomes what God set it to be, His witness in a dark world. It does not flourish from any power extrinsic to itself, or from any adventitious circumstances, but from the energy of the Spirit working mightily in it; and it is impossible to seek the prosperity of the church, without seeking the glory of God. And the blessing of the church is, that its resources are from within: if it goes without itself to the world for aid, it virtually forgets that God is its strength; and the practical result of this seeking after outward resources has been to exclude the help of God.

Again it may be said, that religious societies have been the means of calling into activity much energy, which would otherwise have remained dormant. And this is doubtless true; and we have seen not only the acknowledgment of lay co-operation, but likewise the strange inconsistency of lay management in societies, which would hesitate about the propriety of employing an unordained missionary. But however this may have tended to disabuse some minds of the prejudice that everything of a religions nature was to be done through a clergy, it has been one of the evils arising from the management of a society, that it has greatly tended to lower the value of church order. In the church, those who role and have the control of things affecting the well-being of the church are not elected or supplanted by others who may be chosen to succeed them. In a communion of saints, there may be one only with the gift of rule, or there may be several; but if they have grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, they cannot be superseded by others having even the like gift in a greater measure. There would be room for the different exercise of all the gifts; and thankfully should they be received. The disposition of these things is in the hands of the Lord; but is this recognized in the constitution of any society?

The entire management of religious societies is left to the control of a Committee, or a board of directors. Now a Committee, or directory, is that which has suggested itself to worldly prudence, as the readiest and easiest way of furthering its own plans. Christians have therefore in this instance borrowed from the world. They have not the power to delegate the government of themselves, in the things in which they are engaged, if indeed they be the things of God, to those in whom they may choose to confide. True it is indeed, that according to apostolic rule and practice, where money was concerned, it was left to the people to select those gifted of God as competent for the service (see Acts 6; 1 Cor. 16:3,4; 2 Cor. 8:19, 20). But the Committee of a religious society is entrusted with far more than a faithful application of its funds. Looking at religious societies, either as Bible or Missionary societies, the committee have the control of translations in the one, a most important work indeed, and of the missionaries in the other, which is equally important. Now these functions are the very highest in the church, and yet they are formally delegated from year to year to a nominated committee. Surely such a proceeding at once shows, that they are not recognized as so placed of God; for if they were, there needed not the renewal of their commission. And then to whom do the Committee so constituted stand in immediate responsibility? If they held any church place, their responsibility would at once be to the source from whence their power was derived—that is, the great Head of the church Himself. But however fitted and gifted, even by Him, a number of individuals forming a committee might be for the execution of so important a trust, yet being dependent on annual choice for their existence, the sense of direct responsibility to Him is much deadened; and, what is of importance too, it tends to induce forgetfulness of individual responsibility, “as every man hath received the gift, so minister the same, as good stewards of the

manifold grace of God."

It is a serious consideration for Christians to weigh well the question, whether either in appointing a committee or being appointed to it, they are not indirectly interfering with the Headship of the Lord. For what office recognized of Him does a committee hold? what gifts given by Him does it pretend to? In fact the constitution of societies has necessarily given rise to very lax notions on the point of church government, as if it were a matter left either to our tastes, or will, or convenience. And it may be soberly said, that the powers which a committee pretends to exercise are unheard of in the church, such as the college of apostles never thought of asserting—viz., so completely controlling the agency it employs, as effectually to hinder the liberty of the Spirit of God. If the Spirit should now as plainly forbid a missionary to preach the gospel in a given region, as Paul was forbidden to preach it in Asia, the Committee might still say, That is your sphere, there you must remain, till we tell you to move. And this is not hypothetical; a society constituted as religious societies are seeks to carry into a heathen land the arrangements it has for religious instruction in its own country. A station is selected by the Committee—a missionary sent forth—a mission house and chapel built—a school established; but after years of labor the preaching has not been found to be owned of God. The missionary cannot shake off the dust of his feet and go where a door may have been opened of the Lord, because the society has now a property in the station; and it is no uncommon thing in India to see men of God tied down to a station by the assimilation of their labor to the model of an establishment, whose love of souls would lead them to declare the glad tidings to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. And this hindrance to the liberty of the Spirit almost necessarily arises from the constitution of a religious society.

Religious Societies: Part 3

The utter in-subjection of the minds of Christians to real church authority in the Spirit has doubtless been materially helped on by the introduction of the worldly expedient of a committee into a society professedly religions. Nor does the evil end here. We find among the agents of the several societies many able and gifted individuals; but in their place as agents or secretaries of societies, what are they as given of the Lord? Are they apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, or evangelists? Surely not—they hold no church office at all. It is no office given of the Lord or owned of Him. Nothing surely but being misled by the desire of doing good could possibly have induced so many men of piety to put themselves in so anomalous a position. It need hardly be added, that the constant habit of appealing to a worldly auditory leads them for the most part into very low and meager statements of truth; and some have not thought it beneath them to amuse their hearers, instead of simply stating what God has wrought. The mischief arising from this entire disregard of church office and church order, through the setting aside of both by societies, is incalculable.

But then it may be said what are the saints to do? Now the object of this paper is rather to awaken inquiry as to the wrongness of their present means, that they may seek to ascertain the way of the Lord more perfectly, than to say, Here is a perfect plan into which you may at once come. There is a perfect plan, God's own plan—His own society—the church; but who can say we have attained unto it? And that which is specially intended to be pressed on the minds of God's children is, that the very existence of the societies in question is a proof of the fallen and low state of the church, and calling for humiliation and sorrow, rather than congratulation. The word surely is, “Be zealous and repent.”

There is one simple way however of proceeding, and that is, immediately, without regard to consequence, to leave off doing evil. Let the children of God separate from the unholy and disobedient, and conform their plans, not to the judgment of man, but to the mind of Christ. But further, the church has been shown its deficiencies and lack of service, and bounden duty. Let it importunately seek of the Lord of the harvest to send forth missionaries both at home and abroad, men of faith and prayer, and simply dependent on the Holy Spirit, without the expensive machinery of a society taking upon itself to send them. If there are such to be found—those whose desire it is, constrained by the love of Christ, to go forth to the heathen, taking nothing of them; assuredly the children of God will be ready to help them on their way after a godly sort, that they may be fellow-workers to the truth (2 John 6-8). But let them not go forth thus provided only, but likewise in the fullest sympathy of the church, and strengthened with all the counsel and wisdom, that the Lord may have given to it in any of His servants, so that they might feel assured that in their difficulties they were not alone. Thus would they be made to feel their entire dependence on God, and at the same time perfect liberty of giving themselves up to the guidance of His Spirit, whilst the knowledge of a loving and watchful oversight on the part of others would alike tend to check the hastiness, or stir up the sluggishness, of the flesh. And so also as to Bibles—have Christians done well in letting the sacred deposit committed to them out of their hands? Are translations of the scriptures to be entrusted to the superintendence of those who do not stand as acknowledged to

have received those gifts by which the church is edified? Persons are often placed in this position of most solemn responsibility from their rank, influence, wealth, or learning, none of which renders a man competent to judge of a version of the Scriptures. All that are spiritual do know how that the exercise of the mere cultivated human understanding is disposed to draw inferences from the word of God which that word itself forbids. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth; even as Jesus is the truth itself, and the Spirit alone can guide into all truth. It is sorrowfully known from the agitation of the question, how little the real inspiration of the Scriptures is held by men of decided piety, and how soon and how easily such a principle would lead men to be content with a paraphrase instead of a translation.

Let not however the mischiefs arising from the constitution of societies be used as a cloak for slothfulness—hindering the saints from undertaking in God's own way the work they have engaged in. The foolishness of God is wiser than man. Let it therefore be shown that, with much less of palpable display, the work is more effectually done, when only undertaken in the Spirit and for God's glory, than when undertaken with the most promising human means for an end, however good, short of it.

Again let it be repeated that, in nothing that has been said, is there the intention of speaking to the disparagement of any religious society. The aim of this paper is to show merely that it is not God's way of proceeding. Let us most thankfully own, that their objects are of very deep importance, and rejoice in the measure of good they have effected. Let us again also see in them how gracious God is, in bearing with the experiments of our own wisdom, and in leading us by His gentleness, through our own failures, to the knowledge of His truth and of His ways.

J. L. H. (Concluded from page 27.)

Chapter 188

The Rest, the Word, and the Priesthood

Hebrews 4

Three things are spoken of here: one that we have not yet and two that we have.

The thing we have not yet is God's rest. “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” The prophet says, “Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted.” We are partakers of the divine nature, and we must rest where He rests.

The other two things are the word of God and the priesthood of Christ. But in speaking of this help by the way, let me refer to that in which all is absolute perfection, to show the difference between our standing before God, and that which is a help more for infirmity than for sin. We have to learn—if we have not yet learned—the place in which we are set through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first exercises of the heart do not enter into this portion at all—those which we have when we do not know our place, when we try to do good and do it not. This is not the path of the people of God as such, but rather the way into it. The place of the Christian is in perfect acceptance before God, with every question of sin completely settled. Just as with Israel: they were delivered from the place they were in; God's judgment met by the blood upon the door-post; and themselves brought through the Red Sea to Himself. “I bare you on eagles' wings to Myself.” That is where the Christian is: the veil rent; and we now before God without any veil at all, though it may be on our hearts through unbelief, of which I do not speak now.

As far as God's government goes, all are in relationship with Him, but I speak now of the relationship of the heart. Every possible trial of man has been made, and it only comes out that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Christ has been rejected, and the world has no place before God at all, though His love goes out toward it; for He has had His purpose and thought of grace ever since Adam fell, and believers enter into a place in which they are in relationship with God. We have to see where we are, when the whole world is lying in wickedness. Men own Christ outwardly, that He died on the cross, &c., and go on just as they did before. You cannot call that relationship where there is nothing real. There remains a rest even for God's people, just as Israel were journeying on to Canaan; they cannot have rest in a world which is contrary to Christ. We are exercised in the wilderness; we are in conflict too with wicked spirits in heavenly places: and this is not rest. Israel will get their rest in time; let us drop that for the moment, and apply it to ourselves. It is a blessed thought, that there will be rest and joy for this poor sin-stricken world, but for us it is a heavenly rest—we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ. Where God can rest in His love, we can rest. If God rests in His love, there is nothing wanting. He is active now in His love, seeking to save that which was lost; but this is not rest. He rests in His love when those whom He has brought by His love are there, and no single thing lacking to their enjoyment. It is ours, that rest; but we are not there yet. Christ is waiting too. He does not yet see the full result of the travail of His soul, but He will do so, and be satisfied. That

rest, of course, is according to God's nature. He brings, us now “holy and without blame before Him in love,” having the adoption of sons, knowing God as our Father; and the blessed rest of God's people is also according to His nature. And it is all revealed now, the veil is rent, and all that is revealed, which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, the Father fully revealed in the Son, the essence of all the blessing. The more spiritual we become, the more we learn what it all is. The figures of it are in revelation, where the spiritual apprehension lays hold of it, so that we can live in it; but it is clear we have not yet come to it.

It is a mistake to speak of this rest as a rest of conscience. “We that have believed do enter into rest” only means the character of those who enter; as one might say, Men come in by this door, and women by that; not that any are come in now. We have rest in the sense of ceasing from our own works for righteousness, but not in the heavenly sense of which this scripture speaks.

But then all has been completely brought out now: the gospel is not promise; “the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared.” The work is all completely finished and revealed. The moment the Son of God was rejected, all that could be done to test man's heart had been done; and He says “Now is the judgment of this world.” For when Christ was here in perfect love and goodness, revealing the Father, He had to say, “The world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee.” He appeals to the righteous Father to judge between them.

Man then—Christ—is in the divine glory, because He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do: there, when He had finished it, and because He had finished it. And Paul says he did not know the Christ Who came to be Messiah among the Jews. They had forfeited all the promises; and it was all over with Jew and Gentile; and there was no relationship that God recognized at all. Man is cast out of the first paradise, but set in Christ in the heavenly paradise; and between the two there is nothing really that God owns. “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Satan was the prince of the world before; but he was never called it until the cross, where the world proved what it was: not a question of the responsibility of man, but the proof that he is enmity against God, and that he will not have Him on any terms. But in that God wrought His own work—the work He had always had in His mind before the foundation of the world, and, as the fruit of it, Christ is in heaven. (Of course, He always had been there, but I speak now of Christ as Man.)

The more we dwell upon it, the more we shall see the whole question of good and evil definitively settled at the cross. The perfect wickedness of man was fully brought out there; the disciples ran away; and all the rest were delighted in getting rid of the Lord, saying, Aha! Aha! so would we have it. There man entirely rejected the Lord; and this is what we are ourselves, our natural state.

On the other hand, when the wickedness of man's heart is brought out, then see Man perfect (in Christ of course), absolute obedience at all cost, even to the cup and the curse, perfect love to the Father; “that the world may know that I love the Father, even so I do.” That love was shown really and perfectly where He was made sin. See Man in His perfectness here glorifying God at all cost; God revealed in His majesty, Who could not let His own Son be spared when He had put Himself in that place; His judgment against sin, the thought of which made the Lord sweat great drops of blood; and all this done for us. He “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Morally speaking, the whole question of good and evil was resolved: Satan's power, the wickedness of man, the perfection of Man, and the nature of God, all fully brought out.

It is not now a question of probation, but of believing in God, a thing so settled that He has set the One Who did it at His own right hand. He was perfectly glorified in the place where Christ was made sin, and Man is sitting at the right hand of God in glory. It is all done; and this is what the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal to us.

Exercises of heart there will be, finding out what we are, that in our flesh dwells no good thing—that we are the very persons who were thus manifested at the cross. But I find too, that, being one of those having the evil nature, it was all met at the cross—a settled thing to faith. He would not have the twelve legions of angels, but went on to the end. “I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

When thoroughly convinced of sins and sin, when before God in the full conviction of what I am, I get, Christ instead of myself: He is before God for me. Not at all that the sin is nothing, but that Christ has borne it all for me; and God has accepted this as meeting it completely and absolutely, giving me not a legal righteousness, but infinitely beyond that, a place in glory in virtue of the work which has perfectly glorified God. But the sense of this is not until we have done with all confidence in self—a very subtle thing. A man does not, set about saying there is something in me to trust, but goes on as if there were, and as yet has not the liberty spoken of in Romans 8.

I am utterly condemned, and taking my place under the righteous judgment of God, I find Christ is not on the cross now, but is sitting on the right hand of God, after He has been on the cross, where all I was as a child of Adam is done away, and I am sanctified by the will of God, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” He is sitting there at rest, because He has finished the work (without speaking now of the work He is daily ministering to us).

If I am looking for anything to put away my sins, it is not believing in the finished work of Christ. Therefore the apostle says, in Heb. 9, “then must Christ often have suffered.” There is for this nothing to be done, but it is done— “no more conscience of sins.” It is not that one does not fail; but when looking up to God, faith cannot have a thought that God imputes anything. And why so? Because Christ is sitting at the right hand of God when He had purged our sins.

If I go in faith, I go through the rent veil—His flesh—into the holiest of all with boldness, because He Who accomplished the work is there; I find Him there when I go. I press this, because you are not on the full true ground of liberty before God until the thought of imputation, when you put yourself in the presence of God, has completely disappeared. It is well to put yourselves there to test your souls. Supposing I stand before the judgment seat, why, the One Who is there is the One Who bore my sins! I see it more every day, that the whole question of the church's ruin hangs upon this; whether or not the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. People speak of Christ bearing their past sins; but there is no sense in saying Christ bore my sins up to the 16th July! He was there before God meeting the whole question of sin, and He sits down because it is all settled. God has made death and judgment, like the Red Sea, to be a wall on my right hand and my left.

What then comes of our present life? The first thing to get quite clear is, that my place before God is Christ's place every instant. “No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” How can you condemn one who is in Christ? It is absurd, and the apostle says it triumphantly.

But what do we get as to what is going on now? It is not a question of imputation at all; but we have to do with the same Christ Who is the perfect Witness to God's satisfaction.

I am here, a poor weak creature, exposed to all sorts of snares and temptations; and we have the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, which comes and judges; it runs right through, and says, What is this in your heart? Is that in accordance with the light? No buts, nor ifs; there is no excuse: you are brought into the light. It shows me things I never suspected before—all things naked and open. The word is God's eye, prying into my heart, and showing me what suits that eye, judging not merely acts but the thoughts and intents of the heart.

But, supposing all the thoughts and intents of my heart were as perfect as possible, still I am a poor weak creature, to whom the priesthood of Christ applies. There are snares all round—the world, and Christian friends who are not spiritually-minded; and I have to go through all that—all the difficulty and trial that comes from those who do not wish the cross to be quite what it is. We are in danger in passing through the world; and so I have Christ, Who has met every difficulty and temptation (and ten thousand times more than we do), and understands it all, not only in the divine, but also in the experimental, way. But for the evil movements of my heart, I want the hatchet; for the difficulties, trials, etc. I have got the throne of grace, yea, God Himself, the perfect and adequate supply of all grace to overcome.

The priesthood of Christ does not apply to sins. Many a one who does not quite know that he is perfected forever, if he gets into a low state, goes to Christ, just as if he could not go to God. I have a High Priest there, and I go to the throne of grace; it is for help in time of need, not for sin. For this He is Advocate.

If you go to Christ about your sins, as if He was to go about them to God, this is not what He does as Priest: He, the Priest, is to obtain, grace for me, that I should not sin; He is always there to obtain every needed grace to help in time of need. It is impossible a temptation can be too strong for us, for He is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. By Him we have all the strength of God. We go to the throne of grace, and get what is needed for seasonable help.

The Epistle never connects the priesthood with sin; it is well you should feel it, that you may not think you may sin, and then run to the Priest to get it set straight. But supposing I fail and sin (which we all do), then I have an Advocate with the Father. It is not then going to God to get grace and strength; but fellowship with the Father must be restored. Fellowship is interrupted if I even allow a sinful thought; it were blasphemy to say He could have fellowship with that. I go then, not doubting His love, yet not cheerful and happy, as if nothing had happened: while the righteousness in which I stand is not touched, communion is destroyed. If I allow anything that is not of God, communion is interrupted: and “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father;” this is about our sins. But mark what he adds that there may be no cloud— “Jesus Christ, the righteous.” Why bring in that word? Because our righteousness is not touched; it all remains in unalterable value.

Grace has brought me to walk in the light, as God is in the light; and, after communion is broken, He interferes to restore it. If I look at the sins as interrupting my standing before God, is Christ then my righteousness? The effect of His work is to put me into the light, there to judge of everything as He does. There is no other place for a man except that of being in his sins.

The moment there is anything inconsistent with the presence of God, in the measure in which I realize it, communion is interrupted. Then do I lose the position of grace? Not at all. He interferes to break me down about my sin, to make me judge the root—the place where I got away from the path. My soul has to go through the judgment of it all; and there I do get the question of sin raised, but then it is as Advocate with the Father.

If I think of the priesthood, I am before God perfected forever. But though this is true, I am a poor weak creature going through the wilderness and there is infinite strength for me, and He is my Priest, representing me before God. We never can excuse ourselves if we fail, because He is faithful. There may be unwatchfulness (and we may not have time to overcome), and negligence in prayer or in using the means God has given; but I never can excuse myself.

Have your hearts right open before God. Do not leave any chambers locked up before Him, or you cannot have joy and liberty. You may walk well outwardly without scandalizing anybody; but if you have anything in your heart not open before God, you have lost your communion; and there is what tends to weaken your whole path.

There are two things: the believer's full apprehension that before God there is no more conscience of sins; if you have not reached it, never rest till you do. He has perfected forever those that are sanctified. Yet the fact remains that we are poor, weak, infirm creatures; and we are put through all sorts of trials to exercise us; and He is my Priest where the intention is right. My will must be broken, things I do not suspect brought out. But, even if I fail, the advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteousness; and in this there is no progress and no change,

I urge it upon you distinctly and definitely—for the loss of it was the very ruin of the church—and for your own souls, not to rest till you have “no more conscience of sins;” then, not only watchfulness against evil, but growing up unto Him in all things; but no perfectness till we are like Him in glory. Meanwhile press toward the mark.

The Lord give us diligence and earnestness of heart thus to follow Christ.

Samuel, the Last Judge of Israel

That revealed truth is primarily for the conscience is perhaps nowhere more clearly seen than in the inspired history of Israel after their entrance into the land of Canaan. A consecutive history of the eventful period of the Judges would interest a student; but the Bible must in everything be worthy of its Author and consistent with its design as addressed to men after the fall. Even more than creation, it declares the glory of God. His ways are made known by it, and the results to His praise, if to the shame of men, are clearly set forth; but a consecutive history is not given. For the end in view all is perfect, though chronological and similar difficulties may detain the critic. The danger to such is, that a brief life may be wasted in barren discussions and the soul perish.

But besides this, there is another danger from the tendency to ignore the testimony these histories give to our own true state and condition in the sight of God, and thus the conscience, though addressed, is not reached. While written for our admonition (1 Cor. 10:11), there are those who refuse to be admonished, and who limit their sense of sin to their own personal consciousness and observation of it. This must be imperfect. “Who can understand his errors?” Who can discern in every failure, great or small, the outcome of the one terrible corrupt nature common to the whole race since Adam's transgression? A drop is not the ocean; but analysis shows that the same elements are in the drop that are found in the ocean. So in every sin are the elements of all sin. But so serious a view of the matter is rarely taken. There are very many who agree with the Duchess of Buckingham, when in writing to the Countess of Huntingdon, she said, “It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with rank and good breeding.” This confidence in the flesh is invariably associated with ignorance of the true grace of God as revealed in His word (1 Peter 5:12), and often, as in this case, with opposition to it. The Christian should have no such confidence (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 7:18; 8:18).

We need not question the sincerity of the people of Israel when they promised again and again amid the solemn scenes at Sinai, “All that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient.” Or again, when notwithstanding the most solemn warnings, they renewed the covenant of works in the plains of Moab. Or yet again, when put in possession of the promised inheritance, they protested to Joshua, “Nay, but we will serve the Lord.” And when he added, “Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve Him,” they said, “We are witnesses” (Ex. 19; 24; Deut. 29; Josh. 24). But if we may hesitate to question their sincerity at the time, we cannot be ignorant that, with every help and incentive to obedience, they were invariably unfaithful; and this unfaithfulness to their covenanted engagements was visited, in the righteous government of God, with sore judgments, as Moses and Joshua warned them. How serious a matter it is then to make solemn promises and vows to the Lord and not fulfill them! “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for He hath no pleasure in fools” (Ecc. 5:5).

It was asked in this magazine some years ago, “Does man make a covenant in the sacraments?” The answer (decidedly in the negative) ended thus, “The whole Christian position is thereby lost, and we are put simply where a Jew under the law was—and worse, because he was placed there that we might learn that we could not possibly stand there.” But who will learn? What is more common in Christendom than making a covenant in the sacraments, and, notwithstanding all the advantages of “rank and good breeding,” with no better results than were found in. Israel? Soon after they had bound themselves by the most solemn compact, and for the third time, to serve the Lord, we are told that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes;” which surely means that he did wrong, and how wrong we may learn from the last five chapters of Judges, which in historic order precede the earlier chapters, and describe events that happened while Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was high priest. Chastisements followed, as Joshua foretold. Their enemies brought them into captivity, but the long-suffering mercy of God raised up deliverers from time to time. Samuel, the last of these, was called when their state was most deplorable. When weakened by civil war, broken down by seven captivities, deprived of every provision for approaching the Lord in His appointed way, the ark removed, the tabernacle an abandoned tent, the priests fallen by the sword, and Ichabod pronounced on the people, he entered upon his service under every discouragement. In other respects also his case was exceptional. The judges before him, for the most part, had been raised up by the Lord in answer to the repentant cry of the people, Samuel was not. His mother alone prayed for him. They were distinguished by deeds of prowess. He was not. They in some cases drew thousands at once to their standard. He for twenty years saw no fruit to his testimony. Though “all Israel knew from Daniel to Beersheba that he was established to be a prophet of the Lord,” the word by him was unheeded. The people, indifferent to all, acquiesced in their bondage. Still Samuel's spirit was submissive; he had faith in God, and His word. He did not exalt himself or make haste, He had time for God, and God in His. grace would give a time for him. Dr. J. Lightfoot said of the result, when “all Israel lamented [or was drawn together] after the Lord,” that “the great conversion in Acts 2:4 is the only parallel to it.” And here we may observe that it is probable that remarkable spiritual movements in the church of God may have been foreshadowed in the history of the deliverances of Israel at this time. From the fact that there were just twelve Judges and seven captivities a typical meaning may be intended; but without further light than appears to be given to any yet, we must wait to understand this.

Idolatry was the besetting sin of Israel, as in a more subtle form it has been, and is, the sin of the church (1 John 5:21), and it was with this that Samuel had to contend. The Lord had put a, check on the Philistines by Shamgar and Samson, but the people themselves must deal with their idols, “If ye do return unto the Lord with all your heart, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you.” At such a crisis this was the first and deepest need, and must precede a true gathering to the Lord. It is idolatry in the church that hinders this now. “And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh” (Watch-tower), the place of expectation. This the enemy at once resisted; the lords of the Philistines immediately went up against them, and they were afraid. But false confidence was gone. They said not again, “Let us fetch the ark that it may save us,” but they entreated Samuel, “Cease not to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.” They were learning Hannah's lessons and taking a true measure of everything. They were finding out, as an old Puritan minister said, that “nothing is secure that hangs at the girdle of the creature.” Even the priestly family had failed them, and they asked not for one of them; but “they drew water and poured it out before the Lord” (comp. 2 Sam. 14:14), and

confessed their sins. They took the true place of being without strength and ungodly.

What a moment for Samuel! His twenty years of labor were now bearing fruit, and his faith (taught by the Spirit, for he was a prophet) at once reached forward to the sufferings of Christ in the deepest character in which they are set forth in the typical sacrifices. What a testimony was this! There were no preparations for war; nothing that marked him as a champion. He took no weapon. He summoned none to join him. The people at first had been redeemed by the blood of the lamb, and Samuel saw clearly that what was true then must be true now and at all times. The infinite value of that blood was their only confidence in Egypt, and it should be so now in the presence of the Philistines. He therefore at once and without hesitation, though not a priest, “took a sucking lamb and offered it for a burnt offering wholly to the Lord, and cried to the Lord and the Lord heard him.” Observe, it was a burnt offering. The work of grace was seen in the people. Samuel would declare the perfect work of grace for them. They had taken true ground as to themselves. He took the true ground that the perfect work of Christ put them on. In themselves they confessed they were hopelessly bad; but the burnt offering was expressive of the sinless one Who, when made sin, gave Himself up an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor; and in this savor, this infinite delight of God in His Lamb, they must now stand. There was and could be no intermediate ground. It must be wholly themselves, and then they would be lost; or wholly the Lamb and—then they must be saved. Their feelings and their fears were not the Lamb. Granted that to them this was, and could be, set forth only in figure: grace had taught them much about themselves and their enemies which had awakened their fears; why not of the burnt offering that alone could dispel them? “As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel.”

Such then was the faith and such the significant action of the last Judge. Where Shamgar with the ox-goad and Samson by marvelous strength gained only partial and transient successes, Samuel (the man of prayer, but above all the man whose intelligent faith, by the Spirit, rested on the sacrifice of Christ) was blessed with a lasting victory. “The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.” Is not this a needed lesson as to prayer? There is a voice also in the simple memorial which Samuel set up to perpetuate the remembrance of the sacrifice, and the deliverance of that day, that has carried hope and consolation to the hearts of millions when surrounding circumstances have filled them with fears. “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” In this we may perhaps rightly see a type of the Great Deliverer, Who has also left a simple memorial of His infinitely precious sacrifice and the everlasting salvation it secures. In one thing there is a difference, and a difference that awakens very sad and painful feelings. We read of no profane hand meddling with Samuel's “stone of help” —the “Ebenezer.” Has it been so with the Lord's supper?

Samuel the Prophet

The quiet certainty which faith in God has imparted to the soul, enabling it calmly and implicitly to obey Him under the most trying circumstances and in every dispensation, is a fact much to be regarded in a skeptical age. The parting with her only child as soon as he was weaned must have been a severe trial to Hannah. As a pious mother it cost her the more, for she knew well that she was not leaving him with a divinely regulated household. Eli had grievously failed in his own family, and the Spirit of God has interspersed with the earliest notices of Samuel the most distressing details of the conduct of Eli's sons, and that in a way that commands our attention. But Hannah knew whom she believed, and her faith was not disappointed. Year by year as she visited Shiloh she was the happy witness of how her child “grew on and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men.”

What then was her warrant for this extraordinary step? It may be replied—her vow. This does not answer the question. Jephthah vowed; but it will scarcely be contended that he had any divine warrant for his vow: Hannah had. Immediately on the redemption of the first-born in Israel from judgment by the blood of the Paschal lamb, the Lord, their Redeemer, claimed them as His own (Exodus and set apart the tribe of Levi in their stead to serve Him. “And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel.... therefore the Levites shall be mine because all the firstborn are mine” (Num. 3). This surely was known to Hannah when she prayed for a man-child, for her husband was a Levite. She was, herself, an eyewitness of the neglect of the sanctuary, and saw that there were none there who cared for the honor of the Lord. She longed, therefore, for one, even though a child, who should recognize His claims, for when all is darkness, the feeblest ray of light makes itself manifest. If no one else would minister to the Lord, as before Him, this man-child might do so to their shame. She made no attack on the evil-doers, neither did she seek to expose their evil ways, but with singleness of purpose sought the Lord's glory by faithful adherence to His word when all around her were abandoning it. The Levites were to be numbered, like the firstborn, from a month old, so that her vow to give her child to the Lord all the days of his life was in accordance with His revealed will. Her husband also approved of it, and this was required (Num. 30:6, 8; 1 Sam. 1:23). The Tabernacle was at Shiloh, and Deut. 18:6, 8, sanctioned her taking Samuel there. In offering the bullocks, she followed the appointed order of consecration (Num. 8), and in giving him to Eli she obeyed the commandment (Num. 3:9).

But to return to Samuel. When in Shiloh he was in the way of seeing the provisions made for Israel in the tabernacle according to the law. They were perfect for their purpose. They showed how willing God was that man should approach Him, if he would come as a sinner by sacrifice. But all this had failed, and another truth dawns upon us here, and is fully set forth in the N. T.—God will draw near to man. This He did to this child. He appeared again in Shiloh. He came, stood, called, and revealed Himself to Samuel by His word. By nature he knew not the Lord (1 Sam. 3:7). In this he was like us all; and he needed this sovereign work of grace by the word in order to know Him (see for us James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23). A revelation from God, perfect as it is, and unspeakably precious, is not sufficient alone. There must also be a revelation of God by it for individual

blessing. Many possess the Bible, and are responsible on this account beyond those who have it not, yet they live and die in ignorance of God. And why? If they want spiritual food, God in giving them the scriptures has not given a stone. “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live” (Deut. 8.). Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found and I did eat them” (Jer. 15:16). Again, the Bereans “were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so, therefore many of them believed” (Acts 18). Proofs indeed are innumerable of blessing to souls by reading the scriptures without note or comment. Augustine in his “Confessions” relates how he was led by hearing a voice (“Tolle, lege.” Take, read) to open again the epistles of Paul (codicem Apostoli) which he had recently been reading: “I read in silence the first place on which my eyes fell (Rom. 13:13-14). I neither cared, nor needed, to read further. At the close of the sentence, as if a ray of certainty was poured into my heart, the clouds of hesitation all fled at once.” Thus the prayers of his pious mother, Monica, were answered. How needed are these words in our day, as to the Bible; “Tolle, lege.” Take, read; for God will magnify His word, it is for man to honor it. As another has said, “Oh that men knew how much hangs upon it! How would they seek that God, and His revelations might remain in their integrity. Here alone are the springs and power of a life and walk of faith; and here is the only guide by which the poor heart of man can be delivered from the mazes of a multiform error, and the wretched trammels of a growing superstition.”

The first lesson Samuel was set to learn was to know and obey the voice of the Lord, for when called of Him he ran at first to Eli. As a child, the age and the sacred office of the high priest naturally exercised a commanding influence over him; but this is not by any means a danger confined to the young. How numerous are the instances in which a too ready subjection of the conscience, which is due to God only, is rendered to the usurped authority of men! Indeed, who in Christendom has not suffered from it more or less? The solemn thing is, as we see here, that where the heart runs after men, in the same degree it leaves God, and the door is then open to make His commandments of none effect through man's tradition. All will remember how unsparingly this was dealt with by the Lord Jesus, no doubt provoking the hostility of the scribes and elders against Him. And further, in describing those who shall never perish and to whom He gives eternal life, the characteristic mark is, that they hear His voice and follow Him, while a stranger they will not follow (John 10). Even so devoted a servant and an apostle as Peter grievously failed when he yielded to the influence of some who came from James (Gal. 2), but when the supreme and absolute authority of God was reestablished in his soul, no inspired writings are more practical than his as to obedience to Him.

In the case of Samuel, the Lord in rich grace repeated the call until he was effectually separated from man to Himself. Happy result of persistent grace! How every truly delivered soul is indebted to it.

Samuel, alone with the Lord, is taught of Him the true condition of the scene he is in and the judgment about to come upon it (1 Sam. 3:11-14). It is the only place and way of entering simply and without bias into prophetic truth, and the prophetic truth is essential to a true witness, for the cunning craft of the adversary is always directed to keeping up a false confidence to the last moment. This was seen in the camp of Israel. Hophni and Phinehas, with inconceivable hardihood, took the ark of God from the holiest into their midst. They were not afraid “to dare the

glory in its face," to minister to the superstitious cravings of the people, and to magnify their own importance among them. Then the judgment of God made manifest to all what was already known to Samuel. Strange and painful teaching for one so young, yet how needed to preserve him in the midst of the iniquity of those outwardly near the Lord yet in heart and ways far from Him. Shall it be lost on us, when the all-pervading principles of a superficial Christianity are rapidly assuming features so similar to that time, and confidence in ordinances, and ordinances taken out of their place, are becoming more universal?

Beyond and above all knowledge of truth, Samuel, child as he was, had the unspeakably happy consciousness that he was called, chosen, and loved of the Lord; and this carried him through all the scenes of trial, sorrow, and difficulty of that momentous period, and enabled him to render effectual help to the people when by sin they had forfeited everything. (This will come before us if permitted to consider his conduct as the judge of Israel). If they knew from Daniel even to Beersheba that he was established to be a prophet of the Lord, they learned too that as a prophet he could and would pray for them (Gen. 20:7).

Chapter 191

Samuel's Farewell Address

The first government given to Israel was the highest conceivable—the direct government of God. They could say with truth, “The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King.” That they should prove themselves unworthy of this supreme honor, this exalted government, which set them above all the nations of the earth, might perhaps be expected; but that they should reject it was the basest ingratitude, and, surrounded as they were by powerful enemies on all sides, the greatest folly. It was this grave dishonor put upon the Lord which called forth the address that now invites our attention. “They have not rejected thee,” God said to Samuel, “but they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them.”

We need not dwell now on Samuel's challenge as to his own conduct among them from childhood. It evidently afforded no excuse for their sin, and this they own. He was free therefore to remind them of the faithful and merciful ways of the Lord with them, and for this the prophet was eminently fitted, not only by his gifts but by his experiences. His memorial (Ebenezer) tells us how he loved to recall past help and deliverances, and he could well bid them “stand still, that he might reason with them before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to them and their fathers.” It is probable that we have only a brief summary of this address, but the scope of the retrospect which he takes is complete. He begins with Jacob going down into Egypt, and he continues it to his own time when, notwithstanding all their sins, “the Lord had delivered them out of the hand of their enemies on every side, and they dwelled safe.” What a moment to manifest their distrust of Him! What a time to desire a man to take the place of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel!

But we shall be in danger of falling under the condemnation of the hypocrite in Matt. 7:4-5 if, while dwelling on their sin, we lose sight of the ingratitude and folly of the church, and it may be of ourselves. That God was present in the church of a truth even strangers owned where His word was obeyed. That Christ by the Spirit was supreme, the Son over the house of God, is clearly revealed. That there were diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administration, but the same Lord diversities of operations, but the same God Who worketh all in all, is insisted on in scripture with peculiar emphasis. But when the pure worship of God by the Spirit declined, and confidence in the flesh revived, when the love of Christ waned and delight in His assured presence with those gathered to His name failed, the desire for a visible head arose. The spiritual rule and order of 1 Cor. 12 xiv. no longer sufficed, nay, was even counted as disorder, and contentions began as to what was to take its place. Enemies poured in on every side, grievous wolves not sparing the flock, and even those who ought to have fed it as the flock of God, sought to draw the sheep after themselves and thus have flocks of their own. But Paul, who foresaw the danger, pointed out the only resource—return to dependence on God, and obedience of His word. “And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20). Paul's farewell address and Samuel's are remarkably alike; and the church has heeded the one as little as Israel the other.

This digression seemed to be needed, but the reader will judge. We return to the address. With intense solemnity Samuel told them that, although the Lord will never change His purposes, He assuredly would change His method of procedure with them, and God accompanied the warning with thunder and rain, although it was wheat-harvest, a sign that, if it reminded them of the discomfiture of the Philistines at Mizpah, it also bore witness to their own danger of provoking the anger of the Lord as they had done. As to the divine purpose he said, “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” This is absolute; the sovereign purpose of love which nothing can change. Israel is “the dearly beloved of His soul” (Jer. 12:7). But, as they had desired a king and thrown off their allegiance to the Lord, Samuel told them plainly that in this self-chosen position all would depend on their conduct, “If ye shall do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.”

And here we may again pause, because, for abiding peace and humble submission under the mighty hand of God, it is most important for every Christian to distinguish, as Samuel did here, between the purposes of God for His people and His ways with them. In His absolute and unchanging grace “He will not forsake them,” though in His dealings in government “He will consume them.” According to the conclusions of the natural mind these two principles are so opposed that any attempt to reconcile them would appear to be hopeless, and, as a fact, two schools of doctrine divide Christendom on them. Yet to faith there is no difficulty, for faith brings in God. They simply resolve themselves into this, Is the Lord not to use the rod with a people whom He loves and saves? Or shall He not save a people on whom He may inflict the rod? Christians are sadly afraid of an “if,” although it is a very salutary little word to a dormant conscience. The effort to get rid of the whole point of the exhortation in Heb. 12:29, “For our God is a consuming fire,” by interpreting it, “God out of Christ,” is another proof of the difficulty that some find in this subject. They forget that it is an inspired apostle writing to his brethren who says, “Our God,” and hence the need of grace to worship Him aright (ver. 28). Think of the crowds of professed worshippers every Lord's day and is not the exhortation needed by Christians now as much as by the Hebrews? But in the case of Israel we must bear in mind that when their salvation is spoken of it is as a nation and for the earth, while the salvation which the gospel offers is of individuals and for heaven; but these two principles apply to both. Israel is now cast out of their land, scattered among the nations, and often treated with exceptional rigor, as now in Russia. The question is raised in Rom. 11. Are they cast off as well as cast out? Paul admits the latter, but denies the former. He says that severity characterizes the dealings of God with them now because of their unbelief; but he also says, “all Israel shall be saved." Severity is the dealing of God in government. Salvation is His purpose, the fruit of His grace. They, having forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters, have to learn experimentally the evil of hewing them out cisterns that can hold no water. How soon they proved it in their first king, Saul. His desired reign ended in disaster and death. They are proving it now under the Gentile yoke, which they wickedly preferred to the Prince of life, heartlessly saying to Pilate, to force him to crucify Jesus, “We have no King but Caesar.” And they will finally and more bitterly prove it when they receive the one of whom the Lord spake in John 5, who shall come in his own name, the king who shall do according to his will (Dan. 11:36-39).

No prophecy concerning the sufferings has failed, and assuredly none will, for God will never let His word fall to the ground. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I

punish you for all your iniquities." Shall He prove less faithful as to their promised future blessings? Impossible. "Thus saith the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them" (Jer. 32:42). Would we know something of this good? Read Isa. 60; Isa. 65:17-25; Isa. 66:10-16; (et al. freq.).

And now as to individual souls. The first truth of the gospel is extremely simple—God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3). That is, every believer in Jesus is accounted righteous by God. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" From this first point of blessing, which cannot fail to faith, the Spirit of God leads on to others, until in Romans chap. viii. the purpose of God in them all is disclosed. It is this: to conform all those whom He has justified to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. No higher glory, no more perfect bliss, can be communicated to the creature, and in the purpose and the power of God it shall be reached by all the justified. Their chain of blessings are here seen to stretch from eternity to eternity, and the last link is as certain as the first.

When however we read in Gal. 6, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," we are clearly upon other ground; the ground of the righteous government of God in respect of conduct here. He will visit faults now which he has forgiven for eternity. Hence the Christian's duty is to keep a close watch on himself, for "if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:31). The chastenings specially referred to here are weakness, sickness, and death (ver. 30), and are purely temporal; while condemnation, from which they are distinguished, is eternal. The adorable fullness and clearness with which these two principles are treated in scripture must be our plea for dwelling thus on this part of Samuel's address. Let the reader search for himself, and he will have cause to say with Augustine, "Adoro plenitudinem scripturæ."

A brief word now as to Samuel himself. There was real nobility of character displayed in him at this time, and all by grace. Whatever the ingratitude of the people in desiring his deposition after he had served them from childhood with spotless integrity and sincere devotion; whatever the secret sorrow of his heart for having listened to nature in his old age in making his sons judges, instead of leaving it with the Lord; whatever the shame brought on him by those sons, nothing of self appears. He would still serve the people of God in the only way left, he would not cease to pray for them. He was a man of prayer, an intercessor of whom the Spirit makes honorable mention in later times (Psa. 99; Jer. 15:1). Once indeed he failed, in the matter of his sons, and the elders of Israel took occasion of an aged man's faults to accomplish what their unbelieving hearts were set upon, making it the ostensible reason for asking for a king. The plea was a weak one even if true, but it was not true. It was their utter want of faith in God in the presence of some threatened attack of the Ammonites (ver. 12); Ebenezer was lost on them. They chose their own method of deliverance to their shame and subsequent ruin. Samuel went patiently on, seeking the good of the nation and their king; and the Lord was with him. Saul's course made this unselfish path most difficult and distressing; but in it Samuel was brought to know the man after God's own heart, the king of His sovereign choice, and to share in his rejection. "So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth" (1 Sam. 19:18). It was a beautiful close to a remarkable life. All confidence in the flesh was

gone. The difficult lesson of true separation from it was learned, and Samuel now found all his rest in communion with David at a time when, in his experiences, he was a remarkable type of Him Who “was despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Saul

“ Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,

Who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights;

Who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle.” (2 Sam. 1)

The lamentation of David over Saul discovers a spirit the lack of which may well humble us. There is not a secret word in it suggestive of triumph over a fallen enemy, not an expression of selfish satisfaction at deliverance from his persecution. The cruelly unjust treatment which he had received at the hands of Saul for years, his many personal wrongs are all passed over. David remembers only the brilliant natural qualities which might have adorned a throne but were wholly powerless to shield him from the consequences of his headstrong will.

But if we may not consider the history of Saul in a hard spirit, still less ought we to do so in a careless one. In every view of it the subject is serious. As a warning, there is nothing more solemn, no record of a life with more exalted privileges, the morning of which opened with fairer promise, yet whose night closed in darker despair. But its interest does not end here. It throws light upon subjects the importance of which cannot be overrated.

Saul, as David celebrates in this touching requiem, was “the beauty of Israel “; for natural qualities are only in question. His lofty stature and physical strength, the modesty which he displayed when he was little in his own eyes, his occasional warm and generous impulses, his special endowments for his office, his achievements in war and his munificence as a king, all combine, as we think upon his end, to impress the mind with the sense of the inefficacy of the most splendid advantages to remedy the effects of the fall. How important it is to know the true character of the flesh, to be convinced that the result of every trial has been to prove that man is ruined, and, apart from Christ, is hopelessly ruined by sin! But the pride of life (1 John 2:16) is that element of our fallen nature which, encouraged in the world, refuses to admit the extent of our disgrace. A carnal, unawakened, man will never admit that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the New Testament, especially in the Pauline Epistles, the question is fully and exhaustively considered. While maintaining the responsibility of man and establishing the law, we are taught that on this ground we are lost, and that God in His love has provided for faith another and a totally different ground in Christ for all who believe in Him. The law made the blessing of God conditional and pronounced a curse on the evil doer. Not so the grace of God. It brings salvation (Titus 2:11). In Saul and David we shall find these fundamental principles illustrated and confirmed. The mercies of David were “sure mercies.” Saul's were taken from him (2 Sam. 7:15-16).

It is undeniable that God in His sovereignty has blessed man unconditionally. On what ground have the many millions of our race from the days of Noah enjoyed seed time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night? Have these been conditional blessings? John Newton said, “If the most

patient man that ever lived had the ruling of the earth, he could not stand it for a single day." What a mercy it is then that these millions have every day to do with God and not with men. It is clear from Gen. 8:20-22 that it is solely on the ground of sacrifice, of Noah's burnt offering, a type of Christ, that we have these blessings. If bestowed on that of the conduct of men, they would have been forfeited long ago. This establishes the principle.

Now the blessings bestowed on Israel and on their first king were not unconditional. Samuel, as we have seen was most explicit as to this. "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." They were under probation. God went on with them that the flesh might be fully put to the test and its true character declared, and that in the most public way, that none should boast or trust in it. When Christ came, He broke with it from the first (John 3). To this day we speak of "the prodigal son" (Luke 15). Like the elder brother, we dwell on his doings. The father said, "My son was dead... was lost." This is a far more serious view of our case. Would that men saw it!

But to our subject. As a youth, Saul seems to have been very indifferent to the things of God. Though Samuel had labored among the people for years, he appears to have had no knowledge of him until his servant in their extremity suggested inquiry of him: and when, shortly after, he was seen among the prophets and prophesying with them, all who knew him were astonished at finding him in such company and so occupied; so much so that, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" became a proverb, said commonly when anyone was observed in an unusual character (1 Sam. 9:6; 10:11-12).

But Samuel spared no pains with him, and stood by him as long as it was possible. From the first he sought earnestly to press upon him that it was the Lord Who had raised him to the rank and office of king, and to the Lord he must look for all that this exalted position required. As he poured the oil of consecration on his head and kissed him, he said, "Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain [prince] over His inheritance?" He then foretold what would happen to him as he returned to his father's house, "signs" given to him to lead him to mistrust himself and to convince him of the interest which the Lord took in all his matters.

As for the seed of Jacob and of the tribe of Benjamin, few places would be more deeply interesting to him than Bethel, and Rachel's sepulcher. That Jacob desired they should be kept in memory, is evident from the fact that he set up a pillar in each. It is now said that Saul must have gone out of his way to reach Rachel's tomb. Be it so. It was the way Samuel directed him, and, we must think, purposely, however much out of his way. He was to learn his first lesson in the presence of the grave of one who, like himself, was beautiful and well favored, yet, alas! who indulged a rebellious will as he did. Her passionate cry for children, without the smallest recognition of the will of God (Gen. 30:1), contrasts unfavorably with Hannah's subject spirit and humble prayer to the Lord, and prepares us for the despair that overwhelmed her when that which she fondly dreamed would be a spring of happiness proved a bitter and a fatal draft of sorrow. How profound, how absorbing must have been her grief when she sought to make her innocent babe carry the remembrance of it all through life! "It came to pass as her soul was in departing, for she died, that she called her child's name Ben-oni" (the son of my sorrow). But the child never bore the name. His father covered it at once and forever with that of Benjamin (the son of my right hand).

Ben-oni is a true name for man through sin (Gen. 3:16). We are, as David said, "fearfully and wonderfully made," yet "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;" and "the Lord knoweth our frame

and remembereth we are dust." So Abraham confessed, "I am but dust and ashes." Saul, in all the fresh vigor of life, needed to be reminded of his true status as a man, that he might carry the consciousness of it when a king. But God had revealed himself to Jacob as "the God of Abraham his father, and the God of Isaac," and "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." His faith therefore looked beyond sorrow and death, while feeling both acutely, for he loved Rachel. She was right according to nature, but he was emphatically so according to resurrection; and now that Christ has come, it is our privilege to possess the clearest light on the truths which are only shadowed forth in these names.

Jesus, to accomplish the purposes of grace, in voluntary humility and infinite love became Ben-oni, the Son of His mother's sorrow; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; but, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, He is revealed to faith, the Son of His right hand. Rachel's sepulcher should have reminded Saul that, with all his advantages, he was still a Ben-oni, and, if he would cover that name with Benjamin, if his future course was not to be characterized by human sin and sorrow, but by divine power and blessing, it must be by faith, faith in the God of his father Jacob. The Christian is directed by the Spirit to another sepulcher (Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12), How many, alas! have had this sign, and professed to have been buried with Christ in baptism, yet have given as little heed to it as we fear Saul did to his.

There was, however, yet further instruction for him. Samuel told him that two men would meet him by the sepulcher who would say to him, "The asses which thou wentest to seek are found." Why had he failed in so trifling a service? He was about to supersede a man of prayer, a judge where Ebenezer should never be forgotten. Was he competent to take his place? Could he judge the many thousands of Israel? The sign ought at least to have raised the question in his mind and led him to look away from himself, a hard thing perhaps for such a man to do; yet, if he had learned this lesson, he would have welcomed the second sign given to make known to him the provision made by divine grace for all he would need. From Rachel he is now to turn to Jacob, and from the tomb, man's house, to Bethel, the house of God.

Jacob's circumstances when he first reached Luz, the place he afterward called Bethel, might well compare with those of the most wretched on earth. Deservedly exiled from his family, homeless and friendless, his future uncertain, his possessions a staff, his bed the ground, and his pillow a stone, he lay down to sleep. But the Lord was in that place, and never had he such a revelation of Him and of His infinite resources in heaven and on earth, or of richer promises of constant, watchful care and of future blessing than in Bethel, and he proved Him faithful Who had promised.

There were still some in Israel who put their trust in the God of Jacob, and Samuel told Saul that three of these would meet him on their way to Bethel, their hands filled with their offerings: that they would seek his fellowship and would share these offerings with him if he had a heart to go with them. Would he, with a chastened spirit because of the first impressive sign, begin the new and untried path of leader and commander with an acknowledgment of dependence on the God of Bethel, Whose faithfulness to Jacob was seen throughout his life, and filled his soul to overflowing with worship and blessing when "a-dying" (Heb. 11:21)?

Scripture offers us no answer to the question. The fulfillment of these two signs is briefly, very briefly, stated; but not a word is added as to their effect on Saul. We must gather this from his

subsequent course. `

Chapter 193

Scripture Imagery: 65. The Slave's Ear Bored, the Thirty Shekels

When Tischendorf went to Mount Sinai, he found a copy of the Gospels there, where it had been for nearly 1,500 years. It was a strange phenomenon, the mountain laboring and bringing forth a dove. In the same way when the Law itself had existed for about 1,500 years, the Interpreter came Who showed us that in some respects within the letter of its text it held the spirit of the new dispensation. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.....and thy neighbor as thyself.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” The gospel goes beyond it, but not against it. There is sometimes a mistaken effort to exalt the gospel by contrasting it with, and by inference disparaging, the law. This is not “using the law lawfully.” For in its most legal and condemnatory passages it contains by implication or prophecy, a foreshadowing of good things to come; and even the record of the giving of the ten commandments is immediately followed by a most remarkable passage (Ex. 21), where the obedience of love is compared with the obedience of law—the spirit with the letter.

The slave who had to be set free on the sabbatical year might elect to remain in perpetual servitude “If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children: I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him to the door post and bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.” Here the thought is so far from an obedience sub pcena, that the slave voluntarily suffers pain and sheds his blood sooner than not serve. Nor can there be any doubt that the interpretation is right which regards this as a type of the divine Servant voluntarily engaging Himself to perpetual servitude because of His love to God and to the spiritual Bride. In Psa. 40:6 He says, “Mine ears host Thou opened:” the word translated “opened” —kahrah—is translated in Psa. 22:16 “pierced” (my hands and my feet).

As Jacob's seven years' service for Rachel suggests Christ's becoming a servant in order to win the church, so this represents an everlasting service willingly undertaken in order to retain it. The depth of love and the height of devotion here implied only seem the more infinitely beyond our contemplation the more we meditate upon them. Now and then we see some faint reflection here on earth, as when Devine, following her whom he had wooed into prison, was wedded to her in the condemned cell, and held her dead body in his arms till he himself expired with a last “Je t'aime” dying on his lips; or when Leonhard Dober deliberately gave himself into slavery that he might preach the liberty of Christ to his fellow-slaves in the West Indies. Sometimes too we see some reflection of such love and fidelity in a servant— “I love my master” —as when, that brave Russian leaped amongst the wolves to save his master, or when the French bonne recently gave herself to the mad dog that her mistress's children might escape.

There are two other typical references in this chapter which are significantly associated with this. In ver. 13 the Cities of Refuge are briefly alluded to, whither the poor outcast, blood-guilty by misfortune, might fly for protection; and in ver. 32 the mention of thirty pieces of silver, which we find stated as the compensation for a dead slave. To the dishonor of our race we remember that this was the precise value which, after bargaining, was put upon the Son of God by the religious leaders of the day. It was a sober business transaction, and therein consists its bitter contempt, its

being undesigned. They thought Him a wicked man, but, even so, not worth more than a few shekels' reward. This insult was keenly felt, even amongst so many other terrible injuries. “They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver..... Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them! “ We frequently see twenty times as much offered for the apprehension of some common malefactor. This was a long time ago. Yes, but there are millions of people around us who would not surrender even that for the possession of Christ now.

Consider for a moment what became of the money for which our Lord was sold. The traitor could not keep nor use it: it blistered his hands, and he threw it back to the priests; but their piety prevented their taking it. Eventually it was paid for a potter's field, as had been prophesied. Now is there anything more desolate than a field—robbed of its clay, and strewn with calcined cinders and other refuse—which a potter has done with? And to what purpose was the field put? The most miserable and melancholy of all, though perhaps in this world the most useful and necessary of all— “to bury strangers in! Therefore that field was called the Field of Blood onto this day.” Characteristically to the last, even the blood-money of the great Martyr goes to buy a refuge and resting-place for the bodies of wretched aliens. Oh, can there be a more pathetic connection of thought in all the long eternity, past or future, than the thought of the dead Benefactor hanging on that rude cross, with His thorn-crowned head sunken on His breast, and the desolate burying-ground for nameless paupers that was purchased by the price of His betrayal!

Chapter 194

Scripture Imagery: 66. Israel As Illustrating the Principles of Divine Service

ISRAEL AS ILLUSTRATING THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE SERVICE.

(2a) Xenophon relates a conversation which Socrates had with Aristodemns the Little concerning the obligation of divine worship. Aristodemns was inclined to atheism, but by an argument which Socrates advanced in his usual, courteous, questioning manner, he succeeded in convincing him. Up to this part of the dispute the old philosopher had been perfect: his arguments in proof of a divine design, wisdom and beneficence have been the model of all such reasonings ever since; the embryo of Paley's famous illustration of the watch and Lord Brougham's of the crab's tentacle might be found in the remarks to Aristodemus about the human ear and eyelash. When, however, Aristodemus at last says, “I would have [the Deity] send on purpose to let me know expressly all that I ought to do or not to do,” the sage's reply shows us how lamentably in the dark on these subjects the human race was. For the greatest and most capacious mind of a nation of philosophers gives answers concerning portents and prodigies; and (subsequently to Euthydemus) he says approvingly that the Delphian oracle commands to “follow the custom of your country.”

It seems harsh and crude to say that a modern Sunday-school child knows much more of this subject than the ancient philosopher, yet it is quite true—as true as that the modern child knows very much more of geography and astronomy than Plato and Aristotle, who never suspected that the western hemisphere had continents, that Saturn had rings, or Jupiter moons; but of course all this is no matter of credit to the modern child or discredit to them. What was unknown to them has been disclosed to us, that is all. “If I can see more than others,” said Sir Isaac Newton, “it is because I am standing upon giants' shoulders,” meaning that his discoveries were based upon those of Copernicus and others who preceded him. And if we in the Christian era know more as to the service of God than those of former times, it is because we have been raised on giants' shoulders to see that which God has been pleased to reveal—primarily by means of the Hebrew system.

“ Do but consider,” continued Socrates on this subject, “that the sun, that seems to be exposed to the sight of all the word, does not suffer us to gaze fixedly upon him, and whoever has the temerity to undertake it is punished with sudden blindness.” This is only partially true whether of the type or of the antitype: the sun will sometimes, while still visible, veil himself sufficiently to be gazed on by all; “Lo, in the orient when the gracious Light Lifts up his burning head, each under eye Doth homage to his new-appearing sight, Serving with looks his sacred majesty..... Attending on his golden pilgrimage.” If Herschel sat to study the sun for twenty-five years, so may those whose telescopes reach into that heaven far beyond the stars contemplate forever the great Source of all light and life, with reverence and godly fear indeed, but with ever increasing love and adoration: ever to apprehend, never to comprehend. “When I have laved the sea dry,” said the boy to Augustine, “then thou shalt understand the Trinity.”

But it is true that this kind of contemplation has a powerful effect on the sight. Gazing long on the sun somewhat unfits the eye for the time for minute discernment of surrounding things. Sir Isaac Newton had looked so much on it that its image remained continually impressed on his sight, even, it is said, when in the darkness of night; and there seems to have been some similar persistency of vision on the spiritual retina of his namesake, the friend of Cowper— “I meditate on Thee in the night watches.” A recent biographer says that when John Newton was getting old he used sometimes to forget himself when preaching, and would turn to an old servant standing near him, saying, “What was I speaking of?” when the answer invariably was, “You were speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, sir.”

Now that which Aristodenans and multitudes of others sought vainly to know, which even a Socrates could not disclose, has been revealed to man by means of the Hebrew system. God thus made known the principles on which and the methods by which He required that men should approach, worship, and serve Him. At that time they were only to stand “afar off,” it is true, and behold Him with the outward eye. When Christ, the true Israel, was appointed, He disclosed infinitely more; then men were “brought nigh” and beheld Him with the inward and spiritual vision,—in a sense in which He had never been seen before. But all the main elements relating to Approach, Worship, and Service, are here set forth in a system of symbol-teaching; this part of the Pentateuch being arranged as a Kindergarten for the world, in the childhood of the race. This system of instruction has been for three thousand years on the earth; therefore it would be strange indeed if we did not know more on such subjects than the ancient philosophers. How much mankind need the instruction, and how terribly misguided the most devout minds may be for the lack of it, we may see in the puerile superstitions, the gross cruelties and foul abominations of even such highly civilized peoples as the ancient Greeks and modern Chinese. How pitiful it is to read of that devout Phoongye who deliberately burnt himself to death the other day, to offer himself to God. If he had had some of our knowledge! and if we had some of his devotion!

The method in which this instruction is conveyed is by a vast and elaborate system of symbols in connection with the scheme of the tabernacle. These symbols are impressive by reason of a certain majestic dignity in their arrangement, which is most strange; for it must be admitted that symbols are in a sense toys, though useful ones; and it is not easy in general to keep the mind from a kind of levity in considering them. This, however, is chiefly a matter of association. For we may sometimes see a bereaved mother weeping as if her heart would break over a few little toys, which to her are as pitiful and pathetic as to others they are puerile and unmeaning. Symbolism had to be used, as Italian is used in music, because it is the only language universally understood (in connection with that subject); and, further, there are no other means—even now, much less in olden times—of conveying in human language many of the highest spiritual principles. Besides this, symbols attract the attention, impress the memory, and enlighten the understanding.

Chapter 195

Scripture Imagery: 67. The Ark, the Mercy-Seat, the Sanctuary

“Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them: “ the primary principle of worship was enunciated in that word “sanctuary.” The dignity and majesty of God is of such nature that no worship can be acceptable that is not holy; and, as there was no word in human language that would convey the true meaning of this, it has to be conveyed by physical types, ordinances and emblems.

There were, indeed, words which conveyed part of the meaning. All those terms which carry the idea of consecration, corban, taboo, fetish, signify that a thing must be kept apart for the deity's service and must not be made common use of. This principle we see all day around us. The head of the house, of the firm, or of the state, will object to have other persons using his implements. He says, “That is my pen, or sword, or scepter: leave it alone.” He would not use them if they become common and unclean by general handling. Nay, do we not all extend this kind of sequestration over our immediate belongings to a certain extent, and feel somewhat resentful if people roughly use and coarsely handle them? Does not every mother say at times to her child, “You must not touch that; it is your father's”? And this is not merely a question of dignity: one of the chief reasons for this exclusive appropriation is in order that the instruments may be kept clean and fit for the master's use, which would be impossible if everyone be allowed to take them. Precisely the same considerations apply to the use of instruments appropriated by God, but the elements which disqualify them from being fit for His service, being moral and spiritual, are naturally little understood by men. Hence they needed an elaborate ritual (originally) to enable them to understand this word sanctify; that it does not merely mean “keep apart” (like taboo, corban, or fetish) but it means, keep apart in purity.

For instance the priests separated to many of the Greek and Roman gods organized as part of their worship the most horrible and nameless crimes; and it was generally true of any idolatrous priests of old, that so long as he observed certain exclusive attitudes and forms he could be as evil as he liked; as now in such places as Dahomy where a person or thing is “set apart for the deity, Ju-Ju, but it may be the foulest person in the tribe or the most unclean thing—a serpent frequently. The gigantic high-priest of the Hawaiians was perhaps the most wicked man in that hemisphere: he would kill a man for treading on his shadow. But a priest sanctified to Jehovah must avoid evil, for that is especially what is abhorrent to his God; and (since no man but One has avoided it altogether) the ordinances taught him to live in the habitual condemnation of evil, and provided him with a means of cleansing himself, when from casualty or infirmity he was defiled by earthly contacts (but they made no provision whatever for his wanton continuance in it).

The directions for making the Ark are given first of all, even before the building in which it was to be placed. Who but God would think of the furniture before the house? Yet the reason is plain: the Ark was the type of Christ, and consequently everything had to be built out from and in connection with it; for it sets Him forth as the core from which everything flows centrifugally, and the Center to which everything tends centripetally in God's system of worship. Around it all the people were to

assemble; when it moved they were to follow, when it stopped they were to encamp, till it ultimately led them through the Jordan into the promised land: arrived thither, it is deposited in the magnificent temple constructed for its reception where it still maintained its central and dominant position.

It was made of a fragrant wood (signifying the humanity of Christ) covered with gold, “within and without” (the symbol of His divine majesty). It contained the tables of the law (“thy law is within my heart “), also the pot of manna, the treasured memorial of His humiliation here on earth; and (subsequently) Aaron's rod that budded, the emblem of priestly power and authority. Upon it was placed the mercy seat, and upon that rested the Shecaniah, the visible semblance of the divine presence. That is, Christ is the basis on which mercy is exercised and dispensed; the Mercy Seat rests on, and is in a sense part of, the Ark: the mercy seat is beaten out of solid gold, however—no wood or human element in the divine mercy; it is absolute—and beaten out of the same piece of gold are the cherubim, one at each end, emblems of judgment. Justice and mercy are thus met in Christ and combined in favor of the approaching worshipper, for the cherubs' faces are toward each other and toward the seat: that is to say, justice answers to the face of justice, and, looking upon the mercy seat, sees the atoning blood sprinkled thereon.

They were commanded to make staves to carry the ark by. These were symbols of itinerancy, and express to us the manner in which our Lord accompanies His people in all their wanderings through the wilderness, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Until they crossed Jordan they were commanded to leave the staves in their rings; but when they reach their goal in the promised land they take out the staves, for now they were to wander no more.

There was to be a golden crown round the top of the ark. This would be about the edge of the mercy seat, and thus we see what is expressed in the words “Thy glory crowns Thy grace.” Men usually connect crowns with physical conquests and material successes, not with patience and forbearance. The nine crowns of heraldry are of this nature. The Romans had indeed the corona civis which was awarded for the rescue of a citizen in battle, and the corona obsidionalis for a general who saved an army; but the first was of oak-leaves, and the second of grass or wild flowers, while their crowns for deeds of prowess and slaughter were of gold. No man ever thought that there was anything glorious in grace that a, crown of beauty and dignity should be awarded to it: we had derided it and awarded it a crown indeed, but of thorns. But God's thoughts are not as ours. He “beheld His glory, the glory [not of outward dignity as Messiah or Son of man, though these also, are His, but the inward moral beauties of divine nature] as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” “Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee forever.”

Chapter 196

Scripture Imagery: 68. The Candlestick, the Table, the Tongs

The next thing in the tabernacle that is treated of is the position of the people of God. They ax represented by the twelve loaves of shewbread, corresponding to the number of the tribes; and these emblems are placed on a table before the ark—but outside a vail. This vail is removed in the present dispensation, having been rent asunder at the death of our Lord. It was torn from the top to the bottom, signifying, (a) that it was done by God and not by man—from His side, not ours; and (b) that the action is final and absolute. Therefore the people are brought immediately into the divine presence— “brought nigh.” The table on which the shewbread rested was a further type of Christ. It was made of wood covered with gold (deity covering and investing His humanity), surrounded by a golden crown and border, or guard: and over the bread, which lay in rows, was laid the frankincense. Thus we have them in a certain sense “in Christ.” His people rest on Him, as the bread rests on the table. They are surrounded by Him, as the guard and crown surrounded the bread on that table, to protect and glorify them; and they are covered by the fragrant frankincense of His holy and perfect nature, ever ascending to God in their favor. The table has rings and staves, which fact shows that its application is now, during the time of their earthly pilgrimage, that all this is true of the redeemed. We do not wait to be in heaven to be in Christ in this position of extraordinary privilege and honor. The best robe is brought forth, from the father's house (to apply another type) that the prodigal may be invested with it just where he stands.

Immediately connected with that is the Candlestick (or lampstand) of pure gold. It consisted of the central shaft with triple branches at each side something in the form of a vine, with which its meaning is somewhat parallel, though distinct. There is the same primary idea of the branches abiding in Christ as their center and support, but in the vine the chief thought is fruit-bearing; here it is light-giving. The two services, though continually mingled, are distinct operations. In the vine each branch is supplied with the life-giving sap from the central stem, as each soul receives his power for spiritual bloom and fruitfulness by abiding in Christ. And each branch of the candlestick is made with a flower, and the developing fruit (knop) behind it. As light-givers, however, the source of power is the Holy Ghost, symbolized by the usual figure of the oil; even our Lord Himself, the central shaft, gives light in this way, that is, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This light shines continually on the table upon which in symbol the redeemed are exalted, covered with frankincense in the divine presence.

The light-giving function is at its highest and most appropriate use in the tabernacle, where it reveals all the relations between God and His people, but of course its use is universal. That was the true light, which (lit.) coming into the world lighteth every man. That of Galilee, and not—for example—Buddha, though his name signifies the Enlightened One, nor even Moses, though he gave an anticipatory reflection of that light, as a mirror might. What literal darkness, with its sins and doubts, its fears, perils, and lurking evils, is to the outward man, spiritual darkness—ignorance, prejudice, evil—is to the inward man. Light is knowledge; which seems a very meager definition, but it is beautiful in itself as well as in what it discloses and creates. For it discloses loveliness as truly as deformity, and not only discloses but creates all the beauties of

color that deck the gorgeous universe. Light, which is the primal work of creation and which is a symbol of God Himself, is of so mysterious a nature that even though we find out year by year more about it, yet we do not know even now for certain what it is—whether for instance it be an element that travels to us from the heavens, or the vibration of some omnipresent ether, impalpable and all-pervading. None can understand it, but all can benefit by it. Each decade brings us some fresh discovery concerning it. Its susceptibility to sound; its power to produce sound; its power to reproduce form; its actual physical power to move bodies, as shown by the radiometer; its power to draw the tender shoot of the plant above the black earth; and when the darkness is doing its deadly work of producing poisonous carbonic acid gas from its leaves, the light suddenly appears, stops it, and in its turn produces the life-giving oxygen.

All this is true of that spiritual revelation and instruction which comes primarily from on high, to show us our sins and dangers, to guard us from hell and guide us to heaven, to heal and refresh our eyes—though it be painful at first as the sun's rays to those who have been long buried in the dark mines. When we struggle in darkness and the shadow of death with unseen foes, and cry in an agony for light, like Ajax of old; or when we feel the world sinking from us, the pall of a heavy, benumbing gloom settling down over us, and call for more light, like Goethe, then how good and how pleasant it is to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is no wood in the candlestick: it is all gold. All the appliances are divine. The only element that could suggest anything merely human is the wick, and that was consumed in doing its beneficent work. Even the tongs and snuffdishes—those instruments with which the wick is trimmed and kept in order—must be of gold. “And look that thou make them after their pattern which was she wed thee in the mount.” All that pertains to light-giving must be in a divine way, the way shown in the mount to Moses, and in that other Mount of Olives, whence came the oil—where the divine instruction shone forth, not in a way dogmatic, bigoted, or apologetic, but full of grace and truth. And for all that the pattern be divine and the construction perfect, yet must the work of discipline and affliction take its course: the gold must be beaten and the wick must be shorn.

Chapter 197

Scripture Imagery: 69. Boards, Bars, Sockets and Curtain of the Tabernacle

As the temple is stated in the New Testament to be merely typical of the body of the redeemed, who are built together as “living stones,” so the tabernacle is another aspect of the same principle. The latter gives the aspect of the church in the wilderness; and it is strange to see that in God's view and purpose it is as complete in all details (though somewhat differing) as the temple is ultimately in the promised land. In the tabernacle the people of God are living boards. They are built in together around the Ark and then covered with the gorgeous curtains which represent the resplendent glories and beauties of Christ.

These various boards are formed into one complete whole for the indwelling of God. The literal house of God is a people, not a building “He dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” The word “church” in the scripture always means a people, never a building. Thus we read, “Tell it to the church;” “Feed the church;” “the church that is in thy house:” expressions that could not be used except in reference to persons. These boards are formed from the same wood as the ark: the regenerate nature is of the same character as the nature of our Lord; and they are covered with gold—invested with the divine righteousness. “As He is, so are we in this world.”

They are founded on large heavy sockets of silver, and this silver was formed of the half-shekels that the Israelites had to pay for their redemption. They were to be shaped by discipline of cutting, planing, and polishing as divinely ordained; and they were linked together at the corners above and below by rings. There were then five bars shot through these upright boards transversely, to aid in holding them together in their places. These horizontal bars, kept in their position by golden rings, correspond with the five gifts in the church, “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints.”

Thus “all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God.” The whole building, surrounding its sacred contents, was then over-canopied by a curtain of gorgeous tapestry in beautiful and elaborate symbolism of blue, purple, scarlet, fine twined linen, and cherubim of cunning work. Each of these things, like the swan of Wordsworth on St. Mary's Lake, “Floats double, swan and shadow;” and we are told that their resemblance to the things of which they are types is the resemblance of a shadow, not of a reflection. That is, the law has “a shadow of good things to come.” Let us consider what that word “shadow” implies. All the brightness and splendor, all the affluence and elaborate skill, all the solemn pomp and imposing magnificence of the ancient tabernacle and ritual, in comparison with the spiritual privileges of the present and coming dispensations, is but as the dark rough shadow to the regal beauty of the crested swan whose supreme grace it so imperfectly adumbrates. These colors in the tabernacle curtains have doubtless all significant meanings, and though there are many who suffer from what Livingston called “the soul's color-blindness,” yet the colors are real and full of meaning. Those who have especially studied these subjects consider that the blue (which is in the harmony of shades what the treble is in

music) suggests the heavenly attributes of Christ, as in John's Gospel; the scarlet suggests His Jewish royalties, as in Matthew; the purple, His characteristics as the Son of man as in Luke, and the fine twined linen indicates that pure and perfect human life of interwoven service to God and man which we find to be the special feature of Mark's Gospel. The cherubim typify the power of truth and faculty of judgment with which Christ is invested, for the whole curtain is unquestionably typical of our Lord Jesus Himself covering and investing His people with His own glorious attributes.

Now consider how an individual board is kept in its place. It was made with two tenons (Hebrews “little hands”), which were to fit into and take hold on the solid silver socket of the redemption-money underneath. But that is not all; for the little hands would soon yield to the enormous leverage of any pressure on the top of the board. Much more than what strength is found in itself is needed to keep any one soul in its place in the building of God. It is founded on accomplished redemption; that is its faith. It rises up into the iridescent glories of the enfolding curtain; that is its hope. It is built in amongst all its fellow boards, standing shoulder to shoulder with them, stretching out on either side to them, holding them and being held by them; that is its charity. Moreover it is supported by the five transverse bars (gifts) and rings, also by the other rings above and below, the symbols of union and eternity. But above all and more powerful than all else to keep the board in its place of honor and security was the weight and strength of the curtain, in which verily it is a type of the ever-blessed Savior Who over-canopies, surrounds, and encompasses His redeemed people, investing them with the resplendent glories of His own personality and attributes. “As HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD.” These humble pieces of dead wood are taken up from the wilderness dust, and emblazoned with the splendors of a mystic heraldry in the hieroglyphics of the celestial worlds.

Chapter 198

Scripture Imagery: 70. Coverings of the Tabernacle

There were, then, three coverings over the completed tabernacle to shield it from defilement and injury: First, the curtain of goats' hair which presents its aspect to man—nothing indeed very attractive to sight: a curious contrast to its aspect toward God, which we saw in the gorgeous and radiant beauties of the tapestry now hidden underneath. The goats' hair signifies more than this, however. It was the sign of a prophetic function, and an expression of separation from the world—perhaps also of an exalted and estranged life. Over this went the covering of rams' skins dyed red, which means consecration and leadership consecration being an advance on separation, the one negative, the other positive. “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” And over all a covering of badger skins, which would protect from harm and evil. The badger is peculiar for its hardiness (the skin is so impervious that the stings of bees make no impression on it); and its caution, cleanliness, and watchfulness are well known. It is the pilgrim aspect.

Inside, the holiest place was to be secluded by the vail, which until the death of our Lord divided it from the part where the table of shewbread and the candlestick stood. “The vail, that is to say, His flesh,” was rent in death, and a way was made open for the worshippers into the immediate presence of the divine Majesty. We are thus told then that the vail is the flesh or human life of Christ; and the symbolism of blue, purple, and scarlet is reproduced here as in the curtains. The colors are varied features of character (and of office, as already indicated). There is a harmony and meaning in the seven colors as truly as in the seven musical sounds, and there is much affinity between the two modes of expression. Complementary colors are as pleasing as concordant notes, and discordant sounds as displeasing as hoes garish and ill-assorted. Red is spoken of by scientific men as the bass in color, as blue (the color of the heavens and of the sun's flames, according to Dr. Marcet, before the earthly atmosphere modifies them) is the treble. Purple is a blending of these other two, and many interesting applications have been made of such facts as these.

At least there is no doubt whatever that these passages before us indicate the analysis and interblending of the heavenly and earthly elements of our Lord's nature, the divine light, dissolved into its different elements, just as when one looks at the sun through a prism. And pray observe that, while everything else in nature becomes repulsive when dissolving into its elements (decomposing), light alone grows the more exquisitely beautiful, the more its component parts are revealed.

The vail was to be hung on four pillars, which doubtless represent the four evangelists whose mission is to set forth and disclose that holy and beautiful life in the Gospels, whilst hiding themselves in Him. These four pillars are probably much larger and stronger than the boards, and occupy in a sense a more honored position; but they neither rise higher nor are founded deeper, and they are just the same in being of the common wood and being based on the silver sockets of redemption. Their hooks are of gold—all that connects them with Christ and enables them to support Him is divine: mere developed human nature will not do The table and candlestick are

then placed outside the vail; the candlestick on the south side, the side of grace, with which truth is associated—"grace and truth;" and the table on the north or judicial side for the principle of fellowship is always connected with the exercise of discipline in one form or another.

The doorway (or "hanging") through which the holy place was entered was supported by five pillars which cannot typify men, for they are not socketed on silver but on brass. Perhaps these express the five gifts as occupied in advancing and supporting Christ as "the door," the sole means through which intending worshippers can enter into this highly privileged position. These pillars being socketed on brass suggest that the capability to bear judgment unscathed is the foundational element in respect of the exercise of all ministerial gift; for this is what brass signifies, whence it is put on the altar of atonement to sustain the fires that would consume the wood. This hanging has all the same Messianic symbols of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen as glorify the tapestry of the curtain and the vail, but the cherubim are omitted; the symbols of judgment would be unsuited there, where it is a question of receiving a guest. They might repel. The brass sockets indeed speak of judgment, but a judgment borne; and they are hidden out of sight. The old welcoming word on the Roman door-steps of Salve was more encouraging than the warning one of Cave.

Indeed it is remarkable how the invitations of the gospel are always set in the terms that can make them most attractive, and how everything that could possibly repel is removed out of the way. When the

Philistines said to Jonathan, "Come," they meant to slay him. When Leonidas said to the Persians, "Come," he meant to withstand them. When Mahmoud said to the Grecian slave, "Come," it was in order that the gleaming scimitar might sever his head from his body. But from the mouth of the divine Ambassador the whole mystery of godliness is expressed and characterized by that invitation, "Come," and the accompanying assurance, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Chapter 199

Scripture Imagery: 71. The Brazen Altar

Directions having now been given regarding everything within the tabernacle except the golden altar, we might naturally expect that that would be the next thing treated of, but three long chapters intervene. We must not think however that there is any lack of order here: the lightning may move (to apply a figure of Dr. Holmes) in a zigzag way as if undecided, but it knows perfectly well where to strike. The order in which the scripture comes is one of the most powerful evidences of its divine origin; and we shall find ample reasons why, instead of our going on to the golden altar, we are led abruptly outside into the court to the brazen altar to learn that the foundation of all this fabric of worship is in the Atonement.

That which is appropriately called the “religious world” would naturally omit this part, constructing a religion without a basis, a house without foundation. The atonement is becoming ignored or else characterized as a slander upon God. If however we take anything direct from God's own word we can be in no danger of receiving any such slander. But the present increasing surrender of the doctrine of the atonement is a natural reaction against those strained and irreverent analyzes of this awful and sacred theme by scholastic disputants who have contended over such hard and artificial subtilties as Objective and Subjective, Crypto-dualistic, Dynamic or Organic atonement and the like. From such hard and barren theories it is not surprising that the “religious world” should oscillate to a religion which its leaders define as “morality touched with emotion,": a stream of tendency,” &c., &c., where there is no need of a brazen altar at all, and only need of an altar of—say, Britannia metal or German silver—in order that men might burn incense to one another. For they reverse the maxim of old King George, who indignantly said to the fulsome preacher that he had come to his “place of worship” to hear the praises of God and not his own.

The religion that omits the brazen altar is bloodless and consequently lifeless, for the life is in the blood; and it bears the same relation to the religion which God has inspired that the corpse on a dissecting table bears to the man who is examining it. The parts and arrangements are similar; nothing is wanting but the vital principle—the blood. It was said that the war-horse of the Paladin Orlando was in every respect perfect but for one fact—it was dead. And even a dead horse is of more value than a dead religion, for though it may be given a spasmodic semblance of life, such as that which the magnetic current gave to Galvani's frog, yet it is only for a time.

But in the divine plan the brazen altar is an all-essential part. It represents Christ as the means by which a sinful being can approach the holy sanctuary of God—a seeming impossibility; and by which he can whilst thus approaching become divested of his polluting guilt and absolved from sin's tremendous curse and penalty—a still greater seeming impossibility. For it is natural to expect that as a sinner approached God, his sin would be but the more fastened on him, and his penalty the more imminent and threatening: all of which would assuredly be true if this brazen altar were not found on the way. Now the thought is familiar, that the sacrifice on the altar typifies Christ offered, suffering and slain as the atoning Victim; but we have to see in the altar itself which supports the sacrifice the same divine Being in another aspect. The wood of its symbolic humanity

was covered by the flame-enduring metal, which represents that our Lord's infinite capacity to support and endure the fire of judgment is the basis on which His sacrifice rests. Being infinite, His atonement was infinite, because His sufferings were infinite. That is why the brazen altar is larger than the other appointments of the tabernacle. The number of those who are illuminated by the sacred candlestick, or represented on the table of shewbread, or permitted to approach the golden altar, is limited; but in respect of the sacrifice at the brazen altar we read, “He tasted death for every man.” The measurements of these former are in restricted numbers, 11/2, 21/2, &c.; but the circumference of the brazen altar is in fives; the number of human responsibility, universally quadrupled. And, while the brazen altar is double the height of the ark and table and even a cubit higher than the golden altar, he grating on which the sacrifice is laid is adjusted to exactly the height of the mercy-seat. There is to be round this altar no crown, nor attraction, nor ornament—nothing but a terrible presentation of judgment and suffering.

And how much there may be in all of the details! Its “horns” are the symbols of the authority by which it claimed, and the power by which it held, the destined victim of its terrible purpose. “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” In the Antitype this power was exercised by Himself in deliberate self-surrender and solemn self-dedication. It is “hollow with boards:” He emptied Himself. The staves signify its earthly and present character: that wherever the people of God are, they are seen associated with that infinite atonement. “And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basins, and his flesh-hooks, and his firepans; all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.” To trivial minds alone such words are trivial: for others they contain suggestions of an infinite pathos, thoughts that “lie too deep for tears.” Each figure is a hieroglyphic of suffering; each implement a symbol of pain and death. The same God that gave solemn directions concerning the ashes of the sacrifice ordained that the dead Christ should be tended and shielded from insult by reverent hands and loving hearts.

Chapter 200

Scripture Imagery: 72. Aaron, the Priests, the Court of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle was surrounded by a spacious court which was enclosed by white curtains suspended from sixty pillars, socketed on “brass” and filleted with silver: the curtains being five cubits high, one hundred long and fifty wide. The court represents the especial sphere of God's operations by human instruments in the world, and though the measurements (five and multiples of five) indicate human responsibility, yet the curtains of fine twined linen express that purity is expected to be maintained on the basis of a capacity to bear judgment, around all that pertains to God's service on the earth. The silver filleting connected the whole. The principle of redemption traverses and unites all that is really divine. A religion that ignores redemption and what it implies is not of God at all.

When we reach the gate of the court we find, as we might well expect, that the Messianic glories and beauties are emblazoned upon it; but again the judicial cherubim were absent, for it typifies the One through Whom “if any man shall enter in he shall be saved.” The first thing seen by one who enters thus through Christ is the sacrifice on the brazen altar, which at once reveals the inexorable justice of God, and the gracious provision by which its claims are satisfied. The three entrances then are, (1) this outer “gate” which admits the sinner to the ground of salvation, and reconciliation; (2) the “door” of the tabernacle, which admits to fellowship in the Light with the people of God; and (3) the “vail” which—being rent—admits to the inmost mysteries of the divine abode, the ineffable glories of the Shekinah and the exalted privilege of worship.

The house of Aaron is typical of the whole body of the followers of Christ, “whose house are we,” and Aaron, of course, typical of Christ Himself, “the High Priest of our profession.” The high priest was usually understood to be the most noble, wise, learned, devout, and sympathetic amongst men; and in that character—as the very highest development of manhood—he stands towards God to represent and intercede for men. When he turns, then, towards men to represent and intervene for God, he is invested with the absolute power and exalted dignity of his divinely privileged position, It is extremely unfortunate that human sin or infirmity have so obscured to our minds the majesty and magnificence of the original idea of a priest. His “holy garments of glory and beauty” —of blue, purple and scarlet, of exquisite embroidery, and of the iridescent splendor of gold and flashing gems—were full of a sacred symbolism of hieroglyphic meanings. From the mystic miter that crowned his head to the golden bells and pomegranates pendant from his robe, his raiment was emblazoned with an elaborate heraldry of manifold spiritual significations. The names of the people of God were engraved on precious stones to be carried on his shoulders and in his breastplate; their memorial too was in the formula upon the miter on his head; signifying that on the seat of power, affection and intelligence our Great High Priest continually carries the remembrance of His beloved people. The head plans for them; the shoulders support them; the heart beats for them. And one thing more has He assured them of—for all types are imperfect—that their names are also engraved on the palms of His hands.

That is the original idea of a high priest and it abides still, notwithstanding the way in which men have maligned and burlesqued it. Aaron the first to fill the office was the first to dishonor it. Yet probably there has been no living man—then or since—so fit for the position: evidently a man of noble presence and of an exalted eloquence, of calm and dignified bearing, even in times of crisis and calamity. When his sons are smitten dead at his feet, “Aaron held his peace.” He had attained the faculty which that illustrious German prince, who had suffered so much, recently desired for his son” Learn to suffer without complaining.” When he hears that he is to die without seeing the promised land, toward which he has fought and labored for forty years, he calmly prepares for his lonely pilgrimage up the sides of Mount Hor. He was in the main a consistent and devout man and had to sustain a certain amount of obloquy by being associated with the enterprises of Moses, but such a man as Aaron is generally respected. Even the Koran, which is pretty hard usually on makers of idols, deals very gently and apologetically with him: while those writers who have, like Paine, written with the greatest virulence against Moses, generally leave his brother alone.

And this indicates where his shortcomings were: a man who is never abused, never accomplishes anything of the first order. “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!” Aaron was weak and was turned aside at one time by the influence of the strong mind of his sister, at another by the pressure of popular opinion. To him vox populi was become vox dei, when he should have recognized (in that case) the vox diaboli. Not that he was weaker than men generally, but his position required one who was stronger. The position needed one who could, like Sans, look upon the thousands of his prostrate companions appeasing their thirst, whilst he suffered on and merely sprinkled his face with water. Within the imposing personality and behind the eloquent tongue of the first high priest there was a spirit infinitely less powerful than that which enabled the little battered old man whose “bodily presence was weak” to look on the furious opposition of whole nations and say, “None of these things move me “: or even than that which enabled the common-looking old Greek philosopher to refuse to escape from the poison cup of his enemies, when he was offered the opportunity. “Why are you surprised,” he said to Hermogenes, “that God thinks it best for me to leave this earth?” But when such a man as Aaron is led astray, the noble gifts which he has received become perverted to unworthy uses: that faculty of language which formerly had resounded with such sonorous power before the Egyptian courtiers is afterward used to effect a most dexterous palliation of his offense. “Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief...then I cast it [the gold] into the fire, and there came out this calf!”

Chapter 201

Scripture Imagery: 73. The Breastplate, the Priest's Robes

The long and elaborate explanation of the priests' dress is of course full of important spiritual meaning. The Messianic colors and symbols are everywhere interwoven. The golden bells and pomegranates pendant from his robes are considered by some to signify the principles of testimony and fruitfulness. When the fine linen is spoken of, it doubtless indicates personal purity. The Urim and Thummim were the means by which the will of God was made known to the priest. They correspond with the Spirit and word possessed by the priests (i.e., every Christian) of the present dispensation.

From the front of the high priest's gorgeous apparel flamed a splendid coruscation of blended lights, gleaming from the mass of precious stones of which the “breastplate” is made. The names of the tribes of Israel were engraved on them; for, like the twelve stones at the bottom of Jordan, the twelve on the bank thereof, and the twelve which Elijah built into an altar at Carmel, these twelve also represent the people of God. The character, however, of these stones and the position in which they are placed show in a marvelous way in what estimation our Great High Priest holds his unworthy disciples; and consider, I pray you, what unutterable meaning there is in this type. We are accustomed to the thought of being regarded by divine mercy as objects of pity, or by divine favor as objects of benevolence, but we are, perhaps very little accustomed to the thought of our being regarded by divine love as objects of value and beauty, objects of adornment, of radiance and rarity. Ah! that is very different. The apprehension of it would enlarge our knowledge of that love which passes knowledge, and it would give us a higher estimate of the value of every one even to the humblest of those whom He calls “My jewels.” It requires but a comparatively slight exercise of faith to believe that His mercy compassionates us, or that His goodness has bountiful designs for us—as that our names are on His shoulders or our memorial on His brow; but it requires the faith we possess to credit that His love actually values us, that He bears us on His heart, regarding us not merely as pitiful creatures that have been rescued, but as precious gems of intrinsic and inestimable worth. And this is very strange: we can never understand it though we must believe it. Our Great High Priest regards us as valuable and—because His eyes have rested on us—beautiful and worthy of admiration. In another connection we have the same principle. The Bridegroom says to her who bewails that she is black, “Thou art all fair, My love.” And it is at the time when she is conscious of her blackness that she is told so. The German philosopher said, The more that he knew of men the more he liked dogs: probably we all have such a feeling at times. The more we know of one another and ourselves the more marvelous does that love seem which could not only suffer for us, but could set such a value upon us. How to account for it? Who can? Who can explain love and the ways of love? When the mother of the Gracchi said, “These are my jewels,” pointing to her children, did she think them valuable because she had suffered and labored for them? or because it really gave her pleasure to look upon them—or both?

Gems are the most valuable and beautiful things the earth contains. As valuable as the rare metals, they are more beautiful: as beautiful as the flowers, they are more durable. But, after all, what are they, what is their origin? There is a well-known passage in a modern writer where he

traces the course of the common mud or slime, composed of clay, sand, and soot. By process of time and the mysterious alchemy of divine power operating everywhere, the clay is gradually developed into a sapphire, the sand into an opal, the soot into a diamond. And this is not mere poetry but common scientific fact. The diamond is indeed “crystallized carbon,” glorified soot. It is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. How have they been thus transformed so that they adorn the king's crown, the queen's coronet, the high priest's breastplate? By the power of the Most High working mysteriously by means of heat and flood, of pressure, of darkness, and light. And when picked up from the dust the work is not yet done: they have to pass through the discipline of cutting and grinding. The lapidary bends over them on the revolving lathe and makes them scream as he touches them here and there. He hurts them a good deal, but he will not harm them. They will shine with a more beauteous luster presently.

What a sense of security this gives! Those who possess gems protect them with the greatest care. The gem may perhaps be in a poor environment, like that rich ruby which the Russian Peter took from his pocket in a piece of crumpled paper, and handed to King William; or unpolished as the Koh-i-noor, before the Iron Duke used to take it for his royal mistress to the lapidary to be cut and ground. But it is too valuable to be uncared for. The duke would sit by, never letting the gem out of his sight till a new facet was cut, and then would carefully wrap it up in a silk handkerchief and take it away till the morrow. Even such a care protects, even such a value is set upon, the people of God. The heavenly Lapidary bends over the crude misshapen stones as they move on the revolving wheel of life, and He touches them with many a sharp instrument and polishes them with their own dust. But He will neither harm them Himself nor let anyone else do so; and He says, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels!”

Chapter 202

Scripture Imagery: 74. The Laver, the Staves of the Altar

Directions are then given to provide staves wherewith to carry the Golden Altar; signifying that the basis of worship is to accompany us in our wanderings down here, They indicate that worship like the Ark or Mercy-seat—is not to be a matter of one locality, but of all localities; though indeed there is only one “place of worship,” and that is within the veil. In like manner the sailor carries his compass all over the world, but it always connects itself with the center of the heavens where the pole-star shines; otherwise it is useless.

The pilgrim fathers, the Huguenots and many others, have been scattered over the face of the earth; but though they had to leave their household possessions, every remnant of them could carry the golden altar with them by its unseen staves, yet there was but one altar:

Our hearths we abandon, (our lands we resign:

But Father we kneel to no altar but Thine.”

Worship is, however, an exercise of so holy a nature that a means is next introduced by which the worshippers are required to cleanse themselves of any defilement that they may have contracted before approaching the throne of divine majesty. This was the Laver, a large reservoir of water, with a “foot” underneath into which some of it flowed from above as required and in it the intending worshipper was commanded to wash his hands and feet.

This signifies the practical purification of the general course of conduct (“walk” —the feet) and of all definite actions (the hands) by means of “the water of the word.” It is therefore the second and practical side of sanctification, a thing continuously needed, whereas the first aspect of sanctification, the complete submergence already described, never needs repetition. Peter in a mistaken modesty declined to allow his feet to be washed until the Lord told him that it must be done:

“ If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.” Then the ardent disciple made another mistake.: he said, “Lord, [wash] not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” But that would be to repeat what is not to be repeated. The Lord replies, “He that is bathed [lit.] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.”

There is a tendency to overlook this need of purification: the callous and ignorant will rush in where angels fear to tread. Hence the material of which the laver was constructed was brass, which speaks of the searching of divine judgment. Moreover the laver was made from brass mirrors (Ex. 38:8) and thus it represented that character of the word by which a man sees himself reflected in all his need of cleansing, and at the same time, which from its own resources affords means of cleansing.

That mirror-like faculty in the word of God is one reason why so many have an enmity against it. They find themselves reflected in it in a very unflattering light, “warts and all,” as Cromwell told the painter. But it is a necessity in any true religion, as Pascal says, that it should know human nature:

Il faut, pour qu'une religion soit vrai, qu'elle ait connu noter nature. Therefore they assail it, only to find, like Praxiteles when he broke the mirror that offended him by revealing his mutilated face—that all the broken pieces took up and reflected the same representation (so that there were now twenty unsightly Praxiteles' instead of one). It is a mirror which, if it be broken, only multiplies its testimony; and they had thought it to be like that little glass toy, the “Prince Rupert drop” which will explode and vanish if you give it ever so slight a scratch! No, that is the difference between truth and error perhaps. What is that phrase that says though Truth is run over by a locomotive and crushed out of all shape, yet she will eventually recover, whereas Error dies of mortification from a pin-scratch? May be so; I only know that Error is an unconscionably long time dying, and that Truth is being run over all the time.

This purification by the laver is very stringently commanded. If it were omitted, the approaching worshipper was cut off by death. This would be in the antitype of course spiritual—there would be no spiritual vitality in the exercise. There may be much of fluent and complaisant verbosity—or even eloquence—that assumes to be ministry and worship; but unless there be a practically purified course of life and action in those through whom it comes, it is all vapid and lifeless; and there ascends but an odor of death and decay instead of a fragrant incense.

Chapter 203

Scripture Imagery: 75. The Golden Altar

There is a sort of double consecration of Aaron for the position of high priest. Firstly, as typifying Christ personally, where it is without blood—simply with water and oil, that is, by the word and Spirit. There was no need of blood in this case, for of course there was no sin. And the same thing took place anti-typically at the Jordan. When our Lord had been baptized, immediately the Holy Ghost (anti-type of the oil) descended upon Him. He was “anointed by the Holy Ghost.” However it is instructive also to see that, though for Himself personally He was independent of atonement, yet He did not take the place of being independent of the Word. He therefore insisted on being baptized when the Baptist himself demurred. In the second phase of the consecration, Aaron is associated with his sons as head of the priestly house, and he identifies himself with them as the Lord does in grace with His disciples in John 17, Psa. 16 etc. Then we find that after they are “washed” (or rather, bathed, submerged) in water, it is necessary, before the oil rests on them, that their garments should be sprinkled with blood, and their right ears, thumbs, and toes touched with it, signifying that whatever they hear, do, or proceed in, should be in relation with the sacrifice and death of Christ and all that it involves. The bathing in water signifies that of which Peter speaks: “through sanctification of the Spirit [by means of 'the water of the word' of course] unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” It is not here the practical purification of conduct that is in question—that is dealt with elsewhere. But what is meant is that primal and absolute sequestration of the soul from all else to God which is effected directly that His word is received. We see the two aspects of sanctification in Thessalonians; this absolute and final one which is the portion of every Christian: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification... and belief..” And that which is relative and progressive; “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless.”

All this with Aaron is a shadow, no doubt, “but like a shadow, proves the substance there.” When the commands have been given for the priests to be ordained and for perpetual sacrifices to hallow the sanctuary, the LORD gives His promise to dwell among them, and gives directions for the golden altar to be made. We now reach the culmination of the whole fabric—a mystic fabric which “sprung like some tall palm in majestic silence.” But there was to be a majestic eloquence there too.

For the Golden Altar, with its sacred fire and ascending incense, expresses Worship; and this is the loftiest occupation to which it is possible for a created intelligence to attain. Alas! that we understand so little and care so little to know what it is. Doubtless those mysterious celestial beings, those powers and hierarchies that people the skies and solar systems, have many occupations but none so exalted, so privileged, so honorable and, perhaps we may say, so delightful as worshipping and communing with their Creator. The condemned sinner who passes by the way of the brazen altar arrives here at last, into the very presence of deity, to lift hands made holy by the absolving sacrifice, and face made radiant with the celestial light in adoration of his Redeemer, the triune God, throned amid the mystic cherubim.

Of necessity worship is usually mingled with thanksgiving, prayer and intercession; but the highest worship is that pure adoration which “joys in God” for what He is in Himself, quite distinct from anything that He has done for us:

“ Forth from the last corporeal are we come

Into the heaven, that is unbodied light

Light intellectual replete with love,

Love of true happiness replete with joy.

Joy that transcends all sweetness of delight.”

We see how in the vision the four-and-twenty elders, who cast their crowns before the rainbow-circled throne, assign a reason for their worship: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things.” The four “beasts,” or symbolic representatives of mercy and judgment, were saying “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.” Then the beasts and the elders worship. the One Who has taken the book, assigning a further reason, “for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation....” This leads up to the highest of all forms of worship, where the worshippers even cease to contemplate the effect of divine mercy upon their own destinies, or what divine power has accomplished around them. From the myriads of those assembled choirs rises the anthem of adoration, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

If we knew more of this, we should feel like him of old, “How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD;” (but there was something even beyond that) “my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Men think it an honor to be allowed to see some merely human being who has accomplished some great achievements: how much greater the honor and delight of being brought into the presence of the Being Who achieved him. When we look on the excellence of some human work, we think with admiration of its author and even desire to meet him and express our appreciation. Can we look upon God's work even in creation without the same desire? Shall I search with the telescope the infinitude of the midnight sky and look with awe upon the ice gathering on the hills of Mars, the great trade winds circling in the Belt of Jupiter, or the whirling debris making another moon on Saturn; and then look down through the microscope and see the myriad forms of sentient life in a drop of water—see them, too, all manifestly made and impelled by the same One Mind—the almost invisible volvox twirling round exactly on the same principle as the most distant sun—can we see all these without longing to come into the presence of Him “Who rounded in His palms those spacious orbs, And bowled them flaming through the dark profound?” And even though we had no mouths to feed, no souls to save, no sins to be forgiven, there is nothing so natural, suited and incumbent as that the soul should long, even faint, for the courts of the Lord, and the heart, yea, and the flesh cry out for the living God; and nothing that can be more delightful than to join the “sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies” around the throne of the Most High.

Rev. 22:6-21 is the close. After warnings Christ presents Himself as giving the book. The bride, with the Spirit, bids Him come; and her position toward Him, those that hear, and sinners, is

defined. John seals all with his own longing that Christ should come.

Chapter 204

Scripture Imagery: 76. The Incense, the Ointment, Counterfeits

Directions followed for making the holy ointment with which the tabernacle and its appurtenances were to be anointed. The chief component is the olive oil, which, being mingled with certain fragrant and medicinal qualities, typifies the unction of the Holy One who sanctifies by His presence the true Tabernacle of God.

Then the Incense or Holy Perfume is described. The making of this, and also of the ointment, was a sacred commission, invested with a charge of unusual solemnity; and the reason is evident, for the one typifies the essential personality of the Divine Son, and the other that of the Divine Spirit. None but the omniscient can comprehend all that is here signified; and it behooves us to have much care and reverence in considering these things, where the essential nature of Divine Being is presented. The command is given that whosoever should make any imitation of the incense should be cut off from his people, because what experience has seen, prophecy has foreseen—that there is nothing so attractive to a certain class of mind as this very occupation of composing counterfeit Christs. We can no more comprehend the nature of our Lord than we can comprehend infinitude; and all we can do is to accept what is presented in the scriptures for our reverent contemplation, and not essay to go beyond with our shallow reasonings and carnal speculations. But the pedant will rush in where angels fear to tread. He undertakes to explain the whole mystery of godliness. Has he not measured the Infinite with his three-foot rule? Has he not litmus paper in one hand and a pair of small compasses in the other? How deftly does he apply the terms of arithmetic to the Eternal!

Having thus analyzed he commences to reconstruct; but just here is where his efforts are outwardly least satisfactory. He makes something that is like the original—so like indeed that many can see no difference—but there is a difference. The difference is that which generally exists between what God makes and what man counterfeits, the difference between diamond and paste, between gold and pinchbeck.

The system of the pedant is by no means a new thing. It is as old at least as Arius the Libyan, whom stout old Athanasius withstood. Arius was indeed the very high priest of pedants. He analyzed and reconstructed till he presented the church with a Christ so like the real Christ that many till this day cannot tell the difference. But it was not the same. To use his own pedantic language, it was homoiousian but not homoousian. Arius however was undoubtedly a man singularly devout, venerable, and learned. That is not the case always with the learned pedant; but, to compensate for the absence of these three qualities he has “l'audace, encore l'audace, et toujours l'audace” that is usually sufficient to found and lead a new school on.

Now the peremptory command given against this class of offense takes no cognizance as to whether the imitation is a good or a bad one of the original; the command is against making the attempt at all. I have always thought, besides, that in respect of these speculations on the personality of our Lord, it is not so much a question as to whether they be correct or incorrect. The sin is in entering into such speculations at all, nor is the least part of the offense the peculiarity in

this, that it compels the minds of multitudes of persons to enter into the same profane sphere of thought, and turns themes of a delicacy and solemnity too great for speech into the faction cries of vulgar controversy.

All this, however, should not hinder us from reverently contemplating what the scripture has revealed, whether by type or abstract statement. The boundary line between devotion and profanity is not passed so long as we keep within what God has been pleased to disclose. In the components of the ointment and perfume before us, for instance, we can perceive the elements of light-giving (in the olive oil); elements which express an inward origin (as the myrrh), an inward shield (as the cinnamon), an outward characteristic (as the cassia). The calamus then is the pith of a reed. This ointment was not to be put on “man's flesh.” The mere fleshly nature, how innocent soever it may be, cannot receive the Spirit of God.

In the incense there is expressed a reference to grace (stacte, Cant. 5:13, etc.) inward richness (galbanum), and fragrance (onycha—while the word itself comes from a root signifying “a lion"). The frankincense is expressive amongst other things of purity. All these elements were to be salted together (lit., Exodus 30:35).

This incense was to be “beaten very small,” and burned on the golden altar. It is the highest expression of worship. Its substance is deliberately consumed in the service of God, and before His face. What ardor and devotion are here signified? And in this as all else is our Lord an example for His disciples. The martyr of Prague gave it expression when he said, “This body in flames, I give to Thee!” “If they had not been flesh and blood,” says “old Fuller,” speaking of the martyrs, “they could not have been burnt; and if they had been no more than flesh and blood, they would not have been burnt.” He speaks too of “The Forgotten Martyrs” “God's calendar is, more complete than man's best martyrologies, and their names are written in the book of life who on earth are wholly forgotten.” Nor is it only of those who have died in material fires that I speak. It may be that this kind of worship is going on around us every day far more than we know of—where one immolates the whole body, soul and spirit like the old apostle, who said with as much grandeur as simplicity, “I am now ready to be offered.” This immolation is a submissive and passive attitude, “ready to be offered.” It is not meant of course that there can be any justification for men in wantonly inviting death. Indeed the sacrifice is not so much carried out by death as terminated by death. The distortion of this principle may be seen in those who are misled into taking away their own lives, as did the warriors of Otho when he died, or that Burmese who of late burnt himself before his god; their action we know to be wrong. Yet we may well desire the devotion that impelled it.

“ Beaten very small!” And every blow that falls upon it only causes it to yield some fresh fragrance. This was its sole retaliation, like that noble tree which, when wounded, yielded its goodly balm. Every blow that fell on Him, and every crushing humiliation, brought out more and more the fragrant beauties of His nature.

Burnt with fire! And as the scorching flames consume it, it only becomes more and more transformed into a burning and shining light. Consumed it seems to the outward sight; but the eyes of Faith, Love, and Hope can see that it has not perished, but that it is by the sufferance of these fires transformed, spiritualized, and etherealized, and that it ascends odorous with the beauties of its holy perfume into the bosom of the Father.

Chapter 205

Scripture Imagery: 77. The Golden Calf

Whilst God was elaborating a system of worship of such mystic beauties and splendors that angels desired to look into it, those for whom it was being designed prepared a system for themselves, gross and bestial, on the plain below. The incense is ever the climax: the golden calf the anticlimax.

Men are constructed so that they must worship. If they do not worship the true God, they will inevitably worship some false god. I say “inevitably” because, though there are some who profess not to believe in any God at all, yet even these are found to be worshippers of something or other that occupies the position of deity towards them. Sometimes it is Nature or as the ancients called him Pan; or Humanity with a capital H, or Ignorance, re-christened Agnosticism to make it seem more learned (but all its dignity fades into vulgarity when you give it the English name—that is often the case with the deities and theories). Sometimes, says the apostle, their god is their belly. “Belial comes last, than whom a spirit more lewd Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love Vice for itself.”

Even to Christians it was necessary that the apostle should write, “Little children keep yourselves from idols!” In general we may say that any person, or thing, or theory—such as I call “principle” when I hold it myself, and “fad” when somebody else holds it—that we allow to take that position in relation to us, to exercise that authority over us, and exact that devotion from us which rightly belong to our Creator, is a false god that we are serving, no matter by what euphemistic name so ever it may be called. As in a benign sense, so in a malign sense, the outward forms and physical symbols pass away, but the spiritual and essential meanings abide and become more developed. In the worship of the true God the types of outward form have passed away with the childhood of the race; and they that worship do so “in spirit and in truth.” So the gross outward forms of idolatry pass also; but they that worship the false gods still worship in spirit and in fact. Men do not, it is true, worship a physical Apollo, or a visible Aphrodite, or a material Bacchus, but they are often devoting their most precious possessions to the principles represented by these names, whether it be the refined dissipations typified by the first, or the grosser license and debaucheries of the others. They do not offer Apollo a hawk, but will devote years of valuable time to some phase of artificial culture that, beyond a slight and questionable service as a recreation, is of no real use to anyone in the world, where people's bodies are starving and their souls dying. They do not offer Aphrodite a dove or Bacchus a pig; but to the principles that these names suggest there are thousands every day sacrificing health, strength, reputation, home, family, body, soul and spirit. There are those more innocent deities too that receive the service due to Jehovah, Hercules for instance, or Fame, “the sister of the giants.” We don't worship beetles now; but we hear it commended as a virtue to pass a lifetime dissecting the antennae of some minute insect with no object on earth except to be able to state that the Melitta is or is not the larva of the Melue.

All this is widespread, not to speak of those services of the fouler deities, the worship of “Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell,” of “Moloch, the horrid king besmeared with blood of

human sacrifice and parents' tears;" of the worship of the Lords of Malebolge, and of the viler creeping things, obscene as Chemosh, horrible as Kalee. How many offer their most precious gifts to such principles as these! as they said Titania twined her garlands round the coarse and brutal ears of her ass-headed lord. When the eyes are touched with the eye-salve, what an awakening! "There lies your love." "Oh, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!"

The worship of the calf was not however so degraded as this. It was taken from their old masters the Egyptians; and that remarkable people was generally cleanly even in their idolatry. Apis, the bull, representing Osiris, was adopted by Israel, too, and to say the truth, at first view there seems little harm in it. More respectable people than they had worshipped at his shrine for centuries without apparent disadvantage. Where was the sin? Aaron might think. It was a clean and useful animal, and represented the valuable principle of Prosperity. Yet God looks down out of the heavens full of anger and goes near to destroy them off the face of the earth. We soon find that He deals in a different way with His own people from that in which He deals with the rest of the world. He says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: THEREFORE will I punish you for all your iniquities." It is not safe to presume because of the immunity of others. Is He going to allow this stupendous insult, that His own redeemed people dethrone Him in favor of a calf!

See how evil communications corrupt, though the effect of the contagion perhaps does not show till long afterward, when the disease has had time for incubation and the weak state of the constitution gives it opportunity to develop. Moreover, one often takes the disease in a malignant form from another who has it only mildly. The calf idolatry in Egypt had been comparatively decent and cleanly: in Israel it developed at once into horrible orgies.

" Little children, keep yourselves from idols." J.B.

Scripture Imagery: 78. The Intercession of Moses

We are apt to suppose that the position of a ruler is easy and enviable. And so doubtless it would be, if one could accept its privileges without feeling its responsibilities, like an oriental Pacha. Generally those who covet such positions would feel but little of the obligations, and therefore they are unfit; and the obverse of this is true too. There is nothing that we know of Moses to indicate that he ever had the slightest personal ambition to rule Israel: but when he was forced into the post, there is much to show that he felt the responsibilities of a ruler as only such a large and noble nature could. The heartless ingratitude and wickedness of the people however are almost too much for him; and it appears as if he would gladly relinquish his post till he hears God threatening to destroy them. Then, when he sees them in sin and danger, he offers himself up altogether—even to the eternal obliteration of his existence—sooner than desert them; as King Codrus gave his noble life up in secret for the Athenians; as Mettus Curtius leaped his horse into the gulf of everlasting oblivion for the Romans: so surpassed he the legends of Greece and Rome. This is one of the phases of the mediator. He is the Man of opportunity, the Friend in need, that loveth at all times, that sticketh closer than a brother—that says, Call upon Me when you are in trouble.

Those who saw him down amongst the people denouncing their idolatry with flaming words of consuming wrath, could have had no conception of the infinite pity with which he had just pleaded their cause—and would again plead it—even to the offering up of himself in propitiation for them. If Zobeide, in the Eastern story, seemed to beat her weeping dogs cruelly, it was because she was compelled: she afterward mingled her tears of sorrow with theirs. “Let the righteous smite me: it shall be a kindness!” The man of the world condones our faults to our faces and condemns them—perhaps exaggerates them—behind our backs. But the true Advocate reverses this: to men's faces He said “Ye generation of vipers “; but to God He groaned “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"!

Some have asked, What is the use of intercession with Deity? If God's disposition be merciful, what need is there that anyone should intercede for others? Is He likely to be swayed from His irrevocable decrees and inexorable purposes by any petitions whatsoever? This is a kind of reasoning most quickly answered by type or illustration. Here the great indignation of God with Israel for their gross insult and national treason is entirely natural. But so is the pleading of Moses for mercy to his sinful brethren. So also is the mercy that is at last granted in response to that impassioned intercession. It is quite natural, then, that a ruler should desire to grant mercy to a sinful people, and yet find it out of accord with the dignity of his throne and laws to do so unless some one pleaded their cause—quite natural, for instance, that Edward III. should have desired to spare Eustace St. Pierre and his companions, when they were led to him with the halters round their necks, but that he should have found it impossible to do so, until the queen urgently interceded for them. To spare them before that would have seemed weakness: after that it was grace. Yet it is easy to believe that the monarch was quite as benevolently disposed as his wife. He might even have suggested the intercession to her himself (though I do not believe he did, yet

it would have been entirely natural). For all that, it is certain that without the intercession the men would have been hanged by the neck outside the walls of Calais till they were dead.

Not only so but cases are found where the ruler himself searches directly or indirectly for an advocate of sufficient importance for this very purpose; much as the Scotch government (theoretically) appoints the first law-officer of the Crown to defend a criminal who is not otherwise supplied with an advocate, in order that everything which can possibly be alleged in favor of the accused to justify him or mitigate the severity of the punishment should be advanced. And if punishment must come, it will then appear the more impartial and deliberate. Thus the advocate brings out either the vindication of the judged or of the judge, or both. In fact advocacy is one of the very few things that are always productive of some good results (and consequently it is but natural that shallow minds should think it useless).

Besides all this there is its reflex effect. No one can pray or intercede for another without receiving the answer in his own bosom, without becoming larger and stronger in soul (speaking now of ourselves). Let me put this question to the reader: Is your habit of mind that of intercession? Is it your tendency to condone, with that charity that covereth a multitude of sins, the offenses of others—so far as justice permits—and to appeal to God and man in their favor? If so, that is Christ-like. Or is it the reverse? The name of the middle ages, “Advocatus Diaboli", was well invented; but the function is a very old one, and a very bad one. Better to be an Advocatus Dei.

The Daysman, for whom Job in the ancient darkness groaned, has three principal functions: He is the Interpreter, whence the name “Word,” because He expresses the thoughts of God—and of man too. He is the mediator between God and man—that being broad and universal. Besides this, in the divine family of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, He is the “Advocate with the Father”.

Scripture Imagery: 79. Results of Moses' Intercession

When the positivist young man told the minister that he would never believe anything that he could not understand, the old man replied that his creed, then, must be very short. And the reply was well within the truth, which is, perhaps, more fully expressed by the German paper in which I lately saw this conversation reported— “She: 'So you believe in nothing'? He: 'I believe in nothing that I cannot understand.' She: 'Well, that comes to the same thing!'” The reply might have been meant satirically, but it is sober, sound philosophy, for all that; we can really understand nothing until we first believe something.

It is especially true that it is “by faith we understand” in reference to heavenly things, whether they be physical or spiritual. For instance, in regard even to physical things in the heavens, are there not thousands of ships at this very moment safely and surely guiding their courses by the positions of the stars? When their navigators look in the Nautical Almanac that can tell them for years ahead where such and such a star will be at such a moment, not one in a thousand of them, perhaps, understands how it has been made out. If any of them comprehend the method of the calculation, they cannot stay to work it out for themselves. Yet they dream no more of doubting their nautical almanac than of doubting their existence. Any of their calculations, or of the astronomer's whom they trust, are based first of all on belief in the figures and statements of other men who have proved them. It is through faith they understand. At the bottom it is on that basis that they safely convey and protect the thousands of lives and millions of value entrusted to them.

Men say that they do not understand how a perfect and omniscient God can repent. Yet when I read that “the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto the people” after the impassioned and devoted intercession of Moses for them, I find it easy to believe exactly what is stated; and if I cannot understand how it is so, I find it tenfold more difficult to understand how it could be otherwise. And this is true of a large class of scripture difficulties. When it is difficult to conceive how the original statement can be true, consider for a moment how much more difficult it is to conceive anything else of the matter to be true. Is it difficult to believe that God was filled with anger against the wickedness of Israel, and yet that He exercised forbearance toward them when His beloved and honored servant offered to give himself up in their stead? Perhaps it is difficult, but it is impossible to believe otherwise, that is assuming the main historical events to be true, of course.

Then something consists in rightly apprehending the meaning of the word “repent.” In general, in scripture, it does not mean remorse or contrition, as so many think, but simply a change or revolution in the attitude of the mind. “Godly sorrow leadeth to repentance,” but that shows it is not the same thing. There is, indeed, a secondary use of the word repent, as where we are told Judas repented (a different Greek word is, however, used). That is the vain remorse of baffled sin. In any such senses as regret or remorse in reference to His personal actions, we are assured that God “is not a man that He should repent.” There is no inconsistency in these statements for people of ordinary intelligence. (The Learned Critic is not included here, of course. His intelligence is

extraordinary—whether upwards or downwards who shall say?— At any rate a language has not yet been invented sufficiently explicit for him.)

There is far more honor in accomplishing great work with small and apparently inadequate means than with strong and suitable instruments, so we are not so much struck with the fact that Shamgar and Samson delivered Israel, as that the one did it with a common ox-goad, the other with the jaw-bone of an ass. God, who constructs the basin of an ocean by means of the minute encrinitæ, or builds up a thousand miles of rocks on the Australian coast by the agency of coral insects, reveals the glory of His power and wisdom, chiefly by accomplishing work vast and stupendous, by instrumentalities feeble and despised.

It was thus in the Israelitish history. Those whom He took up to promulgate and preserve the knowledge of the true deity on the earth were not a band of angelic beings, but a nation of men quite as sinful as any that ever had existed. It suits modern criticism to speak well of them as a nation whose fitness caused their survival, and their evolution of a religion gradually from a low to a high standard. But ancient criticism had a different opinion; according to the author of Religio Medici, it held that “the Israelites were turned out of Egypt because they were scabbed.” The truth, as usual, holds its own even way between the extremes: they were about the same as their fellow-men, not much better nor much worse. Human nature is much the same wherever you find it. As to the Israelites, having a tendency to develop upwards, however, the facts seem peculiarly the other way. The greatest height they ever reached of pure and lofty devotion was on the banks of the Red Sea. A very short time afterward they fall into the vilest orgies of idolatry. It was with people like these that God has transformed the face of the earth. instruments that continually broke in His hand; and that is full of encouragement for His servants now. All this is too obviously typical to need comment.

On this occasion, when they fell down before a golden calf He turns to cast them away, but listens to the intercession of Moses and retains them. The advocacy of Moses then takes another character. He makes their very wickedness a ground of appeal to Jehovah to go with them. “I pray thee go amongst us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and sin, and take us for thine inheritance.” It is not that we are so good that He cannot do without us, but we are so bad we cannot do without Him If this be presumption, it is the presumption of faith; and I wish we had more of it.

In truth it was one of the finest pieces of advocacy even in God's records. He first carries his point on the grounds of the Judge's goodness, when it was the people's badness that was really in question; and then he turns round and makes the very badness of the people a fresh basis of appeal—this time ad misericordiam and in forma pauperis—for fresh clemency. Moses had said that he was not eloquent and of course believed it, but that was only because of the innate modesty and diffidence of his great nature. He had indeed a massive and magnificent character. “Great, not as a hewn obelisk, but as an Alpine mountain.... unsubduable granite, piercing far and wide into the heavens; yet in the clefts of fountains, green beautiful valleys with flowers." If he seemed at times to be rock, then it was after the similitude of that rock at Fontainebleau, la roche qui pleure; from its hard and rugged face the tears continually falling that fertilize the ground which it protects.

Scripture Imagery: 80. Outside the Camp, Illumined Faces

OUTSIDE THE CAMP. ILLUMINED FACES.

A principle of the highest practical importance is shown us when, after the idolatry of Israel, “Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp.... and every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation which was without the camp". We see thus that a time may come when an institution which has undoubtedly been set up by God Himself must be abandoned, because of its present corruption and apostasy. A time may come when it is as clear a duty to forsake it as till then it had been clearly a duty to support it. The drummer boy told his captors that he could not play the signal for retreat” they didn't use it in the English army “; and the brave French officer, who liked courage and loved epigram, smiled and sent him back free to his own company. But the boy's statement, though well invented, was not true. The greatest general of that age had said that the most important quality in a commander was to see when it was necessary to retreat, and to dare to do it.

This principle is sometimes misapplied, and then, like all else that is valuable when misused, it is apt to be dangerous—even disastrous. Obviously, if we can follow our own inclinations in such matters, there is no obligation to unity and cooperation in a divine testimony at all. Every great little man that can find a few followers can seize a few boards of the tabernacle and trot outside to make a new camp whenever he cannot get his own way in everything. It is nothing to the purpose to say that the seceders will march and fight in the same direction as the others. What commander could admit of that kind of thing—a substitution of guerilla strife for organized and united battle? It is not “magnificent,” and it certainly “is not war”.

And yet there is a time when withdrawal is commanded. Before that time to withdraw is cowardice: after that time to remain is treason. 1—As to when the hour is, we are not left to our own capricious judgment. No private voice, no merely human chief, however influential, is authorized to initiate such a movement. When on one of the Spanish galleons, at the battle of Gravelines, a man was hauling down the flag, the commander stabbed him on the spot. Who gave the man any authority to pull down the flag? Surely that is a matter for the leader. In the case before us it is when Moses (typical of Christ as Leader) removes the tabernacle containing the ark (typical of Christ as the Center of worship and testimony) that the time has come. When such an institution is found neither to possess Christ as Leader or Center, it is no longer treason to leave it: it is treason to remain.

But we have much evidence that the forbearance of the Lord is so great that, so far from forsaking for a light cause anything which He has set up, He will linger till the last instant that there is the slightest possibility of any reformation. In the ancient days the Shekinah lingered near Jerusalem for a long time before finally departing. In the Gospels Jesus visited the temple to the last and purged it judicially until their infamous bargain with Judas was concluded; then He leads the disciples to Olivet. In the church history of Revelation, even after the Laodiceans have excluded Him from their assemblies, He lingers at the door and knocks. And the disciple is not above his

Master: so long as the Master can bear with a disorderly and inconsistent condition of things, the disciple should be able to do so likewise. We should not leave the sinking ship before the captain has decided that the time has come. To do so before that is to act as the rats do: hence the verb “to rat” —a vile verb truly, and though it goes smoothly enough in the first persons singular and plural, a horribly irregular one.

Let those who are easily offended by the inconsistencies of their fellow-servants consider however what an extremity of patience their Master exercises before He gives such cases up. In this case before us there was no removal of the tabernacle until the mass of the people in their idolatrous apostasy had treasonably elected a calf to Jehovah's throne. In the Epistles we see frequently indications of the gravest inconsistencies and disorders in the churches—as at Corinth and Galatia—but no directions given for any to withdraw and commence afresh. All efforts and exhortations are directed towards reform, except where conditions of general apostasy and idolatry render all such attempts hopeless. Then the apostle says, “From such turn away”. “Come out from among them and be ye separate.”

“ And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty:” thus the passage proceeds. When such a step has to be taken, with all that it involves of obloquy and renunciation, there is granted—always provided that the step is taken in obedience to the expressed will of God—a special revelation of divine favor and countenance. Moses then asks, “If I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, [for what?] that I may know Thee: and consider that this nation is Thy people”. Jehovah replies by granting him a special revelation of Himself, and by saying, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest!”

And thereafter the man's face became so illumined with an unutterable, celestial glory, that the people were filled with awe and wonder. In this there was a type of that “light of the knowledge of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. Only, as Paul tells us concerning it, the light from the face of Moses, being symbolic of the legal covenant, was so powerful that it repelled the unregenerate beholders: the light of the gospel, however, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, carries a peculiar power with it which enables the beholders to draw nigh and gaze unharmed.

In any case the face of a man who communes thus with God becomes thereby illumined with a divine glory and beauty, which (though he may be all unconscious thereof himself), when turned upon his fellow-men, yields them a celestial light. This is indeed a beauty “which age cannot wither nor custom stale”. It is independent of all external form. Paul is traditionally held to have been infirm and mean in outward appearance; yet always in all our minds, when we think of him, we think of “a light that ne'er was seen on land or sea” resting on his face, a light of spiritual and intellectual beauty. Plato speaks of the beauty of Socrates, and Phavorinus, comparing him (about the ugliest man in Greece) with his friend Alcibiades (who was about the handsomest), says that the beauty of Socrates will endure undimmed when that of Alcibiades was withering—ay, and when it shall rot in corruption.

And in no way can the French proverb apply more truly than in this. “To be beautiful one must suffer.” That is what Paul proved and what Moses proved. It is what the smith cries to the iron as he burns and smiths it: it is what the lapidary mutters to the stone as he cuts and grinds it—"Il faut souffrir pour etre belle.”

Chapter 209

Scripture Imagery: 81. Gifts and Work of the Tabernacle, the True Atlantes and Caryatides

The Israelites gave very generously of their possessions in order to construct the tabernacle; for so inconsistent are men that they will offer gifts freely to the true God one day and worship veal the next. People are only consistently good or bad in books. When the satyr turned the poor man out of his cabin for blowing on his soup to cool it, and then on his fingers to warm them, (he would have nothing to do with one that could blow hot and cold, he said,) he merely did it after his manner, satirically. He knew very well that the whole human race could blow hot or cold at will, and that even he who said the more he knew of men the more he liked dogs was probably not a great deal better than his fellows. Nor was he who said his countrymen were so many millions "mostly fools," much wiser (though unquestionably more learned) than the bulk.

When the different materials were collected for the building, much necessarily has to be done before the tabernacle is finished, and this is accomplished by human instrumentality. A number of artificers led by Bezaleel (an ancestor and type of Christ) are called, who take up the materials and so design, fit and perfect them, that they are worthy to be built in with the rest of the sacred edifice. The tabernacle being by one aspect a type of the body of believers, we have before us then a figure of the place and value of ministry by human instruments.

The same principle is seen in another connection in Psa. 45. There is "the gold of Oplair "; that is what God gives. It is put in the ground and men stoop and pick it up. No man can make it, though they have been trying for ages (and have indeed succeeded in making something like it). This gold is the divine nature of which we are made partakers, which is communicated in the gospel. Then there is the "wrought gold," that is where human design and labor are worked into the God-given gold. The bride had a third attribute too—raiment of needlework: this she had of course prepared for herself; "the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." These last are in the tabernacle symbolized by the hangings of the court.

But it is to the ministry by human agents that we are directed in this passage. Bezaleel and his assistants took the rough-hewn members of the tabernacle as they were brought, and by their patient and ingenious care, design and labor, they gradually developed and perfected the character of each, till they were formed finally into one glorious and harmonious whole. The important place given in the sacred records to the mention of these artificers may suggest to all who know and serve the Lord a consideration of the great value and importance of their work; and not only to those whose sphere of work is public and prominent, but as Peter says, "As each man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." If there is by grace a faculty, there is also a responsibility. We are all given the care of the characters of one another. We are called to be cunning artificers in human souls, so to care for, study, and act upon, one another as that the impression of the divine idea shall be wrought out in each according to his position, nature, and capacity.

What work this is! There is nothing more important in the universe. Flow infinitely more important than all the carving and sculpturing in literal wood and stone could ever be, how important soever were it. It is the spiritual artificer who has most right to say, “Art is long though life is short.” When Michael Angelo was told by his friend that some finishing touches, that he had been weeks in giving to a statue, were only trifles, he replied that all these trifles constitute perfection, and that perfection is no trifle. When told that he worked slowly, the great artist merely replied, Yes, but that he worked for a long time. And the artificers of the Lord work for a long eternity: as eternity exceeds time, so does the work of the spiritual sculptor surpass the physical, but, alas, so does no his sense of the importance of his work, it is to be feared.

Mutual soul influence is hourly going on everywhere for good or evil whether we recognize it or not. Let each consider whether the influence he is exercising on others is of Bezaleel or Beelzebub. Is the form we are carving to be a Galatea or a Frankenstein; to be animated by the spark from heaven, or the fire of hell? And let us consider, too, that to exercise an influence for evil on one human being for a moment has a baleful effect that can perhaps never be canceled, nor can it be compensated for by beneficial influences exercised on others, however large. The man of God who wrote hymns a century ago of such strength ar d grace that millions of Christians still sing them and find them a soul-forming power—that man used to say that he never could forget nor cease to sorrow for the bad effect of his own conduct on a young shipmate of his in his early days.

Let us therefore consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Let us make it a matter of consideration, of thought, of effort, of design: endeavoring to produce in each the impress of God, the semblance of Christ; not using the same tools and methods with each, but having some care as to what is appropriate. Nor let us be discouraged if some are more difficult to manipulate than others. Beech and oak are much harder to work than deal, but the result is worth the extra labor. If there be knots in the wood—or eccentricities in the character—the patient and able artificer can often turn these to adornments by careful treatment. Who would not prefer walnut wood to pine? If there be a discipline implied in all this, well, then if the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: here again “to be beautiful one must needs suffer.”

Chapter 210

Scripture Imagery: 82. The Pillar of Cloud

At length the Tabernacle stands finished in the midst of the enormous multitude of worshippers. And as it stands, radiant and resplendent with ineffable glories, it expresses to the universe the thoughts of God concerning Christ and His people. Pray reflect on what a wonderful possibility it is for a creature on this small planet to be able to follow the thoughts of the Deity at all, and especially those thoughts and designs pertaining to the most exalted and spiritual themes, the inmost counsels of the Most High. How strange were it for a dog to be enabled, through some subtlety of human invention, to follow the thoughts of a man? Yet the gulf between divine and human intelligence is infinitely wider than that between human and canine. Once in a lifetime there will flash into one's mind the stupendous meaning of those words that He has “made known to us the mystery of His will.” When Kepler was discovering the mathematical laws that move the solar system, he rapturously exclaimed, “O Almighty God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!” And yet the laws of the solar system in comparison with the eternal principles before us are as transient and trifling as the rules of a game of marbles.

When the building containing the sacred Ark has been anointed with the holy ointment—in the same manner in which the antitypical ark, “tabernacled with men,” was anointed with the Holy Ghost— “the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” This pillar of Cloud, which represented the Divine Presence, protected them from the torrid heat by day and the innumerable dangers and terrors of the darkness by night, guiding the myriads of wayward and ignorant beings through the waste howling wilderness home to the promised land. But in order to accomplish this, the people had to be guided in all their journeying by the movements of the cloud. Here we have the two great essential principles of protection and subjection.

A condition of relationship between God and His people is thus expressed. He engages to protect them, and in order to do this requires that they should obey Him. Wherever there is relationship there is responsibility, and there is a certain complementary complexion always between the relationship and the responsibility which is like that which exists between the complementary colors or sounds—the one suggesting and implying the other. When the ray of light comes to the rose, directly she absorbs all the shades that combine to form the green into her heart, she wears its complementary red on her bosom. When any musical note is sounded, the trained ear can simultaneously hear the vibrations—though faint indeed, as in some spiritual realm—of its accordant harmonic tones. The one cannot exist without the other. I know of no gospel—from God, though plenty from men—which does not advance Christ in the two-fold character, indissolubly joined, of Savior and Lord. Protection always necessitates obedience, and obedience always necessitates protection. To omit the first is legalism: to omit the second is lawlessness.

There is no other way of managing that ever I heard of. Everywhere men agree to submit to human governments, more or less faulty, because of the protection they give; for experience proves that the worst of them is better than anarchy. The citizen says, “If I surrender to you my natural savage rights of offense and defense, I expect you to protect me.” The government says,

“if I am to protect you, I must have your allegiance and obedience.” Of course in the human social contract this is limited to physical matters. The rulers do not protect our souls and therefore should not dictate to our consciences. When the rulers of Jerusalem or Bedford commanded Peter or Bunyan not to preach, these very properly refused to obey. They had commands to the contrary from a higher court. At the same time when a government commands that one shall not preach at such and such a particular place because of interference with the public convenience, it is entirely within its jurisdiction, and should be obeyed. Many zealous Christians get themselves into trouble and create scandal through not seeing this distinction.

But as the protection of the Cloud is eternal, so the claim on our loyalty and submission is infinite. It is well to see, too, that His people's submission gives them—so far as a creature can have it—a claim upon God's care which is thoroughly recognized and responded to. Human rulers do not always fulfill their part of the contract. When Philip of Macedon told an old woman that he had not time to consider her petition, she replied, “Then you ought not to be king;” and he, about the fiercest and proudest man on earth at the time, was so impressed with the justice of the taunt that he immediately undertook to examine her claim. The people used to contrast with this the conduct of Demetrius who ruled afterward. This latter received affably the petitions of suppliants and folded them in his robe till he had an armful of them: he then went to the bridge of the Axius and threw them all in the river, which made the populace very indignant.

But what chiefly concerns us is obedience; readiness to advance when commanded—like those six hundred, “Theirs not to reason why.” When Paulus Æmilius found his army talkative, says Plutarch, busy and ready to direct their general, he said that each should keep his hand fit for action and his sword sharp, and leave the rest to him. Chrysantes, too, is handed down to us by the same writer as a fine example of military obedience. He was seen with his hand raised in the act of striking a foe when the trumpet sounded to cease, and his arm fell quietly to his side.

How can we down in the ranks expect always to understand our Leader's designs? If our carcasses fall in the wilderness, our souls shall reach the promised land. If there are wounds there are balms. “How many a Christian pilgrim,” said Kruminacher, “would never have seen anything of the spiritual manna and the spiritual stream from the rock, had God listened to him when, with fear and trembling, he besought Him not to lead him into a desert.” The road is rough, but the goal is sure. Down here on the plain we cannot expect to see the way so well as Omniscience can see it from the summit of the pillar of cloud. It has been said, Abraham went forth not knowing whither he went, but he knew that God knew—or as Whittier wrote,

“I know not where His islands lift

Their fronded palms in air;

I only know I cannot drift

Beyond His love and care.”

Chapter 211

Scripture Imagery: 83. Knops, Loops, Taches

Those qualities of diversity and unity which, being combined, form the principle of Fellowship, are illustrated in every detail of the Tabernacle. The coverings and curtains are made in several pieces, but linked by loops and taches of blue and gold. The building is of so many different boards but united by horizontal bars with golden rings. The twelve loaves rest under the same holy incense on the one table. The branches of the candlestick are all distinct in their individual places, but are all united in the central Shaft whence they originate. They were to be made with “three bowls... with a knop and a flower in one branch;... so in the six branches... And a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches." Not only do their various lights blend into one confluent glory, but, distinct as they are individually, the flowers and knops (i.e., the promise and potency of fruitfulness) are distributed in such a way as suggests co-operation, and precludes exclusive claim. The successful evangelist visits a place with rich results in conversions. He would be the first to acknowledge that the previous labors and prayers of others had prepared the way for him, and to deny that he was the only instrument used, or that the immediate cause is always the sole cause.

Very early in the world's history its teachers sought to open its eyes to the value of fellowship. In the plain of Shinar they were accomplishing a work so stupendous that God Himself thought necessary to “go down” to stop it. What is there a united mass of people cannot do—either for good or evil? “The Lord said, Behold the people is one,... and now nothing will be restrained from them!” God divided and conquered them. It was He first used that principle divbde et impera, and it proved such an effective one that the Devil, who has often a better appreciation of divine methods than we have, and largely imitates them, has adopted it as his chief mode of warfare.

The Greeks would never have been conquered by that Roman plan of campaign, “Divide and rule,” if they had only listened to their ugly little hunchbacked slave's story about the four bulls that the lion dared not attack so long as they kept together, so that he plotted to get them separated and conquer them in detail: or that other story of the old man who reunited his quarrelsome sons by showing them, how easy it was to break the fagots one by one, but how impossible to do so when they were all tied together in a bundle, with a band round, holding them close together, strengthening, and being strengthened by, one another. Ah, that uniting band, how important it is “Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” Herr Hebich's illustration of the tub is none the less graphic and powerful because it is homely. It must be fitly joined together and then bound together, or else it would not hold water. Everything, from the sewing on of a button up to the making of a Jupiter or Saturn, wants a final belt or ring put round it to unify its atoms. There was only one thing that the foreign cook omitted when he made an English plum-pudding, following the directions with scrupulous accuracy. He did not put it in a cloth; and the result was more interesting than satisfactory.

There can be no such thing as fellowship without something of public spirit; and probably there never was a time in the church's existence when public spirit was more weak. For in general there

seems neither grace nor persecution enough to evoke it. If everyone is selfishly to consider his own things and no one those of his neighbor, public spirit is dead and fellowship dissolved. It is necessary to remember that the church has a claim on the sympathies and services of every one of her members, just as the state has on her citizens, under penalties by the law of Misprision, and it is an unnatural thing if the members do not respond. The Greek word “idiot” —■δι■τηϛ—meant a private person who took no part in public transactions. It was not perhaps originally a term of reproach; in fact it was innocent enough, but not all the powers of language could prevent its ultimately passing into a term of pity and contempt. The Christianity which limits its public interest to occasional sneers at the quarrels of Christians is a poor thing.

Yet, poor thing as it is, it is still infinitely preferable to that contentious and ferocious religiousness which wastes the time and gifts granted by God for the tending of His flock, in quarreling and wrangling. “Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least That to the faithful herdman's art belongs! What recks it them?”.. so long as their petty and paltry ambitions are satisfied. La Fontaine renders the story of the old man and the fagots pathetically. He dies imploring his sons to be united by bonds of love: “Soyez joints, mes enfants; que l'amour vous accorde!” It were bad enough after such an appeal for them to be disunited, but for them to enter into fratricidal strife..!

And of all fighting that is the worst—when brothers fight—and the bitterest. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city. The nearer people approach in resemblance and interests, the more virulently they contend when strife arises. The Jews hated the Romans, but they hated the Samaritans, whose worship most closely of all the world resembled their own, a great deal more. The Mohammedan of the Sunnite sect hates his brother Mohammedan of the Shiites worse than he does a Christian. And the strangest thing of all is that the bitterness of religious quarrels is always in inverse ratio to the importance of the subject in dispute: the smaller the point at issue is, the more fierce and disastrous the convulsion on account of it is in church or state. What an array of power, learning, and eloquence do we see all through the church's history joining battle over the respective merits of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, whilst matters serious enough receive no attention at all. How many thousands are Slaughtered for calling Shibboleth, sibboleth— ‘tis merely dropping an H! How many years spent in dividing the churches from John o' Groats to Constantinople simply to determine whether the tonsure is to be crescent like Saint This, or circular like Saint That, while men's souls are dying and “The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, But, swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw, Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread: Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw Daily devours apace”...

“ But we must contend earnestly for the faith.” We must indeed, but not for tonsures, shibboleths, and the like. Better a thousand times that the church be wrecked than the faith surrendered; but what do we of the “laity” care how the “priests” wear their hair, or how they pronounce their Hs, that we should century after century be scattered, disheartened, and anathematized over such things? Every fresh pedant too that comes will tell us that “orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is your doxy: go to, let us make a new sect and say that it is the church (that has been from the beginning), formed on the basis of my new truth—which of course it has always possessed.” And perhaps he will hold up his rushlight to the Sun and insist on our seeing spots there, when we know that those spots are only defects in his own vision, like the “Mariotte blind spots” on the retina.

Some day men may find that to do all that is possible to maintain fellowship is a greater service to God than to get the best of a polemical wrangle; that he who weakens fellowship by pulling its cords so tight as to strain them, or by relaxing them so loose as to surrender them; or who stultifies discipline by laxity to serious evils, or severity to slight offenses; or wantonly introduces or encourages elements of strife amongst the people of God —that such as do these things are not serving but opposing the Head of the church. “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” If we each want our own way in everything, fellowship is impossible.

I do believe, in spite of all that seems to contradict the conviction, that Love is greater than Pedantry, and that such things as rings, cords, knops, loops, and taches are better than dynamite.

Chapter 212

Scripture Imagery: 84. Abridgment of the 2000 Years

The construction of the tabernacle proceeds “from harmony to harmony” through “all the compass of its notes” until finally it closes with the full chords of a splendid diapason.

The fullness of time—the octave, the Eighth Day, has come, and the building in all its beauty and magnificence is erect, every inch of it bearing in mystic heraldry some divine principle; the august presence of the Shekinah arising out of it far into sky. The enormous multitudes of the whole nation of Israel, with their chiefs and elders, and their six-hundred thousand warriors, surge around it. Far in the north sways the banner of the cherub over Daniel Ashur, and Naphtali: westward, southward, and eastward wave the standards of the ox over Ephraim, of the man over Reuben, and of the lion over Judah. “With them rose a forest huge of spears, and thronging helms.”

As the people look, they see their inspired ruler, accompanied by the newly ordained high priest in his gorgeous symbolic robes, standing in the midst of the court of the tabernacle. The priest offers sacrifices and turns to the people, solemnly lifting his hand, to pronounce upon them the ineffable benediction of the Most High. Then the ruler and priest together “went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces! “

And all this was a shadow—not even a reflection but a shadow—of the things which were to come. What then must the substance be? We know this is entirely typical and that we possess the antitypes now and in the future through Christ. “In Him the shadows of the law Are all fulfilled and now withdraw.” In the Talmud one of the emperors impugns the character of the Hebrews' God because He “stole from Adam a rib.” Said the daughter of Rabbi Gamaliel in reply, “A thief came in the night and stole a silver vase.” “Bad,” said the emperor. “But he left a golden one,” said she. “Good,” said the emperor, “I wish he would come every night.” “So,” said the Rabbi's daughter, “If Jehovah took the rib away, He left Eve.” If God takes anything away it is to give us something better. If He takes the shadow, He gives the substance. Yet there are those who cling to the old shadow rather than the substance, those who prefer the rites of the law to the realities of the gospel. Like Narcissus they tall in love with a mere reflection and pine away. Like the dog, they drop the food they have, to grasp at that visionary and transient similitude in the unstable water. Beware of the spirit of Narcissus. “Beware of dogs.”

For all these things were types of that which Christ was coming to accomplish. There was no other way of explaining that to human minds except by means of these types, just as we teach children by toy-symbols in the kindergarten. But they are not to remain always in the kindergarten. When they have learned the lesson, the toys which have served so useful a purpose are forever put away, and the pupils grow up to deal with realities (for the most part invisible and intangible). The case is reversed then. Instead of dealing by means of physical objects with invisible and intangible things, the mind has been trained to deal with vast physical interests by means of abstract and theoretical thoughts. The merchant never sees the property that he buys and sells all day

long—except perhaps shall samples of merchandise occasionally. The diplomatist does not see the countries and nationalities concerning which he labors all his lifetime —though he may have seen scraps of some of them.

Before entering the tabernacle, Aaron offered all the sacrifices prescribed by the law. That expressed in figure Christ “offering Himself” in all the aspects symbolized in the four offerings referred to— “Sacrifice and offering [i.e., peace and meat offerings] and burnt offerings and offerings for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law... Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!—He taketh away the first [i. e. the type] that He may establish the second" [the antitype]. Briefly, the meat offering was a kind of loaf of fine flour burnt on the altar, or baken in a pan. There was no death involved, and it expresses the offering of the perfect earthly existence of our Lord Jesus Christ up to God in continuous daily devotion, during which He was searched and tried by the fiery ordeals of human life. The fine flour is His unsullied nature; the oil signifies the Holy Spirit which He possessed; the salt is truth. The other three sacrifices involved the death of the victim. The sin offering was required in expiation for sin; “He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” In the peace offering then God and the forgiven sinner find a communion of satisfaction and enjoyment in the contemplation of the sacrifice of Christ. This is a very wonderful figure; yet it would be hard to say that it is more wonderful than any of the others. In the aspect of the burnt offering, the divine Priest has offered Himself spontaneously and entirely—absolutely, spirit, soul and body—in life and death, in devotion to God. All these aspects of sacrifice were either culminated or fulfilled –unitedly yet distinctly—in the cross of our blessed Redeemer. In all there are, to be more precise, five sacrifices, which number corresponds to the number of human responsibility. The trespass offering is however a second phase of the sin offering. Broadly, sin is the abstract pollution, and trespass is a concrete action which violates the rights of others and consequently necessitates indemnity. The reason why so much difficulty has been found in distinguishing them is, I believe, because the two things overlap each other so much and are as difficult to limit precisely as body and mind, or soul and spirit.

When all the work of the sacrifice has been completed, the Priest and Ruler in the act of blessing the people passes within the tabernacle out of sight. That was the last attitude in which His assembled disciples have seen their Lord. “While He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." His people stood there gazing, wondering, worshipping, and have been waiting ever since for Him to appear, “He Who with hands uplifted, Went from this earth below, Shall come again all gifted, His blessings to bestow.” These are the two great events since the crucifixion which obliterate all other records. Moses and Aaron (typifying Christ in His regal and sacerdotal characters) while blessing the people “WENT IN and CAME OUT.” Everything occurring between, though it should comprehend “all the farre stretched greatnesse, all the pride, crueltie and ambition of men is drawne together and covered over with these two narrow words, Hic jacet!” and its history written in the one little word “and.” In the sight of God, in comparison with the entrance of Christ into heaven after His accomplished work and his coming forth again to judge and bless the world, all human events for nineteen centuries are only worthy of a copulative conjunction.

Chapter 213

Scripture Imagery: 85. Death in the Sanctuary

Directly after the tabernacle has been set up and consecrated with such imposing solemnity and happy anticipation, a frightful event occurs. Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, are stricken down dead before the altar by a blast of divine wrath.

They had offered “strange fire.” As though the burning inspiration of the God-given afflatus, already there, were not sufficient, they provide from their own artificial resources—and perish. No! Other things men may and should provide, but not that. Moses explains to his brother that this was the reason; but it may well be doubted whether this explanation in any way assuaged the horror and anguish of the venerable high priest, as he saw the charred corpses of his sons carried out from the sanctuary. With that calm dignity, however, which characterized him and veiled the real weakness of his nature, he “held his peace.” But what awful and agonized questionings there are sometimes under the peaceful exterior.

Why should this terrible sorrow fall on him just at this moment when he had done all that the Lord had commanded, and was more than at any former time in accord with the divine will? If it had happened when he sinned in making the golden calf, for example, none would wonder, but now—! Could not God have prevented the young men's sins, (which seemed so much more to partake of the character of rashness than wickedness)? Could He not—seeing whose sons they were—have arrested so fearful a judgment?

The flippant mind has a ready tongue to answer all such questions as these. It is another question whether such facile answers are satisfactory. Aaron had sinned and now his sin had found him out. He must have brought up his family badly too, like Eli, and this is the natural result. “I told you so.” “See how the prohibition against wine is brought in just there.” These answers do not always proceed from coarse brutality as one might think: they generally come merely from levity, heartlessness, and self-sufficiency. “My dear brothers,” as Cromwell used to say, “I beseech you to consider that it is possible you may be wrong.” And consider too, that whether you are wrong or not, such explanations as those are only likely to fill the sufferer with indignation and draw down a rebuke from God on the Zophars, Bildads, and Eliphaz's who torment His stricken servants with their shallow conceits.

There is another class of those who, with much better intentions than these, yet are perhaps more irritating. They approach the sufferer with an airy cheerfulness, and with complaisant smiles tell him that it is all for the best. “This is sent for his good” (fancy a man consoled by the thought that, for instance, his sons are struck down for his good!), and again “there are millions worse off” than he: this last form of consolation is doubly irritating to a right-minded person, as in the first place it insults the sufferer by assuming that he can be consoled, instead of pained by the fact that other people are suffering more than himself; and, secondly, it takes away that little morsel of consolation that everyone finds in believing his own misfortunes are peculiar. Solomon knew these people and said it was like taking away a garment in winter to sing songs to those who have a heavy heart. We are not told by the All-wise to rejoice with them that weep.

But we are told to act as He did Whose mission it was to comfort those who mourn: “Jesus wept.” To “weep with those that weep”, and not to pretend to know too much of the mysterious causes of their suffering. It is possible we may be mistaken in our judgments. Why is it that one of the most honored and influential of God's servants at this time on earth, who has for years endured continual extreme bodily suffering and domestic sorrow, is (now while I write) protractedly struggling with pain and death, just at the time when we would think his powerful voice most needed to combat those attacks on the foundations of the faith which he has already withstood? Why should Carey, when translating the Bible into twenty four heathen languages, be obliged to hear the screaming of his mad wife from the adjoining room?

“ Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know.” From the Jewish Talmud comes that advice, but it is sound and good. Nothing produces so much infidelity as the idea that we have to account for everything, or that there is any human being who can—in respect of its absolute origin—account for anything. Goethe's Doctor begins by thinking he knows all things (though, as a few matters have been discovered since his time, be probably would not pass a modern school-board examination). He had thoroughly and painfully studied, he says, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, and Medicine, und, leider! auch Theologie—"unfortunately” indeed, for when a man exhausts all that, there is nothing but Demonology left, and it is no wonder he took to it. Yet he could not then tell the cause of the restlessness in his own heart, nor find a means to cure it. How much he must have known, that Doctor then, by his own account of what he had durchaus studirt! Yet I think that the man knew more, who discovered the laws of the solar systems and said he was only like a child picking up shells on the shore while the ocean of truth stretched beyond him out to infinity. Did it ever occur to you when such and such an one has been followed by calamities, and men said God was chastening him for his sins, that perhaps the truth was, the devil was punishing him for his righteousness? Such mistakes have been made since Job's time.

How patiently we can bear the trials—of others. We are optimists then: everything is for the best. But when sorrow knocks at our own door, we are pessimists; then we think Schopenhauer may be right after all, and “think that the bottom is come out of the universe when our own gallipot leaks.”

“ Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know.” “If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought.” He knows merely the outsides and secondary causes of things: of the primal causes, the inward origin, the “fourth dimension,” of even the simplest object we know nothing. If the Learned Critic can explain to me what it is that makes one little brown seed come up with a red flower and another little brown seed come up with a blue flower, I will explain to him every mystery in every part of the universe, from the Bathybius to the Gadarene pigs.

We know some things however, though not yet indeed as we ought—that knowledge, though a good thing, puffeth up, and that intellectual pride was the original damnation, and it is the special danger of the present day; that, whilst knowledge puffeth up, charity buildeth up. We know that, if a man love God, the same is known of Him. We know that our blessed Redeemer wept in sympathy with human sorrow, and that in all our afflictions He is afflicted; and we know that there have been some here on earth who in the midst of the most crushing disasters could calmly say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” that there is

“A faith which sees the ring of light

Round nature's last eclipse! “

Chapter 214

Scripture Imagery: 86. Israel's Diet, the Swine, the Hare

It appears somewhat strange that Keshub Chunder Sen's religion of Yoga has not been more successful than at present seems to be the case, for it has in it every element of popularity. The only way of accounting for its failure is in recognizing the truth of what Talleyrand cynically said to the founder of Theophilanthropy, when the latter was bewailing the poor reception which the public were giving to his invention. It is very hard indeed to make a new religion popular. If one however could perpetually preach it, deny oneself all rest and comfort, be put to death and rise again to establish it, it might eventually succeed; but otherwise 'tis poor work. The fact is that people—with the exception of a few, like the hare-brained Athenians, always looking for some new thing, and a few professional skeptics (who have generally credulity enough to believe almost anything, have we not lately seen a leading atheistic teacher become a believer in Madame Blavatsky's Theosophic “miracles”?) — the fact is that the bulk of people are very reluctant to accept a new Faith: otherwise Chunder Sen's Yoga would have had a world-wide acceptance, for it fits human nature to perfection. It consists in selecting the fancy bits out of the other religious systems (rejecting the rest), and joining them neatly together, for all the world like a patch-work quilt, though perhaps hardly so useful.

Now these remarks apply to such passages as the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, where certain prohibitions and restraints are announced to the Israelites as to diet and other matters. For we see round us those who take portions of the Jewish religion, who put themselves nominally under the Jewish law, keep the Jewish feasts, and ceremonials, and appropriate the Jewish promises: but do we ever see a single person abstaining from the meats forbidden to the Jews, or submitting to those restraints which are inconvenient?

For instance we ask, “Why do you follow the lines of worship ordained for the Jews, and appropriate the Jewish feasts, ceremonies, and promises?”

“ Because it is thus commanded in the Scriptures.”

“ Commanded to the Jews, yes. They are also commanded to offer animals in sacrifice, not to eat pork, nor to light fires on the Sabbath. Do you also obey these commands? “

“ No, all that is different.”

“ Ah, that is different. You think then that you are at liberty to take what you like and leave what you don't like. So did Chunder Sen. Yoga? I am afraid that will not do.”

These directions respecting food were given to the Jews, firstly, in order to make a distinction between them and all other peoples, for at that period God had an object in secluding His own people that they might have a fair trial by being kept from mingling with other nations and their contaminations. Now, however, the people of God are sent out amongst the peoples of the world to disseminate their principles and are to be distinguished not by outward actions or garb, but by what is inward and spiritual. Therefore what was physical with the Jews becomes typical to the

Christians.

Now there is perhaps nothing that has so much effect for good or bad on human beings as what they consume for the nourishment of the body, and appropriate for the nourishment of the soul. A foul-eating people will be in most ways physically foul, and a foul-thinking man will be in most ways spiritually unclean. Consequently all that the Jews took into the body by eating, must be cleanly, and all that the Christian takes into the soul should be pure. Some think it strange that the Hebrews' God should concern Himself about the details of their diet. It would be still stranger if He did not; if He allowed those whom He called His peculiar people to eat such loathsome food as was then common, or even such as so civilized a people as the Chinese now esteem delicacies, rats, birds' nests, dogs, and lizards; whilst others eat infinitely worse.

Appetite is a matter primarily of inherent tendency and though, to be sure, it may be trained by custom and restrained by such directions as these before us, yet the great principle that develops itself in the passage before us is this, —the difference in the natures of beings: where there is any being with an unclean nature, it forever remains so unless it have a new nature. In the Hindoo fable the dove flies down to the marsh and seeks to enchant the crane, which is eating snails, by recounting the beauties of paradise. At length the crane draws its beak out of the mud and inquires whether there are any snails there. The dove is afraid there are not. At least has never noticed them. Whereat the crane buries again its beak in the mud with an air that implies that the conversation is irrelevant and intrusive. Heaven itself were hell to the crane without snails.

As to Israel, almost the whole natural realm— I the earth, the air, the sea—was at their disposal for food, but there were certain restrictions. The forbidden things were in general things unwholesome or unsafe for that climate: that is natural and very obvious. But all these things were given to them for ensamples and are typical in many ways. For instance, taking them as types of natures or characters, to be clean an animal required the foot divided—that is, the principle of separation in the “walk” or general conduct, for there is evil in the earth, the foot must not sink into it. But this feature by itself a swine may have, and this principle without the chewing of the cud only produces the ascetic or pharisee—a hard, rigid, uncomfortable, God-forsaken, religiousness, whose highest reach of piety consists in, “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men.” On the other hand, the camel or hare, which chews the cud but does not divide the hoof, is equally to be rejected, though perhaps it is not entirely so objectionable. This indicates a nature that eats spiritual food—that which is unseen is spiritual—and food that has been dead but is now alive again in resurrection (i.e., grass or grain, whereas the carnivora only feed on what is dead), but at the same time a nature which has no principle of stability and separation in its walk.

Such natures as these can charm with their apprehension of the highest spiritual themes while their lives are low and unworthy. Balaam was such an one. How lofty the flight of his spiritual emotions; how base his cunning and avaricious. life. The pathos of Lawrence Sterne over the caged bird and the dead donkey has drawn tears from thousands who perhaps would have been touched only with contempt did they know of the cruelty with which the writer neglected his own wife and home; yet his sermon on conscience is one of the finest things I ever read. In Bunyan, Christian and Faithful are met by “a tall man more comely at a distance than at hand.” This man is extremely fluent on spiritual matters and quite charms Faithful with his fine discourse. Christian however is not so much enamored. He says that the man's name is Talkative, and that

“notwithstanding his fine tongue he is but a sorry fellow.” Faithful replies, “Well, he seems to be a very pretty man;” whereon Christian says, “That is to them that have not a thorough acquaintance with him, for he is best abroad; near home he is ugly enough... all he hath lieth in his tongue.” Faithful then says this reminds him of Lev. 11 and Deut. 14. “The hare cheweth the cud, but yet is unclean, because he parteth not the hoof.” And this truly resembleth Talkative: he cheweth the cud, he seeketh knowledge; he cheweth upon the word, but he divideth not the hoof. He parteth not with the way of sinners.” “You have spoken,” says Christian, “for aught I know, the true gospel sense of those texts.”

And for aught I know, too.

Names of God in the Psalms

Jah seems to be the existing One objectively. There is One and only One Who is. Eh'yeh is His own assertion of it—conscious existence in will. Jehovah is He Who does so exist but in relation with others and revealed in time. He alway is, but “was and is to come” is brought in. There is existence, yet not only an eternal now but a past and what is to come. He is in relationship and in connection with time, and so a Securer of promises. And we read of His mercy enduring “forever.” Adonai, related to none of these, carries the thought of lordship and rule.

Scripture Queries and Answers: “Baptized Into Christ”

Q. The expression “baptized into Christ” is found in Rom. 6:3; also in Gal. 3:27. See also 1 Cor. 12:13, where the agency of the Holy Spirit in Baptism is clearly indicated. Is it not so?

CLERICUS.

A. The premises are unsound, and the conclusion an error. The Greek preposition means “unto” (or “to") as often as “into “: which depends on the context or on the nature of the case. Now baptism with water is clearly indicated in 1 Cor. 10:2 as a warning to the baptized at Corinth. Impossible to think the Israelites were baptized into Moses; and here therefore the A. and R. Vv. rightly say “unto”. The marginal note of the R. V: is a delusion, for the Greek means “to” no less than “into”. So in Acts 19:3 it is as in the A. V. “unto", not “into” as in the Revised. Baptism is the symbol of profession. Reality, depends on faith.; which might, or might not, be true of the baptized; as is certain from our Lord's words in Mark 16:16. To say “into” therefore goes beyond God's word and implies vital efficacy without and against scriptural warrant. This falls in with the self-importance of a caste (on which the truth frowns), and takes away efficacy from living faith in Christ (on which scripture insists). All have not faith. “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (the same sense as “damned” in the A. V.). Baptism will no more save him than dead faith. Baptism is “unto” or “to” only, not “into", even in Matt. 28:19. Compare 1 Cor. 1:13, 15.

But the Spirit's baptism is wholly distinct. It is the peculiar privilege of the church of God, and consequently never was till Pentecost and only is after men believe. See Gal. 4:6, Eph. 1:13. Hence on the church's birthday the apostle Peter told the convicted Jews to “Repent and be baptized”, and they “should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. It was a consequence for genuine faith, never a necessary accompaniment of the water. Indeed in Acts 10:44 we see the believers received that gift, attested by outward powers, before they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (ver. 48). So false is the ignorant and dangerous tradition which identifies the baptism of water and that of the Spirit. John 3:3-8 means no baptism at all.

Further, even the import of the sign in baptism with water is misunderstood generally. It is a sign not of life-giving, still less of the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God, but of death with Christ, as Rom. 6 and Col. 2 make plain. “We who died to sin, shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto His death?” Baptism by or in virtue of the Spirit, as we see in 1 Cor. 12:13, is into (not “unto”) one body, Christ's body; because His work efficaciously unites. Water baptism does not go beyond profession, as in Gal. 3:27 and elsewhere, though we are responsible to be true. No one is true save he who believing has Christ as his life. But the baptism of the Spirit unites the believer to Christ as a member of His body, the church, in the truest and abiding sense.

He who is baptized thereby says he died with Christ to sin and put on Christ. Yet it is only “to” Christ he was baptized, as it may turn out to be without life and only an outward confession, however important it may be, and whatever the privilege. Baptism is to the objective truth of Christ

dead and risen, to the remission of sins therein, to sin judged; and not the sign of our subjective state.

Chapter 217

Shelter From Judgment: the Soul's Start With God

In the dealings of God with an earthly people there are many important samples given of what sovereign grace is, and what it provides as to evil and good; so that freedom from the former may with positive certainty be known, and decided blessing in the latter enjoyed. That souls are rarely to be found thus blessed cannot be denied. Hence it is desirable to see that truth is calculated by the blessing of God to establish them in divine grace, and lead them to peace, joy, and satisfaction in God Himself:

The first thing that Jehovah gave the children of Israel was “Shelter from Judgment” —all-important then for them, and for souls now, to be established in. The question of the judgment of a sin-hating God should be, yea is, a settled thing to faith, so that it never rightly can be raised again. Let it be clearly understood that this is what God willed and God provided when taking up even an earthly people. The truth recorded in Ex. 12 declares that Israel had no real standing with Jehovah till then. Indeed, only from this memorable Passover did they date their history; as it is written, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.” If Israel thus started with God, the unmistakable voice to man by it is, that nothing can give any soul a recognized beginning with God except what that never-to-be-forgotten time set forth. Whatever their previous life, this definite statement acted like the flaming sword, turning every way; all went for nothing until God raised the question of sin, and Himself provided for its settlement.

Weigh this well, dear reader: let nothing keep you from facing it fully, so that there may be a sound and solid start with God. That He is the Judge of sin, that all are alike sinners before Him, is clearly shown in His dealings with Israel; moreover that there was no difference as to this between them and the Egyptians until the Lord Himself made it in grace.

This important fact should ever be borne in mind lest any experience, past, present, or future, should be used to displace the sovereign grace of God in its adequate provision for the soul. Note then the solemn attitude that God takes at the outset. He declared that He would pass through the land of Egypt and by His destroying angel smite without distinction wherever His appointed provision was not appropriated. Hence to escape the judgment already pronounced was the all-absorbing point. To be occupied with any other object, when the destroying angel was at the door, would have been worse than madness. If such was the state of things in Israel's day when types and shadows spoke most closely, is the lesson less distinct in the day when man's moral end is come? Scripture declares that Jew and Gentile are equally sinners under condemnation; yea all are guilty before God, and subject to judgment (see Romans 3:19).

Further, it is also written that “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). The truth and circumstances of Egypt in the past and those of the world today are in reality one, so that what Israel needed in type man really needs; and for this God has provided in the Antitype. The obedience of faith only is wanting to use the bounteous remedy for escape from judgment. But alas! alas! to start with God about his sins is the last thing man thinks of; yet only thus will God have to do with him. Jehovah alone appointed the means of shelter for Israel, by

telling them to “Take to them every man a lamb” —one without blemish, which was to be kept up from the tenth day until the fourteenth day, and then between the two evenings to be killed. Associated with this was the appointment of what would meet Jehovah's eye: hence the command to “Take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door posts of the houses,” adding “The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are.” This was crowned with the significant words, ever to be noted by the reader, “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

A clear emphatic statement by which the Lord Himself pledged the safety of all who were beneath the virtue of the sprinkled blood. True, the experience and feelings of the sheltered ones within might be most varied, either as to the solemn judgment, or the provision in its divinely assured power to deliver from it. But the word had gone forth, the word of the living God; and hence it was strictly fulfilled. The blood, and God's word accepted respecting it, formed a sure meeting place, with the blessed result that not an Israelite perished, whereas into every house of the Egyptians death entered. So began the history of God's earthly people, who could rest in perfect peace, knowing that His eye saw the blood, which was both their safeguard and the ground of all their future blessing.

The glorious Antitype to Israel's lamb is now no longer God's reserve, but is set forth as “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” The answer He is to the early statement, “God will provide Himself a lamb” —in due time to become the victim to die for sin and sinners. He it is of Whom the Gospel of John blessedly speaks as the Word that was with God, yea, was God. He was “the only begotten of the Father,” yet “made flesh.” it is the very One who in chapter 3 speaks of Himself as the Son of Man Who must be lifted up; weighty words, declaring the inexorable claims of holiness, and the desperate need of man, both of which significantly met in the cross of Christ. There love and holiness shine, where all that was due to sin spent itself upon the spotless Person of Jesus, the Lamb slain, fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but now manifested. Not only so, but God has raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, the abiding proof that all claims are met, so that the question of sin cannot again be raised, seeing that the Lamb of the altar is in the presence of God where sin cannot be.

In the application for Israel's safety, it has been shown that they took a lamb, then slew it, and sprinkled the blood upon the houses where they were. But it is not so for souls in this day of the full light of the gospel of God, when Christ has not only come and died, but entered heaven, having obtained eternal redemption. Indeed, since Christ has gone in, God has come out in the fullness and freeness of His grace, taking the place of the Justifier, as Romans 3 clearly shows that He is both Just and Justifier of all who believe in Jesus. Instead of the blood on the lintel, and God the righteous Judge shut out, the righteousness of God is declared in justifying freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God Himself setting forth Christ as the “Propitiatory” by faith in His blood, the all-sufficient, yea bounden reason for so acting toward the believer. Thus, whether the sins of believers in the past ages, or the sins of believers in the present time, they all find a free, full, and everlasting pardon through the precious blood of Christ. And can we wonder that it should be so, when the eye of a holy God and the faith of the poor trembling soul in its conscious guilt, rest upon the blood—the blood of God's own Son?

This is the way souls are called upon to begin their history, having the question of their sins forever settled, knowing God to be the Justifier, and that in perfect consistency with the rights and majesty of His throne. Is this the happy case of the reader, assured of having started with God? Short of this there can only be the dread of God, Who is ever the Judge of sin, rather than present peace founded on the unchanging value of the blood of Christ, shed and accepted once for all.

God grant that souls may rest where He Himself rests, to the honor and praise of Jesus their Savior, and the glory of His grace. G.G.

Chapter 218

Sin-Bearing

Q. Was sin-bearing only on the cross, when the Lord said “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Yet when Christ expired, God was not then hiding His face from Him; for He said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit;” still atonement is in the blood. How would you reconcile this? Did Christ pass through death to undergo God's judgment on man, (namely, “the wages of sin is death,") and to conquer him who had the power of death, even Satan (Heb. 2)? Then how would this be reconciled with “He died for me and He shed His blood for me?” Would it be right to say Christ died for us under the chastening hand of God? would it not do away with atonement if, Christ died under the chastening hand of God? It would almost be saying that God had not accepted the work, would it not? The hiding of God's face was removed before death. W.

A. It is an all-important principle for a Christian that his responsibility as well as privilege and joy is to believe, without pretending to “reconcile". This is always a question of his spiritual capacity, which we may not always discern to be small. It is often enough for his own satisfaction, without expecting to silence gainsayers, or even to meet the difficulties of other minds. Many a thing passes human comprehension. But in all cases a saint is called to accept cordially and without question on the warrant of God's word.

Now as to the subject-matter raised, it is equally certain that in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark our Lord is seen on the cross suffering for sin and our sins, and uttering that cry of deepest anguish under the sense of God's face, then first, then only, hidden from Him: “My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Here then in the true Sin Offering; but Luke presents Him subsequently saying, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” This is rather the Burnt Offering and the expression of conscious acceptance; not His soul realizing His holy horror and infinite suffering in bearing the divine judgment, but the outpouring of His confidence and unclouded enjoyment of His relationship. John lets us know His calm and divine satisfaction in His dying words: “It is finished"; and He dismissed His spirit, for He had title, He alone, to lay down His life and to take it again. Some of these inspired declarations unbelief stumbles at, if not at all. The believer receives them all adoringly as suited to the fullness of Christ.

Negative judgments in these questions are dangerous, for before we deny we ought to know all that God has revealed, Do we flatter ourselves thus? To say that Christ's death was judicial is to oppose many scriptures ignorantly: as Rom. 4:25, Rom. 5:6-10, Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 2:9, 10, 14, 17; Heb. 9:12, 14, 16, 23-28; Heb. 10:10, 12, 14, 19, 20; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18. This surely suffices. His death was much, very much more, but it was in the profoundest way the Sin Offering, and what in the Holy One can be judicial if this be not? The notion is a rash one-sided expression of such as are jealous of Christ's glory; but one truth must not be sacrificed to another. All that is revealed has supreme claims on our souls, and all is perfectly harmonious in Him Who is the Truth, and in the written word, which perfectly reveals all to us, whose simple place is to believe, and then in due time to understand. “Chastening” is an un-meet and unscriptural word for Christ,

and especially for His death. Analyzing His work is almost as perilous as dissecting His person. “The right faith is that we believe and confess—that we worship.”

Chapter 219

The Sin of Eli and Its Results

1 Sam. 2-4

There are few narratives in scripture more calculated to impress us with the solemn reality of having to do with God than the history of the closing days of this aged high priest. We are assured that it is given to us for this purpose, and to faith it will prove “a discerner [κριτκ■ς] of the thoughts and intents of our hearts,” and will be our and not we its critic (Heb. 4:12). We have already noticed that these chapters begin with the bright scene of Hannah and Samuel worshipping the Lord together, but the Spirit passes abruptly on from this to reveal the foul blots with which sin had stained what ought to have been the fairest spot in the whole earth, the home of the high priest of the Lord of hosts. It was a home that in a special way bore His name, but alas! the head of it was indifferent to His glory in it.

We may look at the high priest in Israel in either his official or his personal character. Officially, El had to bear the government and the judgment of all the tribes of Israel, and to instruct them according to the “perfections” and the “light” of God. Of this he was reminded by the shoulder-pieces and the breast-plate of judgment on his priestly vestment. According to the blessing of Levi, the Thummim and the Urim were with him, the highest glory yet conferred upon fallen man (Dent. 28:8; Ex. 28:30). He was thus to draw near to the Lord for them in all their ignorance and weakness. “His lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he was the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” By redemption, God had brought the people out of Egypt to Himself, and He would dwell among them. He made their wants, their sins, and their defilements to be the continual concern of the priest, while they should as continually feel their need of the provision thus made for them. Supreme care for the honor of the Lord must predominate over all else with him, while compassion, not false tenderness, must also influence his conduct toward them. Everything was done at his consecration, by the ritual he administered, and by the laws that regulated every detail of his life and surroundings, to remind him of the holiness and majesty of the Lord, and of his authority and responsibility to maintain it. It is by a careful study of these things that we shall be enabled rightly to estimate his sin, and the righteousness of the judgment that was pronounced and executed upon his house, and upon the tabernacle system that was set up by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai at the gracious command of the Lord after the worship of the molten calf.

Turning now to his personal character, we know that he was compassed with infirmity. This, while it would tend to make him compassionate toward others, should have cast him more entirely on God for himself. In this he was evidently remiss. He even misunderstood Hannah, who might have been a most useful monitor to him had he learned of her to seek strength where, and as, she did. The state of things in his family through his parental weakness was terrible. His sons, while carrying on the priestly services, “made themselves vile and he restrained them not.” It is true that he expostulated with them, and put their sin before them; he also warned them of judgment from the Lord, but there he left it. His words were true, and in some respects earnest, but there was

nothing more than words. Nothing was done to clear the name of the Lord from dishonor, the sanctuary from defilement, and the people from corruption. A holy God could not be dealt with thus, yet He warned before He smote. By a man of God He reminded Eli of the distinguishing mercy bestowed on the house of his father, in not only redeeming him out of Egypt, but in advancing him to the office of the priesthood with all its dignity, its privileges and its advantages. He then, with unsparing truth and severity, laid bare the condition of his house, making no distinction between him and his sons—"Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honored thy sons above me to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people." —"Yourselves;" said the Lord. Are we startled at this? If by "the priest's custom" (chap. 2:13) unholy gain was made, as unquestionably it was, could participation in that gain be avoided by those who did not dissociate themselves from the whole iniquity? Has it ever been possible? Oh! how easy to expostulate and yet go on. Surely in this case— "make yourselves fat" —can have no other meaning.

But let it not be supposed that in saying this any doubt is entertained as to this venerable man's piety. What else dictated his reply when Samuel, at his earnest entreaty, told him every word of the terrible judgment which God had pronounced on his house forever? "It is the Lord," he said, "let him do what seemeth him good." And when the messenger returned from the fatal battle with the Philistines, he bore up under all the sorrowful tidings until he heard that the ark was taken. This was a death-stroke to him; he fell backward, and his neck brake, and he died.

His piety, however, can in no way be pleaded in extenuation of his false tenderness to acknowledged evil. It rather emboldened the evil doers to regard it as a matter after all, not so very serious, and to go on with it. But how did the Lord regard it? He held him responsible— "I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth." "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? he that reproveth God let him answer it." Unhesitatingly then we must acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth did right in thus estimating Eli's conduct, and judging it with the severity He did.

But here a difficulty may arise in the minds of some who have not learned to distinguish between God's government of His people on earth, and their eternal salvation and glory hereafter. In the O.T. there are cases in which this distinction may be clearly seen, while in the N. T. it is as clearly taught. The subject is one of great practical importance to every child of God; but in an elementary paper (the designed character of this series), a single example from each must suffice. Of the eternal salvation of Moses, by grace, there cannot be a question: the testimony of God and the scene in the holy mount prove it; yet, for trespass against the Lord at Meribah-Kadesh, he was not suffered to enter the land, but died in the wilderness under the government of God (Deut. 32:50-52). In 1 Cor. 11:28-32 the teaching is unmistakable, that our Lord Jesus chastens those in the church who will not judge themselves, and that by the inflictions of weakness, sickness, and even death; but it is expressly said that he does this that they may not be condemned with the world. In the case of Eli (of whose eternal safety there should be no doubt, terrible as was the judgment that came upon his house), we must also remember that, dispensationally, he was under the law, but according to the name of the Lord as proclaimed in Ex. 34:6, 7, a fact not to be lost sight of in connection with all His dealings with Shiloh — dealings, that He would not allow His people, as under the law, to slight or forget (Jer. 26:6).

The subject, as we have said, is one of great practical importance, and the Christian reader, if not divinely instructed in it, is besought to seek such instruction. How vital it is may be inferred from a whole book of the Bible being devoted to it—the book of Job. As Elihu said, it is but “one among a thousand” that can rightly deal with a soul under God's chastening hand, and the results of wrong dealing are there seen, not in the sufferer only, or chiefly, but in those who so grievously erred in their treatment of him. “Let us not be highminded, but fear.” There are other principles of deep interest to be found in this portion of God's word, and practical lessons that it will be for our profit to study, but we should exceed our limits to consider them here. We cannot however pass over the fact that, in His word to Eli, the Lord specially dwelt on his ingratitude. What grace had been shown to the house of Aaron, therefore to him and to his house! What a position they held! What honors and what privileges were theirs! Yet what was the return? Has this no voice to us? May we not well say, with Harrington Evans, that “of all people in the world, the people of God have proved the most ungrateful.” He that does not feel it must be insensible to what God, in and by Christ Jesus, has done for him.

If the ruin at Shiloh was irreparable (and surely it was, for the tabernacle never received the ark again, and the priesthood never regained the position they held before), it led to a fuller and clearer revelation of the glories of Christ. The Lord told Eli—"I will raise me up a faithful priest” (chap. ii. 35). This is Christ, because perfect obedience is to characterize His every service. And, be it observed, that this is no after-thought, the fruit of Eli's failure. At the institution of the priesthood, the people witnessed a scene so striking, so impressive, of such profound interest and deep instruction, that none but Jesus could take up, fulfill, and embody, all that is presented in it (read Lev. 9:22-24).

Aaron, in virtue of the completed offerings made upon the altar, lifted up his hands and blessed the people before the manifestation of the glory of the Lord and any visible attestation of their acceptance, though these were accepted, or He could not bless. He then, with Moses, went into the tabernacle, and they were hidden. After this they both came out, and together blessed the people, when “the glory of the Lord appeared, and there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces.”

Can we fail to see in this the Lord Jesus, when risen, lifting up His hands in the sight of His disciples and blessing them in virtue of His. finished work on the cross (Luke 24:50)? He then is carried up into heaven (ver. 51), and hidden there from natural sight; but the Holy Ghost has come to reveal to us His heavenly glory, and how He sustains for us the two-fold offices shadowed forth in Moses and Aaron. This is plainly set forth in the Hebrews from chapter 3. Then, when the present Christian interval is over, He will come forth again as King and Priest, the true Melchisedec, blessing repentant Israel and bringing back the glory of the Lord to the earth in connection with the manifestation of the acceptance of His atoning work. The joyous shout of the people will be in full accord with the worship of that day, unsuited to heavenly worship now (Psa. 47:1; 98:4).

Chapter 220

A Few Words on Things New and Old: Review

Perhaps the little paper so entitled and just received scarce calls for notice; especially as edification is here desired, not controversy. But it is sad to see truth trampled in the streets, and one thing of moment perverted to undermine another still more momentous.

The writer of the pamphlet, “On the Formation of Churches” (originally in French) urged the responsibility of the Christian to keep the unity of the Spirit, and none the less because of its actual state of ruin. Indeed anything else is but ecclesiastical antinomianism. The truth of what the church of God is binds the members here below as long as the relationship of Christ's body exists. And scripture has fully provided for those who desire fidelity to the Lord and obedience of His word in such abnormal circumstances. Nor can we complain of lack of power for this, if we know the Holy Ghost since Pentecost abides forever.

Wholly opposed to these sound principles is the pretending to restore, as at the beginning, or perhaps even in a novel and arbitrary way; which presumption the tract in question censures. But most of all did it direct and encourage saints in assembling to the Lord's name and doing His revealed will in liberty and lowliness, as we await His coming.

To deny that either God's house or Christ's body remains is unbelieving ignorance; and Matt. 18 in its central portion seems a singular choice of strange scripture on which to base such an insinuation. The truth is that the presence of the Lord in the midst survives all failure, and is His gracious assurance if but two or three were gathered to His name. It is precisely the maintenance of holy discipline, as an inalienable duty in the darkest day of self-willed scattering, which gives occasion to this resource above all price. No doubt it widens out in ver. 20 as a general promise to any and every purpose for which His own might be assembled according to His word; but this is clear gain.

Nor is it intelligent to seek this enfeebling of the truth by speaking of “the second temple “: an expression of Rabbinical unbelief. Scripture, on the contrary, is careful, as we may see in Haggai, to maintain in faith the unity of God's house. “Who is among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now?” (ch. 2: 3.) It is “Jehovah's house” while “waste” (1: 9), no less than when “magnifical.” Hence even in the grand future “I will fill this house with glory” (2: 7).

Nor does ver. 9 really modify, still less contradict, its unity; for as the Revisers rightly render (as was known well before they were born), the true force is, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former.” So it stands in the oldest version of all, the Septuagint, to say nothing of others. Here Jerome led or followed others astray, as in not a few instances. There is really no legitimate doubt that it is Jehovah's house all through, and neither a first, a second, nor a third.

How much more solid is the tenure of God's house now, where an eternal redemption is the ground, and the Holy Spirit came down in person as never before save for the Lord Jesus! Granted that the house is in ruins, and that those err deeply who deny it and feel it not; but faith owns and acts on it, and can only do so aright as guided by a spiritual understanding of the written

word bearing on it. Still more evidently is this true of the body of Christ, which is a distinctively heavenly relationship to the glorified Head. It is a “strange doctrine” ("theology” we may leave) to say it was formed in our Lord's resurrection, though impossible without His resurrection and His cross. Eph. 4 does not teach so, as it is said; still less John 20, which does not even touch anything about the body as such. Christ set on high above all God gave to be Head over all things to the church; but the saints on earth were in fact united by the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost and not before (see 1 Cor. 12:13).

The old perversion of Rev. 2; 3 should be relegated to Rome and the fathers from whence it came. Impossible that God could sanction congregational independency in the Apocalypse against the truth of unity uniform elsewhere. In the introduction to a prophecy other objects were before the Spirit which have been thus misunderstood by not a few parties. As well might it be argued, as many do, from “the angels” there, to destroy the divine system of Christ's gifts, and even plurality of elders, by a bishop or a “minister.”

The railing of the close God will look to, if His children be indifferent. It is to be hoped that but few professors of the Lord's name on earth could descend so low in the blindness of ill-feeling. No man is infallible; but the translator thus recklessly assailed contributed to present the Scriptures in English, French, and German beyond any man that ever lived; and no wonder, as he had adequate power, commanding knowledge of all helps, and spiritual acumen unequaled. And when one adds to this, who the detractor is, and on what ground of assumed qualifications he takes his stand, it might provoke a smile, if it were not rather a call for tears.

Chapter 221

Thou Wouldest Have Asked of Him

The Lord proceeds to lead on the woman and inspire confidence in her heart; and the Holy Spirit records it for others who were to hear His words when written: for they surely are spirit and life, words of life eternal. As yet she was spiritually dull and dark. She saw not the True Light, she believed not yet on Him in Whom is life, the light of men—guilty but favored men. Had she known God as the Giver (not exactor, as all hearts naturally conceive), had she believed in the glory of Him Who had humbled Himself to save (of which she had a sample in His asking of her a drink of water), she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water.

For the blessing of the grace of life to a needy lost sinner (and so it is with every child of man) is no question of self-effort or even self-sacrifice, of a charm or a rite, but of faith in the Son of God to Whom the word of God bears witness. On the one hand, “what is born of the flesh is flesh,” and sinful man, Jew, Greek, Samaritan is dead before God. On the other hand, life comes solely to us in the Light of life, it is in Jesus the Lord. Hence said He (John 5:24), “he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” The Lord therefore, Himself the quickening Spirit (1 Cor. 15), said not a word to her of baptism; nor did the disciples any more than the Lord baptize her in fact. Whatever the importance of baptism, to impart life is never attributed to it once in all scripture. “He that believeth,” says the Lord (John 6:47), “hath life eternal;” and so in substance often, and never otherwise. “I thank God,” says the apostle Paul, “that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gains, lest any should say that I baptized (or, that ye were baptized) unto mine own name... For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:14-17). “In Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). So James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23-25, and 1 John 5:1. The divine testimony is uniform and full, clear and conclusive.

But the word was not yet mixed with faith in the Samaritan's soul. Else self-judgment had been produced, and such a sense of sin in herself, and of goodness (if not yet salvation) in Him, as would have drawn her to the Son of God in earnest. To be saved the individual soul must meet God now, and meet Him about its sins: otherwise it cannot evade Him in the person of the Son of man, the Judge of quick and dead, on the great white throne. Then it is too late. Judgment is irreparable and everlasting perdition. To hear Christ's word, to believe God Who sent Him, is to have life, eternal life. This was exactly what the sinner needed, but had not yet. If His word had penetrated, she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water.

But it will be asked, What of the church? what of the sacraments? Now it is a notable fact that in the Gospel of John, where eternal life is preeminently set out, not a word is said of either. There is always harmony in divine truth. The church, baptism, and the Lord's supper, are fully treated in the apostle Paul's Epistles, to say nothing of the inspired history in the Acts. But nowhere does scripture connect eternal life with the church any more than with the public Christian institutions. As everything is ordered aright in scripture, so are souls inexcusable who fall into so grievous an error as to stake life eternal on church or sacraments. It is contact with Christ by faith, it is His word

applied by the Spirit, that gives life in the Son of God. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

Faith therefore is always individual, even if a thousand believed at the same instant out of a multitude listening to the word of God. The church does not preach, but a servant of Christ or as here the Lord Himself; and when the soul accepts it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, it effectually works in such as believe. Its earliest effect is deep anxiety before God and calling on the Lord. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.”

“By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8. Such is the blessed standing and assurance of the Christian in due time. Nor is it otherwise now than it has ever been, though far greater light and privileges be now enjoyed. “For therein [i.e., faith] the elders had witness borne to them,” or obtained a good report, as the A. V. says. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There was not, there certainly cannot be, another Savior; and by God's word and Spirit He was always received. Righteousness, as the apostle proves, was reckoned to Abraham himself in uncircumcision. He was circumcised afterward, as a seal in the flesh. He believed God long before; and this was reckoned to him for righteousness. It is the same now in principle, when souls are baptized, not circumcised.

Salvation like faith is individual. From first to last one must come to God believingly, for without faith it is impossible to please Him; with genuine faith ever is genuine repentance. We judge and condemn ourselves when we truly believe Him, and trust His grace in giving His Son. “Already are ye clean because of the word I have spoken to you.” John 15. We are born of water and of the Spirit. The truth thus sanctifies; which a ceremony never can, nor a body, were it even the church, however important and of immense moment in other ways. “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned,” i.e. damned, even if baptized by Peter or Paul.

In believing God's word the soul hears and answers the call of God. All the blessing may not be at once; but the Lord is confided in and the heart goes out to Him Who came to die for us, for our sins. “Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” And in truth it is not only life in believing, but the Holy Ghost subsequent on it, that peace and joy might be full, and God's love be shed abroad in the heart. The gift of the Holy Spirit is more than life, however blessed life may be. It is the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. It is the Spirit not of fear or bondage, but of power and love and soberness.

Dear reader, have you got this blessing? or do you still lack it, like the Samaritan at first?

Chapter 222

The Trial of Jealousy

"His blood be upon us and upon our children," said the Jews of their betrayed and crucified King. And so it is with them unto this day. Their land, which should have been the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, has become an Aceldama—a field of blood; and as they themselves loved cursing, so has it come upon them.

The Lord in His doctrine determined this—that we are the children of Him Whose works we do, and Whose ways we imitate (John 8). Hence it is manifest that, in the judgment of God, Israel at this day are not the children of Abraham (for they have not done the works of Abraham) but the seed of Judas, for they did his work, being one with him of old in the betraying of Jesus, and still in the disowning and rejection of Jesus (see Acts 1:16; 7 -52,1 Thess. 2:15). But Psa. 109 leads us directly to this mystery. There the rejected Messiah first complains of His adversary, and Judas, we know, is intended (Psa. 109:8, and Acts 1:20). But afterward He speaks of His adversaries (ver. 20) calling for judgment on them as the children of His adversary; and the Jews, we may also know, are intended. For surely it could not have been the natural seed of Judas, the adversary (even if he had any), but rather mystically. And his mystical seed, as we have seen, are the Jews in their unbelief; for they it was who joined with him in his deed, and still in spirit imitate his evil way. Consequently the various judgments invoked in that Psalm, upon the children of the adversary, may be seen lying on the Jews to this day. They it was who persecuted the poor and needy man (v. 16); and they have their reward. They it was who delighted not in blessing (ver. 17), refusing to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" and blessing is therefore far from them. They it was who "loved cursing," saying of Jesus, Crucify Him, crucify Him; "so has curse come upon them: a curse and an astonishment, and a by-word are they made, through all the nations of the earth unto this day.

But in the course of the holy complaint and invocation of vengeance by the disowned rejected King of the Jews, set forth in that Psalm, I may observe, that He makes reference to the ordinance of the "Trial of Jealousy" (see Psa. 109:14-18, and Numbers v. 23-27); and therefore as to that ordinance I would speak more particularly.

This ordinance was for the discovering of unconfessed infidelity. A suspected wife was set by the high priest in the presence of God as the Searcher of hearts. Her head was uncovered, in token that on the present occasion she knew of no subjection to any but to the Lord; and therefore she removed the covering from her head, for that covering was the sign of subjection to her husband (1 Cor. 11:3). The priest then put into her hand "the offering of jealousy." This was a meat-offering prepared by her husband, in a manner suitable to her approach to God, and which the priest afterward took from her hand, and waved before the Lord, offering the memorial of it on the altar; by which action was signified, on both the husband's and the wife's behalf, the committal of this matter to God. Then holding in his hand a vessel containing holy water or water taken from the brazen laver mingled with dust (the sign of curse or fruit of sin; Gen. 3:19), the priest solemnly abjured the woman, and read to her the curses that would come upon her if she were guilty. To

this, if she pleased to stand the trial after all this warning, she said, “Amen, Amen;” and then the priest wrote the curses in a book, blotted them with some of the bitter water, and gave the rest of it to the woman to drink. The trial was then made. If she had been unfaithful, the water would enter into her and become bitter; her belly would swell, and her thigh rot; and she would be made a curse among the people. But if her husband's suspicions had wronged her, none of these things would happen to her. For the curses in the book would all be blotted out, so as to be legible no more; and thus, being freed and avenged, she would receive strength of the Lord to conceive seed.

Now in the Psa. 109, the Lord appears as one Who had brought up Israel to this trial, and by it found her guilty. He was entitled so to bring her up for this trial, for He had of old married her (Jer. 31:32), of old had spread His skirt over Jerusalem (Ezek. 16:8), and at the time of the marriage had warned her of His holy jealousness (Ex. 20:5). And time after time subsequent to the marriage He had been provoked to jealousy, but had forborne, and been patient, calling again and again for repentance and confession (Deut. 32:21, Ezek. 8:3). But at length He pleads with her by this ordeal, while she, like any hardened wife who would dare to stand the trial with the consciousness of sin upon her, defies divine justice. “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” from the lips of Israel, was as the woman's “Amen” to the invocation of the curse. But their confidence has been their shame. The sin of their mother was not blotted out in the trial (Psa. 109:14). The water entered in and did its deadly work (v. 18); and to this day they are under the penalties of convicted infidelity. Israel has been judged as a woman that breaks wedlock (Ezek. 16:38).

Such is the end of their ways. But the Lord has His ways also, and if theirs ended in conviction and shame and judgment, His will end in mercy, in peace, and in honor. There is with the Lord forgiveness for Israel. As Jesus said on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” There is to be acceptance for this unfaithful one with her injured Lord. She has played the harlot, it is true, and so has the trial of jealousy found it; she has said, “I will go after my lovers,” but the Lord has also said, “I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies” (see Hos. 2; 3). And when this comes to pass, the very blessing which is promised to the wife who stood acquitted in the trial of jealousy, shall be Israel's; for she shall then be made free, the free-woman and a joyful mother of children (see Num. 5:28, and Isa. 54:1).

But before she be thus married to her Maker and Redeemer in the bonds of the new covenant, she is to have a time of espousals, in which the Lord will discipline her and form her for Himself. She is never to be restored to the old covenant. Her ruins under that lie as enduring as the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah; but God will remember His covenant with her and establish unto her an everlasting covenant (Ezek. 16:55, 60). And her day of espousals will prepare her for this abiding union. In that day she will be brought to know her own ways and loathe herself for all her abominations, to be confounded and never open her mouth any more because of her shame. But she will also be taught to know the Lord's ways, and rejoice in the grace and the fullness of His love, whereby He will then be pacified toward her (Ezek. 16:60-63). In that day He will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and then speak comfortably unto her. He will hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall so that she shall not find her paths; but all this discipline will only be in order to lead her to say, “I will go and return unto my first husband, for then was it better with me than now” (Hos. 2). “She shall in that day seek again the Lord her God, and David her king” (Hos.

3). The Lord will give her “the spirit of adoption” (Jer. 3:19). “She shall forget her own people and her father's house” (Psa. 45:10). “She shall hearken and incline her ear, and the King shall greatly desire her beauty.” Then shall the cry of “Ishi” be put into her mouth, and the Lord will delight in her, and call her His “Hephzibah” (Isa. 62, Hos. 2).

The book of Song of Solomon and a large portion of the Psalms, give us the exercises of Jerusalem, the bride elect or the remnant of the Jews, during that day of her espousals and discipline. Ruth who first gleaned in the fields and afterward lay at the feet of Boaz on the threshing-floor, is the type of Jerusalem thus in discipline and in espousals, as Ruth the wife of Boaz the mighty man of wealth is her type in all that honor and estate to which she shall be brought when the day of espousals ends in the covenant. And these things are also variously celebrated by all the prophets. But in all that they notice of these things, and of the Lord's tender love to His Jerusalem, I must mark one feature which has its peculiar interest for us. It is this—when the Lord has brought her to Himself in the bonds of the covenant, He does not refer to her former state as one of divorcement, but rather of widowhood. That is, He does not call to mind the shame, but rather the sorrow, of her former estate. Though it may be divorcement and shame (Isa. 1:1), yet the Lord will not remember it as such. May we not, brethren, notice the perfectness of such love as this? Does it not sweetly and affectingly tell us that with our God there is forgetting as well as forgiving? the taking away the sting of rebuking recollections, as well as the covering of the multitude of sins? We see this in that beautiful chapter (Isa. 54). There Jehovah, re-married to Jerusalem, looks back as in pity on her widowhood, and not as in anger on her divorcement. All this is perfect in the ways of the divine love. The human expression of this we get in Joseph, who is the type of Christ in this His love to Israel. For when Joseph forgave and accepted his brethren, he would have the memory of all that which was their guilt and dishonor blotted out forever. “Now therefore,” said he, “be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.”

These are some of the ways of His grace, beloved; but the source of them all, which is in Himself, is unsearchable. Unmeasured heights, and lengths, and depths, and breadths of love are there—a love that no man knows, and that is preparing for us what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. Oh! that we drank more simply, more unmixed of these waters. We should think much of the love of God, as it is in its fountains in Himself, and as it is in its streams spreading and diffusing itself among us, poor withered sinners. Let us not so much brood in sorrow, and complaint over thoughts of our narrow love to Him, but rather let His love be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, our enlarged souls entertaining the thought of it continually.

And here, for a moment, I would turn aside to express what I have felt at times touching the book of God, that in one respect it is indeed a melancholy saddening book. But I mean only as it is a record of man's ways. Open any historical portion of it, and there you will see man in his evil courses, going on in active enmity or reckless forgetfulness of God. Open any prophetic portion of it, and there you will hear the voice of God's minister exposing, rebuking, warning or threatening poor evil man. All this makes the book a melancholy and saddening volume. From Genesis, through Exodus, and onward to the end, as your thoughts are led through man's paths, your heart will be led into lamentation and mourning.

But it is a book of light and joy also, full of rest for the weary, and of refreshing for those who are thus sick of man and his doings. But I mean only as it is the record of God's ways. Open it in any place of it, and there you will find His grace meeting man's sin, His counsels correcting man's foolishness, His efforts of love essaying one method after Another to bring man home to Himself; and in the end you will see Him though refused and slighted, in the sovereignty of His grace building up families for heaven and earth, and filling all things with creation's joy in His own praise. Thus, brethren, let one page of this wondrous book show man to us, and all is sorrow and shame; let another show God to us, and all is rest and joy. And this will be found to be just as it should be, that “according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Let us return, and for a little while meditate on the church's more immediate interest in the truths I have been considering. I would observe that Scripture teaches us that the church knows of no marriage with her Lord, but of election and grace; and of that covenant which pats away sin, and preserves union forever—in principle such a marriage as Jerusalem is to know in the latter day, and not such as Israel knew when of old they came out of Egypt. The church has never been married by a covenant that rests on her own fidelity and strength. Indeed as yet there has been no marriage of the church at all. There will be, but as yet there has been no presenting of the bride to the Lamb. Nor indeed could there have been; for the church is not fully formed, nor has the scene of their union, the home and inheritance of Christ and the church, been as yet prepared. For heaven is the scene of union (Rev. 19:7), and out of heaven the Lamb's wife is seen to descend (Rev. 21). But it was otherwise with Israel of old. There might have been a marriage between her and the Lord of Hosts, as we have seen there was, because Israel as a nation was manifested under Joshua; and Canaan was the scene of the union.

But the church has never yet been manifested, for she is not yet fully formed. She is passing now through the time of her espousals, the time of discipline and preparation, that when she is married, she may be ready for her Lord, and fitted for abiding everlasting anion with Him. She is during this age or dispensation on her journey to meet Him. She is like Rebecca under the charge of Abraham's servant, having left her father, her kindred, and her country, as the espoused of the distant and as yet unseen Isaac. But she fears not, she suspects not. She has committed herself to the care of a stranger, One Who is not known in this Mesopotamia of ours, On.. “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him” (John 14:17). But she knows Him, and trusts Him, and believes the report that He has brought her about her Isaac, and that His Father has given Him all the wealth of His house (Gen. 24:36, John 16:15). And though she, like Rebecca, has not seen Him, yet she loves Him; though as yet she sees Him not, yet believing she rejoices (1 Peter 1:8). Her eye is toward Canaan, and her heart upon Isaac. But she has not yet reached Sarah's tent, Isaac's desired dwelling-place. She has goodly ornament upon her, brought out from Abraham's treasures, the pledges of Abraham's wealth, of Isaac's love, and of her guide's faithfulness; but she is still only on her way. And blessed is it, brethren, when our hearts are “in the way,” when we are contented to know that to the end here it is but a journey. And we must take heed, lest, like Israel, we become discouraged because of the way. For the will of God must first be done, and then the promise (Heb. 10:36).

Thus is it with us, beloved. It is a going still from strength to strength through the valley of Baca. It is the way before, as well as behind us, but still the way. So does the word of God describe it for us, and the word also describes this dispensation to us under the figure of the vestry to the church,

if I may so speak, where the guests are putting on their wedding garments in preparation for the marriage. It is a kind of anteroom to the kingdom or the King's palace (Matt. 22:11); a day of espousals, as we have already spoken, in which. the church is learning the mind of the Lord, and the ways of His house; “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Mark that I may present you. The marriage is but in prospect. Personal individual union of the saints with their Head, so as to bring forth fruit unto God, there is now; but presenting of the church unto Christ there is not as yet. Adam was cast into a deep sleep, and of the rib taken from his side while thus in sleep, was made a woman. But not till she was fully thus made, and Adam had awaked, was she brought to him. So in the mystery. The act of forming the church—the woman, is now going on; but the presentation cannot be till that act be finished, and Adam awakes; till “the whole body be fitly joined together and compacted,” and the Lord arises, and shows Himself, and takes His prepared and loved one.

(see Hos. 2; 3). And when three stages of it, is beautifully disclosed to us in Eph. 5:25-27.

1.— “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.” That is, loving before the world was, He said “Lo I come “; and when His delights, as He speaks, “were with the sons of men.” Then did He set His love upon the church, and in due time He gave Himself for it, sold all that He had that He might possess her—His pearl of great price.

2.— “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” That is, during the present age, He is forming the church for Himself by the virtue and continuous ministry of His word and Spirit, till she is prepared as a bride for her husband.

3.— “That He might present it to Himself a glorious church.” That is, after this age, in the coming kingdom, when He will have taken His bride, the church, then formed and ready, and made glorious like Himself; that He may find her His help-meet, and be satisfied in her forever.

We thus are taught that the church has not been, neither indeed could have been, as yet presented for the marriage in heaven (Rev. 19).

But the looking upon the church as though she had been already manifested and married has been, I judge, the occasion of giving her a very undue place and condition in the world. It has been a warrant for establishing her in the earth; for an establishment is an attempt to manifest or present the church. But this cannot be here, as we have seen. With Israel it might have been so, and was so; for the earth was Israel's home, but the church is a stranger here. And an understanding of this (and an understanding we should have in all things, 2 Tim. 2:7) would have hindered this attempt. But there has not been in all this knowledge, and we have each of us, brethren, much of slowness of heart to bear with in one another, as the Lord with all of us a thousand-fold more than we ever estimate. And it is well to remember that it is written, “If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

But the understanding of this would, I judge, have hindered the Lord's people from ever consenting to the establishment of the church, which is the giving her a place and a dowry thus on the earth; as though the earth was her place, and she were as yet in this age, entitled to the form and the rights of a presented or married church. But the understanding of this would, not only as I judge, have thus hindered error, but have furnished comfort. For it would prepare the saints for the present distracted broken condition of everything among them. And this would be no small

comfort. It would teach them that they were not to expect in this age a perfect exhibition of the church, but they must look on it only as the time for forming and fashioning the church after the mind and counsel of God. And this would further lead them to know that things might be really better when apparently worse, worse as to their external general condition, but better as to the great ends of the dispensation. For the purpose of the divine Former of the church is to have the saints grow up in the life and power of communion with their Lord through the Spirit, rather than to assume any consistency and order, however good for present credit and security, which would not stand the light and purity of that day. For this would be answering the ends of the dispensation, bringing each of us into readiness for the day when we shall all be presented together without spot.

Oh! let us, dear brethren, have grace to cultivate this readiness for the Bridegroom. It depends on this communion with Him, while as yet He is absent; and on our minds being “kept in the simplicity that is in Christ,” on their being formed only in and for Christ. Christ is our salvation, but Christ is our lesson also, the holy lesson we should each be diligently learning, careful and jealous that Satan be not teaching us another. When the Lord God was fashioning Eve, His design was to make her a helpmeet for Adam. His eye rested on Adam's joy, and on that only, all the while. Had any other design intruded, it would have been a corrupting of the fair workmanship. But the Lord God was true to the counsels of His love toward Adam. And so Adam found it; for when Eve was brought to him, he said, “This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; expressing thus his complacency in her, and thus owning that the Lord God had prepared her for him in perfect love and wisdom.

And so when Abraham's servant, Eliezar of Damascus, was getting Rebecca ready for Isaac, he clothed her with raiment, and adorned her with jewels which he had brought out of Abraham's house. Nothing of Mesopotamia was found upon her; for Rebecca was to be for Isaac, and not for her own people. And so with the Spirit now. The purpose of the Holy Ghost now is to get the bride ready for the Lamb. We have been espoused to one husband that we may be presented to Christ. And how jealous should we be lest anything should be forming our minds for any one but for Him! The gifts that have been sent down are only for uniting us in the knowledge of the Son, and that in all things we, may grow up unto Him. Any other attempt is but sleight of man and cunning craftiness (Eph. 4). It may be fair and boastful of great and good things; but it is deceiving an angel of light, if it be not forming us in Christ. That is the point of jealousy with the saint. It may appear to be wisdom, or knowledge, or religion, or order, or some other thing of esteem; but it matters not—it is deceitful and corrupting, if it exercise any art but the art of making us to grow up unto Christ. We want the broken heart, dear brethren, the fragments of which Jesus can take up. We want to dismiss all confidence in the flesh, for Jesus cannot use the flesh. We want to know more of the widowhood, the longings of one who waits for her Lord. He is absent, and many things solicit us the while, but we are to keep ourselves for Him. We are to be preparing as Eve for Adam, that when he awakes he may see the fruit of his deep sleep and be satisfied—as Rebecca for Isaac, that when the solitary saint lifts up his eyes and sees her who had left her kindred and country for him, he may be comforted (Gen. 24:62-67). And doubtless we shall then be comforted and satisfied also. Will it not be enough to find ourselves by His side forever? will it not be enough to see Him rejoicing over us as “His pearl of great price,” for the sake of which He had parted with all that He had? Oh! if the sweetest joy of a faithful wife be this, to know that she has the abiding and

best love of her lord; will not this be ours, brethren, without fear of change forever? May we be true to Him Who never can be false to us, Who nourisheth and cherisheth us as His own flesh! J. G. B.

Chapter 223

True Worship

True worship is in a known relationship, praising, adoring, thanking, blessing God, in the consciousness of His favor, in His presence as those brought in by the work of Christ, both cleansed and according to the value and savor of His sacrifice; but as in a known relationship of present favor and grace wherein we stand; so that we joy in God, and, I may add, are before the Father Who Himself loves us.

It is the outgoing of heart, delighting in God, and adoring Him for all that He has done when we think of that; but it flows from what He is to us. And we are actually in His presence, never forgetting surely how we got there; for He has been manifested. In that we have learned love and righteousness and holiness there, but as within, praising Him Whom we have found, in our present relationship to Him.

There is another thought connected with the Lord's Supper, besides its being that symbolically, in virtue and in the perfect savor of which we, risen and in God's presence, do worship. These are the sin-offering which comes first for the returning sinner, and the burnt-offering. In the peace-offerings the fat was the bread of the offering of the LORD. Jehovah fed upon it, and the priest, the offerer, and his friends fed upon the rest. Christ, Who was God's delight, is our delight: He feeds upon the perfect offering of Himself. “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.” We feed upon His broken body. We do feed with delight upon that which came down from heaven; but we cannot feed upon it as such without or separate from its being broken and its blood shed. And even when dwelling on Christ in His humbled life, it is always with the consciousness that the cross completed it and threw its character of perfectness over His whole path, besides the work that was wrought there. It is not a glorified Christ that we feed on then, but a sacrificed Christ; wherefore it is “in remembrance of Me.”

J. N. D.

Chapter 224

The Two Natures in a Believer

A Letter to the Perfectionists in the Flesh, Or Holiness People

Dear Friends,

Scripture says of the believer in Gal. 5:17, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other,” There is then the Spirit of power, but also the old fleshly nature. The apostle Paul personates the previous struggle in one born again. “In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Even after the deliverance, a few verses farther on in the same chapter, he shows that his old nature is in no way gone. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;” yet he adds in the same verse, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” Notwithstanding this, he proceeds to say in chap. 8. what is the summing up of the matter. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (the rest of the verse being spurious).

Thus the Christian is in Christ Jesus, and Christ is in him (vers. 1, 10). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (vers. 2, 3). The first reason why there is no condemnation for the Christian is because he is delivered in the power of Christ's risen life, which life in the new man God cannot condemn; the next is, because God has already condemned the old man in Christ an offering for sin. But the old man, though crucified with Him, is still in us, for us, walking in the Spirit, to condemn and spare not.

The believer is thus judicially dead to sin and to the law with Christ (chaps. 6. and 7.), that we may walk in newness of life. So we reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. For God, I repeat, has condemned sin in the flesh by the cross of Christ: and has annulled its power for the believer, so that we should no longer be in bondage to sin. It would seem that ver. 6 of Rom. 6 is better given in the R.V. “done away;” for sin is there: and we are exhorted, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (ver. 12). It is there, but must not “reign.” By the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we have power to walk in newness of life; even though the flesh is still in us, its power and authority are broken and set aside by Christ's death. “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

“If we live in the Spirit, let us therefore walk in the Spirit.” “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16, 25). The power of the Holy Spirit in us detects by the word and hinders, through Christ's grace, the flesh from acting, even though still there. “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace.” Were we under law, sin would be provoked into action. It is there, but grace gives us the victory through the death and resurrection of Christ. The last clause in Gal. 5:17 as to this is ill rendered in our A.V., “So that ye cannot.” This accredits the flesh and strips the Spirit of His power, representing it as an

impossibility to overcome the flesh and walk in the power of the Spirit. But this is erroneous. The correct thought is given us in the R.V., “That ye may not.” Doubtless the flesh strives to hinder; but as we live in the Spirit, let us therefore walk in the Spirit (even though the flesh would ever so hinder), and we shall not fulfill fleshly lusts. We are called to “mortify the deeds of the body,” as having already died with Christ. The Holy Spirit in us is of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Devotedness according to Rom. 12:1 is our calling, living, and walking thus in the Spirit, presenting our bodies (not “the flesh”) a living sacrifice to God. It is similar practical devotedness which is set before us in 1 Thess. 5:23, The God of peace Himself sanctify (or set apart) you wholly: spirit, and soul, and body be preserved entire, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture nowhere teaches that the old nature is exterminated, or burnt out, or ameliorated. It has had God's sentence executed on it in Christ's cross. But the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us acts on and in the new nature given us in Christ; and we are able thus to walk in newness of life, bringing forth fruit unto God. From our start as Christians we walk in the light, as we have life eternal in fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1). Devotedness to God is not the cause of salvation, but its effect by grace. Christ dead and risen is the ground upon which salvation rests; but a holy walk is the fruit, brought forth, to the glory of God. It is a great privilege indeed, and what we are saved for, and called to walk in down here, through a series of temptations and evil, to the praise of the Savior, as also to our own present joy and everlasting reward, when the Lord shall examine our lives, and manifest all; not before we get to heaven, but when we are there.

Salvation is of grace, through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:5-9). Rewards are for faithfulness (Matt. 19:29; 1 Cor. 3:14). I repeat that entire devotedness by the power of the Holy Spirit in us does not extinguish the carnal mind, or the flesh; which is still there, and will still hinder if allowed. The power of the Spirit, answering to Christ's work on the cross, lifts above it; and the new nature thus led says No to its every motion, and thus prevents its breaking forth into activity.

The flesh in us is neither forgiven, nor cleansed, nor renewed, nor improved. It is incurably evil and therefore “condemned” by the death of Christ; and so the believer in Him is delivered from it, and, being in Him “a new creation,” he is not in the flesh, though it is in him. Faith, prayer, watchfulness, self-judgment, as well as all public means, and holy discipline, are needed; or the flesh will act. And herein learn your mistake, in blaming the devil for much which comes from the flesh, though no doubt he acts on it, when we slip out of dependence on God.

Yours truly,

G. R.

Chapter 225

The Unwritten Things Which Jesus Did

John 21:25

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

These “many other things,” including doubtless the “many other signs” mentioned in the previous chapter, are indeed unknown to us save as to their general character; but we know that they must have been marked by the same divine grace and stainless holiness, by the same moral glory, that stamped all that the Son of God wrought. They were probably called forth by some need or some sorrow. But we can go no farther—would wish to go no farther; for, as another has put it excellently well, “The silence of God is to be respected in the next place to His utterance.” Still, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost notes the fact that there were “many other things” done by our blessed Lord, it is plainly incumbent on us to heed it. The renewed heart indeed dwells with delight on this thought, and the spiritual mind recognizes its fitness. For that life of ceaseless self-sacrifice could not but be the occasion of other deeds of mercy than those that are recounted in the Gospels, numerous and unfathomable as the latter are. Those lips, “replenished with grace,” must have distilled many an unrecorded benediction; those hands, uplifted in blessing, when the risen Lord ascended, mark the end, and yet not the end, of an unwearied course of love.

But if, in the wisdom of God, many a deed of mercy, many a word of comfort, or, may be, of holy indignation is unrevealed. it by no means follows that such must ever remain a mystery. May not eternity give scope for the unfolding of these “many other things” which have been already “seen of angels”? At any rate it is and must be profitable to ponder every statement of scripture, and not least when the Lord Jesus Himself is the direct theme. Direct or indirect object, we know He must always be. And so again, and yet again, each time we read the passage, we love to be reminded that we have a record only of “parts of His ways.”

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

He has “magnified above all His name” (and if this be true of the Old Testament, not less surely of the New), we are presented with a perfect picture of the Son of God. On the one hand there is a true perspective, on the other divine accuracy of detail, where detail was the object of the Spirit. Now one Evangelist only relates a suited truth, or parable, or miracle; now the same incident is recounted by two, or three, or even by the four.

In short, the object of the Holy Ghost is told us by John in the 20th chapter of his Gospel. “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” Enough and more than enough for this, be it said reverently; yet not too much for “our learning” (Rom. 15:4), not too much for “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), though we are often slow to work that inexhaustible mine How little have we explored, but what of the still smaller portion we have, so to speak, made our own! We do oftentimes but touch the fringe of the divine teaching, and the most diligent are but as spiritual Newtons, gathering pebbles on the boundless shore. Yet, such is His grace, merely to “touch the hem of His garment.” is fraught with richest blessing.

To conclude, our Lord's ministry, whether by word or deed, whether recorded or unrecorded, was that which He could not but perform. He could not but work His own works, which miracles indeed were, even as they were the works of the Father that sent Him (John 9:4). And while each sign bore witness of Him, of Whom all the prophets had spoken, yet indisputably they derived their chief luster from Him, Who wrought them. Let us not forget that He is “this same Jesus” (Acts 1:11) now and for, evermore. R. B. Junr.

Names of God in the Psalms

Jah seems to be the existing One objectively. There is One and only One Who is. Eh'yeh is His own assertion of it—conscious existence in will. Jehovah is He Who does so exist but in relation with others and revealed in time. He always is, but “was and is to come” is brought in. There is existence, yet not only an eternal now but a past and what is to come. He is in relationship and in connection with time, and so a Securer of promises. And we read of His mercy enduring “forever.” Adonai, related to none of these, carries the thought of lordship and rule.

Chapter 227

The Catholic Apostolic Body or Irvingites

We have seen how shallow is the view of Mr. Sitwell as to Christianity, that is to say, our standing and privilege individually considered, even where it is not plainly erroneous. It is no better as to the church, that is, our corporate place, even Christ's body here below. The entire scheme is faulty from first to last. Thus his “first part” is the calling of the church (pp. 1-36); but in it not a true trace of that calling occurs even accidentally. He confounds the church absolutely with the kingdom; whereas the latter is another relationship of no small moment, as distinct from the former as power is from grace. As Christians, we are now after a special way in the kingdom; but we also compose the church, being members of Christ. Following Him in His rejection, we are not mere subjects like Israel by-and-by, but become kings and priests, and shall reign with Him in that day. This is the kingdom, not the church, His body; and the effect of the confusion is inevitably and in every respect mischievous. In this pseudo-apostolic volume the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church, great as it is declared to be, is not at all understood. The exclusive topic throughout is “the gospel of the kingdom.” The immense and eternal purpose of God revealed in Eph. 1, etc. does not enter his mind, the heading up in Christ of all things in heaven and all things on earth, and our association with Christ in both the calling and the inheritance.

Mr. S. does not look above man on the earth. “And the habitation, the dwelling-place of man is the earth—forever” (p. 5). We may praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and exult in His glory, no less than own the riches of His grace, that it is far otherwise for the saints, even now blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. How sad not to have the eyes of our heart enlightened to discern our incomparably higher blessedness! The Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, to say nothing of others, are ignored for this. Not that one would depreciate “the kingdom” for a moment. It is meet that the scene of our Savior's infinite humiliation should shine in the day of His manifested glory. But it is only a part, and an inferior one, bright as are the visions which prophecy opens about the earth, Israel, and the nations, to the eye of faith. But the New Testament, on the accomplishment of an everlasting redemption in Christ's cross, discloses what had been kept hid from ages and generations—hid in God till Christ ascended and the Holy Ghost came down to dwell in us. This mystery makes known the church in union with the Head; yet as to it all Mr. S.'s book is a complete blank. Surely as one of the new apostles he ought to have been an adequate exponent, when his task was to explain the calling of the church; he seems from his book to have known nothing about it.

Mr. Irving, boldly astray as to the object which ought to be dearest to us, Christ's person, rose far beyond this poverty. Indeed the “part first” unwittingly proved what is justly enough laid to the door of Christendom in his “part second” (pp. 37-129), that not only most people, but Mr. S. himself, forgot the church's calling and became earthly. His doctrine, as we saw, makes all who receive it earthly in principle. Amiable approval of certain traits in Rome, Greece, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, and Dissent, shows how all he can say is incompatible with the feeblest faith in the church's calling. He divides the past course into six periods of declension: the apostolic, the episcopal, the imperial, the papal, the reformed, and the revolutionary; but on this we need not

dwell now.

The third part is the church recalled to her true standing (pp. 130-254). Here again the same judaizing pursues us. Hos. 2 is said to be fulfilled, which is certainly untrue; as the prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit denies the distinctive abiding privilege of the church. It is a lapse into Israel's need. Tongues and powers, even if true, could have in no measure availed before the ruin of the church: nothing but humiliation, and obedience, sure of blessing in the grace of the Lord. Apostles and prophets constituted the foundation; and such they were in divine power and grace. How out of place and season to have this over again? or, to meet the objection, by talking of a John Baptist ministry? For Christ's forerunner was no apostle. No! The setting up of apostles was presumption, and as far from God's mind as can be conceived. It was the work of a spirit. All is simply an apology for Irvingism, with its vain misinterpretation of the Tabernacle, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim. Of doctrine we have spoken, but left other points.

The fourth part is the end—its progress and consummation (pp. 255-336). Here they have a little more truth, because there is less of the church and more prophecy. Bat antichrist, the man of sin, is confounded, as usually, with the last Roman emperor, whereas he is the prophet-king in the land; and also with the king of the north, or Assyrian, the enemy of both! And though the two Witnesses (Rev. 11) are allowed to be future, Rev. 14:1-4 as well as 7:1-5 are applied to the Irvingites, as well as the manchild! Of these puerilities enough has been said before.

The fifth is the conclusion, which still lingers over the society, as the sixth part consists of answering objections to their work, and especially to apostles. Mr. S. was only like others occupied with themselves, not with the Christ of God; so that the true calling of the church, and the blessed hope, were lost in earthly things.

As to the Irvingite interpretation of Rev. 12 can anything be more out of the way? It is self-evident that, lacking intelligence of the book as a whole, they of course cannot be trusted for any particular part. The woman is seized on for the church, the twelve stars for the new apostolate, and the catching up of the manchild for the party rapture to heaven.

Now in the prophetic visions three women appear with marked differences. The first is the mother, the second the harlot, and the third the bride, the Lamb's wife. This the new Jerusalem is beyond just dispute, the glorified church, as the harlot is the corrupt counterfeit, Babylon. The first needs more care, but is distinct from either, and points to Israel, of whom Christ the Son and Heir was born. The chief difficulty is to account for introducing what was past in a revelation of the future; but this is far from inexplicable.

Rev. 12 (or more strictly 11:19) begins the second part of the prophecy, the first bringing us to the seventh trumpet which unmistakably carries us on in general terms to the end of all. The second part therefore, which explains much in detail and with more precision, must go back; and in the manner of the O. T. prophecy it gives us a mystic view which identifies Christ and the church. It goes indeed beyond Rev. 4, 5 where are the heavenly saints in peaceful session on their thrones round God and the Lamb. Here they are wrapt up as it were in a Son of glory, the Manchild caught up to God and to His throne. The translation of Christ (long before) omits His life and death, and passing over all the intervening times joins with itself those who are to share with Him the rule of all the nations. This, we know, is the promised portion of Christ and the church

(Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21); so that scripture confirms fully what is here advanced. But there can be no favored party: what more abhorrent to the mind of Christ? For “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” The entire church are concerned. Isaiah 1 shows how the Christian is lost in Christ like a binary star (cf. Rom. 8); as Isaiah passes at once to the Second Advent from the First. Indeed both are not uncommon; and the Revelation recurs to the prophetic style. There is this characteristic difference, however, that while O.T. prophecy skips clean over the Christian or church parenthesis, from the Lord's birth and rejection to His taking His great power and reigning publicly, the Apocalyptic view here is rather to show us in an enigmatic way God's purpose in Christ and the translation of the heavenly saints found in Him caught up to the throne of God. This, it will be observed, is absolutely dateless: a token not without moment. It is in virtue of the rejected Christ on Clod's throne that the saints can be caught up and thus seen mystically in Him.

But what of the vision as a whole? “The temple of God that is in heaven was opened.” On earth His temple was to be the scene of the most daring rebellion of man and triumph of Satan, the man of sin worshipped there as God. But God's purpose is declared on high before judgment effects it here below. “And there was seen the ark of His covenant in His temple.” Israel the covenant people is to be the theater of His plans for blessing, the church having been proved irreparably guilty and ruined, and no promise of restoration for her, as for the Jews beyond controversy and in mercy that endures forever. The accompanying signs of divine judgment (“lightnings and voices, and thunders,”) etc. still mark that actually it is a time when God's hand is on men in displeasure, the harbinger of wrath to come yet more terribly. It is not yet His day, any more than it is properly the day of grace, but of special judicial dealings in providence. “And a great sign was seen in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown [or chaplet] of twelve stars.” It is the chosen people of God as in God's purpose, invested therefore with supreme authority, lifted quite above their old servitude to the reflected light of legal ordinances, and adorned with the evidently complete instrumentality of administrative rule in man for the earth. So it will surely be when the Lord reigns in Zion; and this is Apocalyptic intimation of God's purpose in heaven before the conflict with Satan is described. His opposition immediately follows, and this foremost against Christ in every way. But there is this added, “And being with child she crieth, travailing and in pain to bring forth.” It is not millennial joy, but the hour of sorrow yet. “And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third of the stars of heaven and did cast them unto the earth.” Christ, and those one with Him must be in their place first, whatever the dragon's enmity. For though he is seen, not as of old but with characteristics of the Roman Empire and casting them down from God's light and order in the west, as I suppose, and with destructive hostility against God's counsels in Christ, all is vain. “And the dragon stood before the woman that was about to bring forth, that when. She brought forth he might devour her child. And she brought forth a son a male, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that there they should nourish her a thousand two hundred and sixty days.” Rev. 11:19-12:6.

Once the Christ thus mystically regarded (see 1 Cor. 12:12) is caught up, we find ourselves in the latter day; and the rage of Satan under the form of the Roman power is directed against the Jewish people, the tree mother of Christ; and set times come into reckoning. They have to do with

the earth and the earthly people, not with the church of the heavenlies. This is not agreeable to those who are pre-occupied with Christendom, which tends to make the practical question one between Romanism and Protestantism.

This was not Mr. S.'s snare, who thought as cheaply as any could, either of the Popish dream about the Virgin Mary in the same woman, or of the historical fancy that the rapture of the Manchild to God's throne means the political elevation of the Christian profession under Constantine and his successors. If this were true, the woman might rather have been worshipped, or seated on a throne, than driven into the wilderness: an absurd result of the christening of the empire.

Now we can readily understand that, when God has His heavenly ones with Christ above, His purpose for the earth comes into view; and that a mighty change occurs in the true seat of power-heaven, when those who are Christ's for His glory there are in their place. As long as the church is here below, -wrestling with spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places goes on. But after the translation, there is war in heaven; Satan loses his bad eminence and is cast to the earth (Rev. 12:7-12), which fires his wrath the more against those destined to inherit the earth under Christ's reign, the Jews especially. These accordingly have nothing to do with such wrestling as Eph. 6:12 describes. It is thenceforth a dispute for the earth; God forbid it should be so for the church. Satan accordingly is seen, not only in his efforts against the woman and the rest of her seed, the godly Jewish remnant of this transitional time before the millennium (Rev. 12:13-17), but bringing forward his final instruments of blasphemous power and deceit against the Lord and His Anointed (Rev. 13). Matt. 24, &c., and above all the Revelation, furnish N. T. light on this future remnant.

The attempt to make party capital out of Rev. 12 is altogether inferior to what is called the Protestant interpretation, unsatisfactory and even absurd as this has been shown to be, one evil effect of which is the direct countenance it lends to consecrating worldliness in the church. The Popish idea is as childish and profane as their peculiar opinions usually are in divine things. But the Irvingite fancy is a vain essay to catch at symbols in a random way and with gross inconsistency in order to flatter their “Twelve” as well as their adherents. The truth gives all the glory to Christ in Whom the church, not some members but all, is regarded as hidden, its regular place in the prophetic word, its happiest place morally—the joy and boast of hearts true to the Bridegroom Who alone is worthy, whatever His grace to all that are His The mystic man, Christ and the church, being out of reach, the hatred and last efforts of Satan against God's earthly purpose in Israel ensile without delay, with the measured times which connect all with O. T. prophecy. Daniel in particular, is the prophet of Gentile supremacy on the total failure of the Jews, as John is of the world's judgment on the proved and irreparable ruin of Christendom. The church, normally, belongs to heaven which does not like the earth come under times and seasons.

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