BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 20

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 20, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

278 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 20

Abimelech

Judg. 9

The Spirit of God has drawn our attention in the O.T. Scriptures to several men who are undoubted foreshadows of the coming man of sin; among these Abimelech thHe son of Gideon occupies a solemn place. He was of a stamp very different from his father, for Gideon was a man of faith and holds an honorable place in God's list as given in Heb. 11. He had God's glory before him as his object; and loved the people of Jehovah, and groaned over their low estate. He was, therefore, a fitting instrument for God to use, and He used him mightily to the utter discomfiture of Midian, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon (Judg. 8:28).

The son, alas! was moved by a different motive. No sooner was the judge, his father, dead, than he gathered together the family of his mother, and urged them to use their influence with the Shechemites on his behalf. The glory of Jehovah and the blessing of His people were not before him; he desired to exalt himself—he would be king. How painfully he reminds one of the personage in Dan. 11:36! The Spirit of God there, after speaking to Daniel of various leagues and conflicts between the kings of Syria and Egypt (which part of the prophecy has received fulfillment), abruptly introduces the awful king of the latter days. He passes over entirely the present period of time which is never the subject of O.T. prophecy, and fixes attention upon the time of the end.

“The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished.” This is the Antichrist of 1 John 2, 4; the man of sin, the son of perdition, of 2 Thess 2; but in Dan. 11. we get him in his local and political character, the willful and self-exalting king in the glorious land. Now the Lord has declared that ‘he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased:’ the truth of which Abimelech proved, as also will the impious antitype of the future. It was by fair speeches that the sun of Gideon won his way; and so with the man of Dan. 11. “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps. 55:21). There will be a lamb-like air about him; but in the ears of the elect—who know not the voice of strangers—his voice is that of the dragon (Rev. 13.). Antiochus who is another type of him, worked his way similarly. “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries” (Dan. 11:32). By all this the mass are deceived and led away, as the Shechemites were; the remnant, “the people that do know their God” are preserved.

Abimelech was an apostate from the worship of Jehovah, which his father had restored, and evidently followed Baalberith (compare Judges 11:4, 46). Here the type fails in completeness, for the coming one will do graver still. Not content with disregarding the God of his fathers, and speaking marvelous things against the God of Gods, “he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Here we have human iniquity reaching an awful height, not

yet reached by any. It is the full development of the first departure: ‘Ye shall be as God’ said the tempter. It is man's privilege and glory to be dependent (have we learned this?); the man of sin rejects absolutely such a place and claims God's name and worship—only to be hurled from his usurped throne into eternal ruin.

Abimelech soon developed a thirst for blood, sadly typical of the dark day at hand. “He went to his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone.'' How quick did Israel forget what they owed to Gideon! An apostate power is invariably a persecutor of God's saints. When the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place, all must bow or die. Who are the souls under the altar in Rev. 6:9-11? Undoubtedly those who will suffer under antichrist for the word of God and for their testimony. From oppressed hearts will the cry go up, “O Lord, how long”? and the cry is heard. “When He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembereth them; He forgetteth not the cry of the humble” (Psa. 9:12). But all will not lose their lives in the coming day, any more than in the day of Abimelech. We read, “Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.” He was enabled to bear testimony: “he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim” (the mount of blessing; Deut. 27), and solemnly set before Israel their position with regard to the usurper. In his speech he brings forward successively the three trees which are constantly used in Scripture as emblems of the Jewish nation the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, all of which refused the preferred dominion, finally accepted by the bramble in the person of Abimelech. Having delivered his message, eminently prophetic, the witness “fled and went to Beer, and dwelt there for fear of Abimelech his brother.” He is thus a type of that part of the Jewish remnant who will be persecuted for their testimony, but who will be preserved by a faithful God through all until the end. Such are counseled by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 24.

Righteous retribution follows in due course; “for it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you,” and “he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 13:10); Fire came out from the men of Shechem as Jotham prophesied to devour Abimelech; Gaal the son of Ebed gained the confidence of the treacherous Shechemites and caused them to curse Abimelech, and to rebel against him. Accordingly fire comes out from the false king to devour them and the house of Millo, and he appeared at first to carry all before him. But God had decreed his destruction, and when fighting against the tower of Thebez, with the final victory all but sure, “a certain woman cast a piece of millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.” God is not restricted to means; He Who sold Sisera into the hands of a woman could use similar instrumentality here, when all else had proved unavailing. “Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads; and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal” (Judg. 9:56, 57).

Even so shall it be with the willful king of the future, the impious and blasphemous persecutor of God's saints; the Lord Jesus “shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). The down-trodden remnant of God's people shall be delivered at the appearing of Jesus, Israel's true Messiah, the King after God's own heart.

W. W. F.

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Chapter 3

Letter on the Assembly and Ministry: Part 1

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have been observing of late several distinct marks of the assembly of God, as given (sometimes in an indirect way) by the apostle in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and have thought they may be of interest to your readers, especially in a day of difficulty and confusion such as the present.

There are two epistles which have for their theme the church of God viz., Ephesians and 1 Corinthians; but each views the church from a totally different standpoint. Ephesians is a rich exposition of the counsels of divine grace. (there I find the marvelous expression, “the exceeding riches of His grace”) concerning Christ and the church. Christ is shown as the One Whom God has raised again from among the dead, and set at His own right hand in the heavenly places, &c.—given by Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Here we get the church's wondrous place spoken of according to the counsels of God, formed before the foundation of the world: it is Christ's body, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Him. This is altogether God's planning and working; man has no place here, save—as believing in, and associated with, Christ—being the recipient of all. 1 Corinthians, on the other hand, presents the church in its practical walk here below, giving the mind of God upon all matters collective, while exposing, alas! a terrible amount of human failure of every sort. Ephesians directs our eyes to the heaven, and we are shown our wondrous place before God, even the Father, in Christ; while Corinthians directs our eyes downwards, and we get human doings and, too often, sin. The latter epistle opens in an unusual way; it is not addressed “to the saints... and to the faithful,” as in Ephesians, nor to those “beloved of God, saints by calling,” as in Romans; but “to the church of God which is at Corinth... with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” And the opening words are important as indicating the contents of the inspired note.

To proceed to the marks mentioned, the first is given (in an indirect way) in chap. i, the name of Christ, the assembly's true gathering point. The Spirit has grave fault to find on this score; for schools were rapidly forming, party-names were being adopted, and saints were no longer knit together in love, all speaking the same thing, perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Schism was already at work, and sects or heresies would follow, if not checked by the energy of the Holy Ghost through the apostle, as the natural result. Do we wonder at Paul's indignation? “Is Christ divided?” he asked; “was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” He loved the Head, and he loved His body, the church, far too well to accept quietly such dishonor. Nor did it affect the question, that his own name was one of those used: “who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?” Who? indeed, when Christ was in question! The Spirit was in the apostle to glorify Christ, and the devoted servant would knock down all at one blow, that Christ alone might be exalted among His saints.

What deep failure for the Corinthians? They were “enriched by Him in all utterance, and in all knowledge,” and came behind in no gift; yet were they carnal, and walked as men. But the truth

that Christ is the alone center of His saints, both here and in glory, abides in spite of all human failure and sin. In Rev. 5. He is shown as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the elders, representing the glorified saints, being seated around Himself. What a scene for the heart! How the thought of it causes the spirit to yearn for the day when all, through grace, shall be verified in all the saints! But the same Christ is the gathering point to-day ere the glory; and His precious promise in Matt. 18:20 ever holds good, “Where two or three are gathered together in (unto) My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Happy for the church had she never departed from it; but alas, alas, how deep and widespread the failure and departure! Everywhere names gloried in and adopted, and party-making rampant, not the least painfully among many who declare sect-making to be of the foe, rather than of God. Surely the Lord had His eye on evil days when he spoke of “two or three.” I do not find twos and threes in the Acts of the Apostles, but rather thousands here, and hundreds there; but where is this seen to-day?

While not trying to be pessimistic, one is somewhat suspicious to-day as to the hundreds, where found gathered together—professedly in Christ's name. To be gathered to His name means more than is sometimes thought. His name Jehovah expresses what He is; and this principle runs throughout scripture. When God revealed His name “El-Shaddai” to Abraham, it was a revelation of what He was (and of course is), the All-sufficient and All-powerful One. Again, His name Jehovah expresses His eternal unchangeableness. But, sweeter still, the name of Father, revealed by and in the Son, expresses for us a wonderful relationship, and an intimate heart of love. Thus the gathered saints may count on Christ according to all that He is; and is He not enough? His fullness is for faith to draw upon, be the day ever so evil and dark.

Thus the first mark of the assembly, which I have seen in 1 Corinthians, is its gathering to Christ's name; the second is found in chap. 5., a holy maintenance of discipline according to God. When this is despised, and the holiness that becomes God's house ignored, how can we recognize the company as God's assembly? Grave moral evil had appeared among the saints at Corinth—evil graver than was common among the dissolute Gentiles around them. How low may not even the saints sink, when the heart departs from the Lord! Flesh in the Christian is the same as flesh in the unbeliever; only there is light, which makes its outbreaks the more dreadful. Solemn indeed was the general condition of the Corinthian assembly. They had evidently been puffed up before the evil appeared, and even so glaring a blot had not humbled them. One would have thought that such a dishonor would have dispelled the boasting and brought them to their faces; but what is man? The apostle wrote and wrote vigorously by the Spirit, “What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in spirit of meekness?” He then proceeded to declare the mind of the Lord concerning the evil in question. “For I verily as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together and my spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (vers. 3-5).

The assembly, not merely official individuals (of whom, I may say, we have no trace at Corinth, as it was not long that the saints had been called), was to act, and clear the Lord's name. Of old Jehovah had said, “Israel hath sinned,” and all Israel stoned the offender with stones that he died (Josh. 7.). So here; the assembly, with Paul present in spirit, was to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Did they not know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole

lump? Were they not familiar with the former oracles of God, where instructions are constantly given to expel all leaven? Did they not know that the assembly in God's sight is an unleavened lump? How inconsistent, nay, how dishonoring to Him Who is Holy and True, to allow the unclean leaven to remain unjudged! They were to judge those “within” (leaving those “without” to God), and were therefore to put away from among themselves that wicked person. And this is ever incumbent on the gathered saints. The assembly, according to God's thought, is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15); and its character is quite belied, when it becomes indifferent to holiness. But in the absence of apostolic power, the “two or three” cannot go beyond the putting away in ver. 13, the handing over to Satan calling for authority which we have not, in the present broken and ruined condition of things (compare 1 Tim. 1:20). Assumption is out of place, and an offense to God; it is ours to walk with lowliness before Him, and use what we have for His glory.

I refrain at this point, from speaking of the assembly's attitude towards false doctrine: it is a matter for discipline most assuredly, where Christ has His true place; it will, however, come before us later. A due maintenance of discipline is therefore an undoubted mark of God's assembly.

I now proceed to the subject of ministry as dealt with by the apostle, chiefly in 1 Cor. 9., and somewhat in chap. 4. Some were evidently venturing to put the apostle on his trial as to his service, pronouncing as to the genuineness of his call to the office, judging his motives, and making various insinuations concerning him. The blessed man of God, established in God's thoughts, knew well how to deal with all such assumption and folly. He stood on his own direct responsibility to the Lord, and wishes them to know it: “let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). He was in no wise their servant ("save in a sense for Jesus' sake, 2 Cor. 4:5), and he repudiated their right to inquire into, or criticize him in, his path of service for Christ. Ministry is in Christ's hands; not in any sense in the hands of official men, or of the church. The source of all ministry is given in Eph. 4—the ascended Christ. He has given gifts; apostles, prophets evangelists, pastors and teachers; the church has no place, save as receiving what He gives according to the grace of His heart, and the fullness that resides in Him for all its needs. How lamentably has this been lost sight of in Christendom! to the church's serious hurt, and graver still, to the Lord's dishonor. Officialism is to be observed on the one hand, men assuming to be successors of the apostles with power to ordain; religious republicanism on the other, the church claiming the right to control itself, and to control ministry. Which is the farthest from the divine pattern? Surely in both systems the true idea is entirely lost. The truth is, that the ascended Head gives and fits, while the assembly is but the receiver of all.

The apostle asserts his right to support from the saints (not from the Gentiles, 3 John 7)—though not a salary—and draws analogies from vineyard, flock, oxen and temple; yet glories in the fact that he had not used this right, nor had he written such things that it should be so done unto him: for it were better for him to die, than that any man should make his glorying void (1 Cor. 9:12, 15).

Noble and self-sacrificing servant! He had drunk deeply into his Master's spirit, and felt it to be far “more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20.). What have his professed successors to say to this?

Chapter 4

Letter on the Assembly and Ministry: Part 2

I will now turn to another and important mark of God's assembly given in chaps, 10. and 11. of the first epistle to the Corinthians, viz.—a due regard for the Lord's Table and supper. Upon these points the Corinthians had doubtless been fully instructed by the apostle, during the year and six months of his ministry among them (Acts 18:11); nor does he bring them forward as new, but says he had received of the Lord that which also he delivered (past tense) unto them. Yet how little did they know the power of the truth, and how feeble, nay, how stagnant, their jealousy for the honor of Christ! A mere knowledge of the letter of the truth will not at all suffice to preserve the soul; the truth must be held in communion with God in the power of the Holy Ghost, or the soul is but little profited, and the Lord but little glorified in His saints.

It will be observed that the apostle presents two different ideas in the two chapters referred to; first, the Lord's table, and afterward, the Lord's supper—various aspects of the same thing, I know, but the distinction should be kept clearly before our minds. In chap. 10. the great thought before the mind of the Spirit is fellowship, which will explain the fact of the cup being placed before the loaf; for apart from the precious blood of Christ (of which the cup so expressively speaks), how could there be any fellowship of saints? And further, the apostle adds a truth concerning the loaf which is not found in chap. 11., viz., that it sets forth the “one body,” of which all the saints on earth form a part, and of which Christ in glory is the Head. In chap. 11. the great point is the remembrance of Christ: in chap. 10. rather, as I have said, the fellowship of saints, and therefore the added truth. It is important to see that eating and drinking is, according to this scripture, an expression of fellowship, which the Corinthians had apparently entirely lost sight of. Else how dare they enter the temple of an idol, and eat things offered there in sacrifice? especially as idol-worship is in reality the worship of demons. In doing so they were provoking the Lord to jealousy—a serious consideration at all times for the saints; as the apostle solemnly asks, “Are we stronger than He”? A right understanding of the truth conveyed in chap 10, will deliver the Christian from independency and unholiness, two serious evils which, without doubt, go hand in hand. If we really believe that all the saints on earth form one body—Christ's body, how can we harbor the thought in our hearts of independency? and if we really understand that eating and drinking means fellowship, how can we be indifferent as to the persons with whom we sit down? The truth, evenly held in the power of the Spirit, and bowed to in all its parts, will preserve the soul from these and the many other snares laid by the ever watchful foe for our feet.

Passing to chap. 11., the apostle says, “I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.” Paul was not one of the privileged few who sat with the Lord in the upper chamber on that memorable night; but the Head of the church had not left him to glean the particulars of the precious feast from the twelve, but chose, in divine wisdom, to make it a subject of special revelation to him. Not so did the Lord act with regard to that other Christian institution, baptism; we have no record of any special revelation concerning that to Paul, though he was himself baptized, and practiced baptism as a servant of Christ. Why the difference? Surely because the supper is the great standing expression of the church's unity (and was not Paul the apostle of the church?),

whilst baptism is an individual thing, expressive of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, but in no way connected with the assembly. The Lord's supper is a memorial feast; it brings before our hearts not merely the Lord's work, important though it is, but the Lord Himself in His sufferings and death. While breaking bread thus, we are gathered to a living Christ, Who is ever in the midst where the two or three are gathered to His name; but we remember a dead Christ. How loudly does the loaf speak of His holy body prepared for Him by divine power (Psa. 40.), formed without a taint of sin, and offered up once for all! (Heb. 10.) And how powerfully does the cup speak of that precious blood, which alone makes atonement for the soul, shed forth at the altar—the cross of Calvary! Well does the Spirit say, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.” What shall we say of the pseudo-spirituality which regards the precious memorial as a carnal ordinance, with the Spirit's own plain words before us, “till He come”? Not till that day are those who love His name, and who would do His will, free from the responsibility and privilege of breaking bread in remembrance of Himself. The words as often raise an important question, which the scriptures answer plainly to a simple mind. Acts 20:7, shows the custom of saints in Paul's day: “Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread,” &c., and the words are even a little stronger than they appear, for the best authorities read, “when we came together.” What can the simple mind, desirous of doing the Lord's will, want more? Such words are a plain intimation that saints in the church's early days, met on “the first day of the week” to remember their Lord in His appointed way. And surely this is not too often where the heart's affections are towards Christ? where is the love of the one who finds it irksome to show the Lord's death so frequently? and what day more suitable than that which bears witness to His resurrection—the Victorious One, alive for evermore?

There is urgent need for care in handling such precious memorials, as the apostle shows in 1 Cor. 11:27-29. The Corinthians had not so far departed from the truth as to welcome unworthy persons (that was reserved for the Christendom of a later day); but there was a danger of themselves eating in a very unworthy way, and this the apostle solemnly points out: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” The saints to whom these words were written were eating and drinking with unexercised hearts, in utter forgetfulness of what they were doing. It is for saints to examine themselves in the light of the Lord's presence, before going up to His table to remember Him in the breaking of bread. Not that unworthy eating on the part of saints involves “damnation,” as the Authorized Version of ver. 29 wrongly states; but such indifference to the Lord's honor brings down the hand of the Lord in judgment. If we are forgetful of what is due to Him, He never can be, and will vindicate Himself and clear His name. To be near to God is very blessed, but also very solemn, for judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4), the world's judgment being still delayed in the long-suffering grace of God. The truth of this was experienced by the lax Corinthian saints, for many among them were weak and sickly, and many slept. Had they judged themselves, they would not have been judged, for it gives the heart of the Lord no pleasure to deal thus with His own; but holiness must be maintained. Yet even here grace is seen, for “when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” When the world is dealt with for its iniquity and rejection of Christ, the believer is, through grace, exempt, his judgment having been borne once for all by the Blessed One; but he is chastened now by a holy yet loving hand, if he walks not fruitfully to the glory of Christ.

May the Lord help us to value our privileges, and give to us an ever deepening sense of what is due to Him, in a cold and indifferent day!

Chapter 5

Letter on the Assembly and Ministry: Part 3

THE next mark of God's assembly, observable in the first epistle to the Corinthians, is the presence and sovereign action of the Holy Spirit (chaps. 12., 14.). It is important to see that the Spirit of God dwells in the saints individually, and among the saints collectively. Without going outside the present epistle, the first truth is expressed in chap. 6:19, and the second in chap. 3:16, 17. To the saints individually the apostle could say, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God:” and to the saints in their collective character, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” This is an immense, truth, too often overlooked in Christendom, to the damage of souls, and, above all, to the Lord's dishonor.

Let us consider briefly 1 Cor. 12:4., &c. The apostle tells us “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” Here we find one Spirit operating, not exclusively through one vessel, but through many; for the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Of what value are the various gifts, if there be not liberty, when the saints are gathered, for their exercise? That such liberty obtained in the Corinthian assembly is clear from the perusal of 1 Cor. 14, which chapter gives us the practical working out of the truth expressed in chap. 12. The apostle asks in ver. 23, “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” How could such questions or exhortations be addressed in many companies in Christendom to-day? If all were wrong in speaking, whether with tongues or otherwise, why did not the apostle embrace the opportunity of saying so? Yet he does not, but he rather lays down a golden rule for all utterances in the assembly, “Let all things be done unto edifying.”

Nor is the epistle to the Corinthians alone with regard to this truth, for similar teaching is found in 1 Thess. 5:19, 22. The assembly is there urged not to quench the Spirit, but to allow Him his due place among the saints; prophesyings were not to be despised, but all was to be tested; the good only to be timid fest, and every forum of evil abstained from. To pass thence to the apostle of the circumcision, we find that each is to minister according to the measure of gift received, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, all who speak being charged to speak as the oracles of God, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10, 11). And the writer to the twelve tribes expresses no other principle when he says, “My brethren, become not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment” (James 3:1).

Clearly then liberty obtained in the assemblies of. God in apostolic days, for the Spirit of God to lead whatsoever He would. These gifts of the Spirit are also “administrations” (1 Cor. 12:4), and those who leave them are responsible to the Lord in the exercise of them; and it is God Who operates— “it is the same God which worketh in all.” Again this diversity of gifts is in connection with the truth of the one body. By one Spirit are all the saints baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and are all therefore members of Christ, and members one of another, mutually dependent. As in the human body every member should be in healthy exercise,

and none kept in a state of disuse; so in the body of Christ there is that which every joint supplies, and what the Spirit has given to each is needed for the blessing and edification of the whole. How seriously are saints the losers who ignore all this, and who look to a humanly-appointed vessel for all their nourishment and edification! The Spirit of God will not be thus restricted. Though He is very compassionate over the saints, He is sovereign, and divides to each severally as He will.

But such a truth must be held in power, or all is vain. Wholesome and humbling is it for us to remember not only that is the Divine Spirit present when saints are gathered together, but that the flesh is present also, ever ready and ever corrupt. How it becomes us to be found in the presence of our God with examined and judged hearts, having no confidence in the flesh, but patiently waiting upon the ever-present Guide, Who will never fail or disappoint us! Whenever flesh does manifest itself, either in haste or worse, it is not because of “a rotten system,” as an unfriendly critic once said, but because of the unfaithfulness of man as a steward of the precious things of God. And the remedy is not the suppression of liberty, and the appointment of a human leader, which is the carnal way of disposing of difficulty and trial; but humiliation before God that the truth, so well-known in the letter, should be so little known in power. And where God's order is systematically set aside and God's Spirit displaced by unbelief in its many forms, how can we discern God's assembly? Failure and weakness we are bound to bear with and seek to correct, as the apostles ever did; but from false principles we must resolutely turn away. Bad practice is one thing; bad principles are quite another.

There remains another mark of God's assembly in the first epistle to the Corinthians, viz., purity of doctrine. Alas, for man! Not only had corrupt morals crept into the assembly of saints of which we have been speaking, but bad doctrine had appeared also; for there were some who denied the resurrection of the dead. This the apostle speedily dealt with (chap. 15.), and showed that if there be no resurrection of dead men, then Christ had not been raised; and if Christ had not been raised, all the preaching was vain, all who had received the testimony were not pardoned and justified but were yet in their sins, and all who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished. Those who taught this fundamental delusion probably saw not the tendency of it, until pointed out by the apostle. Had the assembly formally adopted the error, the apostle would have written in a different strain; but under the circumstances he seeks their restoration to the path of truth and simplicity.

Alas for a company of saints who willfully tolerate and are passive towards evil of a doctrinal character! Where is fidelity to Christ? where zeal for the honor of Him Who bought us with His blood? Foul doctrine is more subtle in its working than ungodly practice; the latter is obvious and readily discerned, but the heart and ear of saints need to be quick of apprehension when the former is in question. We are told by some that scripture is silent as to how to deal with false doctrine. To what effect then is Rev. 2:14, 15, 20, to say nothing of 2 John? Why should the Lord so solemnly rebuke the assemblies of Pergamos and Thyatira for allowing persons to remain among them holding and teaching false doctrine, if such is not the assembly's concern? And why should Paul deliver unto Satan Hymenæus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20)? Granted this is a case of apostolic action, and not of assembly discipline; but why done at all, if false teachers should be allowed to remain among the saints? Not a word in scripture is written in vain; every word commands our attention: when will saints see this? Holiness becomes the dwelling-place of God both in doctrine and morals; or its character is lost, and its testimony is gone.

Will any say it is difficult to carry out to day such principles as these we have been considering? It is difficult, yet not impossible, and the highest favors are promised to the loyal and true, if but “two or three.” Humility of mind, brokenness of spirit, and true dependence draw forth all grace and blessing from the ever-faithful unchanging Lord upon the throne. We may fail deeply, but He abides the same until the end.

Chapter 6

Be Baptised and Wash Away Thy Sins

Q. Would you kindly explain, “be baptized, and wash away thy sins,” in Acts 22:16?

B. G.

A.-It is not all that a soul should by grace believe the gospel. The Lord enjoins the outward act of baptism, as the appointed and standing sign of burial to His death, in subjection to His name. He that would refuse it on principle despises Christ and His work. On the other hand, he that has no more than submitted to the sign has only an external name before men, and no real intrinsic part in the privileges he claims, which is inseparable from faith, without which millions have been baptized in vain. See Mark 16:16. The apostles, he., were told to baptize, as they did: and even Paul was baptized by a simple disciple. But it is a grave fact for system-makers, that scripture is silent about the twelve themselves. There is no ground to believe that one of them was the subject of Christian baptism. Some or all may have been baptized by John; but his baptism was quite distinct, as we see in Acts 19.

Chapter 7

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 5:21-24

From Adam to Enoch was a considerable stretch; yet between the two the Spirit of God gives the line with a sameness of expression which makes solemn the rare departures from it. The first we have already noticed in Seth begotten in Adam's likeness after his image (ver. 3), as distinguished from Adam made in the likeness of God in the day that God created man (ver. 1). Thenceforward is the line of Seth pursued, the terms of each link not differing save in the name, and the days they lived and had successors.

Now we hear of one who stands out spiritually in the divine account from all before and after. How distinct from a man of the same name in the family of Cain, indeed his son, whose name he gave to the city he was building, a dweller on the earth and a seeker of the glory of man which passes away! "Except Jehovah build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you that ye rise up early and so late take rest, and eat the bread of toil." Cain was afraid, as a bad conscience makes a man afraid, of those that kill the body; he did not fear Him Who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; still less did he repent and confide in sovereign grace, or betake himself to a sin-offering couching at the door, or even bow to the sentence— "a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth." All the more was he determined to settle down and rear up the first city and glorify his family by calling the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch. All was after the wisdom and prudence of the flesh, which seeks present strength and ease and exaltation by its own devices and resources, not subjection to God and dependence on Him, not His guidance and safeguard, nor the glory that is from the only God. In full contrast with Cain and his successor is the son Jared. "initiated" after a far different sort.

"And Enoch (Chanowk) lived five and sixty years, and begat Methuselah (Methushalah) and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters; and all Enoch's days were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (vers. 21-22).

Faith in Abel wrought the vivid sense of that death which sin had brought in for man, with its blighting effect on all the lower creation put in subjection to man. And Abel by faith applied the sentence of God to himself: no ignoring death for him, no bearing it with effort to forget it in the energy of nature. But he believed also the revelation of grace, that Another, even the woman's Seed, would confront not death only, but in him that had the power of death, the subtle adversary of God and man; and this mysteriously but righteously (however little he might apprehend the full truth not yet revealed), by His suffering but His all the more efficacious victory. For bruised in His heel, so ran the expressive figure, He was to bruise the Serpent's head. Death therefore realized deeply on all and all things here, the death of the Deliverer to redeem the believer and conquer the enemy in the woman's Seed, was as impressed on Abel's heart as in his name. The characteristic act of his faith Godward sets it forth as clearly, as the end of his course bore witness to it as man's hand, and this his own brother's. What a picture on a small scale of Christ as the Lamb that was

slain!

But not less is our Enoch in a way quite different, but equally true and momentous. He looked to the One of Whose coming in judgment he was also given to prophesy, as we know from Jude; and He is not only a sacrifice to God for us, but our life. There is none else that sits or is available for man; and evidently so, now that man was fallen, and the tree of life, once free in his innocence, debarred by God's judicial power from the guilty. In this proved state of sin and death it was that the God of mercy revealed Him Who was coming and somehow coming in manhood, if self-evidently more and greater infinitely. In due time should His glory be fully made known as God, the Word Who was with God and was God; not only the Creator of all things, but "in Him was life." And as He was "the light of men" emphatically (not of those beings who are heaven's natural denizens and seemed far higher, as indeed in some respects they are), He would be revealed when rejected as "the light of the world"; so that he that follows Him should not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

The faith of Enoch laid hold of this alone true, alone higher, life; for faith receives what the Savior is and gives. He did not merely look at himself and all around to find the revealed relief and resource and deliverance in the bruised One. No doubt this he did; but his faith was characterized by looking to heaven, and to the One Who is above all ruin, Who, far beyond what could be then known, is the source and display and giver of life in the most blessed sense; as we can say, "We are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ: this (He) is the true God and life eternal."

Now life exercised in the unseen is shown in the walk; and so here we read of Enoch (for the first time it is recorded of man), that he "walked with God "; after he begot Methuselah, it is added, three hundred years. And this is much to say in a few words of pregnant and elevated testimony from Him Whose eye of love rests on all that love Him, in Whose sight is not a creature unapparent; but all things are naked and laid open to His eyes with Whom we have to do.

Nor is it without significance and force that after enumerating all the days of Enoch, and not those only to the birth of his long-lived representative but to sons and daughters subsequently begotten, we again hear the divine witness, "And Enoch walked with God ": few words no doubt, but full of meaning to us favored with truth incomparably more made known.

The city, the inventions of skill and beauty and convenience, the music, the refinements of the life that now is, were all elsewhere, perishing like their devotees in the use of them; but he that does the will of God abides forever. It seemed far from this in him who was slain treacherously and unavenged, the first martyr of the faith as of righteousness. But it was indisputable to him who believes God's word about Enoch. "And he was not, for God took him "; or, as it is interpreted in Heb. 11., he "was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God translated him; for before his translation he hath witness borne to him that he had pleased God."

What a plain token God gave in that great but simple fact, so transcending ordinary experience of unquestionable saints, that heaven was to be the home of those He loves on earth, the heaven of His presence where time and change, to say nothing of sin and sorrow, are unknown! This needed Christ's coming and His going away to put in the clearest and surest light, as in John 14-17. Even here in these early antediluvian days was the first testimony to it given, not in word only, but in a striking fact meant to come home to every believer: a peculiar honor to Enoch, the pledge of what

all saints of the heavenly calling shall enjoy, who shall remain living at the coming of the Lord. For then will be the presence of Him Who is the power of eternal life, not for the soul only which we have in Him now, but for the body also as we shall have then. For we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in an instant, in an eye's twinkle, at the last trumpet. This is what the apostle calls “a mystery,” not exactly the resurrection of the just, but the change of the living believers when those dead are also raised and changed. Of translation to heaven Enoch, as he was the first sample, so he is the abiding type in its heavenly reality, and its noiseless accomplishment without a previous sign or any preparation in providence or prophecy. We may see all this confirmed by the wholly different destiny of another saint that follows.

It only remains to notice what a suitable close was his to the great truth of a life superior to death which grace gave him to walk in. Translation that he should not see death was its triumph, as far as we can speak of triumph till Jesus come.

Chapter 8

Behold, the Lord Cometh

Q.-Do you consider the assertion that Jude 14, “Behold the Lord cometh” &c., is a quotation from the book of Enoch, is just? J. H.

A.-The existing book of Enoch, translated into the Ethiopic tongue, may have had a Hebrew original, as it is a Jewish production. Some contend that it preceded the birth of our Lord. It was probably after Jude gave the words of Enoch by divine inspiration, which also supplied the fact of the contest between Michael and Satan about the body of Moses. It is certain that, as Jude's words (vers. 14, 15) are divine truth, the corresponding language in the Ethiopic is false. For this spurious book makes the Lord to execute judgment on His saints, in direct opposition to His own word in John 5:24: the prevalent error of Judaism and Christendom.

Q.-How do you understand the genealogies in Matt. 1 and Luke 3? J. H.

A.-Matthew gives the properly Messianic genealogy from Solomon through our Lord as legal heir of Joseph, for without it promise had failed and He had lacked the legal title. Luke gives His real line as Son of man, and Son of God here below, through Mary, not down from Abraham and David, but up to Adam and God. Mary, as the Talmud allows, was Heli's daughter; “being, as was supposed, son of Joseph,” is the true parenthesis, and not part of the genealogical line.

Recollections of the late G. J. Bellett, by his daughter with sequel: the memory of a dearly loved and only son of J. G. B. A. S. Rouse, 15 & 16, Paternoster Square, London, E.C. 1895.

MANY readers of the B. T. will only need to hear of this little volume, in order to enjoy the pleasure of learning more of one so loved and honored, from its seven brief chapters, and the short memoir of his dear son.

Chapter 9

Breaking Bread at Troas: Part 1

It is of no inconsiderable importance to seek to arrive at a clear understanding, not only of the real intention of the saints at Troas, but of God's mind in the record of their assembling together on the occasion made memorable by the presence of the great apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 20:7). For the practice of the early saints recorded thus by inspiration affords a certain guide for the observance of the church from that time onward; because in as far as their example is approvingly cited by the Holy Ghost, so far may saints follow with boldness and confidence.

A great distinction however must be made between the inspired account of the founding and development of the assembly of God in apostolic times, and that which proceeded in later but early days when men wrote no longer by the unerring power of the Holy Spirit. The difference is not in degree but in kind. While the Scripture is the adamantine rock, the productions of the so-called “Fathers of the church” are the treacherous quicksands: the one affords unyielding support, the others offer nothing but at best a dim uncertainty, coupled with the risk of following their departure from the truth.

The reason for this wide difference is not far to seek; though at the same time it is of such profound importance that no apology is offered for referring to it here. To some it may appear trivial and commonplace to insist upon the inspiration of Holy Writ and to contend that its inspired, character elevates it immeasurably above every other writing whether ancient or modern. But it is certain that none can in these days advance too far in reverence for the Scriptures, or hold too tenaciously that the voice of God is heard in every word from Genesis to Revelation.

The perfect and sufficient presentation of the mind and will of God, under the unerring operation of the Holy Ghost, is to be understood not in the statements of doctrine and in the revelations of the future only. The historical portions are no less divinely given and guarded. Even in recounting events that came under their direct cognizance, the writers were never suffered to pen just what their memories retained or their fancies dictated. The Spirit was there to secure the accomplishment of His own purpose in the Scripture as well as to preclude any human frailty or error.

Thus, in the instance before us, the writer, Luke the physician, was in no wise left to his own wisdom in the compilation of the history. While leaving the impress of his individuality upon his writings, and that so distinctly that they can never be confounded with those of Matthew, Mark, or John, the impress, nevertheless, was such as to include none of the prejudices, the distortions, the foibles, or the partialities that are common to every uninspired historian in a greater or less degree. For the “human element in inspiration,” to use a familiar phrase, never supposes or admits any taint of the weakness and wilfulness, the blindness and bias, which are altogether inseparable from fallen human nature.

Indeed in this latter particular the written word of God may be said to resemble the Incarnate Word. In Him, blessed be His holy Name, we have One Who was both God and Man. Since He

was the Son and eternal God, He could and did reveal God and the Father. Since in grace He became Man, He revealed the Father in such a sort that we might see and hear, believe and know. Yet though He descended so low in order to bring the fullness of grace and truth to poor ruined man, He remained in that state of immaculate purity which was true of none but of Himself. Unsoiled, unstained, though in the semblance of sinful flesh, perfect without and within, of the Savior alone is it written that He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” that “He knew no sin.”

In like manner are the Scriptures divine. In the one case God reveals Himself in our nature; in the other He reveals Himself in our speech; but in both cases is there the most rigid exclusion of sinful imperfection. And the reason is patent. For in the word, God reveals Himself and the triumph of His ways of grace over the sin of man. And this is communicated by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2:13); for who indeed but He could write on such a theme? And since He graciously undertook to express the mind of God to man, how daring and impious to impute error in any way to the writings He has inspired for this purpose!

Still the revelation while emanating from the Spirit of God took a human form. It was given to men and intended for men; hence human phraseology and modes of speech were employed. Nay, even the actual state of the language, Hebrew or Greek, when employed, is reproduced there. Nevertheless it is of amazing comfort to know that every expression, however human, is cleansed from the moral imperfection, from the mistakes and misrepresentations, which under all other circumstances are to be found in the writings of even the most accomplished and illustrious authors. So that it is one of the most blessed characteristics of Holy Writ that it forms an absolutely immovable foundation on which the soul may rest. Remembering this truth we desire to examine the passage before us.

“And on the first [day] of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them, about to depart on the morrow, and prolonged the word till midnight (Acts 20:7).

What is the teaching of this Scripture and its context as to the breaking of bread? Was it the general usage of the disciples to assemble on every first day of the week to break bread? In other words, had the breaking of bread such a paramount claim upon the disciples that it was the specific object before them in gathering together? On the other hand, was the breaking of bread deemed by them of such minor importance that the presence of Paul was a sufficient pretext for setting it in the background in favor of the apostle's ministry? The latter view is held by the apologists of ecclesiastical tradition, as well as by the upholders of all but universal modern practice; both of whom unite to rob the Scripture before us of its plain unequivocal meaning by using it to place the Lord's Supper in a subordinate position utterly unknown to either the Gospels or the Epistles. We do not now speak of those who pervert it into a sacrifice for the living and the dead, and the accompanying horrors of that unbelieving and superstitious system.

Let us consider the interesting and instructive circumstances of the breaking of bread at Troas, and notice the unobtrusive way in which they are woven into the texture of the narrative.

The voyage of the party from Philippi occupied five days (Acts 20:6). This was probably longer than it might have been calculated that the vessel would take. At any rate we know that, when they

crossed into Europe on a former occasion, the journey between the same towns was accomplished in two days only (Acts 17:11-12). The extension of the two days to five proves pretty conclusively, that in this instance the progress of the ship must have been considerably hindered by contrary winds or the like, to account for the wide difference.

It would appear that the party landed in Troas during the latter part of the first day of the week, or the early part of the second; for they abode in that place seven days (Acts 20:6), which brought them to the next first day of the week. The fact of this lengthened stay is highly significant.

For what reason did Paul protract his stay in Troas at a time when, as we know, he was hastening if possible to be at Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16)? He deliberately avoided Ephesus because he would not be delayed on his journey. Yet here at Troas he spends no less than seven days. And it was immediately after leaving Troas that he asked the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus, a distance of thirty miles, that no time might be lost. Are we not bound to gather from these facts, that some important consideration was of sufficient weight with the apostle to cause him to tarry so long in Troas?

But the narrative supplies another circumstance which sheds considerable light on the motives of Paul and his companions. When the first of the week did come and the disciples had broken bread together, the apostle was so unwilling to lose another moment that, though he spent the whole of the night in the company of the saints, he set off (we are told) at break of day on foot to Assos. It is clear therefore that Paul remained the seven days in order to be present at the meeting of the church in Troas.

That the period of this stay should be just seven days and no more could hardly escape comment. And it is the more to be remarked upon since we find the mention of the same period at a later stage of this very journey to Jerusalem, and in like manner immediately followed by the departure of the travelers. Luke records that at Tire, “finding disciples, we tarried there seven days.” “And when we had accomplished these days, we departed and went our way” (Acts 21:4-5).

Yet another instance occurs in this book. When describing the journey to Rome, Luke writes “we came the next day to Puteoli, where we found brethren; and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome” (Acts 28:13-14). This then is the third recorded occasion in the Acts when Paul and his company after a sea voyage remain in the place of landing with the saints just seven days, and then at once recommence their journey.

The explanation that lies on the face of the narrative in Acts 20 supplies the key to the other cases, since no other is given, and the ground or motive is constant. The travelers through unexpected delays on the voyage landed at Troas just too late to join the usual weekly assemblage of the disciples to break bread. In order therefore to partake with them of the customary eucharistic remembrance of Christ, it was necessary to stay a week for the next occurrence.

There would be no such necessity to tarry until the first of the week in order to discourse to them. Of this he could and doubtless did avail himself as far as it was practicable on other days: so we know he subsequently did with the Ephesian elders. But the object of gathering at Troas, &c, was certainly not to hear Paul, though this was of deep interest and a very sufficient reason at other times for such as could be gathered. Here the standing or habitual purpose is expressly declared to have been “to break bread.”

At the same time it is noticeable that the purpose is stated without special emphasis or any word of enlargement. This indicates the all-importance, not the unimportance, of the motive of the disciples in so assembling. It attests not only the veracity of the historian but the divine design of the history to those that seek the truth. For there stands written the instructive fact that breaking of bread on the first day was the then established and regularly recognized institution of the Lord for the assembled saints in the apostolic age.

To be continued, (D. V.)

Chapter 10

Breaking Bread at Troas: Part 2

It therefore appears from the account in Acts 20 that the saints on that particular occasion came together in their ordinary and customary manner for the purpose of breaking bread on the first of the week.

It is true that, in earlier days, the disciples at Jerusalem broke bread more frequently. But they or at least many of the saints were specially found there then, as visitors unfettered by secular duties, rather than as residents; and in the love and joy of their hearts they took advantage of their opportunity, and day by day kept the feast at home (that is, in private houses in contrast with the temple). “And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house (at home) did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46). But at Troas we have the practice not of Jewish but of Gentile believers, and that as occurring under no such exceptional circumstances, but amid the general routine of their daily lives.

From both instances it is ours to profit. At the institution of the Supper, the Lord Himself made no restrictions. “This do in remembrance of Me” was His on word to the apostles of the circumcision; but nothing did He lay down as to the frequency of participation. Neither when making a special revelation to the apostle of the Gentiles, did the Lord define the interval that should separate the observances of the feast of remembrance. From His silence on this point therefore it may surely be gathered with the utmost certainty that He has left it to the love and fidelity of our hearts to respond to His own expressed desire by eating bread and drinking wine as often as circumstances will allow. And this we have seen was the practice in early days. In Jerusalem at the first the saints were able to break bread at home daily. In Troas the custom was to gather for that purpose on the first of the week. Considering both examples, we conclude that they were under neither the incitement nor the restriction of any rigid rule, but that they met together as often as was possible.

It must however be observed that the first of the week affords the most suitable occasion on which to celebrate this feast. What can be more fitting than that the Lord's Supper should be eaten on the Lord's day? To both the supper and the day the Lord has prefixed His title in a distinctive way, thus marking them out as His in a special sense (1 Cor. 11:20; Rev. 1:10). If the use of this term (κνριακ■ς) elevates the supper above any ordinary meal, as the apostle argues in 1 Cor. 11, contrasting the “Lord's supper” with “their own supper,” it is none the less true that the Lord's day is in a similar manner distinguished from every other day of the week. Notably it was upon this day that the Lord arose. How salutary therefore that the joyful associations of His resurrection should be mingled with and tempered by the solemn remembrance of His death! It was also upon the first day of the week that the Lord twice appeared to the apostles when gathered together (John 20:19, 26); while upon the same day of the week the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost to form and indwell the church of God on earth. So that there is no lack of reason for the settled custom of breaking bread on the Lord's day as shown to exist at Troas.

So much for the occasion or time upon which it was usual for them to gather together; let us now consider their intention in so assembling. This is lucidly and definitely expressed in the scripture

before us, “and on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them.” Their professed object is thus specifically declared to have been “to break bread.” And this is stated without word or comment, which would certainly have been added had there been anything peculiar in this celebration.

It is well to note that, though Paul himself was there, his presence was not allowed to overshadow the claims of the Lord. For it was avowedly the breaking of bread that brought them together, showing what supreme control it had over their hearts, and that even the ministry of the great apostle himself ranked but as a secondary matter. No doubt the bulk of the saints were there; and after announcing the Lord's death, advantage was taken by Paul to discourse to them in a farewell fashion, “being about to depart on the morrow.”

It cannot but be believed that, in the previous week, the active and zealous servant of Christ used every opportunity to impart the truth to the brethren both in public and in private. But now he was on the point of leaving them—perhaps to see their faces no more. And the apostle loved them every one as a father loves his children. As he spoke, his heart swelled with that tender anxiety for their spiritual welfare peculiarly characteristic of Paul; so that he prolonged the word till midnight. Blessed season of refreshing without doubt! But the Holy Ghost is particular to record the facts in such a way as to leave it unmistakable that the saints, without in the least undervaluing apostolic gift, met together, not to hear the farewell discourse, but to break bread.

But another point deserves consideration. The correct reading, without question, is as already quoted, “when we were gathered together” etc. not “when the disciples came together” etc. The emendation is by no means unimportant and rests on ample authority. The action of gathering together is not referred to the local saints only, but the expression implies that the visitors also joined. Paul and his company were as much concerned in the assembling together as the disciples in Troas. In the revised form of the text there is not the slightest ground for the unworthy assumption that the band of laborers were themselves relieved from the responsibility, not to say privilege, of breaking bread, nor for the equally baseless inference that the Lord's Supper is a mere matter of local arrangement. On the contrary, the coming together was the united action of the whole assembly of God in Troas including the travelers.

In reference to the expression, “when we gathered together,” it should not be overlooked that while “we” is often used in the Acts to indicate Luke's own presence in connection with the events he is narrating, on the other hand “we” is the invariable word used in the New Testament to introduce what is characteristic of the whole of the saints of God, corporately or in the aggregate.

Thus, when Paul writes in Rom. 5:1, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” can it be doubted that “peace with God” is the common portion of every soul justified by faith? So throughout the epistle the standing of believers is taught in a similar way. The apparent exception of “I” in Rom. 7:7-25 proves the rule; for there the apostle takes up the case of one not brought into the knowledge of true Christian privilege but groaning under the law. Hence “we” would there be unsuitable, as the verses are not descriptive of the normal condition of the saints of God; consequently “I” is used to set forth what is a transitional state rather than the proper position of a soul in Christ.

So in 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, to select another of the instances which occur almost in every chapter of the Pauline and catholic epistles.” Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Here it is evident a revelation is made by the writer himself an apostle and prophet, concerning the whole and not a portion of the saints of God. It is manifestly not true of the Corinthian assembly nor of Paul and Sosthenes that they should not all sleep. They have all been put to sleep by Jesus long since. But the apostle had no such contracted thought, in saying “We shall not all sleep,” as to limit its application to his contemporaries. He expressed the common privilege of all the saints, inasmuch as there is no necessity for them to pass through death. In like manner, in writing to the Thessalonians, he says, referring to the coming of Lord, “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up etc.” (1 Thess. 4:17). Here as in the epistle to the Corinthians, he contemplates the saints who would be on earth at the Lord's return, without at all implying as some destructive critics suppose, that he had a mistaken assurance of being alive himself. The truth taught is that the general hope and cherished expectation of the saints of God was to be, that they might be not unclothed but clothed upon with their house which is from heaven (2 Cor. 5:2, 3).

In John's first epistle this form of expression is remarkably prevalent, as might be expected in a communication addressed, not to any local assembly, but to the whole family of God in its broadest and most general aspect. “We know” is a formula which constantly occurs.

But surely enough has now been said to indicate that “we” is a recognized mode in the New Testament of enunciating what is universally true in the assembly of God. And it is submitted that in Acts 20:7, “When we came together to break bread,” there is an example of this use. The coming together, and the breaking bread were the habitual practice of the church in Troas, and, if there, in all the churches. See 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:2, 16.

In accordance with this too, we find in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, where the principles of distinction between the Lord's table and the table of demons are laid down, that similar language is used. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread [and] one body; for We are all partakers of that one bread.” The unity of the “we” is expressly declared—one loaf, one body. It is the general truth that is in question, and would apply in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Troas, as much as in Corinth. But in 1 Cor. 11 where the apostle takes up the particular malpractices of the Corinthian assembly in regard of the Lord's Supper, “ye” is used. “When ye come together therefore, this is not to eat the Lord's supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). Here the local misbehavior is the subject, aid not universal practice.

In Acts 20:7 therefore, as it stands in the corrected text, it is taught that it was the established custom of the assembly of God to come together on the first of the week for the express purpose of breaking bread. The words can mean nothing else; for none will seriously contend that “we” includes only Luke and those with him and that it was the party of travelers who came together to break bread, while the others gathered to hear Paul's discourse.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 11

Breaking Bread at Troas: Part 3

IT has already been noted that the gathering together of the saints at Troas (Acts 20:7) was the united action of the assembly in that town. And the phraseology employed is such as indicates a common and habitual custom of the church of God. This indication is certainly obscured in our ordinary version through the use of the third person for the first. But the revised and other critical translations restore the true force of the passage by rendering a better text “when we were gathered together to break bread” (verse 7), and again, “in the upper chamber where we were gathered together” (verse 8).

These words are sufficiently precise to establish that we have here a spontaneous action in concert of the assembly; while not a syllable implies that they were specially summoned to hear Paul's parting instructions and exhortations. In further confirmation of this view it may be not without profit and interest to refer briefly to similar expressions used in this very book.

The assembly in Jerusalem was certainly not specially convoked on the occasion recorded in Acts 4:31. On the contrary it was so much the habitual arrangement for them to be together at that particular time, that Peter and John, on being dismissed with threats by the Jewish council, went direct to their own company where united prayer was made to God. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together συνηγμ■νοι as in Acts 20:7, 8: cf. Acts 4:31.

In contra-distinction from this instance of formal and customary meeting we find that, when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after their tour of service in the gospel, they “gathered the church together” and “rehearsed all that God had done with them” (Acts 14:27). Again, when Barnabas and Paul with Judas and Silas returned to the same place with a certain communication from the assembly at Jerusalem, it states “when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle” (Acts 15:30). In like manner, Paul calls together the Ephesian elders to Miletus (Acts 20:17).

Here then are three instances of special gatherings of the saints by invitation, and each is distinguished by that form of expression we might expect from the stated and usual gatherings of the saints in their corporate capacity.

At Troas therefore we are undoubtedly taught that the visitors gathered together along with the whole assembly to break bread, just as Barnabas and Paul had previously done for a whole year at Antioch (Acts 11:26); and those who deny this wrest the scripture to the damage of their own souls and of the souls of others.

But turning to another kind of perversion of the truth there are those who will have it that breaking of bread has reference to the love-feast or the social meal eaten by the early Christians and not to the Lord's supper except as a minor adjunct; but not so those who are bound by the clear and unequivocal language of scripture.

The usage of the phrase “breaking of bread” in the Acts is surely convincing in itself. Speaking of the Pentecostal assembly, the record is “and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42). This use of the term along with “the apostles' doctrine and fellowship” and the “prayers” forbids our reducing the breaking of bread to common social intercourse or even the love-feast. Indeed it is expressly distinguished from ordinary meals in the verses that follow. “And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people” (vers. 46, 47). So that breaking of bread cannot be confounded with eating meat on this occasion; and it is the evident intention of the Spirit that they should not be so confounded.

In the passage, Acts 20, the same distinction is maintained. In verse 11, after the Eutychian episode, Paul returned to the upper chamber, broke the bread, ate, and conversed till break of day. This does not sound like the Eucharist as it is often supposed to be, which is invariably referred to as the action of the whole assembly. Compare verse 7, “when we come together to break bread “; and 1 Cor. 10:16, “The bread which we break.” But in verse 11 it is Paul who breaks the bread, as he does in Acts 27:35, after the fourteen days' fast on ship-board. Here the apostle, after his discourse and before his long journey which was to commence at dawn, partakes of the loaf to satisfy his hunger; so that eating in this case is not participating in the feast of remembrance, but taking a meal as in Acts 10:10; in connection with which “conversing” is appropriately used, in distinction from the more formal discourse that had gone before.

Page's note on the passage therefore is quite groundless. “They had come together to break bread”; this would have taken place naturally at the end of Paul's discourse but for the interruption; he now therefore resumes the interrupted order of the meeting by breaking the bread.'“

This comment contains at least two assumptions which are without the slightest scriptural warrant. He assumes (1) that although the saints came together expressly to break bread, the act of remembrance was as a matter of course put aside for the purpose of listening to Paul's farewell discourse; so that, according to such exposition, to eat the Lord's supper was but a nominal reason for gathering. And it was quite “natural” too for the feast to be supplanted by ministry of the word, not necessarily introductory to the solemn observance, but as in this case a final charge in view of the apostle's immediate departure! Such a theory is without the support of a single word of scripture. It is never of the Spirit of God to displace the claims of the Lord by the claims of the church, or of the very foremost of the apostles. If the ministry of Paul was needful to the saints, the breaking of bread was due to the Lord. Nor would the apostle himself be a party to setting aside in any way what he had insisted upon in his recent epistle to the Corinthians. He could find no word of praise for the assembly at Corinth in respect of their observance of the feast; indeed he sharply rebukes them for the very thing for which misguided men contend as the truth. For it was at Corinth not at Troas where we find the saints allowing social intercourse to stultify if not to destroy the solemn character of the remembrance of the Lord. “What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?” (1 Cor. 11:22.) They truly came together in one place, but it was not (in effect) to eat the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20). For, although their professed object in gathering was as at Troas to eat the Lord's supper, on account of the flagrant disorders that prevailed that object was nullified. So that, as the apostle tells them, they came together “not for the better but for the worse” (ibid). It is true that there were in the

young Corinthian assembly the excesses of drunkenness and gluttony: but the principle enforced is that the Lord's desire on the night in which He was betrayed is paramount to all besides. And this principle effectually disposes of every human arrangement that tends to enfeeble the transcendent claims of the Lord's supper, whether it be an agape or a liturgy or a sermon apostolic (or otherwise).

The second assumption in the quotation made above is (2) that as a matter of course Paul breaks the bread—that is, in an official capacity. This likewise is without scriptural support. We have seen that the reference is to eating to appease hunger, and not to the feast of remembrance at all (ver. 11).

But so far from affording ground for presidency at the table of the Lord, scripture teaches that there all saints meet as one for the remembrance of Him. The Corinthians in their levity were introducing class distinctions at the supper, and even of a worldly character: the rich ignored the poor; self, not Christ, ruled to their shame. The apostle gravely reproved them and told them plainly that, in bringing personalities into prominence, they made it “their own” supper and not the Lord's.

The truth is that the breaking of bread is the action of the whole assembly of saints at which the Lord and none else presides, not even Paul or Peter. For the same one who declared himself not one whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles also confessed himself as less than the least of all saints. When it was a question of communicating the truth of God, he did so as an apostle and a prophet, as a teacher and a preacher. When it was a question of remembering the Lord he mingled with the rest. But it was the carnal desire for formalism that introduced the figment of ministerial administration in sub-apostolic days to the immeasurable loss of all concerned. What the Lord designed to bring the souls of His own in contact with Himself (“This do in remembrance of Me”), man thus perverts by setting up a medium between the soul of the saint and the One he remembers. Surely every child of God should resist such an innovation and all else that would hinder or mar the true character of the hallowed fellowship at the table of the Lord. W. J. H.

[NOTE—Is it not instructive to notice that the correction of abuse (which the apostle effected by recalling the Lord's supper in its true order, aim, and character as revealed expressly to himself) is introduced and closed, before the subject of the Holy Spirit and of His varied action in gift is entered on? No one would think of so treating either the one or the other according to the traditional practice of Christendom. For men are apt unconsciously to read and interpret scripture according to their ecclesiastical habits day by day. It is clear that God has written His word so as to be a standard of truth, to let us know what His mind was from the beginning, and thus to counteract that slipping away from His will, which is even more easy and inveterate in the Christian profession than it was in the previous Jewish one. The leveling of God's order is religious rebellion. This was at work actively at Corinth against the apostle himself. Similar evils have developed more and more to this day. All the more are the faithful called to own and honor His good pleasure. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers,” etc. God has not abdicated His rights. But this other weighty matter is distinctly and designedly separated from the due and divinely appointed celebration of the Lord's supper. The disorder therein was not made the charge of elders even, or of any other official, but pressed home on the conscience and spiritual feelings of the saints themselves. Meanwhile the Lord, Whom they forgot, did not forget to chasten the guilty that they might not be condemned with the world.

The fact is that few of God's children are conscious how great and wide the departure is from the only standard of authority. Thus do we often hear of the church teaching this or that. How opposed to scripture! The church is taught and never teaches. The word of God comes to the church, and to all the church (not to one only), never from it: and for this God employs His servants. It is ministerial work, not at all the church's place. But the Lord's supper is essentially the church's feast, wherein ministers, however eminent, merge as saints, and the Lord alone is exalted in the communion of His infinite love and the incalculable indebtedness of each and all to His death. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion with the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). Sin once leveled all where difference vanished; so does grace now in the remembrance of Him. It is good and right to own the Lord in every servant He sends; it is as least as good, if not better still, even here below to enjoy that blessed and holy supper, where such distinctions disappear in remembering Him Who died for our sins, and Who deigns to give His real presence in our midst. En. B. T.]

(Concluded).

Chapter 12

The Changeless Christ

THE permanence of the new order of things (i.e. of Christianity), in contrast with the temporal nature of things under the law is a prominent theme in the epistle to the Hebrews. It was necessary that those accustomed to what was visible and tangible in their worship should be taught that they were now introduced to a sphere where only faith was in exercise, and where the objects of faith were not less but more real than those specially before Old Testament saints. Yet not only did the remnant of Israel, “according to the election of grace,” need to be enlightened as to the immutable basis upon which all the spiritual blessings of the believer are founded, but the saints of every succeeding age have and do find amazing comfort in the remembrance that the whole Christian edifice is reared upon the Impregnable Rock, Christ Jesus.

It was ever the ordinary expectation of the Jew that Messiah when He came would bring in something lasting as well as blessed. As the people said to the Lord, “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever” (John 12:34). But the cross seemed to put an end to all such hopes. And so in point of fact it did, as far as present earthly realization was concerned. But through the superabundant grace of God it nevertheless became the introduction to heavenly blessings, which were on that account so much the more real and permanent.

This is the central thesis of the epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the all-important fact is established that Jesus Christ is the One to Whom the believer has to look for every blessing he enjoys both now and evermore; and, above all, that upon Him no change can mile. The ancient system of ordinances was vanishing away to make room for the substance of which it was but a shadow. This and more the Holy Spirit unfolds in detail. But though Moses and Aaron, Elijah, and the prophets had been superseded, the work of the Man, Christ Jesus was as changeless as His Person was infinite and unvarying.

In Heb. 1, accordingly, the glories of the Lord Jesus are set forth. And it is as the incarnate Son that He is therein viewed; for this is in keeping with an epistle addressed to the remnant of that nation to whom He came as the chosen messenger of the Most High. Hence the apostle does not commence in the unthinkable ages of a past eternity as does John in the Gospel, but at the moment when Messiah was born in time as God's spokesman. How He exceeds in virtue of His intrinsic worth all that was revered under the law For could prophets be compared for one moment with Him Who ranked as Son, Who was both the Creator and Inheritor of all things, besides being now enthroned on high as the great Sin-Purger? Angels, too, He infinitely transcended. Though in grace He became a servant, the more excellent name of Son is His inalienable heritage. They, as the scriptures abundantly prove, were created for a state of servitude beyond which they can never advance; moreover by the homage they render the First-begotten when He cometh into the world, they testify to His divine superiority.

Again, the Psalms are cited to show that the Son is therein addressed as God (Psa. 45:6, 7). And as if anticipating the objection of a captious Jew that rulers and magistrates were similarly designated in the same book (Psa. 82:6),another scripture is advanced in which the

incommunicable Name is ascribed to Him. “Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” “Jesus” to Him (Matt. 1:21) was not a mere appellation, as to the son of Nun, but accurately descriptive of His person and work as Jehovah the Savior.

Indeed, the word is the more striking since it is quoted from Psa. 102, wherein the solitude and humiliation of the suffering Messiah are vividly portrayed. It is there we read, “For my days are consumed like smoke,” and “My days are like a shadow that declineth: and I am withered like grass,” and again, “He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days (Psa. 102:3, 11, 23, 24). This is the “prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before Jehovah.” And this cry from the depths is immediately followed by the remarkable declaration of the immutability of His person, ascribed to Him at the very moment of His apparent weakness (Psa. 102:12, 24-27). The heavens and the earth, His own handiwork, and the recognized emblems of stability among men, shall perish in contrast with His everlasting existence.

Thus, before the Spirit of God speaks of “eternal salvation” (chap. 5:9), the “unchanging priesthood” (chap. 7.), “eternal redemption” (chap. 9:12), “eternal inheritance” (chap. 9:15), the ever-efficacious sacrifice, (chap. 10.), the “immovable kingdom” (chap. 12:28), the “everlasting covenant” (chap. 13:20), He reveals the wondrous truth of the person of the Lord Jesus from Whom the blessings enumerated take their character of “eternal.” Because He is the same and His years unfailing, His work abides without decay. Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and forever, the luster of the believer's portion in Him is undimmed, its value undiminished, and its possession unalterably secure.

How good of our God to give us (ourselves changeful in a changeful scene where naught is dependable) One Who is unchanging and in Whom we, and all we possess that is worth possessing, are secured from the depredations of the foe and from the corruption of evil within and around us. May we with the tenacity of faith lay hold of this blessed attribute of the Person of the Lord which alone can keep us “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” W. J. H.

Chapter 13

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 1

The sympathy of Christ is associated with His priesthood on high. He sympathizes not with sin, nor with sinners as such, but with the suffering saints of God. At the same time the Holy Ghost looks back upon Christ's own experience when He was upon earth. He was tempted, but then the temptation was not in any way from within. There was in Him no propensity to evil that answered to the trial of Satan; but, on the contrary, all that the enemy found was dependence on God, simple unwavering faith in His word; never a carnal working, as in our hearts.

Hence, as there was in Christ the total absence of self-will inwardly, as He in every respect hated and rejected evil, there was necessarily deep and habitual suffering. The effect of temptation on fallen humanity is not suffering hut rather pleasure, if we can call that pleasure which is the gratification of our evil nature. Christ knew nothing of this in either His person or His experience. Of motions in the flesh, inward solicitations to sin, He had none: He “knew no sin.” Hence, in order to guard against error on so holy and delicate a theme, it is necessary that we should hold fast the truth of Christ's person as God has revealed it.

It is thus the Holy Ghost introduces the matter in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He begins with the person of the Lord Jesus. He insists upon that which, after all, is the most necessary foundation—His divine glory (chap. 1.). From Old Testament witnesses, Messiah is demonstrated to be the Son (verses 1-5) and object of angelic worship (verse 6), to be God (verse 8), yea, to be Jehovah (verses 10-12). If I do not start with this as my faith in Christ, as the basis on which all His other glory is built up, my perception of the truth in general will be soon seen to be radically false. No one thing at bottom can be right with us, if we are wrong as to Him Who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Next, having thus fully shown His proper divine dignity, the Holy Ghost takes up His humanity (chap. 2.); but there is the most careful exclusion of all thought that Christ assumed humanity in the fallen and morally feeble state in which it is in us. Because the children (the objects of God's favor in this world) were “partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” It was needful that He should become a man, in order, by His Heath, to vindicate God, annul Satan's power, and accomplish propitiation. But it was in no way incumbent on Him to take into His person here below the smallest taint of the fall. Nay, it was essential that He should not be thus defiled. If it is required of a steward that he be faithful, no less indispensable is it that an offering should be pure and spotless for the altar of God. The Lamb of God must needs be free from the remotest degree of infection. And so Christ was in all respects and to the full. Other scriptures prove this amply in detail, and fully confirm what we have definitely in the Hebrews that He took blood and flesh without the very least element of fallen nature in connection with it. As to proclivity or even liability to evil, there is absolute silence; yea, rather, we shall see that such thoughts are carefully cut off beforehand.

In the Gospels (where we naturally look for the complete, because inspired, historical accounts of the person of Christ, more particularly in the Gospel of Luke, where He is displayed specifically as man) we find the fullest evidence of this. “The angel answered and said unto her [i.e., the virgin Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” It is evident, therefore, that though truly born of a woman, though deriving human nature from His mother Mary, there was even in respect to this a divine action, which distinguished our blessed Lord most signally and strongly from all others from His birth. What Rome has lyingly, and as a thing of but yesterday, decreed of Mary, is most true of Jesus: He, not she, was immaculate in His human nature; and this through the energy of the Holy Ghost (as even the most rudimentary symbols of Christendom confess, I thank God), the result of the overshadowing power of the Highest. Hence therefore “That Holy Thing” could be its description from the first. He alone of all men was born “holy;” not made innocent and upright only, like Adam, still less—like Adam's sons—conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. He is designated “That Holy Thing,” it will be observed, when the question was not of what was simply divine (which indeed it would be wicked folly to doubt and needless to affirm here), but of what was human. “The holy thing which shall be born [of thee] shall be called Son of God.”

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 14

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 2

Matthew had already presented the birth of the Lord suitably to the design of his Gospel. When his mother Mary was “espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” He was thus Messiah-Jehovah, called Jesus consequently (for He should save His people from their sins), the virgin's Son, Emmanuel, according to prophecy. His humiliation, His rejection by His own people, follows; but, first of all, there is the clearest statement that what was begotten in Mary, what was born of His mother, was of the Holy Ghost. It is wretchedly low and even dangerous ground to say, with divines of repute, that Jesus was born holy because born of a virgin. He was indeed so born of the virgin; but the holiness of His humanity, though of the very substance of His mother, turned upon the miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus then was not only Son of God from all eternity in virtue of His divine nature, but He was so called also because of the divine energy manifest in His generation as man, and therefore the unparalleled blessedness of His conception and His birth, immeasurable though the self-emptying was for Him to take manhood at all. The Babe of Bethlehem, the virgin's Son, was not born, we may surely say, of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God in the highest sense. It was not merely as we are said to be born again to see God's kingdom, which Christ is never—could never be—said to be. In His case it would be altogether derogatory, and a denial of His holy humanity, to say nothing of His Deity. If we may so express it, He, the man Christ Jesus, was generated holy. “The Word was made flesh “; “God (or He who) was manifest in flesh.” But even the process by which He came into the world, though “by the woman,” was the fruit of God's power; it was a miracle of the highest rank, differing not in degree merely but in kind from the birth of Isaac, wondrous as this was; or from that of John the Baptist, filled though he was with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.

There is another most serious consideration which ought not to be forgotten. Fallen humanity calls not for amelioration but redemption, and needed it wherever it might be. Were the notion true that the Word was united to fallen human nature here below, He must have died to redeem it, that is, to redeem Himself! –overthrowing, not only His work of atonement for others, but His own person. In every point of view, the idea is as false as it is destructive—an intellectual trifling with the great mystery of godliness.

There was therefore no admixture of the minutest trace of that sad heirloom of inward evil which Adam had handed down to his posterity. Human nature now there was in His person, as surely as He was and is God; but, by God's will and power, it was unsullied and holy. There was secured the absolute exclusion of the poison which sin had instilled into man's nature in every other instance. Hence the Lord Jesus was born of the woman, not of the man, being in quite a peculiar sense the woman's Seed. For thus it was the Holy Ghost was pleased to set aside for the humanity of Jesus every taint of sin inherent in fallen human nature (of course, in His mother herself, as in all others of the race). Being so born, even the humanity of our Lord was “holy,” as we have seen. Accordingly, in His person there was the most perfect suitability for the work on account of which He came, sent of the Father. On the divine side He could not but be perfect, for He was the true God and eternal life; on the human side there was miraculously effected the complete disappearance of all evil for the body which God prepared Him. The power of the Highest overshadowed His mother from the outset, and thus only was “The holy thing” born of her in due time. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one,” says Job (14.). This, and far more than this, was “That Holy thing” which was born of the virgin. With God nothing is impossible. Thus, long afterward, the angel disclosed what baffled Job of old and satisfied Mary on the spot. Christ alone is, in every sense, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

With this agree the types of the Old Testament. Take that most conspicuous one in Lev. 2 In Lev. 1 Christ is represented as the burnt-offering; in chapter ii. it is Christ as the meat or rather cake offering. This (the minchah, gift or oblation) had nothing to do with what we call “meat;” it was essentially bloodless. In the burnt-offering there was the giving up of life; but in this there was no question of sacrificing animals, or of anything that involved the shedding of blood. It was of fine flour, and thus aptly set forth what the Lord's state was as connected with the earth (that is, in His body derived from His mother). There was, of course, no leaven or corrupt nature allowed, nor even honey or the mere sweetness of natural affection, pleasant as it is, but unfit for an offering to God. Frankincense was there, and the salt of the covenant of God; and, what is much to be noted in contrast with leaven, there was oil mingled with the flour in forming the cake. This answers exactly to the passage in Luke 1. It was the well-known emblem of the Holy Spirit of God, Who shut out what otherwise must naturally have sprung from the virgin. Thus her child by His power was absolutely free from sin. Of necessity all the offerings of Israel belonged to the earth. The bullock, the sheep, the goats, the lambs, the pigeons, the turtle-doves, &c., were necessarily of this creation, if man had to offer them. But there could be nothing where there entered less suspicion of evil than in flour. It was expressly also “a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire.” It was the growth of the earth, and set forth the Lord's human nature.

I employ the expression “human nature,” as I presume is ordinarily done, abstractly for humanity, without a question of the state in which it was created originally or into which it quickly fell. Just so the word “flesh” is used sometimes in scripture for man's nature simply, as in “the Word was made flesh,” “God was manifest in flesh,” Christ was “put to death in flash,” “Jesus Christ come in flesh,” &c. The special doctrinal sense of the term, as characterizing the moral condition of the race, particularly in the Epistles of Paul, looks at the principle of self-will in the heart. But what believer, thinking of our Lord, would contend for, who does not shudder at, such a meaning in His case? By the context we discern its proper bearing.

Thus, ordinarily, “human nature” is or may be used irrespectively of its actual evil state, unless morally contrasted with the new nature. Human nature was in unfallen Adam; it was in Christ; and we of course have it now. But however really in all, it evidently was in a totally different state in Adam before the fall, and in Adam as in us since the fall: in Christ alone scripture pronounces it “holy.” There are thus three distinct phases of humanity here below—innocent, fallen, holy. Christ's manhood was in the condition of Adam neither before nor after the fall.

Plainly therefore the state of human nature is altogether independent of its real existence. The fall altered the condition of Adam's humanity; but humanity remained as truly after that as before. In like manner the Son of God, the Word, could be made flesh, and did become man, though ever infinitely more than man, taking human nature into union with the divine, so as to form one person; but the condition of His humanity must be ascertained from the scriptures which treat of it. Thus in Luke 1 we have seen that, from His conception and all through, Christ's humanity was “holy” in a sense never said of any other; not merely that the Holy Ghost was poured out upon Him, but that He was “The holy thing,” born of His mother and called the Son of God.

Is it now asked, what was the object of the outpouring of the Spirit on Christ when He began to be thirty years of age? Assuredly it was in no wise for resisting inward liability to evil, or for any moral dealing with His human nature; for in Him was no sin. The Spirit was poured out for the testimony and display in man of God's power over Satan and his works. It was the Holy Ghost, not regenerating, nor cleansing (for there was nothing in Him, no, not in His human nature, that needed or even admitted of any such operation), but in power. Thus the Lord Jesus, going forth to be tempted of the devil or in the public service of God, was pleased to act in the might of the Holy Spirit. Enduring temptation, working miracles, preaching—all was done in that divine energy. We alas! may enter into temptation by the flesh, but in the Holy Ghost the Lord repelled evil, yet endured all trial. Hence the anointing with the Holy Ghost was a question of divine power, as it is said, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth 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.” Ignorant irreverence gathers from this that Christ had fallen human nature, and that, being liable to sin, the anointing of the Holy Ghost was given to keep Him from yielding! All who say this unwittingly blaspheme His person and moral glory. That Adam unfallen was peccable, the fact itself proved: that Christ ever was peccable, denies the truth of what He was and is, both in His Deity and in His holy humanity.

And here weigh the deeply instructive type of Lev. 8 Aaron alone is anointed first without blood (verse 12); when his sons came into question, he is with them, and then the blood of consecration is put on him and them (verses 23, 24), as the righteous ground for their being anointed with him (verse 30). So Jesus alone could be and was anointed (and as man, mark, it was) without blood-shedding. The Holy One of God, He needed no offering to receive the Holy Ghost thus. But if He would have us enjoying the fellowship of that unction from on high, blood there must be and was. So He, first anointed before His death, enters the holiest for us by virtue of His blood; and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He shed forth what was seen and heard at Pentecost and thereafter. What a testimony first to His holy manhood, next to the value of His blood for us!

The doctrine of Irving in its worst shape was, not that the Lord was ever guilty of sin, nor that He ever yielded to the overtures of Satan, but that, having all the frailties within that we have, His

triumph over them by the Holy Ghost becomes the ensample to us, that we too should gain the victory over the same evil in our nature by the self-same Spirit dwelling in us. Irving insisted loudly on the holiness of Christ's person; not in the body prepared for Him, but in His practice. His heresy lay in imputing fallen humanity to Him; and Christ's holiness was simply therefore what any saint's might be in kind, if not degree, through the energy of the Holy Ghost, and not in the specialty of His person.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 15

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 3

That Christ was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” scripture declares; but even this shows that fallen nature, peccable humanity, was not in Him, though truly a man, without anything before the outward eye to single Him from others; a man who could be buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and slain. The Lord Jesus, thus viewed, had nothing apparently to mark Him out from the crowd. It could not have been said that He was in the likeness of flesh, any more than that He was in the likeness of God; for this would have denied the truth of His humanity and of His deity. “The Word was God;” “the Word was made flesh.” The one was and is His eternal glory; the other, what He deigned to become in time and will not give up for evermore. But it could be and is said also, that He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh; which, as far as it goes, proves that He had not the reality of sinful flesh, but only the likeness of it. Otherwise, He could not have been a sacrifice for sin; He could not have been made sin, as He was, on the cross. In “a body hast Thou prepared Me” the same truth is indicated, as we have already seen. Christ's body, though as much a human body as that of any man, was not generated and made after the same fallen fashion as ours. Even in this His humiliation God prepared Him a body as for none else, that it should have a specific character, suited for the singular work He had to do (Heb. 10). It is all a blunder to suppose that the reality of the incarnation involves the condition either of Adam fallen or of Adam unfallen.

The dilemma is not only fallacious but heterodox that Christ must have been limited to the one condition or the other. I deny the alternative, which depends on the profound mistake of shutting us up to the condition of the first Adam, utterly ignoring the glorious contrast of the Second man. The assumption is that, if Christ took neither unfallen nor fallen humanity, He could not have taken man's nature at all. Fatal oversight of the Christ of God I It is agreed that bare unfallen humanity, such as Adam originally had, is not true of Christ; but what an abyss of evil is the conclusion, that therefore His was fallen manhood! How plain too that the error goes very deep: for if simple unfallen humanity be exploded, and if Christ, in order to be man, can only take fallen humanity into union with His deity, it must be fallen humanity still, or He has ceased to be man. This was just the dilemma in which Irving involved himself (“Human Nature,” p. 135) when attempting to fix it on those who challenged his heterodoxy.

But Christ is contrasted with Adam as a fresh stock and a new head, the Second man and last Adam, not a mere continuation of the first, unfallen or fallen. He is not a mere living soul (as Adam was before he fell), but a quickening or life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15). “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Was Adam unfallen either righteous or holy? Scripture never says so, and it cannot be broken. But I go farther: what scripture does say is inconsistent with such a standing. Absence of evil, creature good,” is not holiness. There was this positive intrinsic superiority to evil in the Lord Jesus even from His very birth and before it. We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; the Lord's flesh was neither conceived nor made thus, but holy by the power of the Spirit.

It is not true that a fallen man has merely flesh and blood; he has “the flesh” besides, as we see in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere. All do not distinguish rightly between “the flesh,” and “flesh and blood.” In us there is both, but Christ never had the flesh in this moral sense of the expression: because He had not, indeed, God condemned it morally in His life, and executed sentence on it judicially (but in grace to us) in His death. Not only for our sins did Christ suffer, but for sin. He took on Himself as our substitute, not merely the acts and ways and workings, but the root of evil. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, as it is written, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus it is not all the truth that sins were laid upon Him, but He was dealt with as to the subtle principle of sin. God did what the law could not do. The law could only take up positive transgressions; but the bottom of the evil the law could not reach, still less in grace to us. The law, even the holy and just and good commandment of God, could not do what God did in sending His own Son—could not get hold of the hidden spring of evil to deal with it summarily and forever, and in mercy withal to us. Christ both manifested the total absence of the flesh in His life (for He never did anything but the will of God, and thus detected the rebellious ruined condition of every other man), and in His death bore its judgment, that we might stand before God in His risen life, free from all condemnation. “God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” This was precisely the impossibility of the law. The law could condemn the sinner; it could work wrath; it could put sin to account; it could give knowledge of sin; but it could neither blot out and forgive sins, nor execute God's sentence on the root of sin, so as to deliver the believer. God in Christ condemned the whole principle of fallen humanity or “sin in the flesh,” and “for sin,” i.e., sacrificially: the cross was the divine condemnation of it all, root and branch.

Thus in our Lord personally, besides His being the eternal Word, the Son of the Father, there were these two distinct things: first, that which answered to the type of the mingling of the oil with the pure flour unleavened (Lev. 2:5); next, that which corresponded to the pouring oil thereon (6). The first is the action of the Holy Ghost described in Luke 1 from the very outset of His humanity, in order that what was conceived and born of the Virgin should be “holy.” The second is what is described in Luke 2; 3:22 and Acts 10:38. It is the force of the former truth that so many in our day, as of old, and doubtless all through, are apt to overlook, confounding it with the latter, which is quite another matter. Consequently they have so far lost the person of Christ. They have (as regards the human side of His person) reduced the Savior, the Salvation of God, into a mere child of Adam, singularly blessed no doubt, but far beneath the Christ of God. They apprehend not the mystery of His person, in itself altogether distinct from the anointing of the Holy Ghost, which accordingly only came on Him when He was baptized in the Jordan before He entered on His public service some thirty years after His birth. His person then is the truth at stake, nor can anything be so truly fundamental.

The anointing in question points not to the formation of human nature in absolute purity (though of the virgin) for the person of Christ, but to the Spirit's conferred energy over and above that pure nature. It was for His public work; it was with a view to the display of divine power in the humble and obedient Man: “Him [the Son of man] hath God the Father sealed.” His own internal experience was not more really holy or acceptable to God afterward than before. The point was the manifestation of the mighty grace of the Spirit in man to others. No doubt Satan did then come and try our Lord—did set in movement every possible engine of temptation, as we are told in Luke

4:13. But “temptation” here is used, as scripture ordinarily uses the word, not for the working of inward frailty or evil, but for the solicitations of an external enemy, for the devil's presentation of objects here to allure from the path of God.

The first of the three great temptations, when the forty days' exposure to the devil had ended, was the suggestion which appealed to the Lord's feeling of hunger. “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Why not? He was God's Son, He was hungry. Surely it was an admirable opportunity to prove His divine mission, as well as to satisfy the natural need of the body. Could He not turn stones into bread? This was what may be called the natural appeal. The second (at least in the Gospel of Luke, who was inspired to present the temptations in their moral order, whether or not the order of historic sequence was preserved) was the worldly appeal—the offer of all the kingdoms of the world on condition of Christ's doing homage before the devil, The third (in Luke—for Matthew here keeps to the simple order of the facts, and shows it was the second historically) was the spiritual appeal, and so not merely on the pinnacle or edge of the temple, but through the word of God. But in all the Holy One of God defeated the devil, and this through the word used in obedience.

Thus we, have seen the Lord entirely refuses the temptations to make the stones bread. It was the devil's suggestion, not God's word, which itself, and not bread, is the true food of the believer's life. With unwavering perfectness Christ lives as man, the Son of God on earth, by the word of God; He does homage to Jehovah His God and serves Him only, as the Son of man; and trusts Him as the Messiah, not tempting Him as did the people of old in the desert. And here remark a feature in this scene which distinguishes Christ from others who might seem to approach Him, at least circumstantially. Moses and Elijah fasted forty days; but Moses was in the presence of God, sustained so long on high; and Elijah was miraculously fed by an angel before entering on a similar term of abstinence. It was not so with the Lord Jesus, Who was in the presence of Satan, unlike the one, and was without any such previous sustenance as the other had enjoyed.

It is true the Lord Jesus did not come into an earth stainless and happy, but fallen. But to argue thence that He was in a fallen condition of humanity is utterly, inexcusably, impiously false. He could and did suffer, no doubt, from hunger, thirst, and weariness; but these things are in no way the index that human nature was fallen in Him, but of the circumstances through which humanity, holy or unholy, might pass. In his innocence Adam had no such experience; after his fall this and more was his lot. The holy person of Jesus did know these circumstances, and magnified God in them: what have they do with the state of His humanity? with its holiness as contra-distinguished from a fallen or an unfallen Adam's? Who will venture to affirm that Adam, if kept from food even in Eden, would not have suffered from hunger? The argument is worthless, save to betray the will to depreciate the Lord of glory. The grand vice of it all is merging Him as much as possible in the fallen condition of the race. If innocent human nature had to do with a Paradisiacal state, certainly neither fallen humanity nor holy humanity when here below was spared from tasting the bitterness of a wilderness world. This therefore does not affect the momentous point of the different state of humanity in Adam fallen and in Christ even while living here below. Thus the argument founded on our Lord's suffering hunger and thirst and weariness is a manifest sophism, because it confounds the circumstances which humanity may experience with humanity itself; it assumes from these circumstances an identity in the state of manhood, contrary to the most express teaching of the Bible and to all true knowledge of Christ. God tells us the facts to enhance our sense of the

Savior's grace and exalt His moral glory in our eyes; man, set on by Satan, hastens to pervert the facts so as to tarnish His humanity and debase His person.

That the Lord Jesus was liable to sin is not only the denial of His perfect humanity, but evinces, to say the least, the grossest ignorance of His person. It is an insult to the Son because of His humiliation, which no consideration can palliate, which man's unbelief and Satan's malice can alone account for. Certainly He was tried and did suffer to the uttermost; but thence to infer or allow that He had from the fall such frailty and inwardly temptable nature as ours is, I must regard and denounce as a heinous libel on Christ, as a lie most destructive to man. Scripture, while it clearly reveals the manhood of the Savior, seems more careful to uphold His unstained glory than that of any other person in the adorable Trinity. And no wonder. God is jealous lest the Savior's unspeakable grace should expose Him to dishonor. How painful that He should be wounded afresh in the house of His friends!

Some doubtless do not go so far or fast as others; there are too misled as well as misleaders. But there are not a few who stop short, for the present at least, of the natural consequences of the system they have somehow admitted into their minds. They may not allow liability to sin, and yet contend for fallen humanity, in Jesus. But will they affirm that He could have fallen nature in His person without touching the unsullied glory of His person? It is hard to see how the person stands if one of the natures composing it be fallen. Let them beware lest the only door of refuge be that of Nestorianism which divides the Lord's person, virtually setting up a double personality in sharp antagonism (not two natures united in one person), in order to save His divine glory from being darkened by the shade of a fallen manhood.

Take a single chapter of Matthew—the very one from which men have drawn a weapon against the Savior's glory in humiliation, willing to wound and not afraid to strike in His case—chapter 8. and let us see the perfect man in Him Who was perfectly a man. “Lord,” says the worshipping leper, “if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” The hand of man, the power of Jehovah, was there: who else could? who else would? He was come of woman, come under law: had this been all, He must have been defiled Himself instead of cleansing the leper. But as He was thus God, He was open to the need of man, not of the circumcision only, but of the uncircumcision also, were there but the faith that caught a glimpse of His true glory. And there was. For the Gentile centurion confessed Him supreme in His power and authority, so that not His bodily presence only (ever sought by the godly Israelite) but His word would suffice. “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but only say with a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. . . And on hearing it, Jesus marveled.” He was indeed very man; but how much more! He said to the centurion, “Go; and as thou hast believed, be it done to thee.” And his servant was healed “in that hour.” Next, He comes to Peter's house and sees his mother-in-law laid down and in a fever; but in divine goodness He touched her hand; and not only did the malady leave her, but, restored to strength, she arose and served Him. Nor was it only where a special tie existed. He was here below in grace, passing through a ruined, needy, sorrow-stricken world, ready to help any that came, all that were brought, demonized or sick; and a word was enough for the worst. Thus was fulfilled Isa. 53:4 (not yet the vicarious work of verse 5, et seqq.). Certainly that was not sacrificial; still less does the application sanction the revolting idea of our Lord's liability to our infirmities and

diseases. It was the very reverse; it was the power that dispelled sickness from every patient in contact with Himself; and this withal as One not in un feeling distance, but Who (in love as deep as His power) took all, bore all, upon His spirit with God. Divine grace and human sorrow filled His heart, guided His mouth, and directed His hand. Yet none the less, but the more, was He the outcast Son of man. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but He—? He had not where to lay His head. It was not law; nor was it necessity of circumstances or position; it was His grace in a world gone from God. If flesh offered to follow, it had better weigh whither Jesus goes and leads: for He does claim the heart, even at cost of breaking the nearest ties of nature. The burial of a father must yield to the paramount call of the despised Nazarene, if indeed we know His glory and have heard His voice. Jesus is Lord of the living. Those who do not follow Him are dead; they love their own. Leave the dead to bury their own dead. Is it not so, O faithless disciples? Do you presume to have greater love than His? to know His mind better than the Master? I do not say that there are not storms, and that the bark in which the disciples follow Jesus is not frail; but the Man who slept in it through all was the Divine person Who arose at their cry and stilled their unbelieving fears by the word which rebuked the winds and the sea. Such was the Man who next cast out demons after a sort that could not be mistaken; but the world preferred the swine, demons, and all, to Jesus, unanimously beseeching Him to depart out of their coasts! Such is man; and such was Jesus even here below in the days of His flesh.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 16

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 4

If we turn to John 11, we have a different but most instructive display of Jesus on the earth. For what is seen there is no remedial measure in a living Messiah. Nothing of the kind could adequately meet the depth of the ruin even for those who believed in Him and were loved of Him. Death must take its course. It was no use merely to heal: man was too far gone. The Lord therefore remains till all was over, and Lazarus slept in death. Jesus saw things in the light of day: this sickness was not unto death but for God's glory, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. He awaits therefore His Father's will and goes to raise the dead. Martha had no just estimate of the power of death any more than of the Lord's glory:

“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Neither did her orthodox creed meet the case: “I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” No; Martha did not enter in, though a believer, and this because she had Jewish thoughts of Christ. Present resurrection power in Him was beyond her. She went her way and sends Mary, who, if she did not yet anticipate His power better than Martha, at least fell down at His feet, and wept as did the very Jews. Death was there; and now Jesus was there. He was the Son, very God, yet estimated death as none could but Himself Who, a man, was the eternal life which was with the Father. He groaned in His spirit, apparently with the strongest, indignation and pain at the power of death over the spirit of man, and troubled Himself or shuddered. In divine grace He weighed and felt it all in spirit—wept, too, as they asked Him to come and see where the dead saint lay. Little did Jewish comment penetrate the reality; but the more did Jesus groan in Himself as He came to the grave, whence, spite of Martha's unbelief, the glory of God was seen in Lazarus coming forth at the voice of the Son. Nothing can be more blessed than His sympathy in entering into the sorrow and power of death, Himself all the while conscious of the power of life, but using it only as the Sent of the Father. This introduces into a new scene through the door of resurrection, when death has closed all connection between God and nature. Decent and dull orthodoxy finds its prototype in Martha; value for the person of Christ may be slow, like Mary, but, waiting on Jesus, at length sees light and life in His light.

If we look, again, at the doctrinal statements of scripture, Heb. 2 shows us the singularly honored place of man in the person of Jesus; according to Psa. 8 “But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for [or, on account of] the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Incarnation could not deliver, all important as it is. The person of the Deliverer was thereby manifested; but death was the pivot of blessing, if man was to be brought out of sin according to God: no otherwise could there be a righteous basis, for thus only is found a due dealing with our evil before God. “For it became him for whom are all things, in bringing many

sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (verse 10). Thus it was fitting that Christ should pass on high through sufferings for many sons God is bringing to glory. Their state demanded it; grace made it His path. But there is the greatest care to guard against irreverence toward the Lord Jesus. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (verse 11). The phrase "all of one" is exceedingly and designedly abstract. Still He is the Sanctifier, as risen from the dead; for so the quotation of Psa. 22:22 in Heb. 2:12 proves. Then first did our Lord put the disciples definitely in this relationship (see John 20:17). "All of one" means, not His entering into their state, but His taking them into His. The foundation was laid in His death: as risen, He at once associates them with Himself. They were "all of one" thus. It is not men as such, but "the sanctified" (ο■ ■γιαζ■μενοτ). He does not call them His brethren till He became a man; and only then distinctly when risen, according to the passages cited. The nearest approach before was when He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." But this is vague compared with "Go to my brethren," connected as it is with His ascending to His Father and their Father, and to His God and their God. It is manifest also that the Son's incarnation is, in verse 14, introduced as the necessary means for making void through death the power of the devil, and delivering those who were in bondage all their lifetime through fear of death. Alone He wrought this mighty work, by virtue of which, when risen, He gathers the sanctified into association with Himself; but in both as really man, for such the children were.

Power, the power of God, was in Christ. Was it the less bright because it shone through a life of absolute dependence on His Father and the sorrows of His unfathomable humiliation in pity to man, love to His own, and devotedness to God's glory? Look at that extreme point of it all, the cross, the foolishness and the weakness of God. Do they appreciate it who unwittingly slight the rights of Christ's person? "I have power [not δ■ναμις merely but ■ξουσ■α, title or right as well as power] to take it again." Yet was it exercised only in obedience, as He blessedly adds, "This commandment have I received of my Father." That Christ therefore "had in His nature not only a possibility and aptitude, but also a necessity of dying," is a statement so unsound that the reputation of a man, able and learned as Bishop Pearson was, will not avail to consecrate it. (Expos. of the Creed. Art. 4) Had he confined himself to the more guarded language with which the next paragraph concludes, there might he nothing to object; for it is agreed that "by voluntary election He took upon Him a necessity of dying." But this is a very different proposition from having that necessity in the nature He assumed. It is John 10:18 which is cited in the opening of this latter paragraph. Even here, however, the doctrine is exceptionable. The short time in which it pleased the Lord to die (so surprising to Pilate when reported), coupled with the loud voice with which He cried just before (so marvelous to the centurion who heard), points to the practical testimony of His power in death as in life, not to the total exhaustion of bodily vigor as the effect of previous sorrows, to which the Bishop refers it—I might almost say more naturalistic than the heathen judge or the heathen soldier. To say that when by an act of His will He had submitted to the death of the cross... it was not in the power of His soul to continue any longer vitality to the body (i.e., that when He had voluntarily given Himself to die, He could no longer live), is true indeed, but very like a truism. But that from the first He had in His nature the necessity of dying, or that at the last His vigor was so exhausted that He must therefore die, is to cloud the truth of divine glory in His

person by assigning to it a dissolution necessarily inherent in His humanity. It directly touches atonement also; for how deeply is God's grace in His death undermined, if He merely anticipated on the cross a death which must have been in some shape within a generation later? To me, I confess, the scheme ominously symbolizes with the taunts of some who surrounded the cross: “He saved others; himself he cannot save.”

The life of fallen humanity is doomed; but our Lord goes infinitely farther than negativing any such constitutional necessity in His human nature. He claims a power beyond Adam unfallen, or any other creature. None but the Holy One of God, and a Divine person withal, could say, “I have power to lay down my life,” &c.

Hence the Bishop's note to the preceding page (though he justly insists, in the text as well as note, on the reality of the Lord's death, and, of course, the separation of His soul from His body) is utterly beneath the intimations of the scriptures which he quotes. For all this eminent man draws from them is, that they teach not a mere λειποθυμ■α, or deathlike swoon, of which we hear in the later Greek writers, but an absolute expiration; and therefore, he thinks, we have not only the ■ξ■πνευσεν of Mark and Luke, but in Matthew ■φ■κεν τ■ πνε■μα, and in John παρ■δωκεν τ■ πνε■μα. Of course, his inference is true; but what intelligent believer will say that it represents the truth here revealed? Who but Jesus, Jehovah-Messiah, could be said to yield up or dismiss His spirit? Who but a divine person, the Word made flesh, could deliver up His spirit? Only He who had before asserted calmly His full authority— “I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man [no one] taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.” The Nestorianism, which divides the person, is as dangerous and destructive as the Eutychianism, which confounds the two natures to the overthrow of both. From the conception Deity was never severed from the humanity of Christ, no, not even when His spirit was in Paradise and His body lay in the tomb.

The truth is, that the statements of the great Anglican expositor of the Creed are not trustworthy as to the (if possible) still more essential and critical truth of the Son's proper and supreme Deity. One can well imagine the indignant scorn of the younger clergy, whose impulse is at all cost to defend their text-book. Graver men too among the better sort may be slow to accept such a charge. With such slowness one sympathizes, provided there be along with it an honest and open heart to adhere to holy scripture as the sole unerring standard of truth. However this be, the doctrine under Art. i. is, that the Father has the divine essence of Himself, the Son by communication from the Father. “From whence He acknowledgeth that He is from him, that he liveth by him, that the bather gave him to have life in himself, and generally referreth all things to him, as received from him (John 7:27 [? 29]; 6:57; 5:26). Wherefore in this sense some of the ancients have not stuck to interpret those words, 'The Father is greater than I,' of Christ as the second person in the blessed Trinity; but still with reference not unto his essence but his generation, by which he is understood to have his being from the Father, who only hath it of himself, and is the original of all power and essence in the Son. I can of mine own self do nothing, saith our Savior (John 5:30), because he is not of himself,” &c. At the end of the paragraph the Bishop repeats the texts (John 5:26 and 6:57), and enforces the same doctrine in the following paragraphs.

Now it is certain that Pearson misinterprets these scriptures, on which he (following some if not most of the fathers) rests this strange doctrine—a doctrine which soon turns to the denial of the

eternal Sonship of Christ, and, in more audacious minds, to Arianism. The real starting-point in the passages of John is the Son, but viewed in the position He took here below: the Word, Who was God, become flesh, Who refused the very appearance of independence, was come down to do the will of Him that sent Him, did nothing of Himself but only whatsoever He saw the Father do, or what the Father assigned Him only to do. So absolute was His dependence that He could say, “The living Father hath sent me, and I live because of the Father” (δι■ τ■ν π., not δι■ το■ π. αs the English Version would require). Still less difficulty is there in the reference to John 7:28-29. It is His mission, not subordination in the Godhead, which is in question. I think then that I am warranted in saying, that, throughout, the perversion of these scriptures is gross and perilous in the highest degree. What can be worse than habitually applying to the intrinsic glory of Christ the language which He, in lowly love, uttered in His place of voluntary subjection on earth? Can any man taught of God dispute the fact that Pearson fell into this error? The same John, who in the Gospel lets us hear the Savior say that the Father has given to the Son to have life in Himself, in his first Epistle shows us “that eternal life, which was with [not, from] the Father and was manifested unto as:” not a hint of the Father's giving Him to have life in Himself save here below.

Hence even some Romanist theologians are in this respect sounder, if not more candid, than the “great divines” of the Anglican platform. Compare for instance the apologies for the Ante-Nicene fathers (Justin M., Clement of Alexandria, Origen, &c.) in Bishop Bull's Jud. Cath. Eccles., with the frank (?) admissions of Petavius in his Opus de Theol. Dogm. I fear that the acute Jesuit did not find the admission painful; for he was thereby enabled to insist the more keenly on that which is the foundation of his own system (and alas of many not there yet), that it is the church's function to decide and define what the truth is that man has to believe unto salvation. The Anglicans, on the contrary, from the first have ever been under bondage to the earlier Fathers and Councils; and hence their leaders have never freed themselves from the lowering influence of the semi-Platonism which tinctures those ancient writings, and gives their admirers a wrong bias in the interpretation of scripture. For my part, fully allowing that the church (where and what is it now?) is, or ought to be, the pillar and ground of the truth, I believe that the truth is already definitely revealed in the scriptures, and with far greater clearness, fullness, and perfection than in any human formularies, either of the fourth and fifth centuries, or of the sixteenth and seventeenth. To receive, keep, and witness the truth is the obligation and joy of the church; to declare with authority what the truth is, belongs to God and His word; to teach and preach the truth, the Lord raises up and sends His servants. If we mix things divine and human in the faith, it comes to the same disastrous effect as mingling works with grace for justification; being false in principle, the practical issue is, that the divine element is neglected, and the human one becomes an idol. “Our church” usurps the place not of God's church only, but, more or less, of His word. (To be continued, D.V.)

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 5

I observe with regret the influence of Patristic or human theology on Dean Alford as to this foundation truth. How else can one account for the terms of his note on Rom. 9:5? “That our Lord is not, in the strict exclusive sense, ■ ■πι π■ντων θε■ς, every Christian will admit (I), that title being reserved for the Father; but that He is ■π■ π■ντων θε■ς none of the passages goes to deny.” I affirm, on the contrary, that no Christian, if fairly instructed, will admit but deny what is here predicated of the Father and of Christ. “In the strict exclusive sense, ■ ■π■ π■ντω θε■ς” below to the Father no more than to the Son or to the Holy Ghost. The Father is supreme God, Jehovah; but so is the Son, and so is the Spirit. It is fully true of the Godhead and of each person in it. (Compare Isa. 6 with John 12 and Acts 28) They are not three supreme independent beings, but One Supreme with a threefold personality: all three persons supreme God, but none exclusively. But it is striking to see that, while the Creator in Rom. 1:25 is said to be “blessed forever “(ε■λογητ■ς ε■ς τνς α■■ας), while the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is said to be the same in 2 Cor. 11:31 (■ ων ε■ λογητ■ς ε■ς το■ς α■■νας), It is to Christ and to Christ alone that Rom. 9 applies the still stronger terms, ■ ■ν ■π■ π■ντων θε■ς ε■λογητ■ς ε■ς το■ς α■■νας. Indeed I am not aware that so forcible and explicit a statement of divine supremacy can be found in the Bible. So entirely mistaken is the allegation of the Dean in every particular, that, as we see, the very text under his consideration proves that the strictest and largest form of that title is reserved, not for the Father, but for Christ; not because the Father and the Holy Ghost are not equally with the Son supreme God, Jehovah, but because the Son, having stooped to become man and die, needed the plainest appropriation of it which scripture gives to any person in the Godhead. The Father will have all to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Faith sees it in the word and worships; unbelief stumbles at the word, but must bow perforce in the judgment. Can one but feel with Gregory of Nazianzus: “I am filled with indignation and grief (would that ye could sympathize with me!) for my Christ, when I see my Christ [surely it is not less, I would add, when the soul thinks of Him as the Christ of God] dishonored for the very reason for which He should have been honored most. For, tell me, is He therefore without honor because for thee He was humbled?”

I return then with the firmest conviction that the death of our Lord was, in the fullest sense and up to the last, voluntary, though in obedience to His Father. He tasted death by no doom of fallen nature, but by the grace of God. And this is entirely borne out by Phil. 2, which clearly shows that in His case death was in no way through the common mortality of fallen flesh. For “being found in fashion as a man,” He did not necessarily die; but because of the purposes of grace, He “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It was for our sins, and therefore, as far as He was concerned, on a wholly different principle and for ends transcendently divine. Adam, failing man, disobeyed and died; Christ became obedient up to that point of death, the death of the cross. He too was made sin for us; He was made a curse for us; He was crucified in weakness. It was from no necessity in His human nature, which libels Himself, and would, if true, destroy our hope. It was the triumph of grace in the Son of man, Who was giving His life a

ransom for many. God was thus glorified in Him; and “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” I know not what of truth, or love, or obedience, or atoning efficacy for others, or of moral glorification of God in death, is left standing by the fatal error that makes Christ, from the birth to the grave, necessarily subject to the laws of fallen humanity in His own person.

Again, the Authorized Version of Heb. 2:16 is unequivocally false. The passage says nothing about taking up a nature or not, which was just settled explicitly in verses 14, 15. The real meaning is: “For of course (δ■πον) it is not angels he taketh up (i.e., helpeth), but he taketh up Abraham's seed.” It connects Christ specially with the line of promise as the objects of His special interest to the exclusion of angels. I am aware that some ancient expositors and modern divines go with the English translators; but it is certain that they are wrong. For the connection of the thought is broken thereby, and a feeble reiteration of the truth, already stated more fully, is imported. And the error in sense led to a further error in form; for the translators could not say that He is not taking on Him the nature of angels, but He is taking on Him the seed of Abraham. Hence, in order to make it suit at all, they were forced into the blunder of rendering ■π ι λαμ β■νεται He took, etc.

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make expiation [or atonement] for the sins of the people.” Having thus prepared the way, the Holy Ghost did not feel it needful to guard the strong assertion that Christ was in all things made like to His brethren. Those who believed that He was the Sanctifier, as the risen Man, the Son of God Who had by Himself purged our sins, needed not to be told that fallen humanity formed no part of His person. The exclusion of sin in nature is added where it was more requisite, when the apostle (chap. iv. 15) states how fully He was tempted like us.

Observe, moreover, in Heb. 2:18, “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted,” there never was anything else: it is not that He suffered after being tempted, for this a man may do who yields and repents. There was not, there could not be, distress of conscience in the Lord Jesus, any more than the workings of unbelief, such as we may feel. He suffered in the entire moral being the sufferings of holiness and grace; He loathed and rejected all that the enemy presented to His holy nature. Hence He, Who in human nature knew trial and suffering beyond all, is able to comfort the tried saint. This is the real idea and application of temptation here. It does not mean inward susceptibility of or proclivity to evil; it does in James i. 14, where it is expressly connected with lust: if any man dares to apply this to Jesus, let him speak out, that we may know what he is, and that the sheep of Christ may flee from the voice of a stranger. But James, in the same chapter (verses 2, 12), uses the word in its more ordinary scriptural application to trials. The confusion arises from not heeding the difference between such an inward working of fallen nature as is described in James i. 14, and the being tried by Satan without.

The true faith of the Son of God ought to have rendered such suggestions impossible in His case. There was no sin in Adam and Eve when they were tempted: hence fallen humanity is not necessary to temptation. But let it be noticed that, when our first parents were tempted, there was no suffering then: they yielded. It is in contrast with the last Adam, Who was incomparably more tempted but in nothing yielded. He met every assault by the word of God, instead of letting it slip and transgressing it as they did. He came to do God's will, not His own. He acted in the power of

the Holy Ghost, Who brings out the suited scripture for the need, whatever it be. We, it is true, as men, have fallen humanity, which He had not; but then, as believers, we are born of God (Christ Himself being our life), and we have in the Holy Ghost power to resist, especially hearing in mind that Satan is now to us, because of Christ, a conquered enemy. But the old nature in us is still there and no better: victory as far as we are concerned, depends not on its improvement but on His work and our faith.

This false doctrine is sometimes betrayed by a wrong thought of Christ's state under the law. It is imagined that, from the humanity He assumed, there was moral feebleness, if not a repugnance to the law, as in other children of Adam. This is a fatal error; it degrades the Lord beneath His servants. I deny that the Christian's obedience is to do the will of God because he is obliged. Spite of the old man in us, there is also the new man; and scripture always speaks of us according to that new life that characterizes us. Hence it speaks of us, when delivered, as loving to obey, as cleaving to God's word, as sanctified unto obedience—set apart by the Spirit for this very purpose (1 Peter 1.). Now Christ never had the wrestling that we know from the old man's opposition in us to the Holy Ghost. In Him there was the absolute surrender of every thought and feeling to the will of God. There was but one apparent exception, where He prayed in His agony, “Let this cup pass from me.”

But how could He, Who ever enjoyed the unbroken sunshine of God's favor throughout His career on earth, desire to be forsaken of God? It would have been indifference and not love; it would have been to despise the blessed fellowship between the Father and Himself. Therefore was it a part of the perfectness of Christ to say, “Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done.” His humanity, because p sleet (may I say?), could not wish for that unutterable scene of wrath: but here too He was, as in all things, subject to the will of God. “The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?”

Looked at then in the light of God's word, Christ's humanity was as real as ours (which itself differs not a little from human nature as it came from God); its state was totally different from Adam's either in integrity or in ruin. In its singularly blessed source and character, as in its practical development, there was that which, even on the human side of His person, contra-distinguished Christ from Adam whether in or outside Paradise. Was the agency of the Holy Ghost in His generation a small matter? And what of the fact that in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell? There was nothing in Adam innocent that could be represented by the oil mixed with the fine flour, any more than by the subsequent anointing with oil; nor was he at any time (as Christ always was) simply and solely in his life an offering to God, from which the salt of the covenant was never lacking. In the type of the Pentecostal saints, spite of their wondrous privileges, in that new meat-offering unto Jehovah, the two wave-loaves were expressly baken with leaven, and hence necessarily had their accompanying sacrifice for a sin-offering (Lev. 23:15-21): first-fruits indeed to be offered, but not to be burnt (as was the oblation that represented Christ) on the altar for a sweet savor.

We may now glance at Hebrews 4: 15: “For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” There is a notion too prevalent among theologians and their followers that the blessed Lord Himself was compassed with infirmities. Where is such a statement warranted in scripture? Do they call it an

infirmity for a man here below to eat, drink, sleep, or feel the lack of these things? Do they or do they not go farther? What do they make of Matthew 2. and 3.? of Matthew 8:17, “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses?” of His anger against the sabbath-perverters? of His walking in Solomon's porch, not in the sanctuary? of His sleeping outside Jerusalem and other holy cities? of His agony in Gethsemane? Need I dwell now on still more painful insinuations founded on erroneous views of the Psalms, on the types of the law, and on the prophets? Oh! it is grievous to think that these men pass current with heedless disciples, no less than with the blind multitude, as ministers of Him Whom they systematically defame. Some may mean nothing wrong by isolated expressions and hasty ideas culled from old divines (not knowing, like Peter, what they said); but others work it out more daringly, little conscious that it is Satan's scheme for slighting Christ. None assuredly should predicate of Christ what scripture does not; all on such a theme should beware what they draw from a text Here or there, savoring of natural thoughts as to Him Whom none knows save the Father, lest haply they be found fighting against God.

Christ could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, nay, was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. The word “yet” interpolated into the Authorized Version, makes the sense equivocal, if it be not spoiled; at any rate, “yet” probably helped on the misinterpretation that the words teach no more than that He did not yield to sin—that He was tempted, fully and like us, yet without sinning. But this is not the force. He was tried in all things after a like sort (καθ ■μοι■τητα) apart from sin (χωρ■ς ■μαρτ■ας). Tempted as He was in all things similarly, in this He differed essentially, that He had absolutely no sin in His nature. This, therefore, very materially guards the resemblance from trenching on the state of humanity as it was in His person— “without [or, apart from] sin” —and not in us. Consequently we have inward temptations connected with sin in us, such as James speaks of, which He never had. The passage, then, proves the precise contrary of this pernicious doctrine; for it qualifies the resemblance of His trials to ours by excepting sin. With sin He had nothing to do in temptation, though He had all to do with it in suffering on the cross. He had not the smallest tendency to it in His humanity; though a partaker of blood and flesh, He had not what Paul calls “the flesh.” There was no liability to sin in him who was perfect man in one person; there was in the first man, Adam, and he accordingly fell. But the Second man, the last Adam, had no such infirmity, though He had it in the sense of a capacity to suffer in body and soul and to die on the cross, if and when He pleased, yet in obedience to God for our sins (2 Cor. 13:4). Of inward moral infirmity He had none.

Miserable comforters are ye all who found your hope of sympathy on His degradation! Had Adam been “born of God” in his entire nature and in the highest sense, he, without being a divine person, could not have sinned (1 John 3:9). When the Christian sins, it is because he, spite of the new nature and the indwelling Spirit, yields to the old man which is never born of God; he is off his guard, is wrought on by the enemy, and fails. Liability to sin there would not be in a nature exclusively holy. Who would affirm such a liability of Christ when He comes again in glory? Now, the self-same expression— “without sin” (χωρ■ζ ■μαρτ■ας)—is employed about Him then (Heb. 9:27), as when tempted here below (Heb. 4:15). In the days of His flesh He was “without sin.” On the cross God made Him “sin for us.” By and by, when He appears a second time to His own, it is “without sin.” Once for all He was offered to bear the sins of many; soon will He appear for the salvation, not judgment, of those that wait for Him, but appear absolutely apart from sin, having already done the will and work of God about it through the offering of His body once for all. Without

the smallest particle of sin or tendency to it in His humanity, He was assailed to the utmost by the devil; next, He put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself. The second time He will be seen apart from sin, having settled all the question and perfectly glorified God about it in the cross. He will come again, therefore, without sin for salvation. No man is heterodox enough to impute to Christ in glory the least exposure to any inward evil; but if they dare so to speak or think of His humanity while He lived on earth, it is formally contradicted by the very scripture they are wont to allege—Heb. 4:15. The Holy Ghost predicates the same thing, χωρ■ς ■μαρτ■ας, about Him in both cases. He was on earth, as He will soon appear in glory, wholly without sin. Indeed had there been an infinitesimal particle of fallen humanity in Christ, how could He be a meet sacrifice to God for sin? Even the typical animals must needs be unblemished after their carnal pattern. No offerings, it is remarkable, were more stamped with holiness, if so much, as the meat-offering, and the sin and trespass-offerings. They emphatically were “most holy” —Christ in His human activity, and Christ made sin for us. The paschal lamb without blemish, the daily lambs without spot, the red heifer of the wilderness wherein was no blemish, and upon which never came yoke (note it well), all proclaimed that in the great Anti-type fallen humanity could have no place. Had Christ been, as born of woman, under the yoke of fallen manhood in any sense or degree, had He been born into a relation of distance from God, even without question of a single failure in His ways, He never could have been a due adequate sacrifice for us; because there must have been thus the gravest possible defect in His humanity. For what so serious in such an offering as the signs of the fall, no matter how suppressed or attenuated? None can deny that the fall vitiates the entire constitution, save men blinded into thinking God is altogether such an one as themselves. This doctrine therefore makes atonement impossible, unless God can accept a fall-stained victim; and (what is worse) it undermines and assails the person of Christ, the Son, touching God's glory in the point of which He is most jealous. (To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 18

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 6

As to the argument which demands how Christ could sympathize without personal consciousness of fallen humanity, it is worthless otherwise, besides evincing the judicial falseness and profound iniquity of the system. For if Jesus must have Adam's fallen nature to sympathize with mine, alas! I have also yielded to evil: am I then, on this view, to have or to lack sympathy therein? Certainly it is not because the poor sinner, however guilty, does not need pity. If the argument prove anything, it goes much too far; logically, it requires actual failure (and to what amount?) in the Mediator in order fully to sympathize with us!

The sympathy of Jesus is in scripture based on wholly different grounds. I admit that His divine glory alone suffices not; but it does give luster and infinite worth to His most real suffering as man tried, and in every way conceivable, sin excepted. He must have the nature of those whose cause He undertakes, though not in the same fallen state; He must have proved the anguish and bitterness of temptation here below; and so He did incomparably more than any other. In holy humanity He could thus feel sympathy with our infirmities, having felt the wiles and power and malice of the enemy, and so much more than we do, as His dignity and holiness and love transcended ours. Never having known sin (which, if known, narrows and blunts the heart), but having suffered infinitely, His affections are large and free to go out to us, in our sore distresses as saints, who have not only the same outward enemy to try us, but also a treacherous nature within.

The truth is that the believer, resting by faith on redemption as a work already and perfectly accomplished for him, does not want Christ to sympathize with His indwelling sin, any more than with his sins; he has started with the divine assurance that Christ died for both. And if Christ be risen, so is the believer with Him; and is this nothing? or is it not everything as a ground work of comfort from above against fallen nature and its bad fruits? Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree: in Him crucified, sin, the flesh, is already condemned. Am I not to believe it all, and accept humbly, thankfully, the peace of a triumphant suffering so wholly and unmistakeably of God's grace to me?

Not that there is not a wise and holy dealing of God with the believer who has been unwatchful and failed. But it is neither the Arminian plan that denies the permanent relationship of the child of God, and sets him to begin anew with another and another recourse to the blood of atonement, as if we were Jews and not Christians; nor is it the Calvinist idea, that finds a resource in Christ's holy eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, worshipping, &e., for our respective failures in these things, and so in all else. The principle of both errors seems to lie in Simon Peter's hasty words in John 13:8, 9, as the truth which corrects them both shines out of our Lord's reply in verse 10. “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.” The bustling earnestness of the one scheme fails to give its true value to the bathing of the person, the hard cold fatalism of the other sees not the need of the continual cleansing of the feet, because the person is once bathed all over. Christianity maintains both, neither weakening the fundamental and eternal character of the new birth, nor denying the all-importance of continual self-judgment and confession. The bathing is never

repeated; the feet-washing is ever needed here below, if we pretend to communion with Christ. The Holy Ghost carries on the work here in answer to the intercession of Christ above, and cleanses with the washing of water by the word him who is already washed from his sin in the blood of Christ, already born of water and the Spirit.

And such is the doctrine of the typical Red Heifer in Num. 19. On the basis of the complete seven-fold sprinkling of her blood before the tabernacle of the congregation, the rest of the sacrifice was duly reduced to ashes as a standing purification for sin. Then, if an Israelite were defiled, the remedy was not a renewal of the blood—(John 10:10). But to be united to Him as Head of the body is another privilege, which demands not regeneration only but the baptism of the Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13.) Scripture is express that not even the disciples were so baptized till Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2).

Like all error, this tends to lower the person of Christ and to exalt fallen humanity, and therefore man as he is, Real faith in Christ is the secret, in the Holy Ghost's hands, of all preservation from evil doctrine and practice, which is always, I think, attributable, if not always traceable, to some false view of Christ. The right faith as to Christ, the receiving Him with simplicity on God's word, is the foundation of all that is good in any soul: looseness allowed here, lowering Him, admitting anything that sullies or obscures His glory, is the gravest sin, the issues of which none can tell. Enough for us to know, fearing as we bear it in mind, that its least beginning is the beginning of a very great evil; since it sets itself against the main object for which the Holy Ghost is now come from heaven—the assertion of the glory and rights of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(To be continued, D. V.)

Chapter 19

Christ Tempted and Sympathizing: 7

Never does scripture represent our union with Christ as before the Advent, or in His life here below, or even in His death, but with Him risen and glorified. It is true that when united to Him thus, scripture does speak of the Christian being crucified with Christ, baptized to His death, dead with Him, buried with Him, as well as risen. But nowhere is such language used of the faithful till after the work of redemption was wrought and He was glorified: then, no doubt, what was true of Him as their great Substitute might be and is said of them. It is idle in such a question to speak of the counsels of God. His choice of the saints in Christ before the foundation of the world is a precious truth; but it is not their union with Christ till they are actually called and brought into the membership of Christ by the Holy Ghost. So, again, His purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, is not to be confounded with our forming part of Christ's body. Were we members of Him (save in divine counsels) before we were converted or even existed? The question is as to living union with Christ as Head, which, I maintain, is invariably in scripture made to follow redemption and the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven after Christ went on high. If divine purpose be misused to decide the matter, one might thereby justify the heterodoxy of those who say the resurrection or the judgment is past already, and the eternal state come; for these equally exist before God's eyes, and we look on them all by faith.

2 Cor. 5:14-18, again, is a full and bright testimony to the same truth, uprooting all notion of a righteous foundation for sinful man short of the cross. “For the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Not till then came out the complete demonstration of God's love and of man's hatred, of God's holy judgment of sin and of man's hopeless evil and rejection of good. The sorrowful fact, proved in Christ's death, was that all were dead. But grace gives us not only to pronounce on man morally but to judge what God was doing and manifesting there. “He died for all [nothing less could meet the case], that they which live [Christians] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” The conclusion is, that “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” —i.e., not in the condition in which error conceives we are united to Him. Incarnation stops short of the proof of total ruin on one side, and on the other of the sole adequate basis for union with Christ, which demands His death as a groundwork, and is actively exercised in relation to Him risen and ascended.

A born Messiah was the crown of joyful hope to the Jew; to the Christian, even if he had been a Jew previously, the new place of Christ dead and risen eclipsed all such thoughts, showing him that his Christian ground of relationship is on the other side of Christ's grave—expressly not “after the flesh,” but in resurrection. Therefore, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.” Not even the foundation for this was laid till His death and resurrection; then indeed He arose from the dead, the power and pattern as well as Head of those that are Christ's. Before that, a process of probation was still going on. Henceforth He stood in the new and final estate in which He, the First-born, could have many brethren in due

time predestinated to be conformed to His image. “And all things are of God, who hath, reconciled us to himself,” &c. “Even now,” as we are told also in Col. 1:21, 22, “hath he reconciled us in the body of his flesh through death” —through death, remark, where alone our evil was judged and righteously put away. By-and-by the world will be cleared and blessed in virtue of His work; for the blood of His cross avails, not for our peace only, but to reconcile all things unto Himself whether on earth or in heaven. Meanwhile the unspeakable grace of God has reconciled us by Christ, yea, has united us to Him Who has glorified God in His death for us and all things. For Christ is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world; the same is He Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost: first, vindicating God about sin; then uniting us to Himself, not in flesh but in Spirit.

Finally, scripture is everywhere express and consistent that union is not with the eternal Son as such in His deity: else we should be deified, and such Christianity would be Brahmanism. Neither is it with our Lord in His incarnation simply and as such: else all flesh absolutely must be saved. His being God the Son was His competency to undertake the work of redemption as Man for men. But even He was not Head till God (being glorified in Him, not in living obedience only, but in death for sin and our sins) glorified Him in Himself above. Compare Eph. 1:20-22, and all the scriptures which treat of His headship. He was born King of the Jews: only when He is risen and ascended do we hear of Him as Head. Hence Phil. 2 contrasts what He entered as man with His place of exaltation. Incarnate, He took upon Him the form of a servant; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, etc. This is headship, if you will; that was humiliation, and in contrast with it. So in Heb. 2 His being set over the works of God's hands (all things being put under Him) is unquestionably founded, not on His title nor on His manhood, but on His suffering unto death. Similarly in Col. 1:18 Christ appears head of the body as the Beginning, the First-born from the dead; and this distinguished from His being the First-born of all creation, which He was when living here below (verse 15). Thus, too, the truth gives due essential prominence to the death and resurrection of Christ; while falsehood shuts it out or makes it an incident by the way, not the turning-point of God's glory in respect of sin nor consequently of His righteousness in our justification.

It is of painful interest to notice, as I do in closing, that the notion here exposed is the chief point of contact between Rationalists and Tractarians. A friend of mine asked a certain dignitary of the Establishment what the essential difference was between his system and his evangelical father's. “This,” answered the astute and eloquent prelate, “that the value my father assigned to the Atonement, we (the Oxford party) give to the Incarnation.” This witness is true, and, the reader may be assured, of incalculable moment. The same idea underlies the Broad-church theorists. Reconciliation for them is the bridal of the King's Son with humanity; His taking our flesh, which is a blessed truth, being viewed as our union with Him, which is the same pestilent error I have been refuting.

By this device the enemy contrives to shift the true epoch of full deliverance by faith, to hide the proper character and extent of Christian privilege, and to relegate souls to a state when redemption was not wrought, sin not put away, the Spirit not yet given, and Jesus not yet glorified. Contrariwise the legal system, with its carnal ordinances, earthly priesthood, and worldly sanctuary, was still in undiminished force. Through men of sentiments less pronounced, who jumble the birth, service, and death of Christ in a common vicarious lump, his aim is to reduce all

the ways of God to confusion, to destroy the definiteness of grace and truth, and to seal men in uncertainty, half Jews and half Christians, clinging to the Savior, yet not (as far as happy consciousness goes) either within the veil or without the camp. Incarnation, blessed a truth as it is, was neither reconciliation through the death of Christ nor union through the baptism of the Spirit. Scripture carefully distinguishes them; tradition confounds all three, as does rationalism—the former in consonance with the sacerdotal system, the latter in the pride of fallen humanity. The judgment of sin by divine grace in the cross of Christ and the new relationships in the power of the Spirit, when taught of God, deliver the Christian from both.

(Concluded).

Chapter 20

Letter on Christ's Person

In reading the letter signed “C.” in the Bible Treasury, vol. xix. pages 379, 380, I could not help being struck by the subtlety shown in the extract he quotes from the paper to which his letter refers. The sentence quoted reads, “Personally He (Christ) ever was God; but without ceasing to be that, He has taken a place, as the Second Man, and as He is in that position, so shall we be.” Now, it will be noticed that emphasis and stress are laid upon “place” and “position,” the deductions and conclusions are made to rest on them. The simple-minded reader is induced to believe that the personal nature and glory of the Blessed Lord are duly recognized: but on examination of the teaching in question, it will be apparent that the dishonoring statements refer directly and positively to the Person of the Lord. For how can omniscience be predicated of a place? or “having life in Himself” be made to refer to a position? The same question may be asked in reference to omnipotence and omnipresence. What have they to do with position or place? I do not attempt to quote scripture to show how again and again these attributes of divinity are asserted of Him, who is God manifest in the flesh. My object is to draw attention to the sleight and cunning craftiness whereby, under pretense of dealing with the characteristics of “place” and “position,” the direct personal glories of the Lord Jesus are denied. Nor can it the admitted that “the Second Man” is a place. God formed the first man, and put him in the garden He had made. But the man was not the place, nor was the place the man, as was sadly proved when God drove out the man. So the Second Man is gone to prepare a place (the one belonging to the first having been lost) for His own, to which what He is personally and His work give the title and the blessedness. Nor does it appear correct to assert that “as He is in this position, so shall we be.” He is the Head of the body, we are not. He is to be the firstborn among many brethren. In all He is to have the pre-eminence. In virtue of the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. He will sit upon the throne of His glory. All things are to be put under Him. None of these facts can be truly applied to us.

May it not confidently be asserted that all a believer's blessedness and blessing depend absolutely upon the personal glory of the Lord Jesus? and that this wicked attack of the enemy is scarcely more dishonorable to Him than it is destructive to the blessedness of the believer? If He could say, He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye, responsively we can say, He that toucheth the Person of God's Christ touches the fountain of our life. O for fervent love to His adorable Person, so that the slightest reflection upon His glory may awaken a holy jealousy in our hearts, constraining us to cling more devotedly to Him!

Yours in Him,

ADELPHOS.

Chapter 21

The Comfort of the Scriptures: 1

IT forms no small portion of the power and preciousness of the holy scriptures, that they afford the only substantial basis for “solid comfort” amid the numerous trying and harassing circumstances from which few, if any, are altogether exempt. Nor is this consolation by any means confined to certain parts of the word; but it may be gathered throughout the whole field of revelation, if only there be patient waiting upon Him Who is the Comforter or Paraclete (John 14:16, 26); whose present office it is to expound the word of truth, and apply its soothing, cheering, and strengthening power to those who would otherwise be orphans indeed, exposed to the cold charity of a heartless world.

In Rom. 15:4 we have a very explicit statement in this connection. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Here there is a veritable storehouse thrown open to the needy, downcast, and sorrow-stricken soul. For where else but in the scriptures can we see the ways of God with His own? And where but in that blessed Book can we find such a rich and varied store of divinely-chosen examples, giving (as they do) practical exposition to those counsels of comfort which might otherwise seem impracticable and incredible to our weak and dubious minds? Thanks be to Him— “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort"—Who was pleased to give such a full record of His gracious dealings with the sons of men.

The special point in view, in the passage referred to, is the comfort to be experienced amid the trials, incident to those intimate relationships, into which saints are brought socially as well as in the assembly of God. The apostle was exhorting every one of the saints to please his neighbor with a view to that which is good for edification. In support of this he alludes to the historical fact that Christ, the Great Exemplar, pleased not Himself. He further proceeds to point out that this was in accordance with the prophecy of the Psalmist, “The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me” (Psa. 69:9). So ran the prediction, and in due time it was to be seen, in public fulfillment of the scripture, that the life of the Lord Jesus was pre-eminently one of obloquy. And this came about because He was here to represent God, because He came from God, and because He was God manifest in the flesh. In spite, nay because, of the fact that He displayed the fullness of divine grace, man directed upon Him the full measure of the enmity working in his heart against the God of love.

However, the apostle would have us mark that this bitter spirit of animosity against the Messiah of God was plainly foreseen. The principle was placed on record “aforetime,” but only received its perfect fulfillment and exemplification in the life of our Lord Jesus. He it was that bore the burden of unlimited reproach as no other ever did or could. But the sorrow, poignant though it was, did not overwhelm Him; for, the foreshadowing word being hidden in the heart of that Blessed One, it was no matter of surprise to Him that for His love He was rewarded hatred. This may be seen on that occasion, when after a full contemplation of the stubborn unbelief of the highly favored towns of Galilee, the obedient Son thanks His Father because He had concealed “these things from the

wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11.).

Thus did the Lord pass through and emerge from the trials of a repulsed and apparently defeated purpose, serenely confident and triumphant. It was enough for Him, in the hour of His subjection, that such was His Father's will and that so it seemed good in His sight. Inasmuch as He, the perfect and adorable Man, lived by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God, He was prepared for this and for all that befell Him. Nothing could take Him unawares; for His whole life was a strict accomplishment of what was written of old, as the Gospels show without exception. Hence, amid the tireless malevolence of the scribes and Pharisees, the waywardness of the fickle and changeful multitudes, and the perversity of His unsympathizing disciples, He could say, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul” (Psa. 94:19).

But what application has this to us? The very closest; for we are called to follow Christ in the path of self-denial, and to be brought face to face with sorrow in an unwonted degree. Whence then shall we derive our comfort? If we, as here (Rom. 15:4) counseled, emulate the Good Samaritan and seek the good of others, regardless of ourselves, we shall often find it to be, seemingly, a thankless task, and be forced in our measure to echo the apostle's words, “The more I love, the less I be loved.” Where shall we seek encouragement in such a case? We are directed by our good and wise God to the holy scriptures, wherein He has provided for every possible spiritual need of His children at any time and under all circumstances. Even as the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, was maintained in His course of perfect obedience by the knowledge of the revealed will and purpose of God, as contained in the ancient oracles; so the faithful disciple is pointed by the inspiring Spirit to “whatsoever was written aforetime” as the present spring of patience and comfort.

But while the trials particularly in view in this portion are undoubtedly those which attend the workings of divine love in the hearts of brethren one toward another, the passage is of the most general application, and assures of the encouragement the scriptures render under the most varied circumstances. It is not intended, however, on this occasion, to refer to the consoling truths themselves which abound on every page of holy writ; but, while mentioning two of, perhaps, the most general methods by which comfort is administered, to point out that the effect of the rationalism, so prevalent in our day, is to destroy the very source whence such comfort emanates. Both from the examples and from the precepts of scripture, the saints of God may gather unbounded solace; and against both the enemy directs his malignant attacks.

As when king David sent servants to Hanun, king of Ammon, to comfort him for the death of his father, the Ammonitish king mocked and despised him for his commiseration, taking the servants, shaving off half their beards and cutting off their garments in the middle and sending them back as tokens of his savage contempt for the interference of the king of Israel (2 Sam. 10.); even so does modern unbelief, instead of receiving the scriptures as divine messengers of consolation, mock and set them at naught, treating their history, on the one hand, as fable and myth, and their teaching, on the other hand, as the exploded opinions which passed current in a barbaric age. Let such freethinkers fear Him Who is able to work upon them a worse fate than did David upon the children of Ammon.

In the first case, then, of all the scriptural biographies none is, or could be, so replete with inspiriting facts as the fourfold one of the Lord Jesus. According to the prophecies given by holy

men of old, He was to be the Consoler of Israel (Isa. 40:1, 61:2; Luke 2:25), and indeed not of that nation only, but of all the children of God wherever scattered. If not yet fulfilled in the full degree of millennial blessedness, even now the perfection of the gracious ways of the Master affords an inexhaustible fund, whence the disciple who seeks to follow His steps may derive abundant power of endurance. Hence we are exhorted to run the race of faith with steadfast eyes, abstracted from temporal and inferior objects, and directed to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith.

And to meet those who might found a captious objection upon the very sinlessness of Jesus, the scripture provides us with biographic sketches of men of like passions to ourselves; so that, while in the life of our Lord we have what should be done, in the lives of the saints we have what has been and may be done. Now the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 11) shows that the historical portions of the Old Testament, no less than of the New, largely contribute to this end. There the eventual triumph and reward of faith is, for our encouragement amid trial and conflict, illustrated by a series of divinely selected examples, commencing hard by the very gate of Paradise from whence our first parents issued in sinful disgrace. This “cloud of witnesses” is seen to be always confident, ever maintaining an unbroken trust in God, in spite of the most adverse circumstances. But how is it possible to glean consolation from these alleged facts if they have no more historical basis than the exploits of Thor, the labors of Hercules, or the wanderings of Ulysses? If the godly walk of Enoch, and the self-renunciation of Moses are but legendary tales handed down from prehistoric days, of what influence can they be upon a life, shadowed by disappointment and apparent failure? Is it not simple mockery to refer a sorely afflicted soul to a “poetic fiction,” for support in the midst of the overwhelming trials of bereavement? But we know, when we ask our Father in heaven for sufficient bread, He will not mock us with a stone? For we are assured that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

(To be continued, D.V.).

Chapter 22

The Comfort of the Scriptures: 2

THE basis of all true comfort is unbounded faith in God's love and grace. Implicit trust is the soul's sure anchor in every storm. And the spiritual apprehension of the word of God is the means of establishing the believer in serene confidence amidst the greatest difficulties and sorrows he may be called to encounter.

As has been already remarked, Bible history is given with a view to cultivate in the children of God such an acquaintance with His ways, as shall brighten their darkest hours by a firm reliance upon His unerring wisdom.

The life of Abraham, as written in the Scriptures, is especially abundant in those circumstances which inspire confidence in God as the Author of naught but good and as the Supreme Controller of all events to the accomplishment of His beneficent purposes. In himself Abraham was a singularly good man, lofty and noble in character, generous and magnanimous in his relations with men, obedient and self-sacrificing before his God. Yet in spite of such excellence as highly elevated him above his fellows, he was not on that account exempt from fiery trial and blasting adversity. On the contrary, there have been few, perhaps, who have been brought face to face with such bitter disappointment as he; and without doubt, there has been no saint whose faith through long years in the bare and unsubstantiated word of God has been so stringently tested as was his. Nevertheless, Abraham was sustained throughout by Him Who said, “I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward “; and all things are shown to have worked together for the blessing of faithful Abraham, and not of him only, but of Jews and Gentiles also throughout all ages.

For Abraham occupies a prominent place in the dispensational dealings of God with mankind. lie was the first of the post-diluvian worthies. He is declared to be the father of all that believe, even though they be not circumcised (Rom. 4:11). He was the root of the olive tree of promise, according to the word of the Lord God— “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” He was the honored progenitor of that race which has, in the face of extraordinary vicissitudes, been maintained in existence for four millenniums; and though its name be now a by-word in every land, it shall even yet in God's good time be exalted to be again the chief among the peoples of the earth.

But though Abraham holds this distinguished position, he was none the less human, none the less a man beset with similar temptations, possessing similar evil propensities and encountering similar obstacles to the saint of to-day. For it would be entirely subversive of that purpose of Holy Writ, which we are considering, to suppose with the rationalist that the history of Abraham is merely an ideal picture, a spiritual parable, the natural outcome of the universal practice of hero-worship, the imputation to Israel's great forefather of the scattered traditions of many centuries. There is small comfort to be derived from a fable; since it is certain that if Abraham's trials are supposititious, his victories must be imaginary. And if the conquests of his faith are legendary, his biography becomes valueless to us as that of a brother saint triumphing over the manifold difficulties attendant upon a godly and obedient walk.

It may be sufficient for the purpose of this article to glance cursorily from this point of view at the transcendent act of Abraham's life This was undoubtedly the solemn scene enacted on the lonely heights of mount Moriah. It was there the patriarch's faith received its final test; and it was there the angel of the Lord stayed the descending knife, and declared “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me” (Gen. 22:12).

And it is upon this part of the history that the rationalist first lays his ruthless hand. By him it is summarily dismissed as some mythic tale of the hoary past, or at least as a purely fictitious narrative invented by some unscrupulous religious teacher.

Though it is undeniable, it is regarded by him as of no importance, that this offering up of Isaac is referred to in unequivocal terms on two separate occasions in the New Testament. In one case Paul, writing to the Hebrews (chap. 11.), gives the incident as an instance of Abraham's faith along with other historical facts in his life, such as his migration from Mesopotamia, his pilgrim life in the promised land, and the miraculous birth of Isaac. These leading points in the patriarch's history are quoted as illustrations of the power of faith; but if fabulous, they are absolutely worthless for that purpose. The truth is, however, that they are not fables but facts which the Spirit has recorded in the Old Testament and authenticated in the New.

The other case is James, who gives the same act as the great proof and manifestation of the mighty faith possessed by this eminent man, who was called the “friend of God.” “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect” (James 2:21, 22)? Is it possible to seriously entertain for one moment the supposition, that the apostle is thus referring to a baseless tradition? Moreover, the apostle goes on to say, “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God; and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23). So that this sacrifice is here definitely stated to be the proof of the faith expressed by the childless man on that starlight night when Jehovah promised the lonely wanderer that his seed should rival the countless hosts of heaven for multitude. Abraham believed the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness. So it was said of him in Gen. 15; but some forty years later (Gen. 22.) this confession of trust was proven to the utmost, and by his works was faith made perfect. Thus the entire force of the apostle's reference is grounded upon its historical accuracy. If the offering up of Isaac is no more than an untrustworthy legend, it is of no avail to quote it as being the abiding and pre, eminent testimony of that living faith in God which characterized the father of the faithful.

In effect, therefore, for the historic truth of the event in question, we are called to choose between the inspired witness of two apostles and the ipso dixit of overbearing and arrogant man—no difficult task for those accustomed to learn in meekness at the Master's feet.

It is not overlooked that the author of the recent essay on Inspiration in “Lux Muridi” grants that the historic age commences with Abraham, everything prior to the migration of the Mesopotamian “sheikh” being shrouded in the mists of dim antiquity. In sooth, this is beyond our concern; for we leave those to establish the exact locality of the boundary line between the historic and the legendary, who refuse to accept the teaching of the inerrant Scriptures that “all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). Besides, Mr. Gore and his followers should

not forget that ante-diluvians are classed in the same category with post-diluvians (Heb. 11.), Abel, Enoch, and Noah, along with Abraham and Moses, with Gideon, Samson, and Barak. So that neology has no support from Paul.

God-fearing souls have good cause to tremble, when daring men thus seek to divide the sacred word of God into the historic and the pre-historic, the inspired and the uninspired. It is not faith that works such havoc with the messages of the Most High. It is rather the reckless unbelief of that impious king of Judah, who first cut the roll of the prophet to pieces and then proceeded to burn it with fire. So that when we see men approaching the Scriptures with the shears, we may well fear lest they follow with the firebrand.

No: if there be any comfort in the Bible, it is because we have therein facts; and more, not facts partially observed and even distorted by our imperfect vision, but facts divinely selected, divinely recorded, and divinely illuminated. Undeniably the trials and sorrows of this life are stern realities. And how can we be better strengthened to bear them cheerfully, than by seeing the way in which God, in former times, ministered to others placed in similar trials and sorrows or even worse? This under divine guidance we are permitted to do in the historical portions of the word.

In the case before us—the extraordinary and unparalleled trial of Abraham's faith—we have what is unusually rich in supplies of comfort. For it is a feeling common to almost all afflicted persons that no one since the world began was ever called to pass through such bitter trials or make such extreme sacrifices as they. Now to quench such distress of soul, much more frequent than creditable, it is placed on record how the greatest possible sorrow a man like Abraham could meet, was faced in the power of faith and completely vanquished.

In order to apprehend the severe nature of the task set before the man of faith (Gen. 22.), it is necessary to briefly recall the leading events of his life of which this was the climax and the crown.

The first demand upon his faith was to leave his own country and his kindred and his father's house and to go into an unknown land, with the promise that he should become a great nation, and that in him should all nations be blessed. At the age of seventy-five, Abraham came into the land which he was afterward to receive as an inheritance, though it was then occupied by the vile and vicious Canaanite. Soon he had to part from his worldly-minded nephew, Lot, who walked by sight and not by faith. Through long and lonely years did Sarah and he dwell in this foreign land, possessing not so much as a foot of it, and without a sign of that heir to whom he might bequeath his flocks and his herds, his silver and his gold, and in whom the word of God should be fulfilled. Once again, however, while meditating in the silent night-watches, the voice, first heard by Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, assured him that the promised seed should be duly forthcoming. But not till eleven years after his entrance into the land was Ishmael born, and then not of Sarah. And the son of Hagar could not live before God. Abraham had still to wait; for “Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.” And though twenty-five years elapsed since he had left Haran; yet hope deferred did not make the heart sick. On the contrary, Abraham “against hope believed in hope. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:18-21).

But this faith, in which he had been thus educated through no small space of time, had yet to receive its final test. Accordingly, when Isaac had fully supplanted Ishmael, when the affections of the old man for his long expected child had developed and matured by years of exercise, when Isaac was grown into a goodly youth, the joy and support of his father's declining years, then the well-known voice from on high demanded, without a word of explanation, that the promised seed should be sacrificed upon one of the mountains in the land of Moriah.

Here then was the crucial test. As a man even, he would shrink from shedding human blood. As a father, he would be horrified to think of sacrificing his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved. As a saint, he would be tempted to doubt the Divine origin of a command to extinguish that seed which was itself the witness of God's special intervention in fulfillment of His promise. None of these things however moved him, but with a dignity and serenity, only characteristic of a ready and unquestioning obedience, he bowed his head in submission.

But what comforted his heart? What sustained him throughout the journey of three days to mount Moriah? What supported his soul when the artless question of his darling boy stabbed him more keenly than could that sacrificial knife his own hand held? It was—in his case as in every other—the WORD OF GOD. It was the firm and unshaken conviction that the word could never fail; that what the Almighty had promised He was also able to perform, and that even death, however disastrous to human plans, was no bar to the accomplishment of the purposes of God. This he found to be an effectual solace for every pang. For his was no blind fatalism but an intelligent trust in the living God. The hand stretched forth to slay Isaac was confident of speedily welcoming him again from the very dead.

This incident, therefore, in all its details, is a remarkable exhibition of the way in which God works with His own, not arbitrarily but to compass His own, ends and the final blessing of His saints. Herein lies our comfort. Even as the patriarch trusted God and was not confounded, so we are safe in resting on the sacred word, though the earth fail and the heavens fall. Abraham found the verbal promise steadfast, we shall not find the written ones less so. Moreover we see not only that he believed God, but that in a very overwhelming trial he proved the end of the Lord to be very pitiful and of tender mercy, calling the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh.

This historical account with the rest was “written aforetime” for our comfort; and what shall we say of those who would discredit the record by insinuating doubts if not total denial?

They are no friends of Christ, but cruel robbers, and wanton destroyers of that comfort laid up for His sheep in the holy scriptures.

(To be, continued, D.V.).

Chapter 23

The Comfort of the Scriptures: 3

WHILE the scriptural narratives, as has already been indicated, afford a rich supply of comfort to the believing soul, the divine precepts and instructions are equally full of consolation. To this effect the sweet singer of Israel thought and wrote: “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me” (Psa. 119:49, 50).

The reason why the word of God produces this blessed result is not far to seek. Since, in contrast to the imperfect, not to say impracticable, philosophies of mankind, it sets the sorrows and trials of this life in their true and proper character, shedding the light of heaven upon the gloom of earth. For all mere human efforts to comfort, apart from God and the truth, are inefficient because more or less ignorant. And the failure is the more apparent in proportion to the bitterness of the trial to be faced. This is shown in the history of Job. His three friends were evidently sincere in their regard for the sufferer, and anxious to serve him in the hour of his sorrow. But the cause of the patriarch's affliction completely baffled them. They failed to understand how such a perfect and upright man, as Job was, should be so very severely tried. Hence, after seven days' silence, by their insinuations and misrepresentations they caused that patient man to exclaim in the bitterness of his soul, “Miserable comforters, are ye all.” They might have been of service if his were an ordinary case; but when an eminently righteous man was stripped of every earthly possession in an unexampled manner, their tongues were dumb. Not comprehending in any degree the ways of God with His own, they caused Job to feel, by their false and unworthy suggestions, their utter inability to help him and threw him back on God Himself. So that eventually he said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5).

It is thus patent that in the deepest and keenest of the sorrows of the human heart, there were none to sympathize, none to cheer, had not Christ been sent “to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isa. 61:2, 3).

But when the Lord of glory came, He declared what sounded strangely enough in mere human ears. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). The fact was, however, that the sweetness of the consolation administered by that Blessed One more than equaled the bitterness of the sorrow which called it forth. In this strain wrote one of God's suffering saints, “I protest in the presence of that all-discerning Eye Who knoweth what I write and what I think, that I would not want the sweet experience of the consolations of God, for all the bitterness of affliction; nay, whether God come to His children with a rod or a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well. Welcome, welcome, Jesus, what way soever Thou come, if we can get a sight of Thee.”

It is noticeable in the ways of the Lord here below, that before removing the cause of a person's grief by His mighty power, He bestowed a word of cheer for the assurance and support of the soul. Thus, when He met the funeral procession issuing from the gates of Nain, carrying forth that

widow's only son, He did not proceed at once to raise him to life. But when the Lord saw the grief-stricken woman, “He had compassion on her,” and banished her tears by His compassionate words “Weep not.” The words were effectual, for they were not the formal utterance of some shallow-minded unfeeling mortal; but they came from the lips and heart of the One Who Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus. He was able to enter into and fully appreciate the inward pangs of her heart as no other could. Bereft of adequate human sympathy, this in itself was as balm to her wounded soul. Besides, there was not only exquisite compassion in the words of Jesus, but power and promise and hope. He was able not only to comfort in the very presence of tribulation, but to deliver out of it. (Compare 2 Cor. 1:3-10.) The divine voice, that first of all spoke peace to the troubled heart of the bereaved widow, spoke life to the dead youth upon the bier. “And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still, And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother” (Luke 7:12-15).

Again, when blank despair was settling on the heart of Jairus at the tidings of his little daughter's decease, the Master's words were “Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole” (Luke 8:50). Before announcing her restoration, He graciously soothed the agonized feelings of the newly bereaved father by His sympathizing and encouraging words “Fear not.” So, too, before stilling the storm, His voice was heard amid the howling of the tempest, bidding His timorous disciples “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matt. 14:27) It is well, therefore, for us to learn that the Lord not only delivers the godly out of their troubles, but supports them by His word in the very midst of them.

And because this “comfort of the scriptures” is ever available in the very hour of sorrow, it thereby becomes of untold value to the saint of God. Human comfort is sometimes liberally administered when the trial is over and gone. In the case of Job we find him left alone in the hour of his grief, save for his “friends” whose offices were more irritating than soothing. But when Jehovah “turned the captivity of Job” and gave him “twice as much as before,” we read, “Then came there unto him all his brethren and all his sisters and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and they bemoaned him and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold” (Job 42:11). Such comfort as this may do for fine weather but is useless in a storm.

And the experience of Job is by no means unexampled, as most can testify from their own histories. But what sorrowing saint ever consulted the scriptures in faith and sought in vain for cheer and support? There the blessed Lord ever lives and speaks before the eyes and ears of His people. There we have the incomparable fact of God manifest in flesh upon earth, in the very midst of a world like ours. There we see His manhood bringing Him into daily contact with the abundant sorrows of this vale of tears; yet the glory of His Godhead outshining and forbidding us to think of Him as altogether such a one as ourselves. Hence nothing more quickly calms the troubled spirit than a reverent consideration of that Man of Sorrows Who “Himself rook our infirmities and bore our sicknesses,” of that Divine Word Who, while tabernacling among men, began to do what He will more perfectly accomplish in due time—to wipe away all tears from off all faces.

It has been said that the great essential feature of comfort is substantiality; in order to be effective, it must have a solid and permanent basis. And this basis our God has given us in His Son. For what can be more changeless than He Who is “the same yesterday and to-day and forever?” And in this we are privileged beyond saints of Old Testament days. They hung upon promises—upon what God had said He would do. But now grace and truth has come by Jesus Christ. In Him God was and is manifested in all the fullness and tenderness of His love, so that no sorrow can withstand His presence. There we see divine tears welling forth from human eyes, for His interest and sympathy in the sorrows of mankind were those, not of a man only, but of God Himself.

It is painful to think that there are those who at this very day, are teaching that the Ineffable Son “beggared Himself of divine prerogatives,” and became no more than a man. No more than a man! Alas! alas! For the universal experience is, that there is no man, no, not one, in whom we can implicitly trust and confide. It was not at the feet of a mere man, but of the Omniscient Man that sorrowing and contrite Peter threw himself. To no other but Jesus could he have said, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (John 21:17).

It is worthy of remark that after alluding to the “consolation in Christ,” the “comfort of love,” the apostle by the Spirit proceeds at once to unfold the essential glories of Christ's person in a most striking way (Phil. 2). Thus is the condition of our hearts bound up most closely with the majesty and dignity of the Person of our Lord.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 24

The Comfort of the Scriptures: 4

THE blessed office of the Bible, in which it dispenses comfort to the sorrowing souls of God's people by shedding the light of truth amid the most gloomy and depressing circumstances, is seen in a striking manner in connection with that revelation peculiar to the New Testament, viz.—the return of the Lord for the church.

This truth was first made known, in essence if not in detail, by the Lord Himself. On more than one occasion during His ministry, He spoke of the coming of the Son of Man—of the effulgence of His presence in a future day which should be the redemption of His people and the destruction of His enemies (Matt. 24 & 25.; Luke 21.)

But in John 14. the gracious Master dealt in a direct manner with the need of the hearts of His disciples both at that time and Subsequently. He had plainly announced to them His immediate departure; and, in consequence, sorrow had filled their hearts. What would be the world to them without their Lord `For His sake they had left all to become His disciples. Their “all” might not have been great, as some men count greatness. But they could leave no more. And now the One for Whom they had stripped themselves informed them that He was about to depart. They were borne down with grief at the news. But in the midst of their distress the Lord with the most touching sympathy bids them, “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

The great fact, thus presented for the support of their souls during His absence is the assurance of His own personal return to conduct them to that special place He is gone to prepare. From the moment of His departure therefore they were invited to stay their hearts upon this promise of His coming to receive them to Himself (Acts 1.) As the same Blessed One, afterward said to the church in Thyatira through the evangelist who records these farewell words, as an encouragement to the faithful watcher through the dreary night, “I will give him the morning star” (Rev. 2:28). It was not intended, neither was it needful that the disciples should know the day or the hour of His return. It was sufficient that He was coming, and, as He assured His waiting Bride, coming “quickly.”

It is not to be supposed that this coming in John 14 is a figurative reference by our Lord to the believer falling asleep. On the contrary, the decease of a Christian in the New Testament is invariably represented as a departure to be with the Lord, not as the Lord fetching such an one. As the apostle says, “I am in is strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). And again, “The time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. 4:6).

We are not therefore at liberty to imagine that anything is meant but what is plainly implied, viz.—that the Lord distinctly promises to return shortly for those who are His. There could be no more effectual means of consolation than this. The Lord shows thereby that the very cause of their

sorrow should in reality be a cause of joy and gladness. It was true, even as they deplored, that He would be absent from them; but they now knew that He would during His absence be occupied on their behalf, and that He would in due time return to lead them into a place of everlasting felicity with Himself.

This knowledge of the wondrous activity of His love was meant to raise their hearts and ours from occupation with the trials of a difficult pilgrim path, to read by faith even in the protracted absence of the Lord the proof of His concern in our ultimate blessing. Moreover not knowing the actual moment of His return our souls are kept on the constant stretch in joyous expectancy of seeing Him. And in the light of such a prospect of eternal gain, a moment's loss or pain appears but a trifle indeed.

And this truth that is revealed in John 14 in a most general way is further expanded and applied in the Epistles, and not seldom with a similar purpose of consolation. Let but one instance only be referred to, viz.—that of the saints at Thessalonica. They, like the disciples, were in sorrow, though for a different reason. Their sorrow, the apostle intimates, was due in a measure to lack of knowledge of what would be the effect of the Lord's coming upon the sleeping saints. One purpose of the epistle was to enlighten them upon this matter and by that means to remove the cause of their grief. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

Evidently, the Thessalonian saints were imagining that those of their number who had fallen asleep would on that account miss the peculiar joys attendant upon the Lord's return. For this reason they were cast down. Their loved ones had not only been taken from them, bitter enough where the light of truth had not yet dispelled heathen darkness, but it was an added pang that the departed ones would thereby be prevented from greeting the Lord at His expected advent.

The Lord, however, does not deal with them as with the widow of Nain, the ruler of the synagogue, and the sisters of Bethany. He comforted these by restoring their dead to life. Here the apostle is specially commissioned “by the word of the Lord,” to administer consolation to their aching hearts by telling them that, so far from the sleeping saints losing their share in the bliss of the Lord's arrival, they would in point of fact be the first to participate in the manifested power and blessing of His presence.

It is plain, therefore, that their anxiety and grief rested entirely upon a misapprehension. And how much trouble of mind God's children pass through, which is similarly based!

But the scripture, in every such case as in this, disperses the mists of ignorance or distorted truth, and thus afford the truest comfort.

It remains to say a brief word of warning against those who seek to rob the saints of the consolation of the New Testament as well as of the Old. Proud men lacking faith do not hesitate to accuse the apostle of ignorance, of error, and even of worse. They scruple not to annihilate the hope of the church at a blow, and, “feeding themselves without fear,” filled with all worldliness, content enough with the pleasures around them, have no desire that the Master should return to bring them to account for their unfaithful stewardship. But let us cherish the word of His promise, which no word of man can ever invalidate. And may “our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through

grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2 Thess. 2:16, 17).

W. J. H.

Chapter 25

Coming of the Lord in Revelation 2-3

Let us here enter a little on the coming of the Lord. First, it is connected with our acceptance, Christ having borne God's judgment for us. Judgment is no longer to us therefore an object of dread. If we have met Him by faith in the grace of His first advent, all will he joy to us at His coming again. But, secondly, He will return as a judge—the Judge of quick and dead. If we realize the difference between expecting Christ to glorify us and expecting Him in judgment, we get the way in which His coming addresses itself either in fullness of love to His own, or as a solemn warning to sinners, as they are in themselves out of Christ.

Rev. 2 and 3. set before us a general history of the church in the world, the ecclesiastical course of things in its salient features, as it presented itself, not only together as in John's day, but successively since then till the Lord come. These churches become, as we may see especially in Thyatira, a birth-place of evil that God had to judge; and judgment in a certain sense goes down to the end. It is not merely judging this or that evil as it came out; but the state of the church was such that God must kill (chap. 2:23). “But to you I say, the rest (or remnant) in Thyatira, as many have not this doctrine, those which have not known the depths of Satan, &c.” The eye of faith is turned, not to look for anything good where they were, but to hold fast what they had till Christ should come.

And here we find a double aspect as regards the saints. Judgment of the quick and power over the nations refer to Psa. 2 It is a judgment on the living, not on the dead, which of course excludes anything national. Men will present in that day a picture like the days of Lot, when they were surprised by the divine vengeance in the midst of all their wickedness. This thought when received lays hold of the conscience more than the yet distant fact of the judgment of the dead at the end.

For men are apt, else, to flatter themselves that the world goes on beautifully, eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage. But sudden judgment comes from on high. The world has been thus judged once by the flood; but it will be again when He comes Whose right it is, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8).

Are any saints to be troubled at that thought? They ought not to be; for their hope is His coming and their gathering unto Him, as the apostle says. This takes away all such fear or perturbation of mind. In that day He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be wondered at in all them that believed. Even now they are one with Christ, and at His appearing they will be associated with the Judge. They will be caught up to meet Him in order to be displayed with Him. Those that through grace are brought to acknowledge themselves sinners and are justified by faith will then be manifestly, as they are now really, associated with the Lord Jesus. So we read here (1): “and he that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received of My Father” (vers. 26, 27). But there is (2) the higher and deeper blessedness also in verse 23, “and I will give him the morning star.”

It is in brief what we find elsewhere. They are in fact the two great subjects in the word, next to Christ and His work: in the O.T. the government of the world in righteousness; in the N. T. the church's union and heavenly glory with Christ, after His rejection on earth. When Christ takes the kingdom, evil will be set aside; now Satan reigns. The effect of faithfulness, till God's peat power is taken (Rev. 11:15-18) to put evil aside, is that the follower of Christ has to take up his cross, says the Lord. Hence all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution for it, says the apostle Paul; or as Peter, If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable (grace) with God. We have to swim against the stream till the power of God's world-kingdom comes: then the stream will flow aright. This is at the appearing of the Lord when His power overwhelms all adversaries.

But in the bright and morning star we have the heavenly character of His coming. “And I will give him the morning star,” that is, I will give the Christian Myself in this way before the day. The morning star is seen before sunrise by such as watch. When the sun rises, every eye shall see Him; and manifest blessing and peace shall follow the execution of judgment. But Christ gives Himself to the overcomer before the day. If we are to appear with Him in glory, we must be with Him in order to appear; we follow Him out of heaven after being caught up (Rev. 17:14, 19:14).

Let me put it to any good conscience—Is this world what God would have it? Assuredly those are to be pitied who are ignorantly, vainly, trying to improve it; as if man could mend a state which is the consequence of sin, and of sin rising up more and more from Adam to the cross of Christ! The Lord is now exercising grace, not judgment; as the gospel He sends to every creature best proves. He lets the world go on. There are on the one hand signs of a good and wise God; there is on the other hand a state of utter moral confusion in the world. But faith sees another thing: the saints' association with Christ, not only by the Spirit now, but actually by His coming for them before He is manifested He will give us the “morning star.” The believer even now has the light of life in Christ, a child of light and of day (1 Thess. 5:5). We are not of night nor of darkness, but belong to that day. Therefore should we be watching for the “morning star.” So in Rev. 22:16, the moment Christ says, “I am the bright and morning star,” the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

But there remains the solemn truth that “the day” will come with sudden destruction on sinners unawares. Such is the solemn testimony as to the world. The risen Lord will judge the (habitable) world in righteousness, as the apostle told the Athenians (Acts 17.). Beyond doubt the day will come when lie shall appear in glory and we together with Him from heaven. But 2 Peter 1:19 speaks of more even now, day dawning and the day star arising in the heart. It is the present possession of the heavenly hope, which might be lacking, even when prophecy was known. Christ will reign in that day, and I shall reign with Him at that time, as the lamp of prophecy discloses; evil will be put down by the Lord, and the world will be set up for divine blessing universally. In the meantime has the heavenly light of the gospel day dawned on me since I believed? Has Christ arisen as a heavenly hope on my heart?

Alas in Sardis we hear of a name to live and yet dead (the world valued, and the works incomplete, not any terrible corruption, such as we see in Thyatira). If you that hear me have a name to live, is Christ the power of your life? Those who have a name to live and are dead are treated like the world, though called the church. “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt

not know what hour I will come upon thee." But if Christ is your life, you are not of the world, even as He is not. How sad for professors of Christ to be threatened as the world is in 1 Thess. 5:2! If any say, Why? Am I not as good a Christian as you? I answer, Is there such a result of your Christianity that Christ is the power of your life? If not, having a name to live, you are dead; and that day of the Lord will overtake you as a thief in the night.

Very different is the word in Rev. 3:7-13, which comes to those that have but little strength. Weak as they were, they had kept Christ's word and had not denied His name. This is what pleases God in a day of superstition and infidelity: Christ's word in a world where even professing Christians have departed from it; Christ's name not denied, when humanitarianism prevails. God had revealed, and still in some hearts maintains the truth in the midst of ever rising evil. "Because thou hast kept &c., I will also keep thee (not merely from the judicial day that overhangs men, but) from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world (ο■κ) to try them that dwell on the earth." Are you then keeping the word of His patience? Christ is waiting, and so should we be waiting. I must walk, and worship, and wait like a person that does not belong to the world, in communion with Christ.

The soul that believes judges sin in God's light, and with the Psalmist says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. He by grace is justified. by faith. In the day of judgment God will no longer allow sin to go on, but openly punish it. Suppose the Lord sitting on the great white throne, and saying there is not one righteous man, would you stand up there and affirm that you are righteous? No, you could not. But you do not tremble, because the day of judgment is not come yet for either quick or dead. But such unbelief shows that you are in a deplorable state; and God does not deceive any by allowing one to think he can he saved in his sins. Have you eternal life in the Son of God? He that believes God concerning His Son has that life, and is passed from death into life. Have you ever seen yourself guilty and dead in sins, as His word says, in the presence of God?

But it speaks to us also of a dying Savior. This is what first awakened me: my Savior died for me, and I could go and amuse myself! Light from God gets into the soul that sees the Son, and tells me what I am. For what did Christ come the first time? He came to save the lost, to meet God's judgment of sin for such as believe before the day of judgment. If Christ had first come into this world now, what company would He keep? Would He seek and move amongst the respectable, the moneyed people? He did nothing of the kind: they are like the Pharisees who derided Him. Christ only went where people wanted Him, to those who felt they were lost. Do you want Christ because you are lost? Do you want cleansing from your sins? He came to seek and to save the lost. Thus you may find God meeting you in love. When one's eye rests on Christ, one says, That is what I want. I want such an One as my sin bearer; I could not be saved if He were not the propitiation for sins. Now this is one thing you do not possess if you do not know Christ; namely, that your sins are all blotted out before God.

If I look at the life of Christ, I cannot find one thing He did for Himself. What have you been doing all your life? One finds the whole principle of fallen man is self, instead of love to others. O what a hateful thing is self will! If you reply, I know and feel it is hateful to God and to myself; but I cannot get rid of it. Well, I rejoice, that Christ has done so before ever the day of judgment comes. For in unspeakable grace He has suffered for your sins; and in His cross God condemned sin in the flesh

on your behalf. Thus in Christ God Himself has stepped in and settled the whole question. Therefore is Christ sitting at the right hand of God. Behold your victory in Him risen (1 Cor. 15:57). Are my sins on Him there? No, but effaced forever. Yea, according to Eph. 2:6, I am risen with Him and am seated in the heavenlies in Him.

Christ first convinces me of sin, and then shows me sins all remitted forever (Heb. 10.). In 2 Cor. 7-9 we read, “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” The glory of God in the face of Moses was only a reflection.

If the Lord were to come in the light of His glory to search every thought of my heart, I could not bear it. Where is His glory? Was it only in the face of Moses, the ministration of condemnation searching my sin out? No! the glory is in the face of Jesus Christ. This very glory shows me my sins gone, and myself in Christ—one spirit with the Lord. I am not afraid of looking at His glory there, but can let it shine into me. Christ Who knew no sin was made sin for me, that I might become God's righteousness in Him. He is on high, sitting at God's right hand; there is God's righteousness revealed; and the Holy Ghost came down to reveal it. His ministration of righteousness is entirely out of myself. Christ of God is made to rue righteousness, as He sits now at the right hand of God. how well I know that Christ loves me! I hear in His cry—My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?—God's solemn judgment of sin: and I know it is all gone for me from God's eyes, because I believe the witnesses of His pierced side, the water and the blood that have cleansed me. It is a searching work to make me judge myself in all evil; because I know Christ has been judged for me, that I should not be condemned with the world which despised Him and neglects so great salvation.

In vain you talk of rules to order the walk aright; for these do not, cannot, give power. Law is a sharp accuser, but a helpless friend. Faith looks, calls, and listens to God against the evil that is in my nature. Till I knew deliverance, I could only cry to God to appear for me against indwelling evil. But now I know He has executed sentence on it in the cross of Christ. My heart is knit to Him in peace and liberty. I can delight in the hope of the presence of my Savior, because He is coming to receive me to himself; and I can love His appearing, when all adversaries shall be put down, and righteousness flourish even in the desert, and peace reign everywhere.

Chapter 26

The Cup in Gethsemane: Part 1

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

IT is surely admonitory and, as being so markedly characteristic of the times, not less ominous to note, under what specious subterfuges Satan seeks to lower Christ. This is his real character as the untiring slanderer and subtle tempter; with many alas! the unsuspected and successful adversary of the truth—specially truth which more immediately bears on the immaculateness and impeccability of our Lord's humanity, and on His attitude and walk as the Son serving in the varied circumstances of His life and sufferings when here in flesh.

An instance and illustration of this has recently come before me in one of the many religious serials of the day. But the truth as in Jesus, and the honor due to Him are more, ought to be infinitely more to His own than names be they in other respects worthy. The subject discussed is the holy cry of the Lord Jesus in the garden, so impressively given us in Matt. 26:39, and in the two other Gospels of Mark and Luke. It is a subject surely which in its grave surroundings and associations of time, place, occasion, and person, may properly in approaching it claim from us the unshod foot of reverence and self-mistrust due from creatures such as we are. One has been used to conclude or take as granted beyond question that the “cup,” from which He the Lord could and indeed did shrink, must have involved a something more far-reaching and appalling than anything flesh is heir to. What a vision before which He quailed must have held within its infoldings, and foreshadowed what no mere creature, man or angel, could face; or surely He Who is above all would not. But in this our long-cherished belief it would seem according to this new school (is it new?) we have been all wrong and need that one teach us again, I will not say the “first principles of the oracles of God,” but what is to my mind foundation truth.

Let us hear then what it is we are asked to accept, and accept too as the only possible solution of words, otherwise presenting, as they say, insuperable difficulties and implying under any other interpretation a “weakness and ignorance” on the part of the Lord not to be thought of.

“I believe,” says Dr. Schauffler, of New York, that the prayer of Jesus was not at all for deliverance from the cross. I believe that what He most feared in the garden was that the suffering He was enduring on account of the sins [?] of the world would prove too much for His physical frame, and that He would die then and there under the burden. His soul was sorrowful ‘even unto death '; was there not the fear that He might actually die? So it seems to me that the cup, from which He prayed to be delivered was not the death on the cross, but death in Gethsemane itself. He was praying for grace to reach the cross, not for grace to escape it.”

“Dr. S.,” says the editor in his comment on the above, “claims that the advantages of this interpretation are obvious and very great. It delivers the prayer in the garden at once from ‘weakness’ and from ‘ignorance’.... and, above all, it meets the only possible meaning of that famous passage in Hebrews which unquestionably refers to this event: ‘Who in the days of His flesh,’ &c., &c. (Heb. 5:7).” The editor then proceeds to favor his readers with a quotation from the

paper in which Dr. S.'s contribution first appeared, the editor of which, equally with himself, puts his imprimatur on Dr. S.'s interpretation. “It has long seemed to the editor of the Sunday School Times that the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane was from the fearful pressure on Him of the consequences of sin, as culminating in His betrayal by a trusted ‘friend,’ in the failure of His chosen followers to understand Him or to be His sympathetic helpers, and in His rejection by His loved people, and by the world He came to save. Under that pressure on Him in the physical weakness of His humanity, it seems as if He were to sink before the final crisis of His earthly hour came; that peril was the ‘hour’ and the ‘cup’ He then faced—the peril of failure in His earthly life-work: .... The ‘cup' spoken of at the garden gate when Judas and his band had come to take Him was another cup altogether—the cup of His trial and crucifixion, which He was always ready to accept, and did accept without flinching.”

Now I unhesitatingly reject such teaching as derogatory to the Lord in every part of it. It altogether shuts out the divine aspect of the cup, and substitutes for it a mere physical contingency which He had not counted for, and which moreover would have left Him helpless to finish the great work He came to accomplish. That the Lord did suffer other than substitutionally, and so as to surpass all conception of created beings, must be admitted; for indeed how could it be otherwise with one so holy as He in a scene such as this, and so defiled? The sights of human misery and suffering, the moral and physical degradation of man once created in the image and after the likeness of his Creator, the dire results of sin in all their hideous forms and degrees, ever confronting, ever before Him, must have told sadly and terribly on His tender heart, and on a nature so divinely attuned and so transcending (in sensitiveness to every form of suffering and wrong) aught which we could ever have attained to, fallen or unfallen. The supreme intensity of His love would necessarily render Him all the more susceptible to every slight, whilst not the less would His holiness make Him the more acutely alive to its every infraction. The whence and wherefore of His presence here as the “sent One” of the Father—the august and benign character of His mission and office as the Christ of God, the Messiah of prophecy, Israel's King, and the Savior of the lost, His dignity as “the Son” and “Immanuel” in the world He had made, amongst “His own people” and “His own things,” all added point and poignancy to His rejection—rejection, too, not so much at the hands of lawless, godless Gentiles, though this was so, but specially, of those to whom pertained “the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God, &c., and of whom as concerning the flesh He came, Who is God over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9.). They were His chosen people, the children, the descendants, of those whom of old He had saved from Egypt, borne on eagles' wings and brought to Himself (Ex. 19:4); and whom now though in other and lowlier guise, but really in person and grace and power, He was here again to emancipate and enrich, and bless beyond thought.

This and all the other accompaniments, incidents, and inflictions, of a life of such unparalleled devotedness, could not but make up a cup from which, had He not been the Holy One tempted in all things like us, sin excepted, as in His case of course it was, He might well have shrunk. But it is just because we hold that He was this, and not only other but higher and more in His personality and in His humanity—more and higher in every sense, as we shall presently see, that we indignantly resent as of Satan all such insinuations, under whatever, protest, as that when He, in the garden, cried, O Father, &c., it was “death then and there” He had in His view premature death, and consequent failure in the mission He came specially for; that He had it before Him not

as a possibility only but as imminent; that as being helpless to save Himself He sought exemption at His Father's hand, and that His prayer was for strength to reach, not for grace to escape, the cross! Oh, the puerility as well as the sacrilegious presumption of such imputations! puerility indeed; for if mere physical dissolution, why the “if it be possible”? Oh, the blasphemy of attributing to Him a contingency attaching only to sin and sinners!

True, He was made a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2)—the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5), was made flesh (John 1),was made in the likeness of men—made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant (Phil. 2), was made like unto His brethren (Heb. 2), was tempted (Heb. 4) and to crown all, “being thus found in fashion as a man,” He further “humbled himself” to become “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2). But are we therefore to depreciate Him to our level, to think of Him only as one of ourselves, because He thus descended (Eph. 4), and to attach to Him, or His humanity, the tendencies, the frailties, the amenabilities, incident really to sin and the sinner, to humanity fallen? Is it to be so conceived of Him in presence of such scriptures as the following?— “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel, (God with us)” (Matt. 2). “Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost, &c.” (Matt. 1:18-20). “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb. 10). “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father “(John 1.). “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of his body” (John 2). “For it pleased all the fullness in him to dwell” (Col. 1:19). Fallen humanity an enshrinement of deity! Fallen humanity conceived of the Holy Ghost! And will anyone tell me when He being here was not “God manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3)? How then failure or fear of it?

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 27

The Cup in Gethsemane: Part 2

THUS much as to His human side; now for the higher, if we may differentiate as to that which was inherent to Him, whatever the form and conditions He might assume or fill. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” “And the Word was made flesh” (John 1). “Who is the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1). “Before Abraham was I am” (John 8). “Upholding all things by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3). “He is before all things and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:15-17). “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever” &c. (Heb. 1:10).

Impossible to read these and how many more I without finding ourselves consciously, willingly or unwillingly, in the presence of supreme majesty, of Godhead truly. Subordinate Godhead is an absurdity, it cannot be, neither does God give His glory to another. Here is no inferior God; no mere outcome of creatorial power, place him ever so high or where you will. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is here, the God of Israel, of the Red Sea, and of Jordan; Whom winds and waves obey. In likeness of flesh of sin He was. And as the weary one He sat at Sychar and asked a drink of water; yet was He ever the omnipotent and the omniscient (Who none the less received all from His Father Whom He came to serve), mighty to save from sin, death, and judgment.

Fear of death with Him! fear of failure in His life-work with Him! The whole theory in its inception and elaboration is from beneath, and only finds its endorsement in the natural mind. Its foundation is sand. It is an insult to the Christ they profess to honor, as it is a reflection on, yea, denial of, His person and ways. What can one think of those who can so misconstrue His words, so consistent and becoming the Son the Father at such a time and under circumstances and surroundings unparalleled except at the cross itself?

There is a further element, which can no more be overlooked than those we have been discussing: there, are His own prophetic words, so impressively given to His apostles as recorded by Matt. 16:21, 22, 23, by Mark 8:31; 10:33, 34, by Luke 31, 33, which I beg the reader to read. And again as to His life, “I lay it down of myself” &c., (John 10:17). “So must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3). Can scripture be broken? Had He forgotten or did He not know of Psa. 22, Isa. 53., where perhaps more than any where else, we have the whole tragic scene of His death depicted? Then again is His own pre-utterance in Psa. 16:8-10. How can it be supposed that He the One of faith beyond all others, its author and finisher (Heb. 11; 12), could so fail in His faith, and not in faith alone, but in His conception of the probabilities or possibilities of the case? Not so! In all things His is the pre-eminence. That there was in His view and vividly before His all prescient mind that which made Him “exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34), we know; and that “being in an agony.... his sweat was as it were great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44) we know; and that there appeared “an angel from heaven unto him strengthening him” (ver. 43), we know too. And as we read the record, we bow and challenge ourselves not to draw near with levity, not to venture presumptuously our own thoughts, or speculate on a theme so holy, so profound as the “baptism” He was then about to “be baptized with” (Matt. 20:22); for not for this surely were words

so impressive handed down to us.

There are other statements equally questionable in the article we are reviewing, which, for fear of trespassing unduly on your limited space, I pass; not without hope that you, Mr. Editor, with your so much abler pen, may find it not incompatible with your other onerous occupations to take up and examine much more exhaustively and effectively than I in the least degree can aspire to.

Having endeavored in my remarks to show, what the “cup” in Gethsemane was not, I now proceed to show what that cup was. One desires to feel the holiness of the ground we are about to tread further: its sacred, solemn character, profound beyond thought of man or angel, where as nowhere else in our own sphere, should he “the sacred awe that dares not move.”

But preparatory to this I give a further extract from the paper before me. It is the Editor's opening statement and implied endorsement of Dr. S.'s view.

“When Jesus stood by the grave of Lazarus and lifted up His eyes to heaven, Father, He said, ‘I know that Thou hearest me always.' But if in the garden He prayed He might escape the death upon the cross, then He was not always heard; this was one prayer—and a most agonizing one—that the Father refused to answer. For it will not do to say that His prayer was answered in the angel who came from heaven to strengthen Him. That was not His prayer, and it is to escape the dilemma by falling into another. For if Jesus prayed for one thing and the Father granted another, then our Lord knew not any more than we, what He should pray for as He ought.”

The Lord not heard! the Father refused to answer unless in the sense they claim, and pointed to as (they say) in Heb. 5:7. Turning to the Psalms, we see, on the contrary, that whilst Heb. 5:7 says He “was heard for his godly fear” (Revised Version), Psa. 22:19-22 not only confirms this, but leaves us in no doubt as to what was the purport of the prayer referred to in Hebrews, that it was deliverance out of, not immunity from, death, there or any where. And was He not most signally answered? and declared Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4)? See also Acts 3:15 Cor. 15:15; 1 Peter 1:21. God “raised him from the dead and set him 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 world but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:20, 21). Answer this, surely! The cry in the garden, then, had no such reference as they say it had. The “cup” there, was not another cup, nor did the cry there in my judgment. synchronize at all with Heb. 5.

It had in it another ingredient, one far more fearful than “fear of death and failure through death then and there;” an ingredient, a factor, from which there could be no discharge if “atonement” were to be made: hence therefore the qualifying “if it be possible” and the “nevertheless.” What that was we are not left far to seek for. We read 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24, and we get our answer truly as to one part of it— “made sin.” We read Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34, and we again get our answer in its second part— “forsaken of God”! Let us pause, let us afresh consider of Whom it is these scriptures so speak. The Only-begotten, ever in the Father's bosom, the Son of His love and His delight. Alike in His own love to and delight in the Father as was the Father to Him. The Son too, Whose scepter is a scepter of righteousness, Who loved righteousness and hated iniquity. The Holy One, the Holy One of God, even that not relatively only, but absolutely, essentially, intrinsically, the expression of it without measure, without alloy in His person and in every step and

stage of His wondrous path here, in Whom could be no tolerance or excuse or mitigation of sin, but absolute abhorrence of, and anger against sin in its every beginning, development, and ending. Whose eyes to detect it were as a flame of fire, in Whose hand to resent it was a sharp two-edged sword, Whose voice to condemn it is as the voice of thunder, and the sound of many waters; and His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength, flashing forth indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, against every soul of man that doeth evil—every evil work or thought. Here in grace to save though! wondrous combination truly! The apostle writes, “Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.”

But here in our present view, we are to behold Him— “made sin” brought into vital contact and affinity, if we may so say, with that which He as the “Holy One” so hated—so contrary and repulsive to Him, beyond the holiest of men or angels, as well it might be surely; not as touching Him only, but as that which touched specially His God and Father in His prerogatives, His honor, His sovereignty, His word; the great blight on the creature and the creation, the foul and poisonous breath of Satan, and his kindred host of demons and of men, his only too willing accessories and tools. And mark, not “made sin” only, not “bearing our sins in His own body on the tree” only; but as the necessary, inevitable—and to Him appalling result, Himself the “forsaken” one of “His God.” “O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.” “Our fathers trusted in thee and thou didst deliver them But I am a worm”

(Psa. 22). He had said, “I knew that thou hearest me always “; but now, it is, “Thou hearest me not.” “Why art Thou so far from helping me”? Speak not of death as His “fear” here, true He died, had to die, for that was a necessity in atonement. But “made sin,” “forsaken of His God,” that—the two combined—the latter, the necessary, the irrevocable, the stern sequence of the former. “Let this cup pass from Me if possible”! And is not this divine perfection in its purest form, the “perfection of holiness and of love, a love which might well shrink from a forsaking such as this? Not to have shrunk here, not to have recoiled here, would have been a failure indeed, the strangest failure and more fatal to His own character as “Son and Holy” than any other. And yet we are told by these writers that “this He was always ready to accept and did accept without flinching.” Do they really mean it?

It is important, too, to observe how carefully scripture excludes the thought that His death was the result of anything from without, the result of crucifixion—its accompaniment it was truly, but only. For we read that when they came to Him with intent to hasten or precipitate His death by breaking His legs, they found Him dead already, but not so the two malefactors (John 19:31-33); and so Pilate marveled if He were already dead (Mark 15:44). No! His life He laid down of Himself as He had said (John 10:17, 18), and so with loud voice He cried, “It is finished: and he....gave up the ghost,” saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30). Thus, thanks be to His great name and holy, “He the Just one died for us, the unjust, that He might bring us to God—died that we might live” (2 Cor. 5)— “gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1); for “thus it is written and thus it behooved him,” as the Son and the Savior and the Shepherd. And so with John we exultingly cry, “Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” Amen.

To say then that when the Lord Jesus cried in the garden, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” He had before Him “death then and there": and that it was “fear” of this which induced or evoked the cry, is not to explain but to pervert His words. It is to lay upon Him a contingency only belonging to one fallen. It is to impute to Him forgetfulness of His own. and the Father's words, and all the scriptures which speak of His death (and this as only on the cross), and so far from “delivering the prayer there, from weakness and ignorance” (Himself pardon the words) as this writer claims, makes it all that and worse, for it places the Christ of God on the same plane as those, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. This is not to honor. It debases Him, not exalts. G. R.

Chapter 28

Daniel: Review

The Book of Daniel by F. W. Farrar, D.D. &C. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 27 Paternoster Row, 1895

This volume of the Expositor's Bible can surprise no considerate reader of the author's previous writings. It is the fruit of extreme rationalism put forth by a special pleader of no little skill, whose kind feelings are on the side of heterodoxy, with unscrupulous dislike of all faith in plenary inspiration and in the truth itself.

The first chapter insinuates throughout doubts of the historic existence of the prophet Daniel! The decisive testimony of our Lord in Matt. 24:15 is only noticed in the text to be strangled if possible in a note which says, “There can he of course no certainty that the spoken of by Daniel the prophet is not the comment of the Evangelist.” Supposing it were, has not inspiration divine authority? Evidently not in the writer's eyes. But it is contrary to all the usage of the First Gospel so to interlard our Lord's discourses; and therefore it is against evidence to question that our Lord here puts His seal on “Daniel the prophet,” as well as on this particular prophecy in chap. 12:11. The kindred one in chap. 11:31 had been already fulfilled, to say nothing of the difference of form which distinguishes what is past from what is future. But this is lost on Dr. F., who believes in real prophecy nowhere, because he excludes God in any real way from it all.

The reader will gather the state of this school from what is said at the start of the first half of the book. “I believe that its six magnificent opening chapters were never meant to be regarded in any ether light than of moral and religious Haggadoth, yet no words of mine can exaggerate the value which I attach to this part of our Canonical Scripture Finally unfavorable to the authenticity, they (critics) are yet in no way derogatory to the preciousness of this Old Testament Apocalyptic” (pp. 3, 4). Our readers will require no words to prove that such language is the self-deceived and shameless mania of skepticism. As the throne of wickedness has no fellowship with Jehovah, neither has the Spirit of truth with fables or frauds, pious or impious.

As the first half is a conglomerate of infidel doubts and misrepresentations, the comment that follows is its suited companion and worthless for spiritual intelligence and edification.

FROM 29th Sept. 1895 Mr. T. F. SHORTO will D.V. receive orders for approved books, pamphlets, tracts, and periodicals, at the Depot, 53 Paternoster Row, E.C.

Chapter 29

The Darnel of the Field

FOR the due understanding of this parable, observe that it is the first in which the kingdom of the heavens is likened to this or that. The opening parable of the seven contained in the chapter is not such a comparison; it presents the Lord as Sower before that kingdom was set up. The other six suppose its establishment; not in manifested power and glory according to Old and N. T. prophecy, but in mystery, as here made known by our Lord, rejected by men and exalted by God on high, unseen but none the less real and glorious, affording scope for faith no less than unbelief as being a day of profession. It is Christ's ascension which gives occasion to the kingdom of the heavens here revealed to faith and assuming a character of grace in keeping with His rejection.

We have the Lord's own interpretation that “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man” (ver. 36). This it was of moment to explain; because His heavenly position might have seemed incompatible with such activity of grace. There ought to be no doubt that He was the sower before He took His seat on high as in the first parable. Whatever the means or instruments employed, He it is that is still sowing good seed in His field. And as He says, “The field is the world.” As He is the rejected but glorified Son of man, it is no longer the land of Israel, but the world. The needy, the guilty, the ruined world is precisely the object of His gracious care. Among the lost sheep of the house of Israel He had labored in the flesh, and in vain (Isa. 49) for the mass, who refused and hounded Him to the cross. Now from the right hand of power He sowed the good seed in. His field, the world. Nothing less was suited to His glorious plans, any more than His love. Undoubtedly He will another day bring Jacob again to Him in sovereign mercy; but meanwhile He is given for a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the end of the earth. “The field is the world.”

O my readers, hear His voice, that you receiving His word, now sent to any and to all, may be sons of the kingdom. Even before the kingdom of the heavens was set up, our Lord said (ver. 9), “He that hath ears, let him hear.” So He says still at the end of His interpretation of this first likeness of the kingdom (ver. 43). It is not the law laid down to an ordered people on penalty of death. It is the word, wherever received in faith, to produce fruit. The great principle the Lord introduced when here is individual responsibility. This He reiterates from on high. The kingdom when set up in no way enfeebles it, as we thus learn. And though the church, as we know from elsewhere, brought in communion of saints, common subjection, and common action, yet never does God sanction the giving up of individual responsibility. The presence of the Spirit gives power to the word for conscience and heart to conciliate what self-will under Satan ever seeks to dislocate.

Christ is life, and righteousness, and salvation. If you believe on Him, these are yours in Him; and they are found not otherwise nor elsewhere. Man cannot quicken, nor a minister, nor yet the church. Christ is all: so scripture testifies; and if you receive Him on God's word, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, Who glorifies Him. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are admirable and abiding institutions; but they are perverted to poison when put in the place of Christ and of faith in Him. Hence it is the word for individual reception. If you reject Christ and receive not His saying, you cannot escape One that judges you: the word the Lord Jesus spoke, that shall judge at the last

day. Oh! neglect not so great salvation, nor His authority.

And the danger is the greater, because Christ's enemy, while men slept, came and sowed darnel also among the wheat. Indistinguishable at first, they became manifestly different ere long. For the darnel are the sons of wicked ones. They are found all over the field, the world of Christian profession. Such is Christendom, to speak of nothing worse, and there were soon greater abominations from early days too. But these are bad enough and prepare for every evil from beneath., The darnel are the heterodox and the lawless among the baptized.

Yet this does not make the field to be the church but the world, save in their eyes who understand neither, and are so deceived as to confound them. Hence we may see that, when the Lord forbade His servants from uprooting the darnel, He in no way denies in the church the discipline which the Holy Spirit demands (1 Cor. 5). It is the extermination of the wicked professors He prohibits under His figure of gathering up the darnel from the field. And experience falls in with this. Disobedient servants of His have rooted out the good seed, oh! how often, under the plea of getting rid of the darnel. Grace is to reign now. “Let both grow together until the harvest,” saith the Lord Who will then send forth the executors of judgment.

The season for harvest will be a marked change: a different work with different workmen. The reapers are quite another class, His angels, whose business is to gather up first the darnel, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but the wheat are gathered into Christ's barn above. It is a vain dream that the world is to improve under the action of the gospel or the church. On the contrary the normal state of the wheat-field was spoiled as a fact from early days; and the servants are forbidden to employ their ineffectual efforts to efface the evil, which must go on till the consummation of the age. Then shall the Son of man intervene with His angels. Revival or reformation can in no way abolish the mischief the devil wrought while men slept, as they quickly did. God secures His own work by grace all through: the good will surely be gathered into the heavenly granary in due time. But the field was soon spoiled through man's lack of care and Satan's craft; and this cannot be adequately dealt with till the Lord come in judgment of the quick.

Look and listen then to Him now. Receive Him at God's word to life eternal. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and there is no other; that you who live may henceforth live not to yourselves but to Him Who for you died and was raised. Thus may you await His coming not only in peace but with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Chapter 30

The Daughter of Jairus Raised

Matthew 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

A great request was now laid at the feet of Jesus. The petitioner was Jairus ruler of the synagogue. His daughter, a maiden of twelve years, was dying. “But come” said her father, “lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live.” Nor did our meek Master turn a deaf ear, but arose and followed him.

The dying maiden was a striking type of the daughter of Zion, for whose sake Messiah was here. And the Jewish ruler expressed his faith in engaging His gracious presence and power to restore his daughter at the last gasp.

On the way the woman with a bloody flux for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. And the Lord not only yielded to her deed, but drew her out from her hiding, and sealed her faith and confession with His open approval to her better blessing. It is not otherwise with the Lord now, as we have proved who have gone to Him in our depth of need in this interval, since He came as Messiah to be sought by Israel, and before He reaches the daughter of His people, not sick only but dead. Grace has met us to the uttermost, not merely immediate healing for such as have touched Him on His way, but clearance away of all fear and doubt that we might taste how gracious He is and rest in peace through His word.

Yet this created a delay which must have tried most severely the importunate Jairus. And while the Lord was yet speaking to the healed woman, one comes from the ruler's house saying, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the teacher. But an answer was given to nourish his drooping faith, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made well.

So it will be in the day that hastens. Unbelief will do its deadly work among the mass of the Jews. But the desperate condition of the chosen people will draw down the action of grace; and faith will, according to God's word, look to Him that loves to heal, and to Him that smote to bind up; and He will in due time raise them up and cause them to live before Him. Whether it be the long and desperately tried woman or the maid of Israel, faith alone enjoys the blessing. And justly so; for faith renounces all dependence on self and honors God and His Son, giving credit for love as great as the power, and Christ's word as unfailing as either. Faith therefore purifies the heart, as well as relieves and assures it.

Here the Lord, when come to the house, suffered none to enter save chosen witnesses, Peter, James, and John, with the father and mother of the maiden. As for all the rest who were weeping and bewailing, He put them out when they derided His saying, “Weep not: she is not dead but sleepeth.” They believed their senses, not His word; and the scornful shall not see the blessing. But He took hold of her hand and called, saying, Maiden, arise. Then her spirit returned (for it was gone), and she rose up immediately; and He directed food to be given her. So in due time will the same Lord raise up the people from the valley of dry bones, as the prophets assure us, no matter how many say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. As Jehovah

hath spoken, He will perform; and in that day shall it be known through all the earth.

Quickening was no strain on the Lord of glory. It belonged to the Son as to the Father; and now that the Son was here a man to do His will, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, showing Him all things that Himself doeth. Of these none was more characteristic than awakening the dead and quickening them. His dignified calm is remarkable here as on all such occasions. He took the dead child by the hand, and called; and she arose immediately. He graciously thought of her bodily need, which at such a moment even parents might not unnaturally overlook. Truly “He hath done all things well,” and as none other; though many another did like works or even greater in His name, which exalts Him as much or more than if He had done them all Himself.

And has this tale of the Holy Spirit no bearing on you who read these lines—dead to God while you live? Nay, it was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name (John 20:31). How many have heard His voice, since He was here, in the written word! For the hour now is (John 5:25), as the Lord so solemnly avers, that souls hearing Him may not come into judgment but pass out of death into life.

Leave not such an issue uncertain. You might well despair if it turned on you, as men fancy in the pride and impenitence of their hearts. But the life you need is wholly and solely in the Son of God; and God is calling you to believe that Jesus is He, and that He gives eternal life to every believer on Him through His word.

It is “the dead” who are now called to hear; and they that hear, the Savior assures us, shall live. Clearly they are not dead physically, but in trespasses and sins; and they are called to hear Him and live. For life is not in the first man whether profane or religious; it is in the Second; and faith by grace receives it. For such a boon, morality is as vain as ordinances. Those that live do live to God, and honor His institutions; but believers guided by God's word and Spirit testify to Christ as their life, and reject every other dependence as a destructive error and a cheat. He is the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself declared; and so it is in John 5 with His “verily, verily.” Woe is his who despises Him or sets up a rival in His stead. “Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life! It is far better than to be raised to natural life as Jairus' daughter was, though He Who raised her is the same Who quickens those who believe now, and Israel from the dust of death by-and by. Fear not; only believe.

Chapter 31

The Demoniac Delivered

Matt. 8, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8

There are two very different forms in which the enemy of God and man works: one which may be called extraordinary; the other far more common. It is thus for evil with the spirit that operates in the sons of disobedience, as the Holy Spirit does for good in children of obedience. The history in which the demoniac plays so conspicuous a part illustrates both. The second Gospel enters into affecting details of the man's hopeless misery, and of the Savior's gracious power; as the first is more general in the display of a present Jehovah-Messiah, taking notice of a second victim as is usual throughout (Matt. 8:28; 9:27; 20:30), the least adequate testimony to Israel. Mark and Luke graphically bring before us the more notable of the demoniacs. When the Savior was here, it would seem that Satan put forth his malignant power beyond all example. But a stronger than he was here to overcome him, take from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

Immediately, on the Lord's quitting the ship from Capernaum to the other side of the lake, there met Him a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling in the tombs. None could bind him, not even with chains. Often as he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were rent asunder by him and the fetters shattered; and none had strength to subdue him. Continually by night and day in the tombs and in the mountains was he crying and cutting himself with stones. What a depth of unspeakably wretched and appalling degradation! Matthew adds the fierceness and danger to others; Luke, that for a long time he had worn no clothes.

The sight of the Lord Jesus even from afar arrested him, so that he ran and paid Him homage, and with a loud voice cried, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For the Lord said, Come forth, unclean spirit, out of the man. Nor was this all: He asked him, What is thy name? and got the answer, My name is Legion, for we are many. There is a fact outside human ken, on the evil side of the spiritual world, beyond measure horrible: a man with such a host of evil spirits in him as could justify the well-known name of a Roman battalion, and a man with a personal consciousness, yet also merging his personality in theirs!—Legion, for we are many!

But mighty as a spirit is, and especially when in such multitudinous and tyrannical force of evil, demons have no skeptical hardihood. They believe and shudder (James 2:19). Therefore did they beseech that He would not command them to depart into the abyss; for their sure doom was before their eyes; and they knew that when He reigns, they will be cast there, which they dreaded even now. Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? is the cry in the first Gospel. So, when they begged to enter a great herd of swine feeding on the mountain side, the Lord gave them leave; and the swine, about two thousand, no sooner received the unclean spirits, than they rushed down the steep and were choked in the sea. It was the witness, to all that believe scripture, of the Lord's delivering power on the one hand and of Satan's destructive energy on the other. It is idle here, as everywhere, to confound possession by demons with either lunacy or disease. Either or both might be also, or neither be, and yet that possession of evil spirits. The reality was thus

transparent. The effect on the swine made the objective fact undeniably plain, and the suggestion of a physical or mental derangement inexcusably false.

Nor does the Lord, to Whom all belongs below as on high, need the apology of man to justify His permission, any more than for the sickness and death, the plague and the famine, the tempest and the earthquake, which He employs providentially in this fallen world. To what purposes of grace does He not turn every one of these inflictions for such as hear His word! So doubtless it was then whether Jews or Gentiles owned the swine.

And here we face the more ordinary working of Satan's power. For when the swine-herds reported all, the whole city came to meet the Savior and besought Him to depart out of their borders! They saw the possessed that had the legion sitting, clothed, and sensible; and they were afraid, not of Satan but of the Savior! The witnesses related what explained all as to the demoniac and the swine; but all the people round about began to beseech Him to depart!

Such is man under Satan's power ever at work, if not so terrific in appearance far more dangerous than the maddening possession in its intensest form; and none is recorded beyond Legion's. Yet his presence never so acted on their fears, as the proof of the Savior's beneficent power.

O my readers, are you under the same fatal spell? Do you dread to approach the Lord of all, the Savior for eternity of all who believe? is it Jesus you dread in your soul? Is it from His grace that you shrink back, lest you should be saved now? Consider your most perilous condition. You are slaves of Satan, children of wrath, enemies of God. What must follow as you are? Death, and judgment. So it is laid up for men as they are. Without faith on your part, baptism and the Lord's Supper, blessed as they are to faith, only aggravate your guilt. There is no Savior but the Lord Jesus, Who, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those that wait for Him unto salvation (in contrast with judgment, as He died a sacrifice for their sins).

Not such was the state of the delivered demoniac, who besought Him that he might be with Him. But becoming as the desire might be, the Lord had work for him to do, before that first love is gratified as it surely will be in due season: “Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and showed thee mercy.” And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus did for him. And he did right, though all were wondering.

Alas! wonder is not faith. Let it not be your lot to fall short of the demoniac. Delivered from the oppressive power of Satan, he was to bear witness of the gracious power of the Lord, even Jesus, shown to himself. But was it not by the hearing to produce faith in souls exposed to Satan in other ways? May you be delivered from the snare that would bid the Lord Jesus to depart. The day is fast approaching when He as King shall sit on the throne of His glory, and say to the faithless nations gathered before Him, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

Chapter 32

The Early Haul of Fishes

Luke 5:1-11

THE Holy Spirit transposes the call of Peter and his companions to a later place than the historical order adhered to by Matthew and Mark, which fell in with His design in their Gospels. But it suited His work by Luke to give previously the Lord's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, His striking procedure in Nazareth on the sabbath day, His deliverance of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, His healing of Peter's mother-in-law with many more, and His preaching in Galilee. He Who arranged the task for each evangelist knew all the truth, which judges every man, and can be judged by none save at his peril.

In beautiful connection with the great work of proclaiming the gospel, we see the Lord standing by the lake of Gennesaret, as the crowd pressed on Him to hear the word of God. Into one of two little vessels there, from which the fishermen had gone and were washing their nets, He entered, and asked Simon (for it was his) to put out a little from the land, and thence He, sitting down, taught the crowds. After that He said to Simon, Put (thou) out into the deep, and let (ye) down your nets for a haul.

What can one conceive to act more powerfully on the mind of Simon and the rest! Sailors, especially fishermen, are apt to trust their own judgment in their craft and to think cheaply of landmen's advice. The circumstances too made any hope naturally forlorn. Master, said Simon (who had already, been led to Jesus and received from Him a name of honor), through a whole night we labored and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets. And having done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. And their nets were breaking. And they beckoned to their partners in the other ship to come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking.

But great as the wonder was and pointing to the Son of man with all things put under His feet down to the fish of the sea, it was small compared to the spiritual power which let the light of God in Christ into Simon's soul. For when he saw it, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. He knew himself as he never did before. God in His grace brought thus near filled him with self-judgment, and he pours out the confession of it at the Lord's feet. He believed already, and before the miracle promptly gave up his own thoughts and his discouraging experience at Christ's word. Then the immediate and amazing answer to his confidence not only awed his soul but searched his conscience thoroughly. It seems like a moral dilemma to say at Jesus’ knees, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. It is really what an exercised soul feels on which the light falls with overwhelming power. Nothing farther from one than to depart from the Lord, yet His divine goodness and glory so realized that one feels utterly unworthy to be near Him while clinging to Him. When the work of redemption was done, much more could be enjoyed by the purified conscience and the heart resting on His love known in peace; but for this all had yet to wait. Even now the grace Simon saw in Christ made manifest his sinfulness but filled his heart.

The vast take of fish, the bursting nets, the sinking ships, each of which would have commanded Simon's interest at any previous time, were all unheeded. Jesus was all to his soul. Self-importance dwindled, no less than anxiety, and every earthly desire. He fell before One, a Man on earth, Who presented God with a power which delivered from Satan and the effects of sin for soul and body. As He Himself had read at Nazareth the opening of Isa. 61 and said, To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears, so His course demonstrated in an outreaching grace which irritated even then all who would limit divine privilege to themselves. Even then it was clear that preaching the kingdom of God was more momentous in His eyes than the mightiest deeds of power: “therefore am I sent.” He received not glory from men; He would by the word bring them into Living relationship with God; He would not only lead such as Simon into deeper blessing, but call them from every object and tie on earth to Himself and the activities of His grace.

Depart from Simon! from a sinful man! Why, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. As His grace made God better known, so it discovered Simon to himself, who would soon learn and own that He the Lord Jesus knew him perfectly, yea all things. Yes, the Lord Jesus knew all when He entered Simon's ship, and heard him own His word; and He so revealed Himself to his soul that Simon could not but follow such a Master and Lord.

And now He Who spoke the word of power for the miracle says to Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt be catching men. There is a season to everything, a time to fear, and a time not to fear. Nor is this peculiar to Simon. It is for every believer in Christ. Till we know Him by faith we do well to fear. Not to fear before that is impenitence with indifference or presumption. But when grace makes Him known to us, “Fear not” is as truly for us as for him. And so it was for James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. The word addressed to Simon they took for themselves believingly; and they were right. It was written for us, that we might believe and have the blessing with like assurance. Perfect love casts out fear.

All, no doubt, are not called to “be catching men,” as Simon was; and eminently was made good in due time this word of the Lord also. But while the Lord still calls and sends to preach the gospel, neither man nor woman that believes ought to hide the word of His grace, but publish His name far and wide, as they have opportunity, and in all earnestness, though decently and in order. Time was, whilst all the apostles lived too, when the scattered faithful went through the world evangelizing the word; and the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 8; 11). Let us fear neither for ourselves, if we believe on Him, nor to speak a word in season, His word, to the weary, if they too by grace may hear and live.

Chapter 33

Ecclesiastes: Introduction

IT is difficult to conceive a stronger contrast than this book affords to Song of Solomon in aim, character, and handling. For the latter, of all the O. T., presents Messiah's affection for the object of His choice with a fullness and particularity beyond what is found in any or all others of the Holy Writings; and the effect is produced on that object in drawing out a suited return, with experiences of the deepest interest in its course till the consummation. Here on the contrary it is the sorrowful converse of the utter incapacity of all that is under the sun to satisfy the heart-cravings of one who had personal capacity and unlimited means of finding happiness in the creature if it had been possible. It is the negative counterpart of Proverbs, with the sententious wisdom of which it has not a little in common. The difference of the design accounts for “God” in Ecclesiastes, and “the LORD” or Jehovah in Proverbs. For in the one it is simply a question of man as he is, and therefore of God as such; whereas the other looks at the scene of moral government and those set in relation to it. The Song on the other hand is so full of the Bridegroom and the bride, as to have neither; for one can hardly regard chap. 8:6, admirably strong though the last word be, as an exception—it at any rate just proves the rule. The reserve of the Bridegroom's person, elsewhere unveiled, preserves the divine glory intact; but the plain bearing of the Song gives the fullest scope for the reciprocal love that reigns throughout, and this is best expressed without introducing either of the divine names.

But it is not hard to conceive the Holy Spirit employing the same vessel for His power in writing all these books. Nor did the man ever live who could be a more fitting instrument than Solomon if God so pleased. For He gave him “wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the sons of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of the trees, from the cedar that is on Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of cattle, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:29-34).

But other elements entered which God could use in His wisdom. The range which Solomon traversed was immense in his unique position, not only of royalty over the throne of Jehovah (1 Chron. 29:23), but as endowed, with wisdom and knowledge beyond every other, and, as he did not ask, with riches and wealth and honor beyond what any king possessed before or since. Alas! this was not all. Magnificence, luxury, commerce, reputation, and even the most intimate relations with the heathen became a snare; and the largest wisdom is not faith or righteousness. The king was forbidden in Deut. 17. to multiply to himself horses and wives; Solomon disobeyed flagrantly in both respects. The king was commanded to write him a copy of Jehovah's law in a roll, that he might learn to fear Him and keep all those words; but his wives when he was old turned away his heart after other gods, which was far from being perfect with Jehovah like his father David. If God

employed David as the vehicle of the noblest psalms and hymns for his people's praise, spite of his grievous falls, there is nothing on that ground to deny His choice of Solomon, not only in his earlier years when His pleasure in this king is express, but even in such a writing as Ecclesiastes brimful of bitter and humbling experience. On the contrary, bearing in mind the difference between Israel and the church or Christianity, we may readily perceive how Solomon, as in fact he was the writer if we believe scripture, was also the most adapted to the purpose of God.

If the Preacher or Convener had not described himself as son of David, king in Jerusalem, who else could have written it but Solomon? He tells us too that he was “king over Israel in Jerusalem”? Who could this possibly be but Solomon? Even his immediate heir quickly ceased to be king over Israel, losing ten out of the twelve tribes, and became distinctively king over Judah as opposed to Israel. But even if the book had no such marks as chap. 1:1, and 12, who does, who could, speak of wisdom as in the latter half of chap. 1. but Solomon? Who could sit in judgment of all that is done under the heavens, and pronounce on its nothingness as in chap. 2., but one with the weight of that great king? Was any one that ever lived after him in Jerusalem entitled so truly as he to speak of great works that he made, of building and planting with every accessory; of servants within and without; of such possession of herds and flocks and on such a scale of grandeur; of wisdom remaining, notwithstanding vast accumulations of silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings? There is no real ground to imagine an anonymous writer personating Solomon: an idea quite alien to scripture, though reasonable in the eyes of worldly men used to fiction. Here all is intense and solemn reality, as he had proved too well who could speak beyond any.

The colloquial character just suits one who loved to unbend from a court; and the Aramaic forms, one who had vast peaceful intercourse with the neighboring peoples in every grade. Never was a mind less tied to time or place.

Chapter 34

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

“THE words of the Preacher (or Convener), son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; the whole [is] vanity. What profit hath man in all his toil wherewith he toileth under the sun?”

“Generation cometh and generation goeth, and the earth forever abideth. And riseth the sun and setteth the sun, and to its place hasteth (lit. panteth) where it riseth. Going toward the south and turning round toward the north, turning continually goeth the wind, and in its turnings returneth the wind. All the rivers go to the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again. All things [are] fatiguing—; one cannot express [them]: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing. What hath been [is] what will be, and what hath been done, what will be done; and there is not all new under the sun. Is there a thing whereof one saith, See, this is new? It belonged to the ages that were before us. [There is] no remembrance of former things, nor shall there be remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall be after them” (vers. 1-11).

The introduction lays the thesis clearly before us; and this by a man not inspired only but suited personally to impress the homily beyond all that ever lived. Hence the importance of its emanating from king Solomon, and of the reader knowing on the highest authority that the words were his, and none other's. Impossible to convey this more simply and affectingly than by the way the Holy Spirit has chosen to effect it. Such a communication, strange at first sight, solemn increasingly on reflection, tells from God its own tale; which man has been always slow to learn, ready to believe that his life consists in the abundance of the things he possesses. It is not guilt, as in Psa. 32 which is here discussed, but the unhappiness of man whose heart rises not above the creature. The amplest means, the highest capacity, the most exalted rank, the most active mind, the most cultivated taste, yea, and wisdom above all men, only give intensity to the dissatisfaction and the misery; and Solomon was the man both to experience it in his departure from God and to give us the profit of it, when grace gave him to review and communicate it all for everlasting admonition. It is the fruit of the fall and of sin: what else could it be? “Vanity of vanities,” and not here and there only but “the whole is vanity” or evanescence, including most of all man without God; not the faith that looks above the sun to the resources of grace and in the fear that keeps His commandments. Our own idiom, “taking pains,” answers in its measure to the toil of man “under the sun,” profitless for happiness (ver. 3). “The shadow” earnestly desired by the hireling, how unsubstantial! Job 7. On the other hand, “he that doeth the will of God abideth forever;” and this is the more apparent when “the world passeth away and the lust thereof.” “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride (or vain glory) of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.” So clear and trenchant a revelation as this, however, awaited another day, when the Son of God was come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. Real repentance is but pessimism in unbelieving eyes.

The thesis is followed by four illustrations from the natural sphere (vers. 4-7), and by as many from the moral (vers. 8-11).

There is all the difference between the inanimate earth, and what has life upon the earth or in it. But what a gap between a sentient creature and that which but vegetates! still more between what has but a soul of life natural, and the human body into which Jehovah Elohim breathed the breath of life, and man, only man thereby, became a living soul; or, as this very book expresses it, “the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downwards” (chap. 3:21). Yet “generation goeth, and generation cometh, and the earth forever abideth.” What is there here to meet the void of man's heart?

Let him look up then at the sun, that brightest orb of a man's vision, which above all to his senses sheds light and heat; without which what would be the earth, and all its denizens, and most of all man? What of profit, or happiness, does he thence derive, as he looks from under it? “And the sun riseth, and setteth the sun, and hasteth to its place where it riseth.” Is this the spring of happiness that his spirit pines after? Orderly and unfailing movement is apparent in connection with the earth; but does this affect man's sense of evanescence in all his being and environment save to aggravate it?

Well, but the wind, which is the same Hebrew word as that which expresses the highest part of sentient and even intelligent nature, the wind whose movements are in the strongest contrast with mundane motion, is there any relief to be found for his tired spirit there? “Going toward the south and turning round toward the north, turning continually goeth the wind, and in Sits turnings returneth the wind.” Naught is there here to console his anxious spirit.

There remain the rivers or mountain streams: can they refresh a mind diseased? “All the rivers go to the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither rivers go, thither they go again.” Admirably for the earth and its atmosphere and every living creature; but not a drop of comfort for him that was made in God's image after His likeness; now that all creation is ruined and wretched through sin, all subjected to vanity, the whole of it groaning and travailing in pain together till now; and man its chief most of all feeling and lamenting, unless he renounce God and Satan sear him, and he be given up to the fatal dream of perfectibility through education and science and all the other devices of his unbroken will.

But these devices are just what the next four verses cover and expose in their futility to supply the needed value.

“All matters are fatiguing; one cannot express [them]: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.” Here the Preacher turns to all the things of nearer experience and direct human interest, and declares that all the things or words, fatigue (or as some think, feebleness), are beyond one's expression: not only so, but even for the senses of largest range and the easiest to please, the eye is not satisfied, nor the ear filled. The result is weariness and disappointment, not happiness. What a difference where one beholds the Son and believes on Him! For He is the Bread of life, and the believer feeding on Him hungers not nor ever thirsts more; and no wonder, seeing that the water He gives becomes in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. Fallen man becomes increasingly wretched, unless when under deadly opiates which end in the deeper misery of reaction.

Then is there not the enjoyment of novelty “What hath been is what will be, and what hath been done, what will be done, and there is not all new under the sun.” Granting this is the moral province, seen especially in what has been done; but is there not a matter of which it may be said, See, this is new? Even this hath been in, or belonged to, the ages that were before us.

But is there no pleasure thence, from the last infirmity of noble minds, as men say? “No remembrance of former things [is there], nor will be remembrance of those to come with persons that will be afterward.” Such is experience under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2

Ecc. 1:12- Chapter 2

AFTER the abstract introduction the Preacher enters on an experience, so personal that one might call it autobiography, and so full that it covers all human life. This is unbroken and evident in the portion that follows.

“I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all [is] vanity and a striving after wind. [That which is] crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom [is] much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (vers. 12-18).

“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also [was] vanity. I said of laughter, [It is] mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I searched in mine heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, mine heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what [it was] good for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all [kinds of] fruit: I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared; I bought men-servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem

“I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, concubines very many. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them: I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all [was] vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

“And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly: for what [can do] the man that cometh after the king? That which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes [are] in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also [was] vanity. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, [there is] no remembrance forever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been already forgotten. And

how doth the wise man die even as the fool! So I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me: for all [is] vanity and a striving after wind.

“And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun: seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be wise or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed wisdom under the sun. This also [is] vanity. Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labor wherein I had labored under the sun. For there is a man whose labor [is] with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skilfulness; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also [is] vanity and a great evil. For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of the heart, wherein he laboureth under the sun? For all his days [are] sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart taketh no rest. This also is vanity.

“[There] is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it [is] from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? For to the man that pleaseth him God giveth wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that pleaseth God. This also [is] vanity and a striving after wind” (2:-26).

What gives peculiar point is the personal position of the Preacher. If exemption from the sense of wretchedness, in the survey of man as he is on the earth, could be the portion of any, it might have been conceived to be the lot of king Solomon. It is his appraisal in the Spirit which lies before us, that faith might profit by all he tells. It is not from lack of power, interest, or research, any more than of capability or resources. He gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. The sense of its fruitlessness, and sorrow over its evil, were only the deeper in one who could best appreciate all. What he began with as a truth he only sealed as facts he had proved. “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Somehow death was in the pot. Crookedness was here; failure or defect there.

It was not so before sin entered into the world; on the contrary God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. When sin was there, God made the evil felt; and the consequence is here laid bare by the most conspicuous type of Him who will yet come in power and glory as well as righteousness, and bring the days of heaven upon the earth, seasons indeed of refreshing from the Lord's face; not simply witness to them as now, and of things higher still for the heavens, but of prophecy fully accomplished in times of restitution of all things. The honor is reserved for Him Who is worthy, the conqueror of Satan, the effectuator of God's will in and for the universe, the reconciler not only of us who believe, but of all things for that day and forever. Far different is this day, when crookedness and defect abide, too great for man, and not yet the time for God; but the misery meanwhile is felt fully and expressed in detail. Solomon's vast experience of wisdom and knowledge only probed the sore, whether on the side of wisdom to cultivate, or of madness and folly to eschew. This too he felt to be but pursuit of wind, “for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (chap. 1:12-18).

Hence mirth is tried next, and natural alleviation for those bitter of soul, as we hear in Prov. 31. It was all in vain, and the feeling of disappointment recurs (chap. 2:1-3). Might not activity in great works succeed better? This Solomon essayed and carried out with extraordinary diligence and

splendor; but reviewing all this work he wrought and the toil he toiled, he could rest in none of it: the whole was vanity and vexation of spirit, and no profit under the sun (vers. 4-11). His reflections follow on wisdom and madness and folly; for he knew what it must be for the man that enters after the king: at best a repetition of the same vain pursuit of satisfaction here below. Still it is allowed that there is a profit to wisdom above folly, as in that of light above darkness: the wise has his eyes in his head, while the fool walks in darkness; yet if to all is the same result, what an irony of event! So he had found it himself; and soon all would be alike forgotten here below, the one dying as the other: so that he had a disgust of life and hated all his toil; especially as it must be left to a successor, and who knows whether he will be wise or infatuated? Yet must he have power in all that toil and fruit of wisdom under the sun. This too was vanity. A feeling of despair ensued over all his toil, as he thought of an untoiling heir. For what was there but pain and vexation in his employment, even in the night his heart forbidding rest. Was not this too vanity? (vers. 11-23.)

The conclusion come to in vers. 24-26 is to receive thankfully what comes from the hand of God, Who gives man good in His sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner travail to gather and heap up, that it may be given to the good in God's sight. And what is this but vanity and vexation of spirit?

Chapter 36

Ecclesiastes 3-4

THE next division of the book embraces chaps 3, and 4. Whatever be the misery of man as such, and no creature under the heavens is so exposed or so sensitive to sorrow, with the awful dawning on his guilty conscience of what may and must be after death, he cannot but also perceive that he is under a system that orders providentially all that affects most nearly the changing life that now is. This is drawn out in what follows, comprehensively and clearly.

“To all is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (vers. 1-8).

Man's anxious toil can alter none of the facts. God's hand arranges; man's place is to bow. Cain rebelled and gained nothing but bitter loss; and many another has taken the way of Cain with the same issue invariably, no doubt. Man likes to rule, and none the less since he is fallen, sinful, and willful; but as creatures, none can rule aright, who does not serve One Who is over him, over all persons and all things. To fear Him is the beginning of wisdom; to forget and above all to deny Him is folly, ruinous now and evermore.

Hence the question asked in ver. 9, and negatived in what follows.

“What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set the world in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good so long as they live; and also, that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labor, is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God hath done it, that men should fear before Him. That which is hath been already; and that which is to be hath already been; and God seeketh again that which is passed away” (vers. 9-15).

It is wholesome for man to feel how little he can find out from the beginning to the end the working that God works. Of Himself we can only receive what God reveals; but this is not the question here discussed. The Preacher accordingly speaks his conviction that there is nothing better for them—nothing good in them—but to rejoice and to do good; as He had shown in His work (whatever man or Satan had done to the contrary) only what is excellent and appropriate. Man should in Him confide, endowed as he is, yet in a scene altogether beyond him; and then what must the Maker be? As man, he is to receive what his nature needs, provided ungrudgingly for him to see or enjoy good in all his labor. What could man's toil have availed, unless it were God's gift?

Then he enlarges beautifully on “whatsoever God doeth.” How indeed could it be otherwise? As our Savior said, “There is one good, even God “, nor would He be called good by one who did not confess Him to be God: if not God, not good in the real absolute sense of the word; yet became He man in the fullest dependence on God, as He calls us to be.

From ver. 16 the Preacher shows that God's judgment is the key to all the present confusion. So it is for man, till the Son of God came and brought in grace and truth which gives the light of God fully.

“And moreover I saw under the sun, that in the place of judgment wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness wickedness was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time for every purpose and every work. I said in mine heart, It is because of the sons of men that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but as beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no preeminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?” (vers. 15-22).

How vivid the picture revelation even then drew, when only the first man stands before us, not as now the Second man in Christ risen and glorified! The world was not so old in wickedness when the wise king reigned and preached; nor was it of heathen only he spoke, but of the favored people too. Alas! Christendom has only brought in more subtlety in impiety and unrighteousness for all professors who are not born anew. Outwardly, and this is what he speaks of here, the same end of death awaits men and beasts. It is avowedly but what is under the sun. The veil is not removed. Yet he takes care to raise the question: who knoweth the spirit of the sons of men that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? If man knows not with certainty, and hence is prone to vain discussion, God not only knows but has revealed fully by and in our Lord Jesus, Who brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel. If man is bad, and he surely is, God is good beyond all creature measure; and as this was always true, so it is now proved perfectly in Christ.

Chap. 4.

Here the Preacher turns, from unjust judgments, where there was most guilt, to the sufferers under them often without succor or sympathy: a state apt to provoke reprisals and revolution, only increasing yet more the disorder of sin.

“Then I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive; yea, better than them both did I esteem him which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

“Then I saw all labor and every skilful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

Better is an handful with quietness, than two handfuls with labor and striving after wind" (vers. 1-6).

Till Christ return, there is no adequate correction or redress. The Preacher, who only speaks here of things present, could but praise the dead who had passed away, or the unborn who saw nothing. Such is man, that success only excites envy in the neighbor, and bitter self-mortification in the fool. The quiet thankful soul here, as before, alone is wise.

Then the vanity of selfishness is portrayed from ver. 7, and the value of fellowship from ver. 9, from which the king is not exempt, especially as he may be foolish and the people fickle (vers. 13-16). Vanity and vexation reign everywhere.

"Then I returned and saw vanity untie: the sun. There is one [that is alone], and he hath not a second; yea, he hath neither son nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labor, neither is his eye satisfied with riches. For whom then, do I labor, and deprive my soul of good? This also is vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he faileth, and hath not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth: but how can one be warm alone? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

"Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition any more. For out of prison he came forth to be the king; yea, even in his kingdom he was born poor. I saw all the living which walk under the sun, that they were with the child, the second, that stood up in his stead. [There was] no end of all the people, of all them over whom he was: yet they that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind" (vers. 7-16).

Never will the state of man and the world be a joy to the glory of God, till He come again and come in power to reign, Who first came to glorify God in obedience and suffering for sin, and thus to lay the foundation for blessing in righteousness evermore.

Chapter 37

Ecclesiastes 5-6

A natural division begins with chap. 5, which may be said to stretch over the following chapters also. It has the form of exhortation at the start, but soon passes into the prevalent character of the book. The first of rights is that God should have His; all is wrong when God is left out; and this is quite the root of the misery in man and the world. Yet neither the house of God, nor utterance before Him, nor vows to Him, can rescue from folly or vanity. Hearing from God takes precedence of speaking to Him. The weakness of man, fallen as he is, pursues him everywhere. The sole resource for the wise man is to fear God. Without this the religious effort but increases the danger. And the conviction of One higher than the high preserves from wonder. As yet all is out of course. So far is rank or wealth from Him all. A king depends on the field; and no resources satisfy the possessor, but fall to others; so that the laborer's lot is often preferable, and riches a hurt instead of a comfort, and no permanency either, and thus he goes as he came naked. Where the profit of such labor? When things are received from God as His gift, how sad to see riches, possessions, honor, with incapacity to enjoy! Long life, and numerous offspring, in such a case do not extract the sting: he is worse off than an abortion. Insatiable desire ruins all. Contention is vain with Him that is mightier than he. God, not man, knows what is good for him, and God reveals an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading reserved in heaven; but till Christ died and rose, it was comparatively hidden. Misery here was plain, especially to the wise.

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words he few. For a dream cometh with a multitude of business: and a fool's voice with a multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words [are] also vanities: but fear thou God.

“If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for one higher than the high regardeth; and there are higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is every way: the king is served by the field.

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the fullness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

“There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt; and those riches perish by evil adventure; and if he hath begotten a son, there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall

take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that laboureth for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he is sore vexed and hath sickness and irritation.

“Behold, that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labor, wherein he laboureth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him with the joy of his heart” (vers. 1-20).

Chap. 6.

“There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy upon men: a man to whom God giveth riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacketh nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it; this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, but his soul be not filled with good, and moreover he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For it cometh in vanity, and departeth in darkness, and the name thereof is covered with darkness; moreover it hath not seen nor known the sun; this hath rest rather than the other. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place? All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what advantage hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor man, that knoweth to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

“Whatsoever hath been, the name thereof was given long ago, and it is known that it is man neither can he contend with him that is mightier than he. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun"? (vers. 1-12).

What a contrast is this life of “days” and “vanity” and “shadow” with life eternal, now given in Christ to the believer and the bright hope of being with Him Who is its source and fullness where He is, and we shall have its perfect unhindered expansion and display in its proper heavenly sphere! But all was veiled then. Now life and incorruption Christ has brought to light through the gospel.

Ecclesiastes 7

Here the Preacher turns from the argumentative strain of what precedes to exhortative maxims of a practical kind, however paradoxical in form. They are wise words in the midst of vanity and sorrow, to guard the man when the evil cannot yet be judged in power or redressed.

“A [good] name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. [It is] better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that [is] the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools in the house of mirth. [It is] better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so [is] the laughter of the fool. This also [is] vanity. Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish; and a gift destroyeth the understanding. Better [is] the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit [is] better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. Say not thou, How “is it that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this. Wisdom [is] good with an inheritance: yea, more excellent [is it] for them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defense, [even as] money [is] a defense: but the excellency of knowledge [is, that] wisdom preserveth the life of him that hath it. Consider the work of God: for who can make straight [that] which he hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity enjoy good, and in the day of adversity consider: God hath even made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything that shall be after him” (vers. 1-14).

Prov. 22 opens with a kindred sentiment: “A name is rather to be chosen than great riches, favor is better than silver and gold.” Men do not think so, still less so act; but thus it is; and the loss is irreparable. The day of death closes the sorrow of the world, into which birth ushers fallen man. No doubt, Christ changes all; but this is not the truth discussed here, but the present scene. Hence the profit of going to the house of mourning over that of feasting, and of rebuke from the wise over the song of fools: which is mere noise and blaze for a moment. Again, the affliction of life, or oppression, is apt to daze a wise man, as a gift to destroy the heart's purpose; so that the end of a matter is better than its beginning, and longsuffering than highmindedness. And as it is well to guard against hasty anger, so especially against retaining it. Nor do they inquire wisely who assume that the former days were better than these. Wisdom with an inheritance is good and profitable here below. It is a shadow or shelter, as is money, yet how differently! For the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to him that has it. Hence the folly of fighting against the goads, of lack of sympathy with what God orders of joy or sorrow. Our true wisdom is in dependence on Him.

All [this] have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a righteous one that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked one that prolongeth [his life] in his evil-doing. Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? [It is] good that

thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from that withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers that are in a city. Surely [there is] not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Also take not heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

“All this have I proved in wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it [was] far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who will find it out? I turned about, I and my heart, to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason [of things], and to know [that] wickedness [is] folly, and [that] foolishness [is] madness: and I fund a thing more hitter than death, even the woman whose heart [is] snares and nets, whose hands [are] bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, [laying] one thing to another, to find out the account; which my soul still seeketh, but I have not found: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (vers. 15-29).

The Preacher notices like Job a just man suffering to the utmost thereby, and a wicked prolonging his days by his wickedness, and lays down a caution against pushing even good to excess. There is such a thing as being righteous and wise overmuch. Exaggeration is never of God in truth or anything else. It sacrifices other relationships. and exposes to ruin. But righteousness binds, as spurious wisdom must be shunned: the fear of God guides one safely. Wisdom then strengthens more than mighty allies, bearing in mind too the failure of even a just man, and guarding against sensitiveness to detraction the resources of the mean, as the report of it is of the impudent. Besides, have you never been guilty of it? Lastly, a most touching confession follows (from ver. 28) of the wise man's conscious lack of wisdom. Christ is made wisdom unto us. In Him we find and have what Solomon found altogether beyond him—beyond him how far! a double depth: how could any find it out? He turned, he and his heart, to know and to investigate, to seek wisdom and device, and to know wickedness as folly, and he found a bitterness beyond death in woman when ensnaring with a seductive heart and with hands that keep fast hold. How deeply the king had drunk of this fatal cup! By God's good hand alone could come deliverance: the erring one is taken captive. He that had sought his pleasure there was miserably disappointed: one man in a thousand had he found to his mind, but not a woman. Others have looked to God for one as a helpmate, and not in vain; but not the king who trusted his wisdom and had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. It was the old, old story: God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices. Life is only a failure where God and His way are forgotten; and the wise made his folly in departing from it more conspicuous. Here he tells the tale sadly for universal profit.

Ecclesiastes 8

The close of the last chapter is the manifest transition to the beginning here. Bitter to the royal Preacher was his refection on an experience he had proved so thoroughly. Nevertheless self-reproach did not lessen his sense of the value of wisdom.

“Who [is] as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. [I counsel thee], Keep the king's command, and [that] in regard of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go out of his presence; persist not in an evil thing: for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, because the king's word hath power; and who may say unto him, What dost thou? Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth time and judgment: for to every purpose there is a time and judgment; because the misery of man is great upon him: for he knoweth not that which shall be; for who can tell him how it shall he? There is no man that hath power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war: neither shall wickedness deliver him that is given to it. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man hath power over another to his hurt. And withal I saw the wicked buried, and they came to the grave; and they that had done right went away from the holy place, and were forgotten in the city: this also is vanity” (vers. 1-10).

Wisdom is inseparable from the fear of the Lord, its beginning; and consists of entrance into His mind, and thus solves questions otherwise inscrutable in a skein so tangled as man everywhere offers as he is now. Nor this only; it transfigures himself, be he ever so plain, and changes the strength of his face, bold as it may be by nature. So in the N. T. let your moderation be known to all men, trying as circumstances may be. Obedience is a first principle, as the Preacher lays down emphatically and this not for wrath but for con science' sake—the oath of God. Haste to go out of his sight is as dangerous as persisting in an evil; for power is of God, and he wieldeth not the sword in vain. Power from the people is a base falsehood, and a usurpation fatal to those that forget God and. His word. Rulers are a terror not to good work but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do the good thing, and thou shalt have praise from it, for he is God's minister to thee for good. The wise heart discerns time and judgment: so we see in scripture and prove in daily life, and here dependence on God is invaluable. The king needs it at least as much as his subjects. So Solomon began; not so did he proceed when wealth and honor and pleasure filled his life; but so now in repentance he feels and teaches us all. For every purpose is it requisite; and as the wisdom that discerns time and judgment is rare, so is the misery of man great for the want of foreseeing. For he knows not what is coming and can find none on earth to tell him. Oh, if he but looked up to Him Who knows all and bowed to His will! This is part of divine wisdom and open to all that fear Him in the midst of creature changes, with death the closing scene of man here. Who has control over the spirit, who over the day of death? Where the discharge in that war? Wickedness assuredly shall deliver none given to it. All this had the Preacher seen, and set his heart to all the working which is done under the sun, the time when man ruleth man to his hurt. He had on the one hand seen the wicked buried and gone, and on the other those that had done right

gone from the place of the holy and forgotten in the city. This too is vanity, and yet plain fact.

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, because they fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his [days], which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there are righteous [men], unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him in his labor the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun.

“When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also [there is that] neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) then I beheld all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because however mush a man labor to seek out, yet he shall not find; yea moreover, though a wise man think to know, yet shall he not be able to find” (vers. 11-17).

How vividly and unquestionably a true picture of mankind as they are! Evil abounds and nourishes till the Lord come; yet no less surely the moral government of God secures good to those that fear before Him, and retribution to those that fear Him not: were they to live long, it is but a shadow. Whatever vanity be in that reaching righteous ones according to the doing of the wicked, and to wicked ones according to the working of the righteous, God is not mocked nor man overlooked. But it is not yet the day when righteous power permits no evil and good openly triumphs? This is reserved for the kingdom, as the kingdom is for Christ appearing in glory and those who suffered with Him then glorified.

Meanwhile the Preacher again praises the thankful acceptance in this mingled scene of what God gives for the life that now is, without perplexity as to its riddles, which escape even such as sleep not day or night: they are beyond man's ken to solve, let him be ever so wise. Christ alone clears up, and the Spirit sent to dwell in all that are His; for He searches all, yea, the depths of God; but this is lost, just so far as with a divided heart man is trusted.

Ecclesiastes 9

Things are in no such sort or degree an answer to God's government as to enable any one to draw from present events a just conclusion. Yet the Preacher lays down two axioms beyond dispute: the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; yet no man knows either love or hatred—the whole before them. Outwardly there is the one issue alike to all; one thing happens to bad and good.

“For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: whether it be love or hatred, man knoweth it not; all is before them. All things [come] alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in [their] heart while they live; and, after that, they go to the dead. For to him that is joined with all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white, and let not thy head lack unguent. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou labourest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol whither thou goest” (vers. 1-10).

Conformity to nature, the pride of pagan philosophy, utterly fails. Sin has ruined and confused all things here below. To look to One above the ruin, Who abides the same forever, was the only wisdom and righteousness; and now that He has revealed Himself in His Son, this is incomparably plainer. Death is the end of all here below; but in Him is life, and those who believe have it in Christ. Before He came death could not but be dreadful: so dim even to the believer was the light beyond. A live dog is better than the lion when dead, he says. Now we can pronounce it gain, and very much better than the life of this world; for it is to depart and be with Christ. But of old the present life was the sphere of knowledge and activity, which death closed in darkness. Hence the advice to accept and enjoy thankfully what God gave “all the days of the life of thy vanity.” Heaven is quite out of sight, and awaited His coming down to make it known, Who is now gone up, even the Son of man Who is in heaven, as He could say on the earth. And hence too the call to earnestness in what lay before each.

Then is pursued from ver. 11 another consideration, not merely an end so dark and imminent, but a course meanwhile so precarious that no advantages can secure.” I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor

yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of knowledge; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, even so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them" (vers. 11, 12). The providential season may never come, without which the swift and the strong, the wise and the prudent and the instructed fail; and ruin ensues, instead of the prize. Is then wisdom useless? Far from it; and this he illustrates in vers. 13-15. "I have also seen wisdom under the sun on this wise, and it seemed great unto me: there was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: and there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man."

The comment is two-fold. "Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of the wise spoken in quiet are heard more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good" (vers. 16-18). Yet this age does not always appreciate. The poor are despised by the first man, not by the Second; and one sinner destroys much good, even though wisdom excels weapons of war.

Ecclesiastes 10

This chapter, as well as those that follow, differs from those before in dropping almost entirely the language of personal experience, save the close of chapter 12 which fittingly recurs to it as a conclusion of the book. In the rest we have aphoristic remarks confirming the argument of the book: caution against the indulgence of folly even in the smallest thing; and commendations of wisdom in practical affairs, and for every class, subjects or rulers, in public as in private life, in word as well as deed.

“Dead flies cause the ointment (or conserve) of the apothecary to stink [and] putrefy: [so] a little folly him that is valued for wisdom and honor. The heart of a wise one is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left. Yea, also, when the fool walketh by the way, his heart faileth, and he saith to (or of) every one he is a fool” (Eccl. 10:1-3).

Men who stand out from their fellows for reputed wisdom are peculiarly exposed to the censoriousness of others far inferior in weight or worth, who cultivate the cheap ability of spying out a flaw to their disparagement. It is therefore of moment to cut off occasion from such as seek occasion. For as literally the heart is at the left hand by nature, wisdom gives it figuratively a quite different place for prompt effective action as it is called for. The fool is slow to apprehend the bearing of a principle, and his measures are awkward and vain. More than that, even in the ordinary walk of the day, he never discerns the right thing at the right time, but blurts out his folly at every opening of his mouth to each companion or passer-by.

“If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yieldingness pacifieth great offenses. There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error that proceedeth from the ruler: folly is set in great heights, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen slaves upon horses, and princes walking as slaves upon the earth” (Eccl. 10:4-7).

This is an application of wisdom, and an exemplification of folly. The ruler's towering spirit naturally provokes; but wisdom strengthens propriety to keep the subject place, and, if an answer be called for, to give a soft one. Mere right never rectifies wrong, but the grace that gives up self and serves. And what the great king saw is not an uncommon sight in all ages, and trying enough even to the wise and meek, the error proceeding from the ruler, that exalts the unworthy and that abases the worthy. But wisdom can bow and wait without contention, which would not remedy the evil but add another.

“He that diggeth a pit falleth into it, and whoso breaketh through a fence, a serpent biteth him. Whoso moveth stones is hurt therewith; he that cleaveth wood is endangered (or wounded) thereby. If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he apply more strength; but wisdom is profitable for success. If the serpent bite without enchantment, then the master of the tongue (or charmer) hath no profit. The words of a wise man's mouth [are] gracious, but the lips of a fool swallow him up. The beginning of his mouth's words is foolishness, and the end of his mouth mischievous madness. But a fool multiplieth words. Man knoweth not what shall be; and what shall

be after, who telleth him? The toil of the foolish wearieth him (i.e. each one), for he knoweth not how to go to the city" (Eccl. 10:8-15).

The folly of the ruler is apt to awaken reactionary folly among the ruled. Wisdom is not given to change: and here the preacher presents the result which so often ensues on either side. The dug pit, the broken hedge, the removing of stones, and the cleaving of wood, especially with indifferent tools, are all dangerous enterprises, not for others only, but for those that essay them more particularly; none more so than breaking down a landmark whence issues a biting serpent. As wisdom is of profit to direct, so is it to enchant and escape the deadly. As a fool's lips are peculiarly destructive to himself, wise words are grace and minister it to others; instead of being like the words of a fool's mouth, folly at the beginning, and mischievous madness at the end. Nor is there a more frequent sign of a fool than multiplying talk, and resolving to have the last word. For man knows not what shall be even in his own time, still less what is to be after him. The toil of fools is but labor for naught save weariness; they cannot, for very heedlessness, tell the road into the city, though it would be hard to find anything that needs less intelligence.

Then we have an animated address of woe contrasted with blessing: woe, where a land has for its king a youth in character as well as years, and princes who live for self-indulgence instead of devotedness to their duty; blessing, where the king is bred in noble associations, and his companions cherish aims in accordance with their place. The view is generalized a little; and the danger of petulant speech pressed in closing.

"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Happy art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! By slothfulness the roof sinketh in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaketh. A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh glad the life; and money answereth all things. Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter" (Eccl. 10:16-20).

Ecclesiastes 11

In this chapter, or at least its first half, we find not so much warning as exhortation in the dark style of apothegm which the writer delights in.

“Cast thy bread on the face of the waters, for after many days thou shalt find it. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be on the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if the tree fall toward the north and toward the south, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Eccl. 11:1-6).

Earlier in the book is shown the folly of setting the heart on any object under the sun; and if any understood more deeply what is in man and in the world, as the writer in fact did, it is only the more profound sorrow. Receiving what God gives and using it all in His fear is wisdom.

Now the Preacher exhorts to liberal action in assured faith, as he may well do who knows that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. The waters may be unpromising for bread or even bread-corn; but casting in faith at His word is never in vain. One may have to wait many days, but He cannot fail, and thou shalt find it at length. Again, we are surrounded by need. The poor never pass away, as the world is full. The next word is “give a portion to seven,” not to one here or another there, but all round where need exists. Even so arrest not that you have to the end; for more need may unexpectedly arise. Therefore he says “and also to eight.” For what does anyone know of evil here below? Little indeed; yet we are in an evil world, and for what purpose? Behold the perfection of this in Christ Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. Yet was it from a resource above the world, as was plainly proved when He bade the crafty ensnarer show Him a denarius: He had none, but far better which passes not away.

Whether one look up or down, one may see how God orders on the earth for the help of needy man, constant object of His compassion. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree fall toward the south or toward north, there it shall be. Goodly sights are they both! Yet God turns them to the use of an ungrateful race. Wherever we may be, we too can serve God by helping man in his wants, as Christ did, the perfect Servant no less than perfect Savior. Never a cry without an answer of goodness, and as ready to act in the wilderness for man's need as if He had not invited His disciples apart there to rest awhile, Himself unwearied in love everywhere.

Nor is it true wisdom to trust one's own prudence, or to be turned aside by objections and difficulties. “He that observeth the wind will not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds will not

reap.” Whatever may not be, God is; and God's word is plain, as to fear Him is wise. Appearances are meant to try faith in a world departed from God, Who worketh hitherto where all is wrong, instead of keeping sabbath as if all were right. So Christ, to the horror and hatred of all who idolize man and the world as they are, could and did say, “I work” even on the sabbath. So ought those that know Him, with a fresh power, besides the sense that all here is vanity.

It is true that man knows little of the wondrous working or the end of God. Why, what does he know of his own being? To say nothing of that which follows death, with its alarm save for the most hardened of unbelievers, what does he know of what precedes birth? “As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, how the bones [grow] in the womb of her that is with child, even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all.” But this is no excuse for self-indulgence, no right reason for inertness in the face of appalling need, suffering, sorrow, danger, death, in a world of sin and ruin. It is the louder call to act on His word Who deigns to direct our path in simple faith and earnest love, as we may surely add who confess the Lord Jesus; the spirit of which here dimly led him who saw dimly the Coming One. Therefore follows the word, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both [shall be] alike good.”

The closing words return to the more wonted strain of chapter 11.

He begins with any, old or young; he winds up with a warning of grave pungent irony to him who in his levity and pride overlooked sin and sorrow, and withdraws for a moment the veil from his coming into God's judgment. Youth and the prime of life, like all the rest here, are vanity. Jesus Christ, we can add, as the blessed contrast for man now, is “the same yesterday and to-day and forever,” never more manifestly God, the true God, and eternal life, than when He became man and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth. “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Ecclesiastes 12

The last chapter drops the irony so evident just before and urges the solemn truth of judgment, which admitted only of the plainest and gravest appeal. It is accordingly the admirable conclusion of a book of telling truth (which unbelief readily misreads), but full of serious instruction where faith searches for profit.

“Remember also thy Creator(s) in the days of thy youth before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, be darkened, and the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song shall be brought low; yea, they shall be afraid of [that which is] high, and terrors [shall be] in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; and the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all [is] vanity” (vers. 1-8).

It is an affecting call from early days to set God before the soul on the one hand, and to forget not on the other the frailty of fallen man, with death and judgment its portion, as man is. Although it is the fashion to doubt and deny that there is an allegorical description, in itself it seems manifest, suitable to the writer, and worthy of the inspiring Spirit. There may be difficulty as to every detail in the application; but this is so true of scripture generally that none need wonder if it be so here.

Ver. 2 expresses external objects and conditions of the greatest power by day or night no longer influencing as they did; then in ver. 3 the infirmity of man's members, once strong to guard or sustain, no less than the feebler ones, so necessary for the nourishment of the body, and the perception of things great or small. Then in ver. 4 is described the failure of human powers for action or speech in public, or to revive what gave pleasure once; while ver. 5 represents the growing inability and fears and decay. The sign of old age is the hoary head and the shrinking from burden or effort, betokening the approach of the grave, with its accompaniments, when the internal powers all fail, and the body returns to its kindred dust, the spirit to Him Who breathed His immortalizing breath into man alone on earth. So pungent a description of human decay, where the word of God is honored, may well warn of the danger of deferring the heed due to Him from such as we are. If fallen man, made in God's image, sink into infirmities more overwhelming than any creatures set under him in God's order, what folly to defer the prime wisdom of fearing God!

“And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, [and] set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and [that which was] written uprightly, [even] words of truth. The words of the

wise [are] as goads, and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, [which] are given from one shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by them; of making many books [there is] no end; and much study [is] a weariness of the flesh. [This is] the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this [is] the whole [duty] of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether [it be] good or whether [it be] evil" (vers. 9-14).

It is not surprising that in a growingly self-complacent rationalistic age men should think themselves competent to question the wisdom of the Preacher, and his acceptable words. To such the words of the wise cannot be goads; their fatal self-sufficiency makes them pitfalls or stumbling blocks. To the faithful they are words of truth, and the collections of them as nails fastened in. They are given from one shepherd, and the reader fails not to be warned by them. Of the many books of man there is no end, and their study is but weariness of the flesh.

But one thing is needful, as our Savior said; and the royal Preacher pointed to the same conclusion. "Let us hear the end of the whole matter," and forget it not. "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Christ alone, while confirming this, gives us far more as in Him, and lets us into heavenly things, and the divine nature in a way then impossible to be known and enjoyed. But to fear and obey Him is ever right. "For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or whether evil."

Chapter 44

Education of the World: Opposed to Scripture, Christ and Christianity

OPPOSED TO SCRIPTURE, CHRIST, AND CHRISTIANITY.

THE principle of the essay is each successive age incorporating into itself the substance of the preceding. The analogy is the law, Christ, and the Spirit.

But this wholly contradicts the principle. For these are no incorporations of past growth or acquirements, but specific revelations of a full and absolute character in themselves—indeed, as to the two last, the actual coming of divine persons.

Not only so; but the law was given when men had plunged into every loathsome wickedness, and had learned to worship demons instead of God; so that God had given them up to a reprobate mind, even as to what became them as men. And the law was given therefore to a people separated out from the rest of the world. It was no progress, but a revelation to a peculiar people.

When Christ came, it was after this law had been broken, and the people become a whited sepulcher. He likewise, though introducing universal principles, separates a people to Himself, and is entirely rejected by men.

When the Holy Ghost comes, we know on the Lord's own authority, that the world cannot receive Him, because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him.

In a word, it was no progressive incorporation by one age of the acquirements of the last, but revelations given to a people separated to receive them: the first, because men had departed utterly from God; the second, because the depositaries of the first had broken and falsified it, as they crucified Him Who came. As to the third, it was manifested in power at the first; but, instead of progress or development, there has been a corruption by the denial of the presence of the Spirit and setting aside of the word, which has made the annals of the church the most painful history in the world (as has been insultingly said, “the annals of hell”). For if the degradation of heathenism was more open, it was not so morally abominable, nor clothed with the forms of Christian grace. Sin among heathens was horrible to the last degree, and consecrated to deities who were only demons to help men's lusts. But there were no Christian indulgences to allow or forgive it, no tax for what it was to be compounded at, no selling of grace and license for what was condemned. This was reserved for the church, and in the outward sense justly.

Remark here another point of vast importance in the present day when development is so much spoken of. What God reveals is revealed perfect in its place and for its purpose at first; and man declines from it. There is progress in the character of God's revelations compared with one another; but in themselves none. There cannot be progress in a revelation (it is itself); there may be in revelations. A revelation is given perfect; and man declines from it. That man should make progress in a revelation denies its nature. Now the things the rationalist speaks of were revelations; different in nature, but still revelations.

When we come to Christ, there is another immensely important truth, to talk of progress wherein is blasphemy: He is God manifest in flesh; He is perfection. Hence the apostle John tells us to abide in that which we have heard from the beginning.

And we find here too a principle of scripture, the ignorance and denial of which is the root of all these errors and modern reasonings. The scripture presents Christ as the Second Man, the Last Adam. There is no progress of man in flesh spoken of, He is to put off the old man (or has done so), and put on the new which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. He is to reckon himself dead. He is crucified with Christ. He speaks of “when we were in the flesh.” That is, the blessed and admirable doctrine of scripture is the absolute moral judgment of man as man, a child of Adam in flesh, because sin is there; and in the delight the new man has in God, he cannot bear sin. He has crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, and lives as alive to God in the Last Adam! “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The great ordinances of Christianity declare this as its nature. We are buried in baptism unto death and risen again; we celebrate in the Lord's supper a Christ, not Who instructed us (though blessedly He has instructed those who are quickened, and warned the dead) but died for us.

Thus Christianity is founded on the total condemnation of the old man (only that Christ has died for it in grace, and thus, as a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh), and the introduction of a new, but a new connected, in the power of Christ's resurrection, with that which is heavenly, where Christ now sits. The object of this new life is not here, though its display is. It is the true character of power in a creature to live, in the circumstances it is in, from motives and a power which are not found in them; or else he is governed by them, that is, he is weak. So with the Christian: with peace in his conscience through a dying Christ, he has a heavenly Christ before him; and, his motives being wholly out of this world, he has through grace power to live in it according to the motives which govern him.

This is not the place to unfold all the exquisite internal beauty of this principle, wrought out for its perfecting in dependence on grace, in the midst of the conflicts we have with a world of evil, and with a lower nature in itself prone to it; and the continual association with Christ, our glorified Head, the Man at God's right hand, in which it is made good, so as to grow up to Him Who is the Head in all things. This would be to unfold the contents of all the Epistles as the development of it in teaching, and the Gospels as the exhibition of the perfection of it in Christ. But enough has been said to show that the system of the New Testament is the setting aside of the old man, the flesh, the first Adam, because there is sin (and sin is become unbearable when the true light, Christ, is in us as life), and the possession—the substitution for that—of the new man, Christ our life, unfolded in a life which we live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Was He a point of progress in the development of human nature, of Adam's fallen life? or the perfect exhibition of a new thing—that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us, and became the source of it to others, while He has died for the guilt and sin which characterized the old?

Life and incorruptibility were brought to light by the gospel; but this life did not begin to exist then. Christ, the Second Man, out of heaven, is a life-giving Spirit—has not merely a living soul, though this of course He had; and, communicated this life to others from Abel—I may well say and doubt it not, from Adam downwards. But then for that very reason, though the great contrast, the enmity of

man—of the carnal mind against God—was not brought out till the Cross, when the perfection of God revealed in flesh was fully presented, those who partook of this life through grace were hated and rejected of the world, whose boasted progress is depicted to us by the new philosophy. “He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.” They were moral contradictions. One loved God, judged self, and owned divine authority. The other sought self and would none of God for that reason. Conscience there was and is in all. Conscience judges good and evil; but a new life is good in—a divine way.

Hence it is found that, with all this modern school of rationalism, even its most infidel forms, Christ will be recognized, provided He be a restorer of what scripture denounces as flesh. They will use what to many a simple mind appears Christian language. But the just condemnation of a sinner, the absolute condemnation of the flesh as well as the new life in Christ, and atonement for the sins of the old life—all this will not be heard of; and into this anti-Christian system even Christians fall. It exalts man; and all the blessed light of God, the heavenly place into which Christ is entered, is lost.

J. N. D.

Chapter 45

Meditations on Ephesians 1:1-14

THERE is an immense difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and that which precedes (to the Galatians). There the apostle has to descend to the lowest scale of grace, and repeat foundation truths, because of the condition of souls. Here he writes freely of the most exalted themes—the counsels of God concerning Christ and the church. The Galatians were being drawn from the ground of faith after circumcision, worldly elements, and works of law; consequently the apostle had to recall them to the true ground of justification before God, faith in Christ's work. In Ephesians he was able to speak “wisdom among the perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6).

It is interesting, yet solemn, to note the difference between this Epistle and that to the Colossians, which most nearly approximates to it in doctrine. In Colossians he brings forward association with Christ dead and risen, but does not carry us into heavenly places. Our hearts, our mind, should be there; but we are viewed as here. He dwells upon the personal glories of the Head and the fullness that resides in Him, rather than the privileges and blessings that are ours in virtue of our union with Him. Why? Again, because of the need of souls. Meat in due season is requisite, and the condition of souls must he consulted. The Colossians were being attracted by philosophy and the tradition of men, &c., and needed to be reminded of the headship of Christ, in Whom they were complete. In the case of the Ephesians, however, there was apparently nothing in particular to rebuke or to warn against; they were exhorted to walk worthy of their calling. Consequently the apostle's heart was free, and he could write freely and fully of the wondrous blessings and privileges which pertain to us in Christ.

Note how he introduces his apostleship: “Paul apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” Quite different is this from the opening of Galatians: “Paul apostle, not of men, neither by luau, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead.” Both forms of speech are in keeping with the character of the Epistles in which they are found. Paul was careful to establish for the Galatians that his ministry did not flow from Jerusalem as a center; nor had he derived his authority through a human channel; but all was of Grid, having Christ risen as center. Now in Ephesians, lie purposes to show that all blessings for the saints in heavenly places flow from God's will (see in chap. 1:5, 9, 11); he therefore tells us that his apostleship had the same spring.

Paul begins with praise, as also Peter (1 Peter 1:3). How could he write such divine realities without thus bursting forth? The inspired writers were channels—the Holy Ghost being responsible for every word written by them (1 Cor. 2:13); but they were not mere pens. Their affections were engaged, drawn forth doubtless by the Holy Ghost; and the truth therefore was inscribed by Paul with a worshipping heart. He speaks of God as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Farther on, in chap. 1:17, he speaks of “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ “; and, in chap. 3:14, of “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” These are the two titles under which God has been made known to us. Recall the Lord's words on the resurrection day, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God” (John 20:17). The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.

This is in direct contrast with the Jewish portion of old. Jehovah called the Jew to enjoy temporal blessings in earthly places, with Canaan as their seat, basket and store, good crops and vintage, their promised enjoyment, if obedient. But we are not called thus. The Spirit here expounds a deeper purpose formed in God's heart before the foundation of the world, that we should be before Him in heavenly glory with His Son. If there, we must have a suited nature. Could the natural man be at home with God, and find pleasure where all is holy? impossible; it is opposed to his very being. Moreover, supposing it were possible to be before Him with a conscience not at rest, where would be the joy? How blessed, therefore, that we are to be “holy and without blame before Him in love” “Holy,” because having His nature, a nature that finds its only portion in God— “Without blame,” in virtue of Christ's work for who shall lay anything to our charge? “In love,” His love flowing ever into our hearts, and back again to Him its source.

But if the God of our Lord Jesus Christ has done this, in the character of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has “predestinated us unto the adoption of children (sons) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,” he. This is a further step: not only nature but relationship. What grace! What part had we to perform? Man is not found here; all is “according to the good pleasure of His will.” He willed, and that is all. He has sought His own glory in doing all this for us: hence we read “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Our blessing is never the prime thought with God, but His own glory and the glory of Christ. How precious the change of expression in ver. 6, not “in Christ” but “in the Beloved!” “Accepted” is hardly the idea here, but rather “taken into favor “; and this “in the Beloved!” Recall the Lord's words in John 17:23: “that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.” How wonderful! Objects of the same Divine affection standing in the same relationship with the Father.

This leads to a passing notice of our former condition (Eph. 1:7); but it is not developed here, for the Spirit would engage us with God, His counsels and His will. And in chap. 2. it is gone into fully, where we are reminded solemnly of what we were. Here it is briefly said that we have redemption, the forgiveness of offenses through His blood. We were formerly Satan's slaves, needing redemption; we were offenders, needing forgiveness.

Further, God has “made known to us the mystery of His will.” He has revealed to us His great purpose to unite all earthly and heavenly things under Christ in headship, and has shown us our place of union with Him in the great scheme. What a position of confidence! (See John 15:15.)

We must not confound “the fullness of times” here with “the fullness of time” in Gal. 4. The latter expression is in connection with the coming of Christ. God has tested man in a variety of ways during different dispensations; and when the creature was proved to be helplessly bad and corrupt, He sent forth His Son. This was “the fullness of time.” But the phrase in Eph. 1:10 refers to the scheme when all the threads of God's purposes will have spun themselves out, and Christ shall take His place as Head over all above and below, the church sharing all with Him.

But not only do we see Christ's portion as Head of all things in heaven and earth, but our own portion is brought forward: “In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” Marvelous thought! we are to share with Him all that the Father has given Him. We have been predestinated to it “according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” This leads the apostle to say that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ. The apostle speaks of himself and his Jewish fellow-saints, who believed in Christ while hidden at the

right hand of God before His public manifestation to the world. The nation will not believe in Him until the day of display and will not be blessed till then, and then in an inferior way. This the Lord hinted to Thomas, who is a striking type of His people: “Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and (yet) have believed” (John 20:29). This is the church's peculiar place, called to believe in Him unseen, and to have the more exalted place of blessing before Him and with Him. But in Christianity the Jew is not blessed apart from the Gentile. Thus we read, “in Whom ye also (trusted) after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Jew and Gentile are united; both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross, and both blessed together.

The gospel is here called “the gospel of your salvation.” The gospel is spoken of in a variety of ways in the New Testament. It is called “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1), because it comes out from God and finds its spring in His own heart. It is the “gospel of His Son” (Rom. 1:9), because Christ is the object; it is God's testimony to men concerning His Son. It is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4); for it bears witness to the present exaltation of Christ as Man at the right hand of God in glory. It is also called “the gospel of peace,” and “the gospel of the grace of God.” But in Eph. 1 the Spirit says “the gospel of your salvation;” for it is the glad tidings, not only that all trespasses are forgiven in virtue of Christ's blood, and that sin is condemned in His death, but that the believer in Him is brought into complete salvation, a totally new place of heavenly blessing before God.

Following faith in the gospel is the Spirit's seal: “ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” It is important to see the difference between the Spirit's early work in the soul in convincing it of sin and producing faith in Christ, and sealing. The Spirit of promise is God's gift to all who have accepted Christ's work: the blood first, then the oil (Lev. 8). But He is not only the “seal,” He is also the “earnest of the inheritance.” The inheritance is not yet possessed by us (indeed the Heir has not yet received His rights); but all is blessedly sure, and the Divine Spirit is the pledge. “The redemption of the purchased possession” looks forward to the time when Christ will take possession of everything He purchased. Then creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, the changing of our bodies into His image at His coming being the first stage.

Chapter 46

Meditations on Ephesians 1:15-22; 2

This closes the introduction of the epistle, and the apostle pauses to pray for the saints. The prayer here is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (“Father of glory,” because Author of it), and that in chap. iii., to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, corresponding with the twofold title in ver. 3. Paul had heard of their “faith” and their love— “love to all the saints” being the outcome of faith in our Lord. Narrowness of heart misses His mind, whatever the day may be, though love does not display itself in the same way toward all. In the companion epistle (Colossians) the Spirit commends the saints for the same precious fruit. There are three parts in this prayer. The apostle desired them to know the hope of His calling; the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. The “calling” we have seen in ver. 3-5; we are to be holy and blameless before Him in love, having sonship according to the good pleasure of His will. The “inheritance” we get in vers. 9-11; we are to share all things with Christ the Heir. Note, it is God's inheritance (as also His calling); but He inherits it in the saints. It is not at all meant that the saints form the inheritance, as some have thought, such a notion having no ground but refutation in the N. T. We see it often written of Israel. Yet also God reserved to Himself the land of Canaan; it was His land, but He inherited it in His people, while they were His inheritance.

The apostle wished the saints to grasp the vastness of all three—the calling, the inheritance, and the power that wrought in Christ in raising Him from among the dead, and placing Him at God's right hand in heavenly places, with all things under His feet. It is God's display of power, not in creation, however wonderful, but in raising from the dead His Son, Who went down into death (where we were) bearing our sins, and Who now is in righteousness at His own right hand above, as the accepted Man, the second Adam, Head of the new creation. The same power will presently place us in the same glory; and meanwhile it gives us to enter into the precious meaning of union with Him there, whereby we walk upon our high places. “He hath put all things under His feet” is a quotation from Psa. 8. It will be seen in its day; He is Head of the body of the church meanwhile. Wondrous thought! the church is His fullness. His mighty grace has so ordered all, that He (the Head) is not complete without His members—all those who have been joined to Him on high by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 47

Meditations on Ephesians 2: Part 1

Chapter 1 ends by speaking of the church as Christ's body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all; chap. ii. shows us the materials of which the church is composed. Chap. 2 differs greatly from chap. 1 in its general bearing; for chapter 1 brings God forward, and shows us what He counseled before the world was, scarcely touching upon the condition in which He found His elect; while chap. 2 gives prominence to what we were, and details our low estate. Here we are bidden to look down; in the preceding chapter we are called to look up.

In speaking of our former condition the Spirit impresses a line of truth different from that in Romans There the sinner is viewed as living in his sins—here as dead, “dead in trespasses and in sins.” In Rom. 1 needed to be put to death, and I am shown my death with Christ; in Eph. 1 am viewed as dead, and now quickened together with Him. What more striking picture could the Spirit draw of our former state of corruption and helplessness? What can come forth from the dead but corruption? and where can the dead find help but in God Himself? Yet was it an active kind of death; for we “walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” The devil rules all in the world; his influence is all-pervading, and we were once under his power as all others. Another Spirit works in us now through grace. The enemy is called “the prince of the power of the air” here only; and this is quite in accord with the general character of this Epistle, which is occupied with the heavenlies. In 1 Peter he is spoken of as “a roaring lion,” and characteristically; for saints are there viewed as strangers and pilgrims passing through the wilderness, and it is in the wilderness we find the lion.

Up to this point the apostle had said “ye,” meaning the Gentiles to whom he was writing; but were the Jews better as to their former state? “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others” (ver. 3). The Jew, with all his privileges and favors, was not one whit better than the outside Gentile. There may be outward differences, but before God the ruin is complete. The desires of the flesh may be distinct from those of the mind; but both spring from the one evil source. The former would comprehend all that is base and foul; the latter, man's search after wisdom, which invariably leads him from God, and lands him in self-complacency, vanity, and infidelity. Solemn thought we ever should have delighted in and performed the will of God; but we loved not His way, preferring our own and indulging our “desires” (or “wills”) to the full. The opposite should be true now; His will, not our own, should be our unceasing delight. Christ as Man below never did His own will, but the will of His Father; and we are called to follow His steps. All this was our state by nature; we were then “children of wrath even as others.”

Where is hope to be found for the ruined? In God alone, and He is instantly brought in. His counsels were formed long before, irrespective of our nature and actings; but the Spirit is careful to tell us what we were when grace wrought in us to give us a part in and with the Christ of God. Note the largeness of the expressions: “rich in mercy"— “great love” — “the exceeding riches of His grace” is the language too strong? Not for the magnificent portion which is ours, through grace, in

Christ above. He loved us too “when we were dead in sins” —the first movement came from above and not from below— “and hath quickened us together with Christ.” Christ came down in grace to where we were; He found us in a state of death with sins upon us; He Himself went down into death bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. What else would have availed? But, having accomplished all, God has raised Him from among the dead, and He has gone up in the power of resurrection-life into the presence of His Father and God as the risen Man, Head of the new creation, where all is of God. And we have been quickened with the Christ—not merely quickened, but with Him. Quickening has always been true from the beginning; for man—irrespective of dispensational differences—needs to be born again to enter into the kingdom of God; but association in life with Christ was not thus developed until He died and rose. Is not this what He alluded to in John 10? “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” For we are not only “born anew,” which is true of saints in all dispensations, but we are associated in life with the risen Christ. He is the accepted and beloved One in the presence of God; we are the same through grace. He lives evermore; and because He lives, we live also. We are brought right into the heavenlies—already across Jordan—and made to sit together in Him: not with Him yet, but in Him. To this wondrous display of grace, in bringing us into such an exalted position, God will point in the ages to come; the exceeding riches of His grace will be everlastingly told out in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

It is noticeable that we are reminded here again and again that all is of grace, “faith” being the means, and this not of ourselves: it is the gift of God. Can God sanction boasting in His presence? Nay; he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. And so will it be forever.

Salvation is looked upon in Ephesians as an accomplished and present thing. In Phil. 2:12, 13, and Rom. 8:22-25, the believer is regarded as a pilgrim here below (as also in 1 Peter), beset with difficulties and dangers, and looking for salvation at the coming of the Lord Jesus. But this would not suit Ephesians, where we are viewed as blessed in the heavenlies. We have been and are saved. All is of God; it is His work alone. We were created in Christ Jesus for special good works (which God before prepared that we should walk in them).

Chapter 48

Meditations on Ephesians 2: Part 2

The apostle has said that salvation is not of works but of grace, that none should boast; but in ver. 10 he shows that works hold an important place in Christianity. “Dead works” are as valueless, if not as outwardly offensive, as “wicked works “; but believers are “created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” It answers to justification before men, as James speaks, which is in no way a contradiction of the doctrine of Paul in Romans, but its supplement. How else is reality proved? Believers may speak of faith in Christ's name, and of association with Him on high; yet the “good works” convince of truth more than mere words. But how are such works produced? Not by following the law as a rule of life (the Galatians, who followed it, fell to biting and devouring each other), but by learning Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost. Believers have been created anew; and in the new creation law has no place.

How striking that the apostle should bid the saints to look down in ver. 11! We are carried very high in ver. 7, and shown our place as sitting in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; we are now told to remember what we were. It is important to distinguish between self-occupation, and the remembrance of our ruined state. The former leads to doubt and fear; the latter to humility and deeper appreciation of grace.

The Ephesians, in their Gentile state, were called uncircumcision—a term of great reproach. (1 Sam. 14:6; 31:4). Circumcision was the sign of relationship with God (and more also): to be uncircumcised was to be altogether outside the circle of relationship and privilege. Consequently, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, they were apart from the Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world. All this is true of the Gentile: the Jew was outwardly nigh, had the promises, hoped in Christ Who should come, and had God's sanctuary and oracles. In the earlier part of the chapter the apostle lays down what is true of Jew and Gentile alike; here he emphasizes what was particularly true of the Gentiles.

But where has Christ's work brought the believer? Into the Jew's old place of nearness to God? Nay, but into a place incomparably nearer than the Jew ever conceived. Moreover, He has brought the believing Jew into the same place, having abolished all distinctions after the flesh. This is an immense advance on all Old Testament teaching. The prophets spoke much of blessing for Gentiles, but always in a subordinate way to the Jew (all of which will be realized in the millennial reign). But meanwhile God has brought out His better thing; and Jew and Gentile, believing in Christ, are brought into the same blessed place of nearness to God: humbling to Jewish prejudice doubtless, but none the less the will of God. There are thus in this period three classes in the world: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor. 10:34 The Jew, believing in Jesus, is brought out of his old Jewish standing; and the Gentile from his place of distance: both are reconciled unto God in one body, and both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

It is to be observed that God has “broken down” the wall which He Himself reared (it would have been sin for anyone else to have done so) of old. Jehovah said to His people, “I Jehovah am holy,

and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine" (Lev. 20:26). The godly gloried in this, and could say, "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Psa. 147:19, 20). So that Peter was warranted in telling Cornelius that it was an unlawful thing for a Jew to come unto, or keep company with, one of another nation. But such distinctions belong to the past. God's present work is the formation of the one body. Christ has abolished in His flesh the enmity (ver. 15). Peace is now proclaimed to the distant and to the nigh: and both draw near to the Father.

Therefore are we Gentiles 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. Here we have a new thought: not merely one body, but a building. Formerly God sanctioned a material house and dwelt in it in the midst of the people whom He had redeemed; but here we read of a temple of a very different order. The building on Moriah was disowned and empty ("your house is left unto you desolate" Matt. 23:38), and God was framing "a spiritual house," composed of living stones. Mark here it is God's building; not the work of man. We have to distinguish between the house as built by God, and as committed to human workmen. The first thought is to be found here, as well as in Matt. 16, and 1 Peter 2.

Viewed from this standpoint, all is perfect, as God's work ever is, and must be. The church against which the gates of hell cannot prevail is composed of living members, called and built by Christ Himself: no rubbish enters there. But how different when man's part is contemplated! In 1 Cor. 3 Paul and His associates are viewed as builders in the house. Paul had laid a foundation at Corinth: others had followed, and built upon it. There the warning is found; for some may build wood, hay, and stubble (instead of gold, silver, and precious stones), and lose their reward in the coming day—all their work being consumed, while yet others may defile the temple of God, and be destroyed. The latter class are not Christians at all. God deals with men according to their profession; and all who take the ground of being His servants, whether possessing life or not, will be dealt with on that ground. (Compare Matt. 24:8-11; 25:30). Men build with doctrines: the faithful servant teaches the truth as revealed, and gathers true souls; the careless laborer, whose teaching is indifferent, gathers those who too often prove to be unreal; while the false servant corrupts the spring, and poisons and ruins all who fall under his baneful influence.

In Eph. 2:21 the temple is viewed as progressing; "it groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." This would include every saint of this dispensation; and in this sense the temple is not completed until the Lord comes. "All the building" is the correct idea, not "each several building" as in RV. The latter rendering militates against the whole teaching of the epistle, which is the unity of the blessed in Christ.

In ver. 22, we get a further thought "in whom also ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Here we have, not the progressive thing, but the local thing—the gathered saints at Ephesus were God's habitation. Very similarly does the apostle speak to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. 3:16)? Note the difference in the language in (1 Cor. 6:9), where the saints are viewed individually. Precious, yet solemn, truth for saints to remember, that, as gathered, the Spirit of God is present, making them His habitation. How widely and long this has been overlooked in Christendom, one

scarcely need say, but it remains on the page of Scripture as the truth of God. Where believed, what room for human officers in worship, to say nothing of priests for us? Ministry or rule is another question.

Chapter 49

Meditations on Ephesians 3

Paul now begins to exhort, and touchingly speaks of himself as “prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” He regarded no second cause, but accepted his imprisonment from the Lord Himself. Precious principle for our hearts at all times! But it was for Gentiles' sake he was suffering. Most of his afflictions were the fruit of Jewish hatred; so repugnant to them was the indiscriminate grace proclaimed by Paul, which leveled fleshly pretensions and distinctions to the dust.

But though the apostle commences to exhort, he goes off into a long parenthesis (not unusual in his epistles), extending from verse 2 to verse 21, in which he explains his knowledge of the mystery of Christ; and he prays for the saints. Doubtless they had heard of the dispensation (or, administration) of the grace of God, which had been given him toward the Gentiles. It was by revelation that the Lord made known to him 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. Paul had had many visions and revelations of the Lord. The Lord's supper was directly revealed to him by the Lord, the manner of the rapture of the saints also; here he speaks of the mystery, Christ and the church. This had not been unfolded in other ages, but “hid in God.” The writings of the Old Testament prophets would be searched in vain for a hint of anything of the kind. Yet it was a purpose formed before the foundation of the world; but God had a time for its unfolding. Jewish apostasy and wickedness must reach their height; Christ must be presented to them and be rejected; redemption must he accomplished; the Son must he exacted as man by the right hand of God; and the Spirit must descend, ere God would open out the eternal purpose formed in His heart for Christ's glory All is now revealed: whence it is announced that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

If the time of revealing the mystery was divinely chosen, so also was the instrument. Be felt deeply the grace of the choice; he “became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God.” “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given.” Elsewhere he expresses himself as “not meet to be called an apostle.” Called by the exalted Lord, when engaged in pursuing His saints to the death, he became His chosen vessel to bear His name before kings, and the Gentiles, and the children of Israel; to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all as to the economy of the mystery of Christ and the church. The result is that the heavenly beings now learn in the church—gathered into union with Christ its exalted Head—the manifold wisdom of God. They had seen His mighty work in creation, and had shouted for joy; they are now privileged to see something more wondrous far in character—the rich fruit of redemption, and the eternal counsels of God—the church formed on earth in time, by the Spirit, to have part in Christ's heavenly glory. What is God's purpose concerning the earth and the kingdom, as compared with this?

In chap. 2:18 the apostle has said, “Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father"; here, “in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” Therefore he would not have the saints discouraged by his sufferings; himself gloried in them: they were their

glory. Devoted laborer! He had drunk deeply into the affections of the Head for His body the church; and it was his highest joy to serve Him by serving it and suffering for it.

He proceeds to pray for the saints, who were much upon his heart; he bows his knees unto “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have noticed that his prayer in chap. i. is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here he thinks of their state: he desired it to be good; he longed that they might walk at the height of God's thoughts as revealed.

Verse 15 is better thus— “of whom every family in heaven and earth is named.” There will be several quite distinct circles above and below, enjoying their measure of nearness in blessing. In heaven the church's place is distinct; so is also that of the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12); and angels have their assigned portion; while on earth the Jews and the Gentiles have their respective places of blessing before God.

Having touched upon this passingly the apostle prays for the saints, that the Father would grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” How forcibly this reminds us of man's inability to find out the things of God! Man not only needs a new nature, and the Spirit to instruct, but needs divine strengthening to receive divine thoughts in detail. This Daniel felt in his day (Dan. 10).

This was not all Paul prayed for, but “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” This is quite a different thought from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is always true, in virtue of redemption, whatever the spiritual state may be; but here we have the conscious enjoyment of Christ within Himself and His love the stay and delight of the soul. What do we know of it? We become thus “rooted and grounded in love,” and able to look out calmly, yet with wonder, upon the boundless sphere of glory opened, in the counsels of God, to our view.

But we comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height (that is, of the mystery) “with all saints.” But there is more. The rich enjoyment of Christ's love, and the understanding of the varied counsels of God enlarge the affections: our hearts share with all the objects of the same wondrous grace—with all who are to have a part in the same glory with Christ. In chap. i. the apostle speaks approvingly of their “love unto all the saints “; and in chap. 6:18, he exhorts to prayer “with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” This is God's way, though love does not necessarily show itself in the same way toward all. “We know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments” (1 John 5:2).

In verse 19 we reach the limit; farther we cannot go. He desires our hearts to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that we may be filled with (into) all the fullness of God. It is not that the vessel can contain all; but it is placed in the fountain, as it were, and is thus filled to its utmost capacity. Are there not heights always to be reached, and depths still to be sounded? But we are enabled for all this by “the power that worketh in us “; which places this prayer in striking contrast with that in chap 1. There he speaks of the power which has wrought for us, displayed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ; here it is power working in us by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, here we have experience. Fittingly does the apostle close with an ascription of praise; his heart, overwhelmed, could not do otherwise. The church's unique place stands forever. In the church, by Christ Jesus, he desires glory to God unto all generations of the age of ages.

Chapter 50

Meditations on Ephesians 4:1-16

We here enter upon the practical part of the epistle. Ver. 1 refers back to the end of chap. 2. In chap3:1 the apostle commenced with, “For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,” and then went off into a lengthy parenthesis (not an unusual thing in his epistles) which reaches to the end of the chapter. Here he takes up the thread: “I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech.” How touching the manner of the exhortation! In all his epistles there is marked rareness of commanding (though of course he had authority as an apostle). He loved to say “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy” (2 Cor. 1:24).

Three times in Paul's epistles we are exhorted to “walk worthy.” In 1 Thess. 2:12 we are to “walk worthy of God,” the living and true God Whom, in contrast with idols, the Thessalonians had been called to serve. In Col. 1:10 it is “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” Christ's authority and headship being much dwelt upon in that epistle. Here it is “worthy of the vocation (calling) wherewith ye are called” (chap 4:1). The calling has been unfolded in chaps. i, and ii.; it involves new nature and relationship, access to the Father, and God's habitation in the Spirit union with the exalted Christ in one body.

Lowliness and meekness are to characterize us: how else can we walk together? We have the same thing in Phil. 2, “lowliness of mind, each esteeming other better than themselves.” Fellowship with each other is an impossibility, if self is allowed: heart-burnings and strife must surely follow. But suppose, in displaying lowliness and meekness, we find our brethren otherwise? Then comes the opportunity of exercising longsuffering and forbearance in love; and our earnest endeavor must be to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In view of the many unions of than this is His formation; and in this we are called to walk, saints in Christendom, it becomes an important question, what is the unity of the Spirit? The Spirit gathers to Christ as center, and His unity embraces all the saints, every evil being excluded. Nothing narrower or broader watching our hearts sedulously, lest Satan get an advantage to Christ's dishonor and our sorrow. We need zeal to observe it practically.

The apostle proceeds to mention some of the bonds of unity. There are seven: one body, one Spirit, one hope; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all. We must not confound the unity of the Spirit with the unity of the body, though the two things are intimately connected. A recent writer, one worthy of esteem in love for his work's sake, has said, “Is it not clear that, during this age, the Church of Christ was never meant to be a visible corporate body, but to be a great spiritual reality, consisting of all faithful and loyal spirits, in all communions, who, holding the Head, are necessarily one with each other?” It is clear, undoubtedly, that the church was meant to be “a great spiritual reality,” and this it is. But it is also clear from scripture, that it should have been “a visible corporate body,” i.e. all the saints on earth walking together in one communion, keeping the unity of the Spirit. It were better far to own our deep failure and sin, and seek fresh grace from the ever faithful Lord, than to excuse our failure by denying the truth and our responsibility.

Though all that is here stated be true of every saint, it is plain that there are different circles in vers. 4-6, and that they widen. None can have part in the one body and one Spirit and one hope, but those that are really Christ's; but the one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, are connected with the sphere of profession; while the one God and Father of all Who is above all, and through all, and in us (or you) all, speaks of a wider circle still (save in the last clause, “in us all”); for all the families in heaven and earth range themselves under Hire, as in chap. 3:15. For God's aim in perfecting the saints, Christ's work of ministry, and our building up here below as members of His body, the Head has given gifts. There are two truths in vers. 7-16; first, “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” This is the general statement. Every saint has received something from Christ for the edification of the body, which is “compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” No member is irresponsible; each has his place and functions. Secondly, there are special gifts, which we may call ministerial. All flow from a victorious and ascended Christ. He came once in grace where we were. We were dead, and under the power of Satan: He went down into death, meeting the strong man, but proved Himself to be the stronger, and, having taken from him all his armor wherein he trusted, He divides the spoils. The lowest place was once His— “He descended into the lower parts of the earth; “He now is seen far above all heavens, filling all things. Captivity has been led captive, the Victor has received gifts for men (strictly, “in man;” i.e. in His human character).

How precious to view ministry thus! It is not regarded in scripture as a mere office, imparting external importance to the holder, but as fruit of the victory of Jesus, of which all His members share the blessedness. There are various gifts named; apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Note, it is not said that He gave apostolic or evangelistic gifts to certain men, though this is true (1 Peter 4:10), but He gave apostles, etc. That is, the men themselves are gifts to the body for its edification and blessing. Apostles and prophets did foundation work; and these, having laid the foundation, have ceased. Their writings abide for the permanent profit of the saints; and in this sense, they may abide; but, as a fact, they are gone. Successors they have none; nor was any promise given of a restored apostleship at the end, whatever some may vainly think.

The remaining gifts for the blessed objects are continued, and are vouchsafed to the end by the faithful Head in heaven. Of these, the evangelist is mentioned first, for so his work is in the order of the soul's experience. He is the special gift to bring the soul to God, the Holy Spirit acting through him. The work of the pastor and teacher then begins. The pastor acts the father's part, watching over the divine life which has been imparted, seeking to train in God's ways, and guide and guard from ill; while the teacher (here a connected class) opens the treasury of truth, and expounds what he knows of the precious things of God that the soul may be instructed. How are these men known? Not by garments or titles, but by spiritual power. The man who yearns over the perishing, and who is able to bring home to them the gospel of Christ, is beyond doubt an evangelist. Where this is the fact (and it is easily known), he is recognized as such, and accepted as a gift from Christ. So, also those who act a fatherly part of unfold the vast field of revealed truth, showing by their ways that the saints are a burden on their hearts, are to be honored by their brethren in that still more delicate and difficult work.

It is due to Christ to thankfully accept all that He gives; not setting off one gift against another, but giving all the place assigned by the Lord. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in the

Lord for their work's sake; and be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:12,13).

It is to be observed that on the one hand miraculous gifts are not mentioned here, nor on the other hand, elders and deacons. They have each their own place in scripture; the first being signs to the unbelieving: the second, local responsibilities. Here we have the direct and gracious and unfailing position of the Lord for the edification of the body here below.

Chapter 51

Meditations on Ephesians 4:12-32

THE first and principal object of all ministry is “the perfecting of the saints.” It is not the will of God that His saints shall remain in an infantine condition, not knowing their privileges and blessings and His thoughts concerning them, but that they should make progress and grow in the knowledge of Himself and of His grace. It is not enough that all is ours in Christ Jesus, and that what grace has given can never be forfeited because the fruit of divine counsel and founded upon Christ's work; but God would have His saints know and enjoy all that has been granted. This thought is immensely higher than the general notion of even good men in Christendom to-day. With many the principal object is the salvation of souls, at best the blessing of the creature rather than the glory of Christ. This is to serve on low ground, however little intended, the aim being distinctly beneath the declared aim of our God. The unhappy result is that numbers of souls stop short at the knowledge of forgiveness, or of security from judgment, with feeble thoughts of divine righteousness, and little or no knowledge of union by the Spirit with a risen and exalted Christ on high. It is, of course, freely admitted that souls must be won for Christ by the gospel before they can be perfected; but forgiveness of sins is but an initial blessing. The soul is by Him introduced into a large place, where unbounded grace may be learned and enjoyed. And let it not be supposed that the evangelist's work has nothing to do with this. His work is included in the statement, “for the perfecting of the saints.” He declares the gospel, and thus performs the first great office; the pastor and teacher follow up the work, the labors of each and all tending in the one great direction. An understanding of this will preserve the evangelist from labor of an independent character. His work, of course, lies not within the assembly, but in the world of the ungodly; yet he goes forth from the bosom of the assembly, and into that circle he gathers souls, that Christ the center may be glorified in them. Thus are the further objects of the giving of the gifts secured; the work of the ministry is accomplished in all its branches; and the body of Christ, which the Spirit of God came here to form, is edified.

Before passing from this important subject, it is of moment to press the direct responsibility of every servant to Christ. Let us note well the principles of this chapter. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are gifts from Christ ascended, as truly as apostles and prophets: the church has no place but as a receiver. The notion of officials or the church appointing ministry is not found here, nor elsewhere in scripture. I am aware that elders (or bishops) and deacons were appointed by an apostle or apostolic man so commissioned like Titus; but such were ordained for rule not for the ministry of the word. The first class (always in the plural) were set to watch over the spiritual affairs of the saints in the towns where they dwelt, their authority not extending beyond those limits; deacons were appointed to serve tables or analogous work. In some instances, persons of both classes possessed ministerial gifts also, Stephen and Philip among deacons being cases in point; but this was altogether distinct from their local responsibilities. They were appointed to local office: as evangelists, &c., they were the gifts of Christ. Therefore, evangelists, pastors, and teachers being Christ's gifts, to Him they are responsible in the exercise of their service, and to no one else. When the Corinthians were disposed to judge Paul, they only drew forth from him a sound rebuke;

and were told that to him it was a small thing to be judged by them, or by man's day—his judge was the Lord (1 Cor. 4:3-5). Had the apostle been speaking of discipline in the assembly, he would have spoken differently; a minister, if convicted of immoral ways, or unsound doctrine, being as much amenable to discipline as any other professors of Christ's name. But in the ordinary exercise of their gifts all such are responsible to the Lord alone, at Whose judgment-seat they and all will shortly stand.

We now come to the duration of the gifts; “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The perfection spoken of here seems to be not in glory, where all will doubtless be according to Christ, but a state of full growth on earth in contrast with infancy and weakness as in verse 14.

Even in Paul's early day, corrupt men bearing the Lord's name were active in seeking to ensnare the unwary and the simple, and lead them astray from the faith. God would have His saints firmly established in His grace and truth, and in the knowledge of His Son, that they may be proof against the ever changing wiles of the enemy. It is deplorable to observe saints tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, apparently at the mercy of the foe. Is this God's will? Nay, but their establishment and blessing. And inasmuch as the church of God will never be without souls needing to be helped on to full growth, the ever faithful Head will continue the gifts of His grace until the end: “till we all come.” Note, gifts are not given to make the saints helplessly dependent on them, but the reverse; by means of the gifts the saints become firmly rooted and grow up into Him Who is the Head—Christ.

Verse 15 is rather “being truthful in love “; the truth not only influencing our speech, as the Authorized Version would indicate, but all our ways, having its true place in our inward parts.

Verse 16 completes the circle of the provision of the Head for the edification of His body. Here we get not only that which is general, the body compacted and fitly joined together by that which every joint supplieth. It is an important principle surely: no member of the body is irresponsible” unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” —and all must be in exercise that all may be blessed and edified, and the Lord glorified.

In verse 17 the practical exhortations take a different shape. In verses 1—16 the instruction affects more particularly our collective walk as one body; here we have that which is individual. A becoming and separate walk is pressed. The apostle puts it solemnly: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord.” He knows the dangers to which the saints were everywhere exposed, and that the Load's honor was bound up with them; therefore the peculiarly impressive tone.

He exhorts them not to walk “as other Gentiles walk.” They used so to do, as chap. ii. 1-3 shows; and at that time they were children of wrath even as others. But grace makes a difference, and would have the difference to be seen by men among whom we walk; not indeed that we may be praised, but that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. The exhortation is similar to 1 Peter 4:3— “The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles” —only there the apostle of the circumcision was writing to believing Jews, who had in their former days sunk to the level of the Gentiles around.

Paul depicts in dark colors the condition of the Gentiles who know not God; minds vain, understandings darkened, hearts hardened, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. This is true of all, whether philosophical or unlearned. Man's mind cannot find a true center or object, if it knows not God; nor can his understanding find the enlightenment. See the solemn confirmation of this in Rom. 1:21, 22, and recall the apostle amongst the “wise” at Athens. In the latter place he could only speak of the most elementary things; the creatorship of God, the unity of man, the folly of idolatry, &c.; for what does man's mind become when he shuts God out? True, all may not sink to the level of verse 19, “being past feeling” &c.; but the unregenerate heart, wherever found, is capable even of that. But we have not so learned: How sweetly the apostle expresses our present path here Not set as those in Judaism to obey a code of laws, but to learn and hearken to a Person—Christ. Would the law, if kept, make a man heavenly? No, it suits men in the flesh, acting as a curb and as a plummet; but it could never make a man what a Christian ought to be. The Christian's standard is immeasurably higher. “But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully, knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man” (1 Tim. 1:9); and this the believer is, in virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, for we have been made the righteousness of God in Him.

The truth is, that a new nature, a new life (from which the Gentiles, as such, are alienated) has been imparted, and the new life has an object presented to it—Christ; and it is the believer's delight to study Him. “I have heard Him and learned Him.” In measure as our hearts are occupied with Him, we become changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. And when we look at His blessed ways here, when manifested, we see how we should shape our steps, for in Him the life of God was displayed in perfection among men below. This, I conceive to be the force of “as the truth is in Jesus” —all was to be seen perfectly exemplified there. Moreover, we have put off (past tense, not as A. V. or R. V.) concerning the former conversation (behavior) the old man; and have put on the new. Both are described: the old man is “corrupt according to the lusts of deceit.” (The meaning of the word “corrupt” here is “ruined” (we get a different word in verse 29, “putrid,” “rotten”): the old man is past all repair. God has disowned him, we have put him off— “our old man is crucified with Him.” But the new man is according to God created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Note the word “created “; God has caused to exist in me what was not there once. See Col. 3:10, the new man is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” The word eminently suits Ephesians; for here man is viewed as dead. But we have been quickened—quickened together with Christ: there is therefore a new creation, “we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works” &c. I have said the new man is described: he is created “according to God.” The new man loves righteousness and holiness of truth, never loving to wallow in the mire; and the practical display of these characteristics is the proof of life.

The apostle proceeds to details: falsehood (meaning more than lying actions as well as words) is to be put off; truth is to be spoken, for we are members one of another. The motive stated is an exalted one: I am not merely to scorn falsehood from a sense of honor, which an upright man of the world may do, but I am a member of the same body with my brother; if I act or speak falsely to him, I do so to myself, and more solemn still, to Christ. Anger is to be watched, that sin may not result, and that the devil may have no place. Anger in the sense of indignation against un righteousness and iniquity, is all well and of God—we find God often angry in the Old Testament

and Christ moved with anger in the New—but our hearts are treacherous, and we have to watch it.

The thief is to become a laborer and even a giver, for grace transforms. The law required the thief to make restitution but grace makes him positively benevolent.

And if the hands are regulated in verse 28, the tongue finds a place in verse 29. What do we emit from our lips? The Spirit in James devotes a whole chapter to the unruly member; instruction always needed and wholesome. Is our conversation “corrupt,” or is it “good to the use of edifying, ministering grace unto the hearers. Of Christ we read; “Grace is poured into Thy lips” (Psa. 45).

The Holy Spirit of God dwells within; the temple should be kept pure, that He may be ungrieved. There are two great principles in these verses, a new nature, a positive life imparted, and the indwelling of the Spirit. By Him we are sealed unto the day of redemption. “Grieve not” is here said to the individual, “quench not” in 1 Thess. 5 to the assembly.

God's ways are to be seen in us, and all bitterness, wrath, put far away. The kindness and tender-heartedness of God to us are to form our ways. He in Christ has forgiven us, the spirit of forgiveness is to reign amongst the saints. “Until seven times?” Nay, but “until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18).

Chapter 52

Meditations on Ephesians 5:1-21

THE apostle continues by the Spirit his practical exhortations. The whole Christian pathway is summed up in one pregnant sentence, “Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children.” How much higher is this than law! In giving the latter God set forth His requirement from man, and it consisted in “Do this and live;” but Christianity is a higher and more blessed thing. God has revealed Himself fully too in the Son of His love. This henceforth is the believer's pattern. We do not aim at godliness with a view to gaining the favor of God, or of making out a righteousness: but we walk thus because we are children, partakers of the divine nature, objects of His unbounded affection. It is sweet thus to be reminded of His love! Paul could address the Roman saints as “beloved of God,” (Rom. 1), the Thessalonians similarly (1 Thess. 1:4); and the Lord in His prayer to the Father lets us know that we are loved by the Father as He Himself was loved (John 17:23, see also John 16:27). The knowledge of this is to shape our steps.

We are to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.” How such a word searches the heart! Is this how we love? Who will not own to shortcoming? Yet the standard may not be lowered, nothing short of this is the mind of God for His saints. Christ gave Himself—His love led Him even to death for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 4). The sacrifice of Christ is here brought before us in its burnt offering aspect—it was a sweet smelling savor; and, blessed be His name, “for us.” In 1 Peter 2:24, where we get the trespass offering side of His cross, “a sweet savor” could not be said: He bore our sins, and drank the cup of divine wrath which was their due.

Warnings follow. “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be named among you, as becometh saints.” How humbling that such exhortations should be found in close connection with the unfolding of the heavenly calling! But what is the human heart not capable of? No warning is given in vain; and the condition of the Corinthian assembly, when the apostle wrote his first Epistle there, shows the need of the word. The Thessalonians were written to similarly (1 Thess. 4:3-8); the Colossians also (Col. 3:5-6). The tongue is to be guarded no less than the other members of the body: filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting ill become the saints. Scripture is positive as well as negative; if folly is not to flow from our lips, giving of thanks should. Happy occupation! the heart so satisfied with divine grace, and so engrossed with Christ, that out of its abundance thanksgiving wells out to Him. May we know more of it!

Does God think lightly of sin and folly? Nay; to pursue such ways is exceedingly grave. Such persons have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The Ephesians must not be deceived, “for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.” What can be said when one professing the Lord's name steadily pursues an evil course? “By their fruits ye shall know them.” It is no question of the believer failing as he passes through the world—for such there is restoring grace through the advocacy of Christ on high, and the gracious operation of the Spirit in heart and conscience below; it is an evil course which is supposed, though under cover of the Lord's name. The Ephesians were to hold themselves aloof

from such, and not to be partakers with them. Such ways had been attractive to them, for they were once darkness; but now, being light in the Lord, they were to walk as children of light. Our former condition is here very solemnly stated— “once darkness.” “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all:” we were thus wholly opposed to God, our very nature antagonistic. But we are no longer darkness, nor in darkness, but are children of light: the fruit of the light—i.e. the practical result of knowing God fully revealed—should be manifested in all “goodness and righteousness and truth.” We thus prove experimentally what is acceptable (well-pleasing) to the Lord.

The Christian should thus, (not only abstain from ungodly ways, but) abjure all fellowship with those who practice them. Rather should he expose them; not necessarily directly attacking the world's practices, but by consistent godliness reproving iniquity. Men's secret sins, which have as large a place now as in Paul's days, are too shameful even to name; but they are exposed, and their true character declared by the light, for light manifests all things. Such exposing will not bring love, but rather hatred, to the witness, as our Lord Jesus said, “Me it (the world) hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil” (John 7:7). In His case the darkness hated the light: it was too much for them.

Therefore is the believer to awake if sleeping, and arise from among the dead. Sorrowful condition for a saint to slip into! Of what value as a witness to God and the truth is a sleeper? Thanks be to God, such are not dead: the spark of divine life is there, and can never be extinguished; but they have sunk into a state of spiritual torpor, having thus lost their enjoyment of heavenly grace, and their usefulness in testimony. The Spirit also arouses in Rom. 13, but there reminds us of the nearness of our salvation, the night being far spent, and the day at hand. Here such sleepers among the dead are exhorted to arise; and, as the apostle adds, “Christ shall shine upon thee.” Only thus can the believer reflect anything of God to a hostile world.

Such exhortations remind us of where we are—in an enemy's land. We shall not need in heaven to be told to walk carefully, to redeem the time, and to lay aside folly, and understand what the will of the Lord is. The days are evil: hence the need of the Spirit's admonitions.

The use of wine is to be guarded—in it is excess, profligacy: the rather are we to be filled with the Spirit. This is a different thought from being sealed with the Spirit. The latter is God's work entirely, the Spirit being His gift to the believer, founded on redemption; but to be “filled” rests with ourselves in self-judgment and looking to Christ. How far do we hinder His operation within?

Being thus filled, the heart expresses itself in melody and thanksgiving to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The psalms, &c., spoken of in this chapter are Christian compositions; not those of David, which relate to the Jew rather than to the Christian. Of course, there are many precious sentiments contained in that wonderful and inspired collection that are true for believers at all times. Still the book is not characterized by those blessings which we are called particularly to enjoy; as accomplished redemption, union with an exalted Christ, the knowledge of the Father, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The spiritual tone is distinctly lowered when souls persist in using the Psalms of David as the proper and habitual vehicle of their worship.

Chapter 53

Meditations on Ephesians 5:22-33

THE Spirit now turns to the various relationships of life and exhorts to a becoming and heavenly walk in them. So complete is the word of God as the believer's directory that nothing is left untouched that is needed for life and godliness. The home and the business find a place as truly as the assembly of God.

The order of the exhortations here should be noted: wives are addressed before husbands, children before fathers, and servants before masters; each word arising out of ver. 21, “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” This important principle the apostle now proceeds to develop in its application to the different circumstances in which we find ourselves on earth. A very beautiful style is to be observed in the exhortations to wives and husbands: each are set to study Christ and the church as their patterns respectively of obedience and affection. How different the principle of legal obedience! Here the Spirit fills our hearts with heavenly realities, and then sets us to reproduce them, as it were, in our walk below. This way reminds of God's dealing with Moses with regard to the tabernacle; “see that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.” Thus, as Paul speaks, the tabernacle and its vessels were “patterns of things in the heavens.” On a similar principle should our walk as saints be regulated.

It is blessed to notice how the heart of the apostle, even in giving commonplace exhortations to the saints, turns naturally to that which was his peculiar stewardship—the relationship of grace existing between Christ and the church according to the eternal counsels of God. Wives are therefore told to submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord, the husband being the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church. “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” The apostle speaks of the place in which the church has been set, that of subjection to her Head; not of her actual practice. Alas, for that! How much self-will and losing sight of the Headship of Christ has marred her practice! But the truth abides, “the church is subject unto Christ”—He is her glorified Head: the Christian wife is to learn the great principle, and act upon it.

Husbands are not exhorted to rule, that not being a point where they are so likely to fail, but to love. The wives are not addressed in this way: love with them is not so likely to be weak as submission. And what is set before the husband'? “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” This, when understood, lifts us above merely natural ground: divine love is our heavenly pattern. It is profitable to notice the different ways in which divine love is spoken of in the scriptures. In John's Gospel (chap. 3.) we get God's love to the world, in John's epistle (chap. 3.) the Father's love to the family. Here it is neither, but Christ's love to the church. It was that on which He set His heart when in the depths as the costly pearl: He would have her for His own, to share His throne and glory, to be the object of His affection forever. To acquire her, He must give Himself (for the question of sin was there): could even divine love do more? He held not back even from the cross, for the joy that was set before Him; a part, at least, of which was to have the church as His own—His body and His bride.

In verse 25 we get the past—what He has done: in verse 26 we get the present, what He is doing, sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of water by the word. He will have her to be according to His mind, and therefore uses His word upon her that she may be kept apart by it from all that is contrary to Himself, and cleansed whenever she contracts defilement in the world. What individual saint does not know the power and blessedness of this? He died for the saints, for the church: He lives for us and serves us, as the girded One in the glory.

And even that is not all, for there is a future as truly as a past and present; “that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” What a contrast between present conditions and future glory! Spots are too plainly to be seen now, for the church has not kept herself from the world (James 1:27): wrinkles, signs of decay, were to be seen even before the apostle of the church went to his rest. But all such marks of failure and sin will be removed by the holy loving hand of her faithful Lord, and she shall be what His heart would have her; “neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing,” as the Spirit emphatically declares, shall be seen in that day.

Meanwhile He loves the church as Himself, with a love that never wearies nor grows cold; and the husband is to learn the precious lesson: Christ nourishes and cherishes the church, “for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” As a typo, Eve's case is then brought forward; the fruit, as it were, of the deep sleep of Adam, his helpmeet, and the sharer of his dominion and blessing. Such is the church's place in relationship with Christ; one with Him now by the Spirit, presently to share all which His grace will bestow. Our hearts do well to cultivate a deeper entrance into His mind concerning the church, seeking His glory in it, and the edification and perfection of all His own. For this, Paul counted it a privilege to labor, pray, and suffer (Col. 1:24-28). In closing the subject, the apostle draws the conclusion. that the husband is to love his wife even as himself, and the wife is to see that she reverence her husband.

Chapter 54

Meditations on Ephesians 6:1-9

IT is noticeable that the Spirit of God gives similar instructions as to the relationships of life in Colossians as here; though not with the same fullness, nor quite upon the same lines. The latter is especially to be seen in the word to children: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (just). So reads Ephesians: but in Colossians the apostle merely states, “for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.” Was the variation because of the legal tendencies of the latter? From the forms &c., which had such attraction for their brethren at Colosse, the Ephesians were apparently quite clear, through grace; therefore the apostle was free to say “this is just,” without fear of the word being misapplied by them.

Everywhere in scripture is filial obedience pressed; and the Lord Himself in the home at Nazareth has left an example which should be studied (Luke 2:51). Disobedience to parents is one of the unhappy moral signs of the last days (2 Tim. 3:2), as also absence of natural affection; elements painfully and increasingly apparent on every hand. But the obedience must be “in the Lord “; all obedience having this important qualification. A heathen parent might bid his child sacrifice to idols: must he obey? Where the express will of God is crossed, such can only answer as Peter and John to the priests who bade them preach no more in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Nothing and no one must be allowed to come in between the conscience and God.

Some have found difficulty in the Spirit's use of the fifth commandment in this place, as apparently sanctioning the placing of Christians under the law. This is not so, for the word of God never contradicts itself. Christians have been delivered from the law by the body of Christ, having died to that wherein they were held; and have a new and higher standard set before them for walk below, even a heavenly Christ. To turn back to law is to build again the things we have destroyed, to place ourselves under the curse, to be removed from Him Who called us in the grace of Christ unto another gospel. But what the apostle shows here is that God has always insisted on due honor and obedience being rendered to parents, under the law as truly as under Christianity; so important, indeed, is it with Him, that Jehovah added a promise to the commandment (the first with such an attachment) “that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.” This is stated to show what the promise was; strictly, of course, in keeping with the calling of Israel. The Christian is called to heavenly blessing; he expects trial and difficulty, and perhaps persecution, in this world; though it is not denied that there is present blessing in the government of God for those who do His will.

Fathers are next addressed. “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Discipline is necessary, and cannot safely be dispensed with (does our Father train us without it?); but it must be wise to be good. It is unhappy to alienate the affections of the children by unnecessary rigor; parental influence is thus lost, and not easily regained. Faith regards the family as a precious charge from the Lord, and delights to lay hold of the word, “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Is not Timothy a bright example, and encouragement to faith (2 Tim. 3:15)?

Some have found fault with the exhortations of verses 5-8, saying that they sanction or encourage slavery. The objection is groundless. God does not sanction such a principle; but it has come in among men, as many other things, as a result of sin; and while not interfering at all with the framework of society (which awaits its rectification till Christ comes), He legislates for His own saints, who may find themselves in these relationships.

What can be wiser or more comforting to the Christian slave than the word in 1 Cor. 7:20-24? If such yearned for their liberty, that they might serve the Lord more fully, they are told not to make a care of it, and are assured that “he that is called in the Lord being a servant (slave) is the Lord's freed-man;” while on the other hand, “he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant” (or slave). Here (Eph. 6) such are told to be “obedient to their masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart as unto Christ.” Did they serve unreasonable and tyrannical men? How elevating and sustaining then to look beyond the man to the Lord, “knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” If the reward fail here, it will assuredly be seen at the judgment-seat of Christ. Christians are not called to reform the world while passing through it; but to acquit themselves becomingly, as heavenly men, in the midst of it all. The principles here laid down though addressed to slaves, apply with equal force to employed servants. Eyeservice, men pleasing, is abominable to the Lord; the rather is it His will that service be rendered heartily, and all done in the name of the Lord Jesus. What a view of our hearts we get, that we should need such a word!

In 1 Tim. 6:2 the apostle adds on this subject another word of particular importance. “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren, &c.” The Spirit of God knows how prone the human heart is to take advantage of such circumstances: it is natural to the heart to be radical. But the believer is to eschew the ways and habits of men, and walk according to God. In the assembly of God, at the Lord's table, the believing master and servant are brethren, and members of one body, outside relationships having no place there; but in the shop or on the farm it is otherwise, and we do well not to forget it.

Masters are then exhorted, and reminded that their Master is in heaven; “neither is there respect of persons with Him.” He notes threatening and oppression: the cry of the poor and needy comes up in His ears, and He will requite it in the coming day. This verse should read, I believe, “their Master and yours is in [the] heavens;” which gives an added point of importance: both master and servant are responsible to the one Lord, and will stand together at the same judgment-seat.

Chapter 55

Meditations on Ephesians 6:10-24

THE mind of the Lord has been declared concerning the relationships in which we may find ourselves on earth. Another subject is now dealt with by the apostle—our conflict in the heavenlies. This flows out of the teaching in chaps. 1. 2. There our place is shown as risen together with Christ, and sitting in Him in the heavenly places, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him. There we learn that, to enjoy our heavenly portion, conflict is necessary with those who seek to hinder. The allusion (though the contrast is complete) is to the wars of the Israelites in Canaan for the enjoyment of what God had promised. In Josh. 1 to 4. we have God bringing them through Jordan (type of death and resurrection with Christ) into the land of promise. In the plains of Jericho, Joshua circumcises them (our circumcision is found in Col. 3); they keep the passover, and eat of the old corn of the land. Thus did they take their place as His people in Canaan, in accordance with the purpose of God. But the Amorites were there, determined and prepared to contest every inch of the ground with them. Israel must meet them in the power of God. They were to enjoy every place that the sole of their foot touched; a sign of taking possession (Josh. 1:3; Rev. 10:2).

But God was with them, and nothing failed of His good word; wherever they went in dependence upon Him, victory was sure, the enemy was expelled, and they took possession. These things, as others written aforetime, are for our learning. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” We are a poor match for Satan and his hosts apart from the power of God. If like Israel at Ai, who forgot God and measured the enemy by themselves, defeat is certain. But the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God; when His Spirit acts in His people, who can withstand? Carnal weapons are in vain, “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Our enemies are thus of a different character from those of Israel; they are “spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies” (as in ver. 12, better rendered). Scripture does not tell us much about the powers in the heavenlies, but we have many allusions to such, good and bad. Thus in this Epistle Christ is set far above all principality and power (chap. i. 21); through the church is now made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God (chap. iii. 10). Dan. 10 draws aside the veil, as it were, and tells us something of the conflicts above, showing how earthly events are affected by movements there; while Rev. 12 shows us the final expulsion of evil powers from heaven by Michael and his hosts. This occurs in the midst of the last of Daniel's seventy weeks. But such hosts are not ejected from heaven yet (though they be not in the presence of God): our conflict is with them. It is the unceasing aim of the powers of darkness to prevent our hearts from rising to the height of our heavenly relations; nothing pleases the enemy better than to see saints groveling below.

Armor is provided, the whole armor of God; which we must take to us to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Many can bear his roar, who are overcome by his wiles. Israel could calmly contemplate the high walls of Jericho, knowing God was with them, but were utterly worsted by the wily Gibeonites. How treacherous are our poor hearts! How unfit to be trusted! We are only

exhorted to “stand “; the bruising under our feet is not yet, though shortly (Rom. 16:20). One shudders sometimes at the light and vain talk so prevalent to-day, concerning the power of the enemy, and our power over him and his works. We need to remember the word not to speak evil of dignities, and Michael's reply to Satan, “the Lord rebuke thee.” “He durst not bring against him a railing accusation” (2 Peter 2:10, 11; Jude 9, 10). The utmost we can hope to do in “the evil day” (God's way of describing the whole of the present period) is to “stand “: happy the saint who is able to do so.

The armor is detailed; and it is all practical. Our loins are to be girt about with truth, every habit is to be controlled by it, the truth is to govern our lives in each particular. Thus alone can we keep our garments unspotted from the world. The breastplate of righteousness follows; for how can we show front to the enemy if our practical ways are not good? Where righteousness before God is spoken of, the figure is rather a robe; but before the foe armor, as here and in 2 Cor. 6:7. The feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; i.e., peace is to characterize our whole walk below. Is it in vain that the Spirit constantly says, “Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”? If peace with God has been made by the blood of Jesus, and the God of peace has brought Him again from among the dead, the peace of God is to keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The apostle prayed that the Lord of peace would give the Thessalonians peace always by all means. It is happy to be a “son of peace:” precious portion in a world of turmoil and upheaval!

But the shield of faith is equally necessary, that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. This is that calm confidence in God which it is ours to know in every circumstance; for we walk by faith, not by sight. Faith never dreads foes, however numerous and strong; it measures them by God and goes forward with holy boldness. With the shield in position, the heart is safe.

The headgear is the helmet of salvation. Salvation is ours now as regards the soul; as regards the body we shall know it shortly at the Lord's return; and it is sure. What confidence this gives! All the malice of the enemy can never wrest from us our portion: it is founded upon the sacrifice of Christ, and secured to us by His life on high. Thus are we enabled to hold our heads high, and say, Whom shall we fear?

All these parts of the armor are defensive; but there is one offensive weapon, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” This was what the Lord used in conflict with Satan. “It is written” was sufficient for victory. Satan is for faith a vanquished foe. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” He meets Christ in the saint, and Christ is enough. One word of scripture, used in the power of the Spirit, is of all value when pressed by the enemy. But this must be coupled with prayer. The word of God and prayer are the two great springs of the Christian's life (Luke 10, 11.); without them we become a prey. Compare 1 John 2:9. It is “the evil day,” and our hearts are treacherous and readily beguiled: dependence on God and a right use of His word alone can preserve us.

But our hearts must not be occupied solely with our own needs: “all saints” are to have a place. This is the Epistle which unfolds the truth of the one body: has it entered our hearts? It is fitting, surely, in such a letter that the apostle should enjoin prayer and supplication for all. And there are those who have a special claim upon our prayers, because placed in the front of the battle, exposed therefore to the peculiar rage of the enemy. Paul was preeminently such an one, and valued the prayers of the saints, that his mouth might be boldly opened to make known the

mystery of the gospel. He was an ambassador in bonds: he felt the difficulty of his position, though his heart was sustained. Tychicus carried this Epistle, as also that to the Colossians; he would make known to the saints the affairs of Paul, and comfort their hearts by the recital of the Lord's faithful love and grace to him.

Salutations close all, and they too in perfect keeping with the aim and character of the Epistle.

W. W. F.

Chapter 56

Erratum

IN a portion of edition of July B. T., p. 302, col. 2, l. 51, for “as authority,” react “on authority.”

Chapter 57

Esau Seeking the Blessing

Q.-Heb. 12:17. Is it the blessing or repentance Esau sought carefully? F. H.

A.-Gen. 27 is explicit. Esau sought importunately the blessing of his father and with tears. He was a self-willed, profane, and unclean man. Not a word is breathed of repentance. He had already despised his birthright heartlessly God was in none of his thoughts, but he counted on Isaac's carnal partiality; as Jacob, misled by Rebecca, trusted to cunning, instead of crying to God and resting on His purpose, which, spite of their low state, both believed in. Hence the R. V. joins J. N. D.'s, and very properly in parenthetically marking the clause, “for he found no place of (or for) repentance.” One fails to see any sufficient reason for taking μετανο■α in any other than its uniform sense elsewhere in the N. T. To make it here only equivalent to μεταμ■λεια demands at least the strongest proof, and seems to be uncalled for, though an expositor second to none appears to have been of that opinion for this place.

Chapter 58

Genesis 3:1 - The Tempter

Gen. 3:1

IT is to be noticed that, when the enemy assails our first parents, he is left in mysterious obscurity. Yet no believer, no serious mind, can doubt, that under the form of a serpent, Satan was at work to deceive and destroy, whatever the misused ingenuity of unbelief may reason to confuse the unwary and credulous. To the first book of the O.T the last book of the N. T. answers here as elsewhere with singular force, and identifies him from first to last as “the old serpent, that is called Devil (slanderer) and Satan” (the adversary), Rev. 12:9, 20:2. Nor are we left to this symbolic prophecy alone; for the apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. 11:3, had given no uncertain sound about this evil one long before. If the serpent lured man into his lie against God, grace revealed the woman's Seed, bruised indeed yet bruising the head of the enemy, the Deliverer not only of all that believe but of all creation also (Rom. 8). The Second man will surely triumph.

Along with the restless seduction of man into sin, Satan is shown us in the ancient book of Job, and with striking clearness, as the accuser of the saint, in the presence of Jehovah (chaps. 1: 9, 10; 4, 5), with permitted power to afflict and within certain limits even to destroy the body, though not Job's life. But the issue for God and those that are His by faith is in every case his defeat eventually, in no case apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus. For there is found the personal antagonism. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 8). He may thwart God in each object and plan of His, he may traduce the believer, and for a while seem ever so successful; but he is doomed, as also all who trust him against God and His Anointed, to utter defeat and everlasting ruin.

Under the legal system, as God was hidden, so was the enemy. David first brought out into relief the type of His kingdom; and there we first hear of Satan (1 Chron. 21:1). Numbering the people in the pride of a national ruler was abandoning dependence on Jehovah and a denial of his own early faith; and the chastening was seventy thousand men of Israel mowed down by pestilence.

In Psa. 109 we see Judas, the leader of the Christ-rejecting Jews against Jesus. Nor was it only a wicked man set over him, but Satan standing at his right hand: the plain prediction of the traitor's deed under the devil's instigation; as the psalm that follows is of Jehovah's exalting the Holy One to sit at His right hand till the word is given to judge. It is the same opposition, seemingly carrying its evil way, but only accomplishing the good counsels of God in honor of His Son.

Zech. 3. has no other voice, though speaking of Messiah's people. Did not their guilt and defilement give title to Satan against the high priest who represented them? Unquestionably and irremediably, had not Messiah been stricken for the transgressions of the people, and bruised for their iniquities. Righteously therefore can Jehovah that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke Satan, and say, Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Righteously can He cause the iniquity to pass from their representative and clothe him with rich apparel, and set a fair miter on his head.

In the N. T. the Tempter confronts the Son of God, and in ways more consummately subtle and complete to draw Him out of dependence on God. The last three-fold effort is recorded for our instruction and thanksgiving: the natural, the worldly, the religious temptations utterly foiled by Him Who stands obediently in the truth, as Satan did not because there is no truth in him. The strong one, however fully armed, here found One stronger, Who overcame him, and took his panoply and divided his spoils. But again he appeared as the prince of the world; and as he could not mislead the Messiah out of the path of subjection, he drew the world, the Jews most of all guilty, to kill Him in it; yet this was his own suicidal guilt, as Christ's death was the glorifying of God about sin, and the reconciliation of all that believe, and indeed of all creation, save of course those that reject Him.

But the N. T. is no less clear that the devil and his angels, till judgment is executed, are incessant in their efforts to corrupt and destroy, to accuse the saints and to deceive the whole habitable earth. He works through the world and the flesh; but his own special field is through falsehood; and his direct enmity is against the grace, truth, and glory of His destined Conqueror. Hence the demons whom he commands trembled before the Lord Jesus in terror of His casting them into the abyss, or bottomless pit, where Satan is to be bound when Christ comes in His kingdom. Till then Satan acts as a devouring lion or a beguiler in a serpent-like craftiness, fashioning himself into an angel of light or kindling the fires of persecution, where he fails with his lies. Fallen angels there are already consigned to everlasting bonds under gloom for judgment of the great day. These so audaciously broke through God's order before the deluge that He has imprisoned them ever since; and they ought not to be confounded with those that are still allowed for a season to tempt mankind, and have access to the heavenly places as well as the earth till judgment befalls them. For their leader is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience; as our wrestling if Christians is declared to be against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heaven-lies (or heavenly places). And this conflict will never cease while the church is on earth. But Rev. 12 tells us that they are to be cast out of the heaven, at a day still future, with new and marked consequences for a short time on earth, before the binding in the abyss for a thousand years, followed soon after by casting them into the lake of fire.

O my fellow sinner, heed the voice of the Son of God, that you may receive the remission of your sins and eternal life. He died for sins, and has authority now and on earth to give you remission. In Him was life, and He gives life, His own eternal life, to every one that believes. There is no other way; for He is the way, the truth, and the life. You are a son of disobedience, and by nature a child of wrath. Be not deceived longer by Satan, who cheats into thinking yourself strong and free, whereas you are without strength and his slave already. Christ only can save you; and He is as able as He is willing; and God has His pleasure in it, for He loves the Son and pities you. Satan can easily and will surely keep you to be his companion in punishment, as now his servant in sin. Whosoever believeth on Christ shall not be ashamed.

Chapter 59

Genesis 3:1-5 - Eve Tempted

Gen. 3:1-5

Tax subtlety of the enemy displays itself throughout. The weaker vessel is deceived, being drawn away by plausible appearances. How like our life! What a light is thrown on facts of every day, with their bitter results through unbelief and impenitence! For God is forgotten, and objects in the scene that now is take His place. Such is Satan's aim till the soul he betrayed into open ungodliness and despair, which hardens an act into a habit away from God.

Here, as the beginning of moral evil on earth, the Holy Spirit relates the fact, in its detail of instruction for every child of Adam, with the grand yet deep simplicity of these early books of inspiration.

“And he said, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (vers. 1.)” It was but a question of what God had said. But where this is allowed, He is dishonored, and a breach is made in the line of defense for the enemy to enter. To doubt God's word is the beginning of the worst evil; it is to sit in judgment on Himself; whereas He only can and ought to judge, and this He does now by His word, as indeed the Lord says will be at the last day. How presumptuous then for man to judge Him! “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:6). Under the seeming modesty of a query Satan was undermining the prime duty of a creature. And what did he seek in particular thereby? To insinuate a doubt of His goodness. What! May you not eat of all the trees? Is it possible that you are forbidden any? How can God love you and withhold a single good thing from you? Surely there must be some mistake. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Is it so?

It is written, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Eve on the contrary listened and parleyed. The mischief was begun. As the serpent had substituted the more distant and abstract “God” of creation for the Creator in moral relationship with man (Jehovah God), she fell into the trap, and discussed the question raised only to excite desire for what He had prohibited. A rebel himself, he maliciously likes to thwart the Highest and have companions in his sin and misery. Yielding to him, instead of turning away at once, Eve drops notice of the relationship Jehovah had deigned to establish, and becomes a prey while she continues her converse. “And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (vers. 2, 3).

Had she held fast the sense of her responsibility to obey, she would have resented the question, rather than answered it. And her answer lets us see that the evil intent of Satan did not fail of its effect. She adds to the prohibition, and takes from the penalty. Jehovah had not said a word about touching the forbidden fruit, but had in the most assured terms threatened death in the day of eating it. Exaggeration of truth is no more the truth than diminution of it; either enfeebles, and both are Satan's work. By the truth we are sanctified; and His word is truth.

But knowledge is not truth received in the love of it from God. Eve well knew and could tell the tempter the liberty given as to all other fruit, and the penalty for partaking of the one forbidden tree. Yet she ventured to hear what the serpent had to say when there was already the proof that he was by his question impugning divine goodness. Did not He delight in their happiness? From Whom came their most bountiful provision? Was she cherishing dependence on Him, or confidence in Him? How worthless is knowledge which issues not in grateful praise and simple-hearted obedience! Still more, if it leave one free to distrust Him! Alas! unbelief has grown apace since Eve.

Emboldened by his crafty success the enemy advances. “And the serpent said to the woman, Ye will not surely die; but God knoweth that, in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil” (vers. 4, 5). It is no longer insinuation against His good will, but open assault on His truth. And it is the same lie which beguiles mankind ever since. Death is hidden diligently from men's eyes; and when it cannot be, its import is explained away. People are willingly ignorant, and are earnest only to enjoy the present. Let us eat and drink, and to-morrow go here or there and get gain. All! ye know not what will be on the morrow; but certain it is, now that man is fallen, it is appointed to men once to die and after this judgment. But men lend a ready ear to him who deceived Eve, and, though unable to deny, believe it not: else that dark shadow would paralyze their pursuits and poison their pleasures. For the sting of death is sin, of which all are guilty; and into judgment for all their sins must come those who believe not in the Lord Jesus for remission.

Further, the serpent held out as a bribe the good of evil. In eating the forbidden fruit, your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil. God is jealous; I am your friend. He would keep you ignorant and in leading-strings. Take my advice: be independent and know for yourselves as He does. As he veiled the doom of transgression, so did he set off the bribe in glowing colors; and as Eve stayed to listen, she was tainted with his pestilent breath. She received the lying foe as her best friend when his slander of the living and true God entered her heart. Open sin and ruin followed without delay.

The remedy is not in man, but from God in Christ for him, yea, for the most guilty if he repent and believe the gospel. Nor did the law work out deliverance, but on the contrary wrath. The Lord Jesus is the only Deliverer, as indeed this very Gen. 3. foreshows. He vindicated God and vanquished Satan in every respect in which the first man failed. His coming, the gift of Him displayed God's immense love to the world; His death for sin was the irrefragable proof of God's truth no less than of His love; and His personal glory, yet becoming a man to be made sin for us, told out God's majesty as well as His love and truth. O what a contrast with those who, being only human, sought to be as God, and, coveting independence, became Satan's slaves! But thanks be to God Who through Him dead and risen gives the victory to us, even to all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His voice that speaks from heaven, as of old He warned on earth. See that ye refuse not Him that speaks. For our God, whatever His love, is also a consuming fire.

Genesis 3:6 - The Fall of Man

Gen. 3:6

The woman then was beguiled, quite beguiled as we are told in 1 Tim. 2:14, and so became involved in transgression; but what of man? Of him we hear not a word in the colloquy of the serpent and Eve. The same N. T. authority assures us that he was not deceived: with his eyes open, he transgressed, swayed by his affection for his wife. It was deliberate disobedience on his part, not here thoughtlessness, or deceived as the weaker vessel by a mightier and subtle rebel; for both and their posterity it was ruin and death, to man irreparable.

Let us then weigh the simple words in which God brings the solemn fact before us. “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (ver. 6).

Eve by continuing to hear the tempter's words more and more lost the authority of God's word, which at first she knew clearly and felt to be paramount. But as she listened to one whose object was to draw her away from God and ensnare her into transgression, she became by degrees less sensitive as to God's honor and Satan's crafty malice. Was it so that after all God did not love man perfectly but reserved good from him?

Perhaps too they might take this fruit, fair and excellent as it looked like other fruits in Paradise, without a blow so dreadful as death. God would not surely be so stern about so small a matter, He that gave them all else! And was it not strange that they (related so nearly to Himself, His offspring, Whose breath was their life-breath, made in His image, after His likeness) should be refused the knowledge of good and evil, to become so far like Himself—was it worthy of Him? Alas! Eve, when tempted was at length drawn away by lust, by the desire to have what God forbad, and was enticed. She used her eyes against the word, and saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes. Emboldened thus she reflected that the tree was desirable to make wise; and so the lust, having conceived, bears sin, as the sin, when fully completed, brings forth death. Compare James 1:14, 15 John 2:16.

The woman had weakly fallen; but the stronger vessel, the man! He well knew the prohibition of the LORD God; he had the fatal yielding of Eve to warn him, if this could be needed; yet he dared to follow her into evil, from which he should have sought to shield her and confirm her soul in allegiance to God; and he too rebelled at her solicitation. All was lost in the fallen head of creation. What dishonor to God! what malignant joy to the enemy! what a root of evil to man! “By one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12, R. V.).

The ruin was complete. Distrust of God's love, unbelief of His truth, slight of His glory in seizing it, introduced open self-will and transgression. And so it has been since with ever increasing corruption. For Adam was head of the human race and involved his posterity in his own evil. He

became a father only after he was a sinner.

It was not so with those who in a higher sphere rebelled against God without a tempter. They each and all departed from God, though they excel in strength. They therefore are left to suffer the due reward of their deeds. But man, in his weakness and exposure to the subtle foe, is the object of God's richest mercy, and gives occasion for the display of His glory in nature and character, in His ways and counsels, as no other creature does or could enjoy; but this positively and perfectly in Christ alone, the Second Man.

Thus it comes out in His headship to the praise of God's grace. For if through the disobedience of the one man the many (or Adam's family) were constituted sinners, so also shall the many (or Christ's family) be constituted righteous. The head according to God determines the condition of the family. We belonged to the one naturally; we belong to the other by grace through faith. No Jew could deny that so in fact the headship of sin and sorrow was with the human race: how could he question that the headship of blessing was just and worthy of God? If Adam sunk his family into that sad estate, why should not Christ raise those who believe into the good portion which He deserves?

But it is not only that the gospel is thus indicated: no otherwise can the sinner be saved consistently with God and His word. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” If this was true beyond question of Israel, is it not quite as manifestly of men in general? How blessed then that God has given His Son to be a man, a Savior, a new head for all that believe! This as a whole scripture testifies from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. Salvation is in Another, not in the guilty; it is in Christ. And salvation is in no other; for neither is there any other, or a different, name under heaven that is given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Christ glorified God in death as a sacrifice for sin, so as to atone for all that believe in Him; as Adam by his transgression dishonored God and brought death on himself and his race. It was when Christ carried obedience to the death of the cross, that He, risen from the dead, was proclaimed the new head: God was glorified in Him as to our disobedience and its consequences, and not only in His unbroken life of obedience. He from the highest glory took the lowest place of a slave, and endured the most ignominious death, that of the cross. O what a contrast with the man of dust who sought to be as God and disobeyed unto death!

As the work of Christ was morally glorious in the highest degree, so is it efficacious and unfailing for all that believe, even though ruined in Adam and adding their own sins. But where sin abounded, grace far exceeded; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 61

Genesis 3:7 - Naked

HERE was the immediate effect of sin in our first parents— “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons,” or girdles. There was the sense of shame as well of guilt, and they sought to hide it from themselves and from each other.

It is all in vain. Conscience was at work, but not before God or toward Him: else had they cried to Him in self-judgment and sorrowful confession of the evil they had done. “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight,” said the penitent king. Yet it might be said that his iniquity was grievous wrong to a devoted servant and his wife, hitherto blameless. Adulterous seduction of the woman! Planned death for the man! What could be worse offenses against one's neighbor? But the contrite heart, even in such a case, justly feels that, whatever the crime before man, sin is against God so as to eclipse all else.

Unabashed innocence was gone. Adam and Eve, once guilty, felt the shame of sin; and their first effort was to cover their persons as they could. They knew that they were naked, when they had disobeyed God. But fig leaves cannot cover sin; and they knew this too, when they heard the voice of the LORD God the same day. For sin is against Him, and His voice when heard awakens terror in the guilty.

How good for such (and we all are, or have been, such) to know David's “instruction” in Psa. 32 “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the mean unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” What a blessing when God covers sin by Christ's sacrifice! Without this all else is vain. For, being sinners, we must come as sinners before God, Who refuses any other approach to Him in the first place. How perverse is unbelief Men strive to come as saints, which they are not, and refuse to come as sinners, which they are and nothing else. Why do they thus evade the truth to their own hurt as well as God's dishonor? Because they have no confidence in His grace. But His grace brings salvation, for it is possible only through Another. Heaven is through Christ alone, and consequently it is by faith. For faith receives the testimony or witness God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this that God gives the believer eternal life, and this life is in His Son. So absolutely true is this, that it is added: “he that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:10-12.

The work of Christ, as the fruit of God's grace, takes guile from the spirit. His blood purges the conscience. The useless apron or girdle, the filthy garment, is taken away; “the best robe” is put on. Shame gives place to uprightness, and perfect love casts out fear. Such are the riches of God's grace to him who believes in Christ. The pretension to work for pardon, peace, cleansing, or life, denies the guilt and ruin of the sinner. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5). The ungodly, the sinner, deserves judgment, which is perdition, by his works; but the gospel is sent to him as a lost one, that believing he may

be justified and saved. What grace! Yet is it God's righteousness, Who gives the believer what Christ's work deserves; and thus only in the cross of Christ, where man's evil came out to the uttermost, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

See to it then that you rest on Christ only according to God's word. Without Him faith were as vain as baptism, to say nothing of works. Else when clothed, as the apostle says (2 Cor. 5:3), you will be found naked. For all must rise, unjust as well as just. And the clothing of the resurrection body will not hide but disclose the real condition. Christ alone meets the nakedness of the sinner; He washes, cleanses, and clothes for the eye of God. Without Christ, even when clothed, you will be found naked: a paradox in natural things; a certain truth spiritually. For in that day there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.

Chapter 62

Genesis 3:8-9 - Where Art Thou?

Gen. 3:8-9

THE word of God is truth, where and when ever written, be the matter in hand what it may. How solemn when He, from Whom no appeal can be, is personally addressing man! So it was here when man had just fallen. “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou?” (vers. 8, 9).

Man was gone from God; and it was now manifest and undeniable. Even before Jehovah Elohim called Adam and Eve into His presence, the fall was working its evil consequences. They were ashamed for the first time, and they sought to hide their shame from themselves and from one another. When they heard the voice of the LORD God, terror was added exceedingly, yet in vain; for how can man escape if summoned there?

Before the fall, how delightful was His gracious presence, Who planted the garden in Eden, and therein put the man He had formed! And out of the ground made Jehovah Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, besides the two trees in the midst of the garden, the silent witnesses of truth beyond all the others. A river too for watering the garden was not wanting, which after that parted and became four heads. Into this garden then did the LORD God put the man to dress and keep it. More than this He brought every animal of the field and every fowl of the heavens to the man, to see what he would call them; and whatever man called each became its name. But more than all this (the sign of his being the possessor and lord of the lower creation) was the deep interest of Jehovah Elohim in building woman out of the man, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, to be his wife.

But sin now made God's presence most alarming. Man's conscience was bad; and the divine presence, instead of awakening love and gratitude, terrified them to the utmost. The fig leaves failed. Adam and his wife bid themselves among the trees of the garden. The summons told the sad truth: “Where art thou?” Gone from God! Till man sinned, there was no question of judgment. Sin made it necessary for God to judge him. From this man shrinks; his guilt cannot be hidden, and God must judge.

What has man done since? What have you done, dear reader? Added sin to sin. So the Psalmist, writing some thousands of years after, confesses that men are all gone out of the way; and this not of heathen merely who knew not God, but of those that knew Him and His law; for whatsoever the law saith, it speaketh to those that are under the law. But now God commands men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world, or habitable earth, in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance to all men in that He raised Him from the dead.

Oh, hear His call, while it is called To-day. For this is the day of grace. As God came in quest of man who hid away from. Him, convicted him of his sins, yet revealed the Seed of the woman to crush the great enemy of God and man; so Christ has already come, been made sin on the cross, was there and then once offered to bear sins in His own body on the tree. To Him does God direct the eye of faith. He is the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He is the unfailing Savior, being God as well as man. He suffered once for all for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. And “be it known to you therefore, through this Man is preached [not promised merely, but preached] unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe [to none other is it pledged] are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39).

You are not only gone from God but lost as you are. For when God in Christ came into the world to reconcile men to God, they would not have Him but cast Him out of His own world; they crucified and slew Him. Such is man's position after all God's dealings: he is lost. But the gospel, which says so, makes known God's salvation in Christ without money or price on man's part, as in truth it cost God everything, His message therefore is that, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up [and so He has been], that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. “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.”

Do you think that this is too easy a way to be saved, too uncertain for you to trust? Alas! the thought betrays your unbelief. For no way was so hard, even for God, as to give His own Son that you might live through Him, and that He might die in propitiation for your sins. And the only certainty a soul on earth can have is from receiving God's witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life (1 John 5).

Chapter 63

Genesis 3:12-13 - Convicted

Gen. 3:12-13

THE chapter tells how Adam and Eve fell into transgression, with mutual shame, and with undisguised alarm at the presence of God. There was no Sinai smoking as a whole, because Jehovah came down in fire; neither did smoke ascend like that of a furnace; nor did the earth quake; nor the trumpet sound loud exceedingly. His voice without a reproach or a menace struck the guilty pair with terror; and they hid themselves from before Him among the trees of the garden. Compelled to answer His call, the man owned, not his sin, but his fear because he was naked; but he could not escape the searching question, “Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?”

Truly the word of God is living and energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to discern thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature unapparent before Him; but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom we have to do. As yet there is not a trace of repentance, but hardness of heart and self-justification. Had there been the least self-judgment, any real sense of dishonor done to the LORD God, they had confessed their sin in listening to the tempter, and humbled themselves at once instead of covering their nakedness in their own way. And when they heard His voice, they would have gone to Him though with bitter sorrow, instead of simply hiding from Him in conscious guilt. Each would have said, “Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.” “Now mine eye hath seen Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes.”

Far otherwise was it as yet with our first parents. “And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (vers. 11, 12). What glaring disrespect and ingratitude to God! What utter lack of affection and compassionate care for his wife, whom he ought to have led and shielded if he could from evil, instead of following her into it! What unworthy and impudent reflection on Him Who gave the woman as a helpmeet for his good, not as an excuse for disobeying God! To hear Him was his first and known duty, even before she was made. Both the man and the woman knew the prohibition of the LORD God; both were fully aware of the penalty of disobeying; and both consciously rebelled, though separately, she quite deceived, he not so yet persuaded by her, preferring the creature to the Creator Who had set them blessed in responsibility to Himself.

It is hard to conceive aught lower, and withal more insolent, than the answer of the man— “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” On the surface the words might be true; morally they were false, unworthy, and irreverent, yea blasphemous. Adam was so debased by sin as to seek to excuse himself by the woman's fault, and even to throw the blame on the LORD God; the woman only pleaded the serpent's craft. Neither felt or confessed personal wrong any more than disloyalty to God. The excuses only proved their guilt,

and could not but be their conviction. Thus Adam was condemned expressly because he hearkened to his wife's voice (ver. 17); and enmity was put between the serpent and the woman, who had sorrow multiplied instead of the pleasure she sought.

So it is with their offspring to this day. Sin brings in moral ruin; guilt leads to guile. Man without exception ever since is willful and ungodly. There is no good but always worse evil from palliation or blaming others, as all are prone to do. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and as it is corrupted through sin, out of that treasure the wicked man brings forth wicked things.

Thenceforward the sole hope for fallen man lay in God; and God's sole available and effectual good for man was in sending His only-begotten Son to become not man only but a sacrifice for the sinful. And so the Lord Jesus is the Savior of all that believe in Him, as the scriptures abundantly testify: the Savior of the lost, not the poor notion of a reinstatement of the race in what the first man ruined, but the blessing of 'the believer with all that God counts worthy of the Second man, His own Son, and of His redemption. What a blessed refutation of “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me”! God so loved, not His children, nor His people, but “the world,” the Christ-rejecting Satan-serving world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As this is the greatest blessing God could give, not pardon only, nor even peace, but eternal life; so His Son, in Whom that life is, becomes the test of every sinner here below, small or great, civilized or barbarian, wise or unintelligent. All are alike sinners: there is no difference in that awful fact, though some are bolder than the rest. It is appointed to men once to die, and, after this, judgment. Impossible for any one to escape either by any resources of his own or by other men. But Christ, sent of God to that end, went down into death and bore the judgment from God, as propitiation for sins; so that, when He shall appear a second time, it will be to those that wait for Him apart from sin for salvation. So perfectly did He on the cross bear the sins of believers that none of them, as He said (John 5), comes into judgment.

Therefore does God call on you now, if you have not already obeyed His call, to receive life eternal and salvation in His Son. To receive Him is to receive, not only what you need and can find nowhere else, but all the blessing God loves to bestow. Seek not to extenuate your case like Adam and Eve. Hide not away from Him Who, knowing all your sins, pities you no less than them, and now sends you the gospel in all its fullness, as could only be when Christ came, and died atoningly, and rose triumphant. It is therefore now not only the grace but the righteousness of God. Through Christ's work He is just and the justifier of the believer. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He that believes on Him is not judged: he that believes not has been judged already, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness more than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hates the light and comes not to the light, lest his works should be convicted; but he that does the truth comes to the light that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God (John 3).

Chapter 64

Genesis 3:14-15 - The Serpent and the Woman's Seed

Gen. 3:14-15

OF the man and the woman the LORD God inquired; not of the serpent, a known and old rebel. On him judgment was summarily pronounced, but governmental, in accordance with the O. T., rather than everlasting, which was reserved for Christ and the N. T. “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field. On thy belly shalt thou go and eat dust all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it (he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (vers. 14, 15).

What can be more striking or instructive? It is in judging the enemy that the revelation of grace is made, not in what was said subsequently to the woman (ver. 16) or to Adam (vers. 17-19). This was not only just but for the divine glory in Christ. What could morally warrant promise to fallen man or woman? Their transgression just perpetrated called for judgment, and the LORD God did not fail to declare it. He is not slack to reprove sin or to vindicate His majesty. Both are evident here in His own words at the beginning; still more, and perfectly, in the completion of the ages, when Christ has been manifested for putting away of sin by His sacrifice. Never before had sin been adequately judged, never before had God been absolutely glorified about sin. And the salvation which results to the believer is according to the perfection of Christ's atoning work and of God's glorification thereby (John 13:31; 17:4, 5, 26).

All the pretensions of sinful man are thus swept away and annihilated. No room is left for the dream of man's amelioration. Not so is God vindicated or sin judged or the sinner saved. There is no restoration of the first man, but the revelation of the Second; no promise to the fallen head, but the assurance of the Last Adam, a life-giving Spirit, the woman's Seed, to crush Satan. In Him and His cross meet, as nowhere else, truth and love, righteousness and grace, man to the last degree obedient and submissive, holy yet suffering, and suffering not only for righteousness and truth as well as love beyond all that ever were, but for sins—He alone, when man and Satan had done their worst, suffering for sin from God, His God. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?. . . But Thou art holy that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psa. 22:1, 3).

God answered Him, not merely by receiving His spirit committed into His Father's hands but by resurrection from among the dead and seating Him at His own right hand in heaven. We answer it too in our measure by believing in His name and confessing that it was for sin, yea for our sins, He the sin-bearer on the tree was thus abandoned of God, that sin might be judged, and we who believe be completely cleansed, and the glad tidings of repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the city of all the world most guilty of His crucifixion.

Undoubtedly the blessing of divine grace was for Adam or any of his race, sinful though they were, if they believed; buy the utmost care was taken that none could say truthfully that it was a promise to Adam. On the ground of the first man there was sin and ruin and death. Innocence lost is

irreparable. There is no possible return to what was lost, any more than ground for hope that fallen man would do better than man innocent.

It is in this judgment on the Serpent that the LORD God pointed out the only hope and the full assurance of victory over the foe. It is wholly and exclusively in the woman's Seed. Christ is Satan's conqueror, Christ is the Savior of man. It was not yet the due moment to make Him known as the Son of God, as God, yea as Jehovah. All this and more we find in the course of O.T revelation; and all is most clearly revealed in the N. T., each aspect of His glory just as it was needed and fitting.

Here we may readily see His deep grace, His wisdom, His holiness; yet the simple truth, that the vindicator of God, the avenger of man, and the destroyer of Satan, would be the woman's Seed, not the man's, with a strict propriety that marks out the Lord Jesus from every other born of woman. The responsible man was altogether left out. Weak woman, who had at the beginning listened to the evil one and drawn her husband after her into transgression, was to be taken up in the pure and rich mercy of God. For in man and by man it was His counsel to bring a new and revel and abiding glory to His name, and thus only to save the lost and defeat Satan.

There is indeed a true and essential work in the conscience, heart, and ways of every soul that believes unto salvation. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But, morally speaking, the beginning of all goodness for a sinner is a divinely given sense and confession of his badness; and it is clear that this alone could give not peace, but despair. He is called therefore in the gospel to look out of himself wholly unto Jesus, the woman's Seed, and to rest in the work He wrought for us, in His suffering for sins on the cross. To this scripture pointed throughout, as the N. T. expresses it with the utmost fullness and precision. Even here we have it in the crushing of His heel: a figure, taken from the serpent's habit, to set forth the acuteness of the wound inflicted on the woman's Seed, yet leave room for the contrast of his own crushed head under the risen Conqueror. The type here was but a shadow, as indeed elsewhere, and could not in this case fully announce that the deliverance of the guilty demanded the Savior's death. But even this lack was supplied in the intimation of the skins wherewith the LORD God immediately after clothed Adam and Eve. It was a covering, not of mere nature like the fig leaves, to which they first had recourse. The divine clothing of the guilty is founded on death, the application of which to Christ is easy and most intelligible.

Such then is the object of faith presented in Scripture. One believes God when he believes in Christ, the woman's Seed. So deep is the glory of His person, that only the Father knows Him fully. Man's mind, presuming to fathom that depth, breaks away into one heterodoxy or another, on the human side especially, but also on the divine. The only safety is to believe God's testimony concerning Him Who is the Son of God and the woman's Seed. This is the mystery of godliness, not only of truth but of godliness: “He Who was manifested in flesh.” It is the abandonment of self, of the first man, the confession of our evil, to find the salvation of God in the woman's Seed, and in the Son, not incarnate only, but in the body of His flesh through death. Thus only has God reconciled us who believe, once in settled alienation and enemies in mind by wicked works, now children and sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 65

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 1

Chapter 1

THE return of the captives from Babylon, important as it was in itself and in its consequences, was no more than a partial accomplishment of prophecy. Jeremiah's seventy years (chap. 25:11, 29:10) were fulfilled, and Daniel's seventy weeks (chap. 9.) thereon had their occasion. Even worse ruin impended, which the latter was given to know and reveal, following the cutting off of Messiah; as indeed the most fruitful and comprehensive of the prophets had already intimated long before (Isa. 49-57). The incredulity that left Jehovah, their own living God, for idols rose up against their own Messiah. Man, the Jew, must show himself as evil and rebellious in every way, before he finds mercy triumphing to God's glory in his salvation and blessing, when the promises to Abraham will have their long expected fulfillment on earth, and the secret of the divine purpose, hid in God from ages and generations, and before time began, will be displayed in the glory of Christ head over all things to the church, His body. The partial return was a pledge of that complete mercy in the future which is inseparable from Christ returning in power and glory, when the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed shall come (Rev. 11:15). He will then take His great power and reign. For behold He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Yea, Amen (Rev. 1:7).

But that little return of which Ezra gives the inspired account is itself the best refutation of the ignorant dream that Ezekiel's prediction of the valley of dry bones (chap. 37.) then came to pass. For these bones are expressly “the whole house of Israel,” whom Jehovah will bring into the land of Israel (vers. 11,12). Further, to mark the difference more sharply, the prophet was bidden, as the same chapter tells us, to take two sticks, one for Judah and the sons of Israel his companions, the other for Joseph or Ephraim and all the house of his companions. Both of these were to be joined into one stick and become one in Ezekiel's hand: the symbol, as is explained authoritatively of Jehovah making the sons of Israel one nation in their land, and one king to them all, never more to be two nations or to be divided into two kingdoms, never more to defile themselves with their idols or their detestable things or with any of their transgressions, but to be saved and purified, and to be His people, and He their God, and His servant the Beloved King over them, all having one shepherd, their prince forever: such the everlasting covenant of Jehovah with them when He sets His sanctuary in their midst for evermore, and the nations know that He, Jehovah, thus hallows Israel forever.

It was an evil fruit of Gentile conceit (Rom. 11.) to deny that these glorious visions pertain exclusively to Israel in a coming day. It was suicidal folly for the church to arrogate what, glorious as it will be for the earthly people, is wholly beneath the portion which sovereign grace gives us with Christ on high, in the day when all things shall be under His headship (and we one with Him), whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. As far as I am aware, not a single one among the Fathers, Greek, Latin, Syrian, &c., escaped this high-minded unintelligence, some

earlier interpreting the O.T of the glorified saints in the millennium, others later taking it allegorically even now or by-and-by, but none confessing the hopes proper to Israel, none believing that all Israel shall be saved after the fullness of the Gentiles, now being gathered, is come in. No wonder that their error, wise in their own conceits, has sown the wind for the rationalistic whirlwind that blusters so loudly in our day, the root of which is unbelief in God, and faith in man, which sees in the ruin and decadence of Christendom the signs of progress and triumph for fallen man, ignorant of divine judgment till the Lord is revealed from heaven to execute it.

The truth is that one of the most solemn events in O. T. history accompanied the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24), the period of the four Gentile world-powers, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, and the Roman empire. Jehovah no longer reigned in Jerusalem, but marked the change by giving over the last king of David's house to Babylon, the head of the image which set out the succession of imperial power, till His kingdom come judicially in the Stone cut without hands, break in pieces all these kingdom, itself never to be destroyed but to stand forever. The return from Babylon was no return of the Shekinah. Jerusalem was no longer the throne of Jehovah, as it had been; still less as it is to be (Jer. 3:17), when all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem; when the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come out of the land of the north to the land He gave for an inheritance to their fathers. Meanwhile since Nebuchadnezzar the government of the world is in the hands of the Gentiles as in Dan. 2., Zechariah, and the Revelation; and Israel is Lo-Ammi, Not-My-People. When the Son of man comes in His kingdom, the Gentiles shall be punished for their abuse of the trust committed to them, culminating in their rising up against Him in glory as before in humiliation; and the first or former dominion shall come to the daughter of Zion, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem (Mic. 4:8), when she shall arise and thresh, and the once despised Jesus shall be great to the ends of the earth.

Yet the return of the remnant was of deep interest and moment during the power of “the beasts” till under the last Messiah came and put them to this new test, more serious even than the old question of cleaving to Jehovah and refusing all other gods. For indeed He was, and was amply proved to be, Jehovah-Messiah; and their apostasy was yet more guiltily to be shown in despising and crucifying Him. Therefore God in due time gave them up to be shaken and scattered to the winds of heaven by the fourth empire for eighteen long centuries, as for their idolatry they were for seventy years swept away by the first.

The narrative repeats the last two verses of 2 Chronicles “And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. And the chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin rose up, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had

stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was offered. And king Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine-and-twenty knives, thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second [sort] four hundred and ten, other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. The whole did Sheshbazzar bring up when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem" (vers. 1-11).

It was the first year of the reign of Cyrus after his overthrow of Babylon. This it was of moment to note, not his previous circumstances. How powerfully Isaiah's prophecy must have struck a mind so thoughtful! Rationalists were not there to insinuate their skepticism. Daniel was there to point out Jeremiah also. It was not policy but Jehovah that stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, as He did that of the chief fathers of the Jews. The conqueror of Babylon proclaimed a jubilee as it were to the captives, but expressly to build Jehovah's house in Jerusalem. Who but an enemy of God's word can doubt. that Isa. 44:28, was his "charge" from Jehovah? And his works were according to his words, without attributing more than the action of conscience in presence of facts so stupendous and above human ken. The holy vessels were counted and restored, as far as was fitting, for Jehovah's house in Jerusalem. The ark, the center, the highest in value, the nearest to the glory, was not there. Alas! the glory itself had withdrawn. But in the day that the salvation of Israel comes out of Zion, the glory will return, no more to leave. When Jehovah turns again the captivity of His people, it will be no feeble remnant: Jacob shall be glad, Israel shall rejoice.

Chapter 66

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 2

GOD numbered His people as His host early in the second year of their leaving Egypt for the wilderness (Num. 1.); He numbered them again after the plague in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho: the same tribes, but not a man the same save Caleb and Joshua.

David numbered the people in the pride of his heart as if they were his, not Jehovah's; and he paid dearly for the wrong in the loss of many thousands of his warriors.

Nevertheless is it not a precious truth that God takes pleasure in letting His people know that they are everyone prized of Him? A sad change had come through Israel's and through Judah's sin, and not least through the sin of David's house; and sin, though it give occasion to His grace, cannot be without man's humiliation; while faith takes account of both. But God waits ever to bless and give the proof and sense of His blessing to His own; as we see even in the numbering of the returned from Babylon.

“And these [are] the sons of the province, that went up out of the captivity of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and that returned unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah” (vers. 1, 2).

Ah! the humbling fact: “the sons of the province, that went up out of the captivity!” Pride easily forgets and conceals; faith, cleared and cheered by grace, can afford in the darkest day to own the truth that, however Israel may change, Jehovah changes not: therefore are the sons of Jacob not consumed. Well may His own be ashamed of themselves: in Him alone do they glory and of His grace toward them. Yet were they subjected to the Gentile powers as Christ Himself urged on their unruly spirits. His first advent did not alter that; for they were sinful and unbelieving; and deeper purposes were to be accomplished by Messiah's rejection in which Jew and Gentile played their guilty parts. So the first named is not the High priest, but the heir without the throne of David.

After the chiefs come the rest. “The number of the men of the people of Israel: the children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred and seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua [and] Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and five. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of Ater, of Flezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three. The children of Jorah, a hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. The children of Bethlehem, a hundred twenty

and three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three. The children of Rarnah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one. The men of Michmas, a hundred twenty and two. The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, a hundred fifty and six. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of fiarim, three hundred and twenty. The children of Lod, Hadid, and One, seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty" (vers. 3-35).

Thus we see that the remnant are vigilant to stand simple and clear as sons of the covenant. Genealogy according to the flesh in the line of promise was as momentous to them, as to be born of God to the Christian. Never had there been such jealous care necessary; and this where it was most requisite —in the priests, as we shall see. But it was true of the people: none but Israelites can be allowed to build a temple to the God of Israel.

The ruin of the church in no way destroys its divine principles. On the contrary, scripture in view of it insists on greater care in cleaving to the word. Not only must the wicked person be put out, but we must purge ourselves from vessels to dishonor, in order to be meet for the Master's use, prepared, unto every good work. In earlier days when reproach and suffering kept out false professors in general, such decision was not called for; but the apostle enjoined, before he departed, a duty still more clearly and commonly imperative afterward. For we are bound truly and at all cost to do the will of the Lord, as we are left above all to seek His glory in obedience to His word.

So with the remnant. The Babylonish captivity had completed the confusion which sin had caused long before. But those who feared the Lord were the more careful in a way which was not needed in the days when all had been known and regular. Restoration is habitually difficult; but true grace is subject to scripture, as flesh ever craves what we have not got, despising what we have, and essaying imitations, substitutes, and inventions of its own. These faith utterly refuses, but has to hear the charge of disorder from the very people who are guilty of it.

Next, we have the numbers of the priests, Levites, singers, door-keepers, with the summed up Nethinim and sons of Solomon's servants. "The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashlmr, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred twenty and eight. The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, children of Shobai, in all a hundred thirty and nine. The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabboath; the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon; the children of Lebanah, the children of Flagabah, the children of Akkub; the children of Hagab, the children of Shamlai, the children of Hunan; the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah; the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam; the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai; the children of Asnah, the children of Meunirn, the children of Nephisim; the children of

Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur; the children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha; the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Ternah; the children of Neziab, the children of Hatipha. The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Hassophereth, the children of Peruda; the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel; the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the children of Ami. All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two" (vers. 36-58).

Observe by the way how many were the priests, and how few the Levites, comparatively. Before the captivity the Levites had shone in comparison. The priests had profited by the lath trial and God's intervention. But there is a weighty supplement. "And these were they which went up from Telmelab, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not show their fathers' houses, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Hakkoz, the children of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim" (vers. 59-63).

How striking and instructive! A day of weakness demands care not to exceed our measure! Power only can clear up dead-locks. Some failed to prove their title, and were discredited. One notable case was through alliance with worldly greatness outside. But, whatever the cause, not to show, the father's house was fatal! They might really be priests; but if their title could not be found, they were, as polluted, put from the priesthood. So the governor ruled, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. This, Israel after the flesh has never had since, and least of all when they refused the Lord Jesus. It will not be so always. They shall look unto Him Whom they pierced; and then shall there be pardon and peace, power and blessing.

Next follows a summary, including many counted (64-67). "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, besides their menservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred singing men and singing women. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five." For even their beasts are enumerated. How ignorant man is of God! How good for His people who may learn from His word, His interest both in themselves and in all that belongs to them! Be it that their estate is low, His notice is all the more impressive. Is this the manner of man, Lord Jehovah?

The chapter closes, it will be seen, with a record of generous dealing out of humble means, and their general position in the land. "And some of the heads of fathers' [houses], when they came to the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to set it up in its place; they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work threescore and one thousand darics of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and, the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities" (vers. 68-70).

Chapter 67

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 3

OUR chapter sets before us briefly and in the unmistakable power of the Spirit two pictures of the remnant alike instructive and affecting. They are also characteristic of this book.

“And when the seventh month was come, and the sons of Israel were in their cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar on its base; for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries; and they offered burnt offerings on it unto Jehovah, the morning and evening burnt offerings. And they held the feast of tabernacles as it is written, and [offered] daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required; and afterward the continual burnt offering, and those of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a voluntary offering unto Jehovah. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings unto Jehovah. But the foundation of the temple was not [yet] laid. And they gave money to the masons and to the carpenters; and meat and drink and oil to those of Zidon and to those of Tire, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia” (vers. 1-7).

The season was singularly appropriate. It was not the first month of the sacred year, in its paschal lamb and feast of unleavened bread the foundation of holy security in presence of judgment and of communion with Christ perfect and exclusive of all corruption. Still less was it the time of the feast of weeks, when the two wave-loaves baken with leaven were brought out fifty days after the wave-sheaf was waved before Jehovah on the morrow after the sabbath, the first day of the Lord's resurrection, the gathering not of Israel but of the church during Israel's rejection, as we know, a kind of first-fruits as He was. Here it was the harvest month, the final one of Jehovah's feasts, but it was only a little witness. The set time was not yet come, whatever the pity upon Zion meanwhile to encourage the waiting remnant. It was the seventh month, and the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Had the God of Israel not been before their eyes, they would not have so gathered. Still less when gathered, would the heads of the priesthood and of the people with their brethren, as their first joint public act, have builded the altar of their God to offer burnt offerings, “as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.” Human prudence would have made haste to erect a wall against their enemies. Faith and reverence led them to build the God of Israel's altar. They could not do all that Moses and Aaron did, or David and Solomon; nor would Jehovah deign under the then circumstances to give the Shechinah, or Urim and Thummim. The full restoration of Israel is still future. But they were free, yea they were bound, to acknowledge Him and His goodness to them after the due manner; and the burnt offering was the constant expression of approach to Him by virtue of an unblemished sacrifice, when all tried by fire rose up acceptably before Him.

They in their utter weakness, “though fear was upon them because of the people of the countries,” justly felt that their God had the first claim. They had seen what forgetfulness of Him had brought upon them, what unsparing chastisement of their idolatrous sins and all others, not because they were not but because they were His people. They had experienced His compassion on their low estate when captives, and His fidelity to the prophetic word in bringing back a remnant to the land; and as one purpose of heart gathered them, so their prime object was to worship Him “as it is written in the law of Moses.” It was not a new device to meet their anomalous circumstances. They had a vast deal urgent to do in a land of rain and neglect; and in no place more than Jerusalem. They had individually cleared themselves as Israelites and priests in chap. ii. They rightly judged that their first act in unity was due in adoring sacrificial recognition of Him. O if all had been it accord with this good beginning! this altar was their best stronghold. It was their spontaneous resource by grace; and what a testimony to all the earth! Certainly it was precious to the God of heaven.

Along with this rest for their timid hearts in the God they thus honored, their jealous submission to his word is as plain in this chapter as in the foregoing, and we may add His own care for it in chap. 1. They had little strength, but they kept His word and did not deny His name. It was the more striking, because the mass of Israel abode far away, scattered among the Gentiles of the east. Godly ones had prayed in their captivity, with windows open toward Jerusalem. But there only did they build an altar, there only offer burnt offerings. Never do we hear of such worship in Babylon, never in Assyria. To us, Christians, the name of Jesus is the center, the sole worthy center for the gathered saints; even as the altar here was for the faithful Jew. It was no question what others did or did not: these recovered from captivity, when gathered, owned thus the God of Israel without pretending to do more than they could. It was godly order, and simple obedience, because it was living faith, and not mere sentiment. Does not this become any faithful now?

But blessed as this was, they did not rest there as if it were all. “They held the feast of tabernacles as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ordinances, as the duty of every day required; and afterward the continual burnt offering, and those of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of Jehovah that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a voluntary offering unto Jehovah. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer offerings unto Jehovah. But the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was not [yet] laid. And they gave money to the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, to those of Zidon, and to those of Tire, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.” Thus ceasing to do evil, they learned to do well, and prepared to follow the Lord fully.

“And in the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbahel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem; and they appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upward, to oversee the work of the house of Jehovah. And Jeshua stood up, his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah [Hodaviah], as one, to oversee the workmen in the house of God; [also] the sons of Henadad, their sons and their brethren, the Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah. they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah according to time directions of David king of Israel. And

they sang responsively in praise and thanksgiving unto Jehovah: For he is good, for his mercy [is] forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout in praising Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief fathers, the aged who had seen the first house, [when] the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy. And the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off" (vers. 8-13).

This laying the foundation of the temple was a decided step in advance. It was good to build and use the altar without delay in faith; it was better to lay the foundation than to content themselves with that informal but acceptable and right beginning. No doubt circumstances were anomalous. The Persian had civil authority over them; and the people were for the most part among the Gentiles; and a new difficulty arose from imported Gentiles who imitated Jewish forms in the land. Yet faith is not to be turned aside from carrying out the truth, but humbly, not pretentiously, and never forgetting that the anomaly was due solely to Israel's sin and God's dealing with it. Hence, even in that hour of loudly expressed joy over the foundation laid, the old men wept; they felt more the ruin and its moral causes. God saw and cherished the tears. Men were more alive to the joy which greeted the auspicious act of that day. Both bore witness that Jehovah is good, and His mercy is forever, whatever be the failure of His people and His righteous notice of it. As it has been truly said, the Lord slighted neither; and each, according to their measure, did what they did to Him. Compare Rom. 14. But in truth zeal in going forward energetically, however right, lacks the due spiritual sense which estimates His glory and the state of His people, if there be not the constant and humiliating sense that He has been dishonored notwithstanding loving-kindness without end, and that He has justly stripped us of our ornaments. Do we feel it now?

Chapter 68

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 4

WHEN grace interposes to bless God's people in any real way, after just chastisement of sin and even universal departure, faith surely appreciates His mercy but ought not to forget the wrong done His name and the ruin of His people as a whole. True and holy intelligence, as it ever looks on Christ and the glory of God in His own, cannot rest in partial blessing, and feels just humiliation, while the mass of His people are scattered and the gathered are short of what His majesty justly calls for. Self-satisfaction, even where most is enjoyed, is unworthy of Him. How deeply the Lord felt this! “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you”? This lack of sense of ruin, and feebleness in applying the light of glory to judge self and the present even at its best, we have to feel, and to seek the moral mind of the Lord; and this was the great want of old. Nor did the fruit fail to appear.

But there were difficulties from without also in those that aped the ways of God's people, and claimed their relationship without reality.

“And the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the captivity were building a temple to Jehovah the God of Israel; and they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief fathers, and said to them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye; and we have sacrificed to him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria who brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the chief fathers of Israel said to them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God; but we alone will build to Jehovah the God of Israel, as king Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us. And the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius [Darjavesh] king of Persia.

“And in the reign of Ahasuerus [Ahashverosh] in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

“And in the reign of Artaxerxes [Artahshashta], wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his companions, to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in Aramaic and interpreted in Aramaic.

“Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions, the Dinaites, the Apharsachites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsitos, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Shusanchites, the Dehaites, the Elamites, and the rest of the peoples whom the great and noble Osnappar brought over and set in the city of Samaria and the rest [of the land] beyond the river, and so forth. This [is] the copy of the letter that they sent unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men beyond the river, and so forth. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee are come to us unto Jerusalem; they are building the rebellious and the bad city, and have finished the walls, and repaired the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and in the

end will damage the kings. Now because we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not meet for us to see the king's dishonor, therefore have we sent and certified the king; that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city [is] a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city laid waste. We certify the king that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, by this means thou shalt have no portion beyond the river. [Then] sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and [to [the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the river, Peace, and so forth. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I decreed, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all [the country] beyond the river; and tribute, custom, and toll, was paid unto them. Make ye now a decree to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until a decree shall be made by me. And take heed that ye be not slack herein: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? Then when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem; and it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (vers. 1-24).

The opening words of the Holy Spirit reveal the snare. Whatever the specious advances of the people of the land, they were not God's people but adversaries of Judah and Benjamin. Their movement was of the enemy, and this Zerubbabel and the other chiefs at once perceived and refused. It was no question of friendly feeling, or of catholic sentiment, but of God and His will. It may have been politic to plead the command of Cyrus the Persian; but God's people are strongest when in their weakness they stand solely on the word of God, however glad to know that Cyrus knew and owned the charge of the God of heaven to build Him a house in Jerusalem. They drew their motive from Himself, Who has all hearts in His keeping, moving one to forward His will and letting others oppose it for the trial of faith in His people.

And the weakness of the leaders showed itself still more in the people, who were troubled, or terrified from building for many a day. Yet the enemy could only delay, not frustrate, their purpose, which was of God. But the effort went on from the days of Cyrus till Darius Hystaspis resigned. Verses 6, 7, speak accordingly but in brief of the accusation in the reign of Cyrus' son and successor Cambyses. Verses 7-23 detail the more successful device in the days of the Pseudo-Smerdis, the Magian usurper, who personated the true Smerdis, Cyrus' younger son whom Cambyses had got dispatched. It was really an effort of the Medes to recover the ascendancy in the kingdomwhich the Persians had enjoyed since Cyrus. After little more than seven months the false Smerdis or Artaxerxes of our chapter was assassinated, the Magians in general were massacred, and Darius Hystaspis, one of the highest of the Persian nobles, obtained the kingdom. This may serve to explain why the impostor, ignorant of the policy of Cyrus, lent so ready an ear against it; and why under God he who was in accord with the great king inquired gravely into the truth and adhered to the measures which honored the God and people of Israel.

In their prime duty of separateness to God as His people the chiefs were firm. It was in vain for these heathen to seek fellowship. "For they feared Jehovah, and served their own gods after the

manner of the nations whence they had been carried away." With professed fear of Jehovah "they served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (2 Kings 17:33, 45). Impossible that the true God could consent to a partnership with false objects of worship, behind which were demons; and never would Judah and Benjamin, even though ever so feeble a remnant, abandon their special honor as His chosen, till His love and glory were nothing in their eyes. People ignorant or incredulous may brand faith in His word and the bond between Him and His own as narrow and presumptuous and uncharitable; but those that value the truth justly feel that relationship with Him is necessarily exclusive. It may be of fleshly descent, as of old; or of the Spirit in honor of Christ as now; but it must and ought to shut out all whom God does not own as His according to His goodness revealed then or now. Not that God did not of old show His mercy to strangers; and now more than ever in the gospel He sends His glad tidings to every creature under heaven. But He never did and never will consent to merge in one those who are His and those who are not; and of all strangers none so offensive in His eyes as those who professing that they know Him serve the enemy. The great test now is to confess Jesus. This is to bring the doctrine of Christ come in flesh. Only such have truth, life, or holiness. To abide in the doctrine of Christ is to have both the Father and the Son: more or better none can have. Those who bring not that doctrine do not guard themselves from idols; nor will such as know the truth accredit but avoid them. The principle is the same then and now: only the character differs, because the Son is come, and God has given us His Spirit as could not be before redemption.

Whether the world oppose, or the world sanction, this is a question of providential circumstances: the believer is bound to obey God; if the world interpose or persecute, he has to suffer. But he is on the earth to do God's will, and if hindered by force can await His time. God's word is the expression of His will; as the Holy Spirit is sent forth from heaven to give it effect in the hearts of His children. Nor are the gifts of the Lord (Eph. 4:1) withheld, save those which laid the foundation, but given in His faithful love, evangelists, pastors and teachers &c., for the perfecting of the saints, unto ministerial work, unto edifying or building up the body of Christ. There is gracious power assured, and no excuse for disobedience. For God is faithful, Who suffers not His children to be tempted above what they are able.

But there was timidity then through want of faith. The Jews were terrified, and flagged long before their adversaries succeeded in getting the usurper's prohibition. Compare Hag. 1:1-4. They had soon the sanction of the civil power revoked; and their adversaries had only ill-will till a king arose who knew pot Isaiah's prophecy. Yet were they deterred from the work while they themselves forgot or slighted the word of Jehovah. Nor was it the world's smile or authority which renewed their courage and recalled them to His work. But for explaining this we await the chapter that follows.

Chapter 69

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 5

BUT God is faithful, if His people too often are not; and He works in His people to recover them by His word. Depressed by their circumstances and disheartened by their adversaries, they had relaxed the work before a decree was gained to stop them. But God in the resources of His grace raised up servants of His even at that time of weakness to recall them to His will. And hearts were not lacking among the chiefs to respond.

“Now the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews that [were] in Judah and Jerusalem—in the name of the God of Israel to them, Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem; and with them [were] the prophets of God, helping them. At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, and Shethar-bozenai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? Then spake we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease, till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it.

“The copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, and Shethar-bozenai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which [were] beyond the river, sent unto Darius the king: they sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth on with diligence and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, [and] said unto them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? We asked them their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that [were] at the head of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and finished. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree to build this house of God. And the gold and silver vessels also of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that [was] in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one whose name [was] Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; and he said unto him, Take these vessels, go, put them in the temple that [is] in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in its place. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, [and] laid the foundations of the house of God which [is] in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and it is not completed. Now therefore, if it [seem] good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which [is] there at Babylon, whether it be, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning

this matter (vers. 1-17).”

Thus were God's people delivered from their fears through the intervention of grace working by the word. This was what recalled them to His work, and not the decree of the Persian power. It was not that they acted against authority; for they had this originally from Cyrus according to the prophecy before he was born or Judah carried to Babylon. But they were frightened by their enemies and turned to their own affairs, neglecting God's house; and this encouraged the effort to hinder them by the world's authority, which was put in action by an impostor or at least usurper, ignorant of or indifferent to the policy of him who founded the empire. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah roused them from their sloth and their fears, and the work was resumed in the face of opposition and threats. But all was in vain. “The eye of their God was upon the elders; and they did not make them cease.” We shall see in the next chapter the issue of the appeal to Darius. The important thing here to note is that faith took away their anxiety, and the work went on. Thus God was honored and His people blessed.

It was no longer Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe. Their companions had now for leaders Tattenai the governor locally, and Shethar-bozenai. Nor was their letter incorrect as to the diligence with which the Jews were now prosecuting the work of God's house; any more than their report of the answer from the Jews. And touching it is to hear, even from their adversaries, that the Jews very simply took their stand on the fact that they were servants of the God of heaven and earth, and building His house long ago built by a great king of Israel; that they owned the sins of their fathers which drew out from God its destruction and their captivity; and that the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus the king, the loftiest figure for Persian eyes, made a decree in the first year of his reign to build this house of God, and delivered the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar took away, to Sheshbazzar the governor of the Jews for replacing in the house to be rebuilt.

What is also striking to notice is that the new adversaries ask for a search in the archives, which resulted, as we shall see, in their refutation and the confirmation of God's people in that faith which was the fruit of the testimony of His servants. Why should His people be disquieted because of adversaries? It is for themselves they have most to fear, lest unbelief should open the door to the great foe, and unjudged sloth, self-seeking, pride, jealousy, dishonor Him Whose name they bear. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the residue of wrath shalt Thou restrain.”

Chapter 70

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 6

FAITH thus won the blessing, as unbelief had encouraged the adversaries and stopped for a while the work for God. The prophets were used to recall the people to God, His word, and His work, before the world-power interfered on their behalf.

“Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha [Ecbatana], in the fortress that is in the province of Media, a roll, and therein was thus written for a record: In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree [concerning] the house of God at Jerusalem. Let the house be built for a place where they offer sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits; and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber. And let the expenses be given out of the king's house and also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to its place: and thou shalt put them in the house of God. Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-bozenai and your companions of the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, he ye far from thence; let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place. Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savor unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this: and the God that hath caused his name to dwell there overthrow all kings and peoples, that shall put forth their hand to alter [the same], to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with all diligence.

“Then Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, Shethar-bozenai, and their companions, because that Darius the king had sent, did accordingly with all diligence. And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their courses,

and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

“And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth [day] of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure: and they killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek Jehovah the God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for Jehovah had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (vers. 1-22).

Thus the authority of the great king was brought on the scene only to confirm God's word and servants, and to compel the homage and help of those who had sought to hinder. What an encouragement to look above the hills to Him that sits in the heavens! And, as we read, the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. The commandment of the God of Israel had its just and primary place; and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, came in subordinately. The people were spared further chastening. The work was finished in Darius' sixth year. The dedication was kept with joy, with due recognition not only of the captives returned but of “all Israel,” “according to the number of the tribes of Israel.” Care was taken of order also. For they set the priests in their courses, and the Levites in their classes for the service of God in Jerusalem, “as it is written in the book of Moses.” A time of ruin in no way warrants relaxation as to scripture; it calls for special heed in those who care for God's house. Their resources were exceedingly diminished; but they were obedient to the word.

And the Holy Spirit draws attention to their celebration of the passover in its season (vers. 19-22).

Here the zealous care of the priests and the Levites is remarkable: they had purified themselves as one man, and were all pure. This had not been the case even during Hezekiah's earnest reformation, when the provision of the second month for the wilderness was requisite for the land, and both priests and Levites hallowed themselves with many in the congregation, who could not keep it in the first month. Now the due order was observed. Nor was it only by the captives who came from Babylon. Grace welcomed all such as had separated themselves to them from the filthiness of the nations of the land to seek Jehovah the God of Israel. The strangers are no less welcome than the remnant; and they kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy. It is of all moment to stand on the ground of God's people; not pretending to be Israel, when in truth they were a feeble few; not in the pride that forgets sin and ruin, but in the faith that cleaves to that ground which grace gives and keeps, refusing every substitute for it. It was that part of God's people which was visible.

Neither the glory of Jehovah appeared now, nor fire from before Him consumed the offerings: both had been unsuited to a day of ruin and small things. Nor would true faith look for either. No greater privilege, no higher honor, as things are: the pretension to more is only flesh, which opens the door to Satan. But faith is entitled to gladness of heart, whatever the sorrow over God's broken and scattered people. So Jehovah made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel. Let the path be narrow, and the heart large. The broad way is fatal, not only to souls, but to God's glory.

Chapter 71

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 7

MORE than sixty years elapsed: a space more than adequate for the decline from the powerful impulse given to faith by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, when God, Who cannot fail, sent suited help through a pious priest till then residing in Babylon, whose very name is hence derived—Ezra. Indeed it would seem that his commission was no more permanent than Nehemiah's, who was his contemporary and appeared a few years later for awhile in Jerusalem, even then but “the place of my father's sepulchers,” as he pathetically described it to the great king. How little Josephus can be relied on appears from his statement that Ezra died old and was buried magnificently in Jerusalem (Ant. xi. v. §.65), and before Nehemiah governed, in the face of the Tirshatha's express words.

“Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: this Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statute and judgment.

“Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments of Jehovah, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heavens, perfect and so forth. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and their priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king and his seven counselors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thy hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold that thou shalt find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem; therefore thou shalt with all diligence buy with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meal offerings and their drink offerings, and shalt offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee and thy brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do ye after the will of your God. And the vessels that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to

bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heavens, shall require of you, it be done with all diligence, unto a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths Of oil, and salt without prescribing [how much]. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heavens, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, the singers, porters, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thy hand, appoint magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye him that knoweth [them] not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him with all diligence, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

“Blessed [be] Jehovah, the God of our fathers, who hath put [such a thing] as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened according to the hand of Jehovah my God upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me” (vers. 1-28).

The people were careless, forgetful, and disobedient. They felt neither for God's glory nor for their relationship to Him. But God never ceases to be God, if His people were Lo-ammi; and faith alone reaps the blessing of His grace and issues in fidelity. They were not only few and feeble, but unfaithful; and Ezra had directed his heart to seek Jehovah's law, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statute and ordinance But this he undertakes under the authority of the Persian power that had succeeded Babylon, set supreme by the God of the heavens: a strange fact for Israel, whose apostasy from Jehovah had brought it about. In such circumstances the evil heart of unbelief, which wrought the ruin, is apt to become hard, indifferent, or despairing. Faith cleaves the more to the living God, feeling and owning the iniquity of His people, the real source of the mischief. But now that their apostasy had laid them at the feet of the Gentile world-power, God wrought in His compassion, first by prophets and His own word, now by succor according to the king's word from Babylon. And the faithful priest who enjoyed the king's confidence comes up to Jerusalem to recall the remnant to the neglected and violated law of Jehovah.

Liberty is given to all of Israel, and of their priests and the Levites, in the Persian realm, who were disposed, to go with Ezra to Jerusalem (ver. 13). Nor was he sent empty-handed to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem: the king and his seven counselors freely offered to the God of Israel, as he was to inquire “according to the law of his God which was in his hand “: a remarkable testimony from such a source (vers. 14, 15). His sacrifices and offerings were represented where He set His name, but a free discretionary power for what seemed good to Ezra and his brethren to do “according to the will of their God” (vers. 16-18). Royal liberality, not without a certain fear of God, is owned with exemption in such things from tribute in vers. 19-24: as Ezra is empowered, “after the wisdom of thy God that is in thy hand,” to appoint magistrates and judges who might judge all the people, “all such as know the laws of thy God,” and to teach him that knew them not; and this under grave sanctions of death, banishment, confiscation, or imprisonment (vers. 25, 26).

All this drew forth Ezra's thanksgiving to Jehovah, the God of his fathers, as he expresses in vers. 27, 28. A soul less pious and submissive to God's will in the humiliation of Israel would have chafed. We, Christians, are not an earthly people like Israel and have no such wants as they, though needing to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand for a departure from His will yet more serious.

Chapter 72

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 8

As it was the day of the people's humiliation, not power but pity and devotedness in obedience characterized Ezra. God will have reality in those He honors; false pretensions He hates. Communion with His mind, suitable to His people's state, is what we see here; and this blessed to not a few from a small and unpretentious beginning. Ezra in Babylon had not the living prophets which had cheered the early workers in Jerusalem; but his heart was set on the written word, and the hand of Jehovah did not fail in gracious providence, either for God and His worship, or on his journey to Jerusalem. Details now follow.

“Now these are the heads of their father's houses, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershon: of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel: of the sons of David, Hattush. Of the sons of Shecaniah; of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males a hundred and fifty. Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah; and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel; and with him three hundred males. And of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan; and with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah; and with him seventy males. And of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael; and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel; and with him two hundred and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah; and with him a hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai; and with him twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan; and with him a hundred and ten males. And of the sons of Adonikam, that were the last; and these are their names, Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud; and with them seventy males” (vers. 1-14).

The earlier return included several priests with their numerous houses (chap. 2:36-39); now but two volunteered without mention of their houses. At first no Levites offered themselves to Ezra; but this drew out his zeal, and not without fruit. Of the people some fresh families now returned; of other families a fresh part. Of one family, the sons of Adonikam or Adonijah, “the last sons” appear to have gone up; of whom the ominous number, 666, had returned with Zerubbabel (chap. 2:13). Compare Neh. 7:18; 10:16.

“And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there we encamped three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, which were teachers. And I sent them forth unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia; and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and his brethren the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.. And according to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of discretion, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; and Hashabiah, and with him

Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; and of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim: all of them were expressed by name" (vers. 15-20).

The lack of Levites grieved Ezra, as he deliberately reviewed the company that gathered to the river that runs to Ahava. He had means for the due service of God's house, but where were the ministers? He found none of the sons of Levi; and he will be no party to disorder in divine things. So in the strait he sent for chiefs and men of understanding and gave them a charge to a quarter where were Levites. God gave effect to his desire, and near forty Levites responded to the call, with more than two hundred Nethinim, who, if they had a lowly service, were all to their honor expressed by name.

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way, for us and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God [is] upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and wrath [is] against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us" (vers. 21-23).

Nor was the work begun or carried on in self-confidence. Ezra proclaimed a fast on the banks of the Ahava (the Hit, probably). He had boasted a little to the king of God's hand upon them all for good, notwithstanding their low estate because of their national sins; and he was rightly ashamed to ask of him a military guard against their enemies in the way. To God with fasting then he would have them to turn, assured that he was seeking His glory and doing His will. And God, as he says, "was entreated of us."

"Then I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king and his counselors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered: I even weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents; of gold an hundred talents: and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. And I said unto them, Ye [are] holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels [are] holy; and the silver and the gold [are] a freewill offering unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep [them], until ye weigh [them] before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' [houses] of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. So the priests and the Levites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring [them] to Jerusalem unto the house of our God" (vers. 24-30).

Here we see righteous care and choice of faithful men, and this in no narrow spirit, but of fellowship. He separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, or Levites, and weighed to them the offering for God's house, with a solemn appeal. So the N. T. still more impressively shows us Timothy and others charged in view of the Lord's appearing (1 Tim. 6:13, 14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2; Titus 2:13, 14). For responsibility is in view, not exactly of His presence, but of His appearing, when all will be out, and each will receive according to the things done with the body as their instrument, whether good or bad (2 Chron. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:10).

“Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the her in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. And on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him [was] Eleazer, the son of Phinehas; and with them [was] Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, the Levites; the whole by number, by weight: and all the weight was written at that time. The children of the captivity, which were come out of exile, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats [for] a sin offering: all a burnt offering unto the LORD. And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's satraps, and to the governors beyond the river: and they furthered the people and the house of God” (vers. 31-36).

The journey was made prosperously; the offering after three days delivered by number and weight in God's house into the due hand, and as duly recorded at the time; and God was owned according to His word, as He could not be in Babylon. Burnt offerings were presented to the God of Israel, “twelve bullocks for all Israel.” They rose in faith to God's mind, and they embraced in heart before Him all His people. But they were as far as possible from pretending to be more than they were, while they refused to be other than they were. Imitations or substitutes never satisfy a true heart. Besides the bullocks, they offered ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve he-goats for a sin offering. This could not be forgotten. They thoroughly owned their original relationship to Jehovah, so dishonored; they looked with confidence to their glorious restoration for His own name; and both contributed to their doing the right thing meanwhile, in obedience of faith and lowliness of mind. They acknowledged the present ruin of Israel, but clung unwaveringly to Israel's God.

Chapter 73

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 9

BUT a great sin was going on, and Ezra must take it up in sorrow and shame before God if haply repentance might work recovery.

“Now when these things were done, the princes drew near unto me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the trespass of those of captivity; and I sat astonished until the evening oblation. And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my mantle rent; and I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto Jehovah my God; and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over [our] head, and our guiltiness is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers we [have been] exceeding guilty unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, [and] our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to spoiling, and to confusion of face, as [it is] this day. And now for a little moment grace hath been [shown] from Jehovah our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we [are] bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, through their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their filthiness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their prosperity forever: that ye may he strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave [it] for an inheritance to your children forever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great guilt, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities, and hast given us a remnant, shall we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the peoples that do these abominations? Wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed [us], so that [there should be] no remnant, nor escaping? O Jehovah, the God of Israel, thou [art] righteous; for we are left a remnant that is escaped, as [it is] this day: behold, we [are] before thee in our guiltiness; for none can stand before thee because of this” (vers. 1-15).

After all the mercy shown to the remnant returned from captivity, after long patience with shortcomings and protection from their adversaries, the princes announced to Ezra that the people

of Israel and the priests and the Levites, far from keeping themselves separate from the heathen round about them, were living in open disobedience of God's word and rebellion against His authority. For they had taken of their daughters for themselves and their sons, and thus mingled the holy seed with the peoples of the lands, the princes and rulers being first or chief in this unfaithfulness. What evil more deadly for a Jew, unless it were worshipping other gods? And to this it habitually tended. It was in itself a fundamental violation of Jehovah's will, an abandonment of that separateness to Himself from the nations which was essential to their standing as His people. It was not only the surrender of their own privilege as the sole nation of His choice, but rebellion against His rights and glory Who had thus favored them.

No doubt a most solemn and humiliating change had come through their idolatry. The government of God had no longer its center in Israel, while recognizing other nations around though ignorant of Him. When even Judah and the kings of David's house definitively gave Him up for other gods, like heathen nations though far more guiltily, the God of heaven brought in the world-power system, from Babylon down to the Roman beast in its last and still future phase, till the Lord judge its apostasy and anti-Christianism. For that system is but provisional, and will give place to His resumption of power in His displayed glory, when He shall reign, alike King over Israel and in Zion, and Son of man in universal and everlasting dominion, and all the peoples, nations, and languages shall serve Him in a kingdom which shall not be destroyed. Every believing Jew knew more or less clearly of that glorious consummation, as well as of their past departure from God which had brought in their present ruined estate. All was intended to bear on their souls and their ways before God in producing self-judgment but withal confidence in His mercy and submission to His will. To disown the Gentile power He had set up was false ground; to forget that they were but a remnant, restored to the land in His grace, was evil. What was it to set up, a handful (as were the returned Jews in such circumstances) to claim the place and authority of unbroken Israel with the throne of David, yea the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel? It would have been the vainest presumption without conscience and heart in opposition to God till Messiah come and change all things.

The spirit of this is one of the perils of Christendom. Those who see and hold aloof from antiquated claim and gross iniquity are exposed, when they learn ever so superficially what the church is, to imitate its forms and arrogate authority without power, trusting in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. The pretension, avowed or implied, to set up the church again in its primitive order and the official authority which was of old, is at once a grievous affront against God and shameless insensibility to the low condition of His saints. Scripture nowhere warrants any such spirit, never sanctions such a course, in a day of ruin. It is at bottom the same self-confidence that led to the ruin which assumes to rectify it. If really humbled in heart because of the anomalous state of things, our place is in dependence on God to seek His will in view of the ruin, with grace to obey in the circumstances. He in His goodness has provided for our guidance now quite as clearly as for Ezra and his companions of old. To acquiesce in the evil we know—to compromise—is not and never was of God; neither is it of Him to claim authority beyond our power, but to obey His word humbly and to own the title of Christ's members, looking to Him to work in His grace and power. Wherever there is the assumption to restore the church, the first act, or one of the first always occurring, is to nominate elders, without apostolic authority direct or indirect. Thus men fall into open antagonism to the word of God, the

one standard, and grand test for the grievous times of the last days. This is to eat leavened bread from the beginning; as the spirit, which led up to it, is fleshly pride which will soon become a prey of Satan in other error and evil.

Here we find lowly unpretentious fidelity in Ezra, and deep sense of the trespass among the returned from captivity. Overwhelmed he sat till the evening oblation. Then with clothes rent he spread out his hands to his God and owned the guilt, “our guiltiness,” thoroughly. Not a moment's thought that the Jews then could do all that Moses or Joshua, that David or Solomon, did in their days, but seeking to do all that God's word authorized them to do in their actual circumstances. “For,” said he, “we [are] bondmen” (ver. 9), as the context and even verse requires; instead of “were,” as the A. V. has it and people are so apt to think in their forgetfulness of God's ways and His people's sin. But we shall have more to weigh when we read the practical issue that followed. The all-important condition is a just sense of where God's people are, and the heart humbly set on obedience, instead of our own thoughts and self-confidence to put all things right.

Chapter 74

The Returned Remnant: Ezra 10

WE have seen holy Ezra humbling himself before God because of the unfaithfulness of the returned remnant, yea, of their princes and deputies chief in a matter that closely touched His honor and tested their devotedness. For what was a Jew that failed to be separate to Jehovah? He who united himself with a Gentile in the nearest relationship of the flesh despised and defied His law. He was profane like Esau and in the face of fuller light and more awful sanction. Such a breach in mingling the holy seed with the peoples of the lands, and this in too many cases, filled Ezra with affliction and shame, as his ways attested to all eyes. But there was no hasty utterance. Not till the evening oblation did he pour out the confession we have heard.

“And while Ezra prayed, and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have married strange women of the peoples of the land: yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for the matter belongeth unto thee, and we are with thee; be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. So they sware. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water; for he mourned because of the trespass of them of the captivity. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever came not within three days according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of the captivity. Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month: and all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.

“And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have trespassed, and have married strange women, to increase the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers, and do his pleasure; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the strange women. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let now our princes be appointed for all the congregation, and let them that are in our cities which have married strange women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be dispatched. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah

stood up against this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of fathers' houses, and all of them by their names, were separated; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had married strange women by the first day of the first month.

“And among the sons of the priests there were found that had married strange women: namely, of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren, Maaseiah, and Eliez-er, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And they gave their hand that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their guilt. And of the sons of Immer; Hanani and Zebadiah. And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah. And of the sons of Pashhur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah. And of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. And of the singers; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. And of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. And of the sons of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbal, Athlai. And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and iVIe,nassela. And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Anaram, and Uel; Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib; Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu; and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei; and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah; Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai; Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah; Shallum, Amariah, Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, and Joel, Benaiah. All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children” (vers. 1-44).

The apostasy of Israel and then of Judah, which led to the world-power of the Gentiles did not annul God's will for faithful men; still less does the ruin of Christendom for the Christian now. Assuredly there is much for us to learn, not only in the principle itself, but from tine danger owing to our circumstances. Once Jews were imperiled from theirs; especially as to us the separation to God now is of no merely outward and fleshly sort, but in the Spirit's power as taught in the word. It is from the world and in the judgment of flesh, being wholly evil as the cross has proved. For neither the Jew nor the Christian evidently is it a simple question of moral pravity, but of consistency with the relationship, which grace has conferred on the one or the other. We are called to do His will in obedience to His word; and this imperatively, whatever the cost. The danger is from claiming laxity because of a state of ruin. A true heart would feel it a louder call to watch and pray.

Shecaniah first responded to the appeal (vers. 2-4). We do not hear that he was personally unfaithful but, it would seem, his own father (compare ver. 26). Yet he confesses, We have trespassed, &c., and proposes repentance shown in putting away the evil and its fruit, charging the administration of the judgment on Ezra. On this Ezra acts, swearing all to it from the highest downward, still fasting himself with mourning (vers. 5, 6); and proclamation is made to gather to

Jerusalem within three days on pain of forfeiture of goods and cutting off from the congregation. And they did come together (vers. 7-9). Ezra calls on the unfaithful to confess and separate from the peoples as well as the strange wives; and all the congregation answer loudly, but plead the long work in the then untoward circumstances, and propose that it he dispatched in detail by responsible men throughout their cities (vers. 10-14).

A singular difficulty appears in ver. 15. The words might mean appointment over this, or opposition to it: the A. V. favoring the former; the R. V. the latter. But the context appears to decide for opposition. For ver. 16 is clear that not only Ezra but certain chief fathers, and all by name, were separated, and sat down to examine the matter. These carried out the task in order; whereas only four had stood up against this proposal. And more than a hundred were found, four of priestly rank, who gave pledge to send away their wives and offer the trespass-offering required. Their names follow without respect of persons (vers. 18-44). The authority of God's word abides inalienably to faith; but a time of ruin, while giving occasion to God's fidelity, is the last to allow of pretensions which ignore that ruin or the lowly walk which becomes faithful men, any more than the sanction of unfaithfulness. And the hope of Him Who is coming not only cheers and brightens the present, but acts on the conscience, as we may see in the later prophets who testified for God and to the remnant during those days.

Chapter 75

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 5:1-2

The chapter on which we now enter strikingly refutes the hypothesis of separate documents, so much in vogue with the neo-critics. For according to it this book of Adam's generation originally followed Gen. 1; 2:1-3, as the more ancient Elohistic record, supposed to be dislocated by the singular compound (Jehovah Elohim) in chaps. 2:4, 3., and by the Jehovistic interpolation of chap. 4. But such an arrangement as is thus assumed not only yields a result barren of any good fruit, but deprives us of truth most interesting, momentous, and necessary about God and man, as well as the enemy of both. For what is omitted thereby? The instructive lesson of the temptation; the awful fact and consequences of the fall; the solemn intervention of Him Who blessed and tried but, by man's sin, was made his Judge; the mysterious revelation of a suffering Destroyer of that enemy who ensnared our first parents by disobedience unto death, and of a Conqueror Who, in some way as yet unexplained, should be born of woman, and yet deal with Satan as not all mankind of all ages together could. Nor is this brief summary of chap. 3. anything like a full appraisal of the most needed truth left out.

Consider next how deep and searching is chap. 4., where sin against man, one's brother even, is as fully out as against God in chap. 3! The sole ground of acceptable approach to Jehovah is by sacrifice; for this was the then acknowledgment of man as sinful, and of God in grace looking on to a remedy in righteousness. So we see the younger son Abel offering and accepted by faith, the elder Cain rejected with his offering of nature in unbelief, though Eve had fondly counted him a man gotten from Jehovah. Then, in pride rankling into hatred, notwithstanding the gracious expostulation of Jehovah, Who points to the remedy and maintains his title after the flesh, Cain slays his righteous brother, is convicted (spite of heartless and insolent prevarication), gets cursed from the ground, and is sentenced to be a wanderer in the earth. What a type of the Jew guilty of the death of Jehovah's righteous Servant, their own Messiah, yet with a sign given that they shall not perish; and in the end under Lamech confessing the sins and avenged seventy and sevenfold, when we hear of another Seed appointed of God instead of the slain, and in due time men calling on the name of Jehovah! For this in its turn is no other than the pledge of the One Who combines the slain Messiah with the appointed Heir of all things, our Lord Jesus. Yet much as is here traced, there is also the picture of the world and its civilization, its arts and sciences and delights, away from God, Who refuses its natural religion and vain efforts to worship Him after the flesh.

Think then of the critical judgment, which can regard the narrative (call it Elohistic, or Book of Origins, or Priest's Code, or anything else), when disengaged from the rest where designations other than Elohim occur, as “a nearly complete whole!” Surely men learned or unlearned, who thus manipulate the scriptures in honor of the crudest fancy which ever rose into a popular fashion, betray their own lack of faith and their consequent inability to interpret that Mind which opens to the believer only. It is just as under another form in Israel of old, “All vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned” (Isa. 29:11, 12). What! “a

nearly complete whole" in God's history, or the Priest's Code, of man, without one word about the details of his divine relationship founded on his peculiar formation, his body of the dust, the inner man as directly inbreathed by Jehovah Elohim! Without one word about paradise lost and death gained by disobedience inexcusable! Without one word about the knowledge of good and evil incompatible with innocence pure and simple, but after his transgression man's condition for good as for ill! Without one word about woman's relationship to man founded on her most singular, but touching; and beautiful, building up under the wise and good hand of the LORD God, with all its fruitful admonition whether men hear or forbear! Without one word about the simplicity of sinless man and woman naked and without shame, their instant ineffectual covering of a natural sort, and the profound truth and grace, though merely as yet a shadow, of the LORD God's effectual clothing based on death! And withal the mysterious serpent's ominous and dark insinuation to man's ruin and his own sure destruction by divine power in the person of the woman's Seed—not a word about this dire and constant adversary of God throughout the sad history of man's responsibility, or the final judgment!

Really the freaks of human speculation are far stranger and more unaccountable than the unvarnished narrative of inspiration as it stands, which to the believing ear requires the distinctive titles of Elohim, Jehovah Elohim, and Jehovah (as others also in due time) according to the varying character of the communications, and therefore intrinsically necessary to the perfection of the divine word. It is the phenomenal ignorance of unbelief, absolutely unheeding God's mind, which, in despair of real intelligence by the Holy Spirit, seeks the superficial, unsatisfactory, and baseless hypothesis of a composite from distinct sources welded together by a later compiler into a continuous whole, which after all is full of inconsistencies in details and wholly unreliable. In truth it is but infidelity and veiled with no better than fig-leaves which betray sin and nakedness. Different points of view there are, as there ought to be for full truth, which account for differing traits of style; but as chaps. 2. 3. pre-suppose chap. 1., so does chap. 4. follow up both, as the actual conflict of nature and grace. Chap. 5., like other scriptures, employs each designation and its accompaniments as truth demands: so we may hope to show to such as, receiving Holy Writ, accept it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth God's word.

Needs it further proof that the so-called duplicates are due to differing design, not to distinct hands, still less to bastard legends? Thus in chap. 2:4 and onward, there is no thought of setting out the order of creation, already given generally from first to last in chap. 1., but the momentous fact of such special truths as the Moral Governor, Jehovah God, set up in the scene of Adam's relations with Himself and paradise, with earthly creation as a whole and the woman in particular. Opposition between the chapters whether materially or formally is a libel. And hence, as in many respects the condition was peculiar to the primeval state, we never in the Pentateuch find Jehovah

Elohim regularly used but here, save exceptionally in Ex. 9:30. It is untrue that chap. 2:7, 19 represents man as created before the birds and the beasts; it is untrue that chap. 2:7 (Adam's formation out of the dust) contradicts chap. 1:27 (created in God's image); it is untrue that chap. 1:27 asserts that the man and the woman were created together, or does not consist with the woman being formed specifically out of Adam's flank. Such objections spring solely from the spite of unbelief. The two chapters, like those that follow, are from the same Mind guided of God; but some to their shame have no knowledge of God.

With the light derivable from all that precedes, chap. v. takes up man in the succession of his generations from Adam to Noah and his sons; and therefore Elohim rather than Jehovah was the correct title, Jehovah only appearing once where it was more proper. And this to the eyes of our “wise and prudent” critics “can only be accounted for upon the supposition that the sections in which they occur are by a different hand” (Driver's Lit., O.T.)!

“This [is the] book of Adam's generations. In the day God created man, in God's likeness made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam (man), in the day when they were created” (vers. 1, 2).

Now suppose the different-document hypothesis a fact, and this chapter had ever followed chap. 1. 2:3, as the immediate sequel, how insipid such a continuation as the opening of chap. 5.! We say nothing of omitting such all important particulars as are ignored between the two, as we have already noticed. If on the contrary we receive these scriptures as they are, the new departure on ground similar to the earliest section most suitably calls for a tracing down from Adam through Seth to diluvian times, just as we have it. The intervening history which brought out God not simply as such, but as Jehovah Elohim, and then in the usual style of Jehovah, where special relationship is treated with rebellion against it, made it all the more requisite to resume the genealogical line from its source till God judged creation.

Even here it is far from mere repetition, which it might seem to the careless reader. For chap. 1:26 says that God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and reiterates not His “likeness” but “image” twice in ver. 27. Here it is said that, in the day of His creating man, He made him in the likeness of God. Both were true, but they are not the same statement; and an imitator or later redactor being uninspired would rather have made them identical. He Who knew the whole truth could and did use each appropriately; as we may see for the form here employed, when ver. 3 comes before us. But the shade of difference is undeniable, understand it or not as we may.

Further, here only are we told that God “called their name Adam (man) in the day they were created.” It was Adam before the fall who called the woman Ishah, because she was taken out of Ish. It was Adam, after the fall but also the revelation of the woman's Seed, who called his wife's name Eve (Chavvah), because she was the mother of all living. Unbelief might have naturally called her Death, as the mother of all dying. But Adam looked in faith for her Seed Who entitled him and them to better things than he and she had any right to. But here it is the racial name, common to both, which God called in the day of their creation. How wise is every change, every difference, embodied in God's word! And how foolish the incredulity that can see nothing beyond the discrepancies of different hands, none of them inspired in any true sense!

Chapter 76

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 5:3-5

THAT chapter 5. is in its only proper place, supposing one and the same hand wrote all the sections preceding it, is manifest from the exclusion of reference to Cain and Abel, and its notice of Seth as the true and appointed continuator of Adam's line to Noah. Previous and fragmentary documents, or not, is quite a subordinate question. But this is the more inviting for the speculative to discuss, as there is the slenderest basis whereon to display their skill in building their ingenious but shadowy schemes. The believer has before him the solid fact of a divinely carried out design, on a principle which discovers the enmity of a mind above man's, not here only but throughout the O.T. Nor is there a single instance known to me of sure evidence against Moses as its writer. The ancient heathen themselves, spite of their undying animosity against the Jews, were not in this as unbelieving as our modern critics who call themselves Christians.

For where could the fruitful episode of chap. 4. stand suitably but where we find it? Yet this, to be exact, required the use of Jehovah alone for the first time in the narrative. Neither Elohim as in chaps. 1. 2: 3 would be in keeping, nor yet Jehovah Elohim as in chaps. 2:4 and 3., each in its proper place, which is only proved the more by the exceptions in the language of the serpent and of Eve (chap. 3:1, 3, 5). The conditions in chap. 4 were no longer paradisiacal but such as appealed to all the race now fallen, especially before men lapsed into idolatry, having still the traditional knowledge of God, not as Creator only but in special relationship as Moral Governor of His offspring. Not for two millenniums and a half was that Name with the law given to the chosen people as their distinctive possession and responsibility. But here they were shown, on the small primeval platform of Cain and Abel, the vanity for a sinner of natural religion, slighting, as it always does the guilt and the judgment of sin, no less than sacrificial provision of grace bound up with faith in the coming and suffering Messiah Who should destroy the enemy.

It is remarkable that Eve, who had been misled by the serpent to forget the special relationship of Jehovah Elohim, said on the birth of Cain, I have gotten a man from, or with the help of Jehovah. It was like Sarah in Hagar's case looking for the seed of promise through nature. On the other hand, and in the same chap. 4:25, she said on the birth of Seth, Elohim hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel: the more to he observed, because in the next verse we are told that then it was men began to call upon the name of Jehovah. Now each of these designations is employed with exquisite propriety, and with an aim evident save to men walking in the darkness of Egypt. So mistaken are they who, ignorant of what is all-important spiritually, fall into the delusion of striving to account for these differences and their accompaniments, by the fancy that the sections in which they occur are by different hands. It is the design, and this a divine one, which alone satisfactorily explains all the phenomena, and the more strikingly because they come from the same inspired writer.

So in our chap. 5. Elohim is the only proper term till we come to verse 29, where Jehovah is demanded by the aim of the inspiring Spirit. Difference of hand is the resource of incredulous ignorance. Cain and Abel had played their parts respectively, as all that hear the truth must, in the

darkness of unbelief or the light of faith; and Eve, profiting by her early mistake, acknowledges her son Seth as substituted by Elohim for Abel whom Cain slew. Son of Adam, he the firstborn had gone out impenitent and in despair from Jehovah's presence, was building a city called after the name of his son, and began the world of arts and sciences, civilization and pleasure, a wanderer far from the God Who reveals His will and judges those that despise His Christ. With the appointed Man people began calling upon His Name, the foreshadow of the millennial day (compare Isa. 11:9.10;, Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:9; Mal. 1:11).

Here till the close the sole correct designation is Elohim, and could not be Jehovah. It is the line of Seth from Adam to Noah.

“And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat [a son] in his likeness, after his image, and called his name Sheth. And Adam's days after he begat Sheth were eight hundred years; and he begat sons and daughters. And all Adam's days which he lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died” (vers. 3-5).

When Elohim made man, chap. 1: 26, He proposed it to be in His image, after His likeness. So He created him in His image, as it is said twice (ver. 27). And we have already seen, that, as likeness resembles, image represents: a distinction which it is of moment to seize, as it holds everywhere in scripture. The “likeness” consisted of qualities corresponding to God, as no other nature on earth had; the image was man's place in presenting Him to others, as not even angels of heaven did or could. As man was made upright, so he was called to dominion over the lower creation. Angels fulfill His word and do His pleasure, yet they only minister, never rule. But now that the head of the race was fallen, he “begat in his likeness, after his image.” It was in his own likeness, not God's; and it was not Cain but Seth that is said to be “after his image.” Adam was represented by Seth, though he could not be said to be begotten after Elohim's likeness but Adam's. Yet it still remains true that man, even though fallen, is the image and glory of God (1 Cor. 11:7). Hence the guilt of murder demanded death, for it was the extinction of what represented God on earth, even when man was no longer after His likeness (Gen. 9:6). The comparison of our verse 1 makes it all the plainer: “in the likeness of God made He him” (Adam). The “image” of God was the emphatic point in Gen. 1:27, and even in 26 takes precedence, however important the “likeness” which sin destroyed for Seth, whom Adam “begat in his likeness, after his image.” The race is fallen.

What progeny Adam had during this early time we are not told, but simply that his “days after he begat Seth were eight hundred; and he begat sons and daughters.” How little is said of the line of faith, especially if we compare the striking picture which the preceding chapter furnishes of the world's rapid progress in all that life which nature deems worth living!

“And all the days which Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died” (ver. 5). There is not the slightest sound reason to doubt the longevity here attributed to antediluvian man. Man was made to live, not to die; his death came in through sin. The truth of life will appear when the Second man takes the world-kingdom (Rev. 11). Those who live righteously when He reigns shall continue through the thousand years, none dying save under curse for rebellion; and the righteous, as scriptural principles imply, are at last changed, without passing through death, into everlasting in-corruption; as Christians are entitled to expect who are alive and are left to the coming of the Lord, before His displayed kingdom begins (1 Thess. 4., 1 Cor. 15.). Lengthened as the span of years may seem, compared with the measure which the prayer of Moses (Psa. 90)

lays down as the ordinary rule of human life, they were but “days” of Adam or any other here recorded. After Adam they were begotten, and they begot; they lived and they died. This sums up the history of most; but of this more when we review the account of others, as well as the exceptions.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 5:6-20

Chap. 5: 6-20.

JOSEPHUS and certain Arabian writers, quoted by Hottinger, allege details of ancient worthies here enumerated; which are not worth repeating, because they are destitute of real authority. The inspired writer all the more impressively gives the same simple outline of these lives so prolonged. Two exceptions occur of most notable character which claim appropriate heed in their places. The general line is all that now comes before us. Divine purpose is the key to both. It explains alike the mention which looks so meager, and the special record in the cases of Enoch and Noah. It accounts for the omission of all particulars in the general genealogy beyond the direct line of the chosen people, and so especially of the Messiah, God's salvation, light for the revelation of the gentiles, and glory of His people Israel. The rest of their progeny, however numerous or distinguished in a human way, are merely merged in “sons and daughters” they begot.

“And Sheth lived a hundred and five years, and begat Enosh. And Sheth lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. And all Sheth's days were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died. And Enosh lived ninety years and begat Kenan. And Enosh lived after he begat Kenan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters. And all Enosh's days were nine hundred and five years; and he died. And Kenan lived seventy years and begat Mahalaleel. And Kenan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters. And all Kenan's days were nine hundred and ten years, and he died. And Mahalaleel lived sixty-five years, and begat Jared. And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. And all Mahalaleel's days were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. And Jared lived a hundred and sixty-two years, and begat Enosh. And Jared lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And all Jared's days were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died” (vers. 6-20).

It is in vain for men to decry the longevity of the men before the deluge, and, though diminishing, after it. Oriental and other nations long retained the tradition, however disguised, pointing to the primitive facts. To argue that it is contrary to the known laws of physiology is only the resort of narrow-minded and ignorant unbelief. For God if He pleased could easily by change of conditions reduce man's life from 900 years to 90. It is a question of fact for which His word vouches. Nor is there any need to labor on behalf of the plain statements of scripture; for man unfallen never partook of the tree of life; and, when fallen, he was driven out lest he should. The gradual experience of men since the deluge is of no validity against the immensely greater age of mankind as scripture avers before that great event, whatever the physical or secondary causes may have been before or after, as they are presumptuous who deny it.

We are not in a position to ascertain where God has said so little; but there were reasons we can appreciate why in the early history of mankind their prolonged span of life was of incalculable moment. It was in their high interest that the origin of the race should be attested, as well as of the

earth and heavens, and of all creatures in them; still higher was it to hear of the fall and its solemn results; highest of all, to know that He, alike the Creator and in moral relationship with man, had interposed in a way not more righteous than graciously revealing a suffering Deliverer, the woman's Seed, to destroy the enemy: the victory of good over evil for all who believe as well as creation. What can be conceived of such great weight for God and man as to convey aright this pregnant revelation of grace, and to those so immediately concerned as the fallen race, or at least such as had ears to hear? And how was a revelation as yet oral to reach the family of Adam effectually save by the longevity which characterized that early day?

Hottinger, allege details of the ancient worthies here enumerated; which are not worth repeating, because they are destitute of real authority. The inspired writer all the more impressively gives the same simple outline of these lives so prolonged. Two exceptions occur of most notable character which claim appropriate heed in their places. The general line is all that now comes before us. Divine purpose is the key to both. It explains alike the mention which looks so meager, and the special record in the cases of Enoch and Noah. It accounts for the omission of all particulars in the general genealogy beyond the direct line of the chosen people, and so especially of the Messiah, God's salvation, light for revelation of Gentiles, and glory of His people Israel. The rest of their progeny, however numerous or distinguished in a human way, are merely merged in “sons and daughters” they begot.

For Methuselah lived to tell Shem what Adam communicated from God Himself, and Shem lived to repeat all to Abraham and Isaac: facts and prospects briefly expressed, of plain meaning, and profoundly important.

Then again one can understand how favorable the lengthened span of life in those days was to carrying out God's word in blessing the first pair, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over fish of the sea, and over bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Thus not only is the fact unquestionable for all, that respect revelation, but the wisdom, not to say necessity, of that exceptional condition, is pretty apparent.

The fact is, so far from the truth are those who judge solely from present experience, that man was naturally made at the outset to live. Death was sin's wages, not then a physiological necessity. God had provided the means for prolonging his life if obedient; but deprived him of that means peremptorily when fallen. For what greater misery, or moral anomaly, than an everlasting life of sin? Death therefore is in no way a debt of nature but of sin; and here we read its knell for each even of those who stood aloof from the evil way of Cain, the ancestors not of Israel only but in due time of the Messiah. Of Adam, so of Seth, Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jared, it was alike said “he died.” Now that man is a sinner, it is the one event that happens to all in the seen world; in the unseen there will be another still more solemn. “For it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

How sad, were this all! Not so however; it is only the first man. “But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man [is] death, by man also resurrection of dead persons.” He that had the power of death, that is the devil, is brought to naught through the death of Him Who in grace submitted to it, but could not be holden thereby. And so in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they

that are Christ's at His coming; then the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to Him Who is God and Father. The second man is of heaven and has all things in His hand. They that are His will enjoy a resurrection from the dead like His own; as the unjust shall be raised by His power for judgment, who despised His grace and would not have the life eternal that is in Him. For all must honor Him; if not now by believing in Him unto all blessing, by-and-by when raised to be judged for the ills they did. How blessed is the portion of those that hear His word and believe God that sent His Son! They “have eternal life, and come not into judgment, but have passed from death into life.” So declares the Lord with solemn emphasis on its truth, His “Verily, verily.”

Chapter 78

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 5:25-32

IT is but little that is said of Adam's line through Seth. They lived many days on the earth; they begat sons and daughters, besides the one who continued the succession; and they died. This gives great significance to all that is said beyond. Thus we saw the strong moral difference expressed in Seth's case compared with Adam. But the vivid contrast appeared in Enoch, the witness and manifest enjoyer of life which shone out in his walk, and superior to the power of death, as it pleased God to prove, when his comparatively tried pilgrimage closed in a sort altogether heavenly.

His son was Methuselah. “And Methuselah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years and begat Lamech; and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died” (vers. 25-27). In his instance it might have seemed that man was exceptionally to reach a millennium. But not so. This is reserved for the reign of the Last Adam; and He will make it good throughout His world-kingdom as the rule, and not the exception, for such as welcome Him when He appears to reign in righteousness. Mighty and beneficent the change in that day, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea! It is in vain to reason from the first Adam experience, the prolific source of unbelief.

He is Jehovah Who deigned to become a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit in days to come; in virtue of Him shall Jacob “take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.” For in truth lie is also the root of Jesse. “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse: standing as an ensign of the peoples: it shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be in glory.” Then, when he that had the power of death is bound, and the Conqueror reigns over the earth, man shall fill his days. And Jehovah will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in His people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And as Christ is the key to our understanding the scriptures now, so will He be the One in that day to put down evil in power and righteousness, and to bless man subject to His scepter.

“And Lamech lived a hundred and eighty-two years and begat a son; and he called his name Noah, saying, This [one] shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning toil of our hands because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died” (vers. 28 31).

Here again the Holy Spirit pauses on the occasion of Noah's birth; and his father was made to utter an oracle about his son. The prophetic spirit is evident in Lamech's utterances. Noah he recognized as the witness of comfort for man's work and toiling hands. And so Noah is the type of Him Who will govern and bless the habitable world to come, after it has passed through His

judgment of those that defile or destroy the earth. Lamech acknowledges time righteous dealing of Jehovah no less than Enoch does in his prophecy recorded by Jude. But the difference is characteristic. Enoch speaks openly of the Lord's coming with myriads of His saints; for a heavenly portion only adds to the sense of coming judgment of all, and not only in their works is ungodliness which they ungodlily wrought but in the hard things which ungodly sinners spoke against Him. Lamech was given, though more darkly, to see in Noah the pledge of consolation for the earth, after the judgment of the quick has done its work.

They are the complement one of the other; and both look on to a day not yet come; for a judgment in providence makes nothing perfect more than the law did. They are shadows of what is coming, and not only of destruction at the Lord's hand, but of comfort to follow for this toiling earth. It is well to accept the pledge; it is better still not to rest in that measure, but to await the full blessing Christ alone is competent to bestow. Then Jehovah's work will appear to His servants, and His glory upon their children; then the beauty of Jehovah their God shall be upon His people, and He will establish the work of their hands upon them; yea He will establish the work of their hands. No doubt to share Christ's position on high in the Father's house is incomparably more, and this we shall have who share His rejection; but it is wrong to overlook and worse to deny the blessing He will also pour on the earth, and on the ancient people, and on all peoples, in that day of glory.

Nor is there any question that on Christ's first advent and on His infinite work of atonement all depends for blessing to souls now, and for glory in the heavens and the earth at that day, because therein God was glorified in Him even as to sin, the otherwise insuperable block in the way. But while owning this fully and finding now in Him life, peace, joy, liberty, relationship with God as children and union with Himself our glorified Head, through the Holy Ghost given the more ought we to be freed from every hindrance and testify with might from above His coming, not only to take us on high, but to execute judgment on a guilty world and a guiltier Christendom, and to bless the earth gloriously and Israel and all the nations; and so much the more, because we see the day approaching.

We need not dwell on Noah more now, but just observe what we are told in verse 32: “And Noah was five hundred years old [son of 500 years], and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” Shem is first named, not because he was eldest, which Japheth was, but as in the direct line of the blessings of Israel.

Chapter 79

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:1-2

THE chapter opens with a brief and calm notice of a mysterious fact, on which heathen mythology revels much. What scripture does say is pregnant; but the reticence on such a theme is as suggestive of holiness, as man's tradition as usual indulges prurient curiosity. The recital no doubt seems strange to minds accustomed to reason from existing phenomena and disposed to discredit what is “marvelous” in men's eyes or all that is beyond common sense. Yet Peter and Jude render striking testimony, not only to the truth of the narrative and the divine judgment of the exceptional sin committed, but to the solemn and needed warning it renders to guilty Christendom. God has not spoken in vain whether by Moses at the beginning of the O.T, or by those two inspired men verging on the close of the N. T. If any one has a mind to read a scathing exposure of modern unbelief as expressed by the commentators Patrick or Gill, D'Oyly and Mant, Scott or A. Clarke, he can find it in Dr. S. R. Maitland's Eruvin, Essay vi. 124, (Sze. Henry Ainsworth in his Annotations and Matthew Henry in his Commentary were no better. There is a slight difference in the popular view, some holding the sons of God to be great men, or nobles; others, the progeny of Seth.

But it is impossible to deny that “sons of God,” in the early books of the Bible (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7), are found appropriated to angels. So in a slightly different form of the Hebrew we read in Psa. 29:1, and 89:6. When the prophet Hosea predicts in chap. 1:10 (or 2:1) what the apostle Paul applied (Rom. 9:26) to the present call of Gentiles during the eclipse of Israel, the phrase is pointedly distinct, besides its having no retrospective bearing. Indeed in the Alexandrine MS. of the Septuagint version of Gen. 6:2, for υ■ο■ of the Vatican is read ο■ ■γγελοι. But apart from this, which goes rather beyond the place of a translator, there is no ground from O.T. usage to question that the application of the phrase is to angels, and not to men even if faithful and righteous. And the apostolic reference is indisputable. Peter and Jude, regarding the awful crisis at the end of this age in the light of this scripture, though from quite different aspects, bear the concurrent testimony of the Holy Spirit that angels were here intended by “sons of God.”

This to a believer in divine inspiration is decisive. God knew all and cannot lie. Difficulties there assuredly are to us, who know little of what is possible to beings so far transcending human estate. But we learn even from the reserved terms employed in the original text and the inspired comments that angelic commerce with mankind was exceptionally heinous in itself and in its results. God therefore avenged the flagrant departure from all the bounds He had laid down for the indigenous dwellers on high, as well as for the creatures of earthly mold by a judgment that slumbered not nor spared either. For it is evident that the fruits of the iniquity no less than the guilty mothers perished in the deluge; while the appalling sentence of consignment to everlasting bonds under darkness befell such angels as kept not their own first estate, to await the great day's judgment. Their lot, so different from that of the devil and his angels, marks the enormity of their sin for which God cast them into Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4). They had so daringly abused their liberty that they were handed over to the gloomiest custody; unlike the rest of the fallen angels, who have even access to heaven and accuse the saints and deceive the whole habitable earth as yet.

“And it came to pass when mankind began to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of mankind that they [were] fair and they took to them wives of all that they chose” (verses 1, 2).

Such, we shall see, was the prelude of the deluge, the apostasy of the antediluvian world, the horrible commingling of these sons of God with the daughters of men, which led to such violence and corruption as brought down destruction from the hand of God. Yet it is instructive to notice how the fact stated in our chapter, and pointedly applied by Peter and still more plainly by Jude, is not merely evaded but denounced, if not by the earlier, by the later, fathers Greek and Latin, by some of the Rabbis, and by many of the Reformers as utterly impossible and unworthy of credit.

Abuse on a priori grounds is vain against the direct force of the record according to unquestionable usage, and as interpreted by the highest authority of the N. T., so clearly as to leave no doubt for any soul subject to the written word. That angels could appear as men is beyond controversy, and eat or drink if they pleased is certain from scripture. It is not for believers to recoil from the further and fullest intimations of God's word, because we cannot account for that which was avowedly a strange and portentous violation of nature, i.e. of God's holy will. But if He pledges His word that so it was before the flood, outrageous as it may seem and really was, who are we, who are any, to set up human opinion, and deride as well as oppose the confirmed and reiterated declaration of Holy Writ?

Philosophic difficulties are trifles light as air against scripture; especially as the explanation which takes the place of the literal meaning, supported by the full induction of O.T usage, lands the popular hypothesis in a trivial sense, unsuitable to O.T. thought and expression, and foreign or misleading to the context, as will appear when we examine verses that follow. Calvin's preference of his own judgment to the word drove him, not only to slur over the earlier statements of Gen. 6., but to get rid of the peculiar dealing of God: intimated in the Epistles of Peter and Jude for the apostate angels. Thus he says “We are not to imagine a certain place in which the devils are shut up! for the apostle simply intended to teach us how miserable their condition is, since they apostatized and lost their dignity! For wherever they go they drag with them their own chains, and remain involved in darkness!” Such is the fruit of insubjection to plain scripture, because of our incapacity to understand or explain: a pious man in what is obscure misled to explain away and contradict what is transparently irreconcilable with and corrective of his superficial view! Faith alone is always right: whether we can answer objections or remove difficulties is another question, and merely one of our spiritual measure. In this it is wise and comely not to have high thoughts above what one ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt a measure of faith to each.

Chapter 80

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:3-4

THESE verses follow up the subject of that mysterious fact already stated, adding the expression of Jehovah's mind on the one hand, and on the other the far different thoughts of man.

And Jehovah said, “My Spirit shall not strive within man forever, for that he also [is] flesh, and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. The Nephilim (giants) were on the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare to them. These [are] the heroes, mighty men who [were] of old, men of renown (the name)” (vers. 3, 4).

We may see from Job 1:6; 2:1, that various documents have nothing to do with “Jehovah” occurring here along with “sons of Elohim.” The moral question in both scriptures require “Jehovah” as such, whilst the designation of the angels as “sons of Elohim” was equally correct. Further, in the same context we have repeatedly one that feared Elohim (Job 1:1; 2:3), and the kindred language in Job 1:5, 16, 22; 2:9, 10, where Jehovah is emphatically used in that moral trial both by the inspired writer and in the mouth of job (chaps. 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 21, 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), so as to demonstrate the vanity of the hypothesis. The reason for one or other lies in the due requirement of the case, wholly independent of any imaginary change of authors. So, in our chapter of Genesis, verses 1-8 demand “Jehovah,” save in the name of the offending angels, as 9-22 call for “Elohim” without exception.

Translators and commentators differ considerably as to the rendering and scope. Onkelos and Saadiah, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate substantially agree in the sense of “remain” for “strive.” But the force is moral rather than physical existence, and fairly given in the A. V. Some prefer “in his wandering” instead of “for that,” which may well be. So it is said in Isa. 31:3, that Egypt is man and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit. Man had now proved himself no better. But if Jehovah warn that His Spirit will not always plead, He sets a term of patience. For the hundred and twenty years refer, not to man's span of life, but to the space given for repentance.

This verse it is, and especially it would seem “My Spirit,” to which the apostle Peter refers in his first epistle (chap. 3:18-20). He speaks of Christ put to death in flesh, but made alive in [the] Spirit, in which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, once disobedient when the long-suffering of God was waiting in Noah's days. The second epistle too (chap. ii. characterizes Noah as a preacher of righteousness. Thus, among other ways, for he prophesied also (Gen. 9), did the Spirit of Christ which was in him point out, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them. It was this testimony, which made the days of God's longsuffering and of Christ's Spirit preaching through Noah so apt an allusion for the apostle. For Jews ask for signs of power, as Greeks seek wisdom, the wisdom of the age; but Christ is God's power and God's wisdom, Christ crucified to Jews a stumbling-block and to Greeks foolishness, but made to us that believe wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Believers from among the Jews (and to such the epistle was addressed) stood peculiarly exposed to the taunts of their unbelieving brethren after the flesh, who would hear only

of the visible Messiah exalting Israel and putting down the nations in power and glory; as they scorned the little flock that confessed Him dead and risen and glorified in heaven, and that claimed through Him salvation of souls. Hence, of all the Jew owned true in O.T. story, nothing more suggestive than the few souls saved through the flood, when the mass perished in unbelief. Yet God sent men testimony by Noah, as He does now in the gospel. If that generation paid the penalty of slighting Christ's Spirit in the preaching then, let them beware of resisting the same Spirit still; for, though Christ be not present bodily but, in heaven and at the right hand of God, He is ready to judge living and dead; for which those who rejected the warning in Noah's day are reserved in prison, as are all unbelievers.

It might seem incredible, were it not fact, that anyone could say, “Not a word is indicated by Peter on the very far off lying allusion to the fact that the Spirit of Christ preached in Noah: not a word here, on the fact that Noah himself preached to his contemporaries.” No person has ever shown in the O. T. a case more germane to the apostle's aim, which was to strengthen the believing remnant against Jewish or any other mockery of an absent Deliverer and a spiritual deliverance only enjoyed now by faith. The allusion was strikingly near in its bearing: “very far off” in time is nothing to one who ranges through all scripture, in this very passage expressly introducing Noah, and the Spirit; as he elsewhere styles Noah “preacher of righteousness,” and those who disobeyed in his days “spirits in prison,” awaiting (as we all know) far more than a temporal judgment. Did not all this lie very near those surrounded by unbelievers who jeered at the fewness of Christians and rejected Christ's present testimony by the Spirit? The fact is that not a word connects the time of the preaching with the imprisonment of the spirits. Peter does not say that Christ went into the prison and there preached to the spirits, but that He went in the power of His Spirit and preached to the spirits that are there, disobedient as they once were in Noah's days. So the Jews were in danger through despising the Spirit of Christ now. What the text means is that their imprisonment is because they disobeyed once on a time when the longsuffering of God was waiting out in Noah's days, while an ark was being built for the few that entered and were saved. The nicest and strictest interpretation here lends not the least support to any preaching in Hades, which is foreign and opposed to the rest of God's word.

The superstitious view in effect denies and uproots the gospel, and is wholly baseless in either the O. T. or the New. Nor is the fancy inconsistent only with the testimony of scripture in general; it is opposed to the plain drift of the apostle's reference to Noah in each of his epistles. For how unmeaning, not to say inexplicable, that, if Christ be supposed to have gone in person to preach to the imprisoned spirits, those only should be singled out who had once been disobedient in Noah's days during the preparation of the ark! What revealed principle of either grace or righteousness applies to such a dealing with them in particular? Especially as the original text, Gen. 6:3, implies just the contrary—that the striving of Jehovah's Spirit was with man in this life, and that the limit to His patience with those in question was tied to the hundred and twenty years of their days on earth? To imagine the spirits of those very persons appealed to afterwards seems to annul the scripture in hand and therefore so much the less credible as an inspired comment on it. For it would involve the strange doctrine of Jehovah's striving after death, and with those exclusively who had been the objects of the longsuffering of God for an allotted period previously.

Again, the reference in 2 Peter 2 equally shuts out the notion as the dream of the untaught and unstable. For the apostle speaks of God's not sparing, not only angels when they sin and

reserving them extraordinarily for judgment, but the ancient world also, though He preserved with seven others Noah, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood on a world of ungodly persons (and afterward He dealt similarly with Sodom and Gomorrha); as proofs of His rescuing godly ones out of trial and keeping unrighteous people under punishment for judgment day. The heterodoxy we are considering treats these very persons, if not all the wicked dead, as kept for hearing Christ to save them from judgment! Can one conceive grosser ignorance, and, what is worse, more arrant trifling with solemn scriptures, or a more evident desire to bring their meaning to naught?

As to ver. 4, the construction is not without difficulty. It appears to distinguish between the Nephilim or giants in those days, as afterward also, and the Gibborim, mighty ones or heroes, who were the fruit of the union of the sons of God with men's daughters. In fact, notwithstanding the dark confusion of the old heathen remains, traces of this distinction are not wanting; though nothing can be more marked than the superiority of scripture in the very little it says on this painful subject over the traditional lore respecting the Giants and the Titans, which the later poets jumbled inextricably. Num. 13:33 of itself easily accounts for the clause here parenthetically marked. It may run, without parenthesis, “And also after that the sons of God....these [are] the mighty ones which were of old, men of the name,” thus distinguishing the giants and these heroes. One shrinks from boldness in speaking of such a phrase; but the latter part distinguishes a class which was not found afterward: “These [are] the heroes, who [were] of old, men of renown.” These, as being of quite a different source and character, had a fame peculiar to themselves for might. The reputation they acquired of old was not founded on mere stature, like that of the Nephilim.

In result it is clear that the bounds of creation were wickedly traversed by certain angels, and thus a peculiarly evil corruption introduced among men, where evil in its ordinary character grew apace as we are afterward shown. But that unnatural amalgam touched the rights of Jehovah, though outwardly He had left man to himself since his expulsion from Paradise; as it played its grave part in calling for divine intervention in the governmental act of the deluge of which Genesis speaks, but in those deeper, lasting, and unseen ways which the epistles of Peter and Jude reveal in unison with N. T. truth for eternity. The evasive reading of the passage which many pious ancients and moderns have adopted to escape its only fair interpretation, because it conveys what is to us beyond measure strange, if not incomprehensible how it could be, is nothing but a makeshift of unbelief. Received simply, it gives the sure, though purposely reserved, revelation on the darkest scene of old, the true source of what was expanded, after its wonted fashion in Jewish tradition and Pagan mythology. In scripture the evil was dealt with in holy judgment; among men it became the basis of fame for beneficent might on man's behalf in vain struggle against envious but superior gods: no untrue description of beings who were really demons. “Jehovah, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him? Man is like a breath, his days are as a shadow that passeth away. Bow Thy heavens, Jehovah, and come down.”

Chapter 81

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:5-8

THUS far we have had the new, strange, and portentous evil which played its part in calling for the righteous judgment of the deluge. But this was not all which made the catastrophe necessary in the eyes of the divine Governor.

“And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man [was] great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually (all the day). And Jehovah repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will wipe out man whom I have created, from the face of the ground—from man to cattle, to reptiles, and to bird of the heavens; for I repent that I have made them. But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah” (vers. 5-8).

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Could He be indifferent to the general state of man morally? It is not God simply in His nature, but He who concerns Himself with the ways of His creatures. Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth. Nor would it be easy to find a more solemn appraisal: “every imagination” of them was before Him; and He who loves to accredit the least thought or feeling that is good saw nothing but evil all the day. He is assuredly the God of judgment, and after due testimony will not be slow to execute it.

Yet the language employed is affectingly suggestive of the grief it cost Him Whom the unbelieving mind of man is pleased to treat as impassive. “Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. Wake up righteously and sin not; for some have ignorance of God,” as the apostle speaks to our shame. Converse with the world lowers to its own level those who thus indulge; and as the world by its wisdom, when it boasted most, knew not God, it never without Christ finds Him out; for Christ is the image of the invisible God; and Christ never showed Himself insensible to human evil, whatever His patience and endurance. No doubt, as is so characteristic of these early revelations, the expression is by grace adapted in childlike fashion to the heart and conscience of man. Jehovah felt deeply what man ought to have felt but did not. “Jehovah repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

Here however we need to distinguish: else we shall surely and seriously stray. Jehovah is here said to repent of mankind that He had made on the earth. His work is a thing quite different from His purpose. And when corruption pervaded it, He was in no way bound to perpetuate what existed only to His dishonor. On the other hand, when a prophet was sent to cry against a great city because of its wickedness before Him, and its inhabitants, from the greatest to the least, repented at the preaching, God saw their works that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil which He said He would do unto them, and He did it not, to the disgust of the prophet too self-occupied to appreciate the compassion of God, even for the babes and the cattle. But here we are not told of the slightest effect. The preacher of righteousness testified many a long year, and, as far as we know, in vain. Oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, and moved with fear himself, he prepared an ark for saving his house, with no recorded result save condemning the world of that day and the imprisonment of their spirits, disobedient as they were

then, till eternal judgment come. It was a singularly hard generation in the days of Noah; and the Lord declared that so it will be also in the days of the Son of man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were given in marriage until the day, that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Alas! Christendom is rapidly becoming as unbelieving as the Jews were when divine judgments befell them all; and both will be surprised when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God—and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But even in that day it will be made clearer than ever that without repentance are the gifts and the calling of God (Rom. 11:29). He may repent of making man, and He may on man's self-judgment repent of His threats; but His gifts and His calling are subject to no such change of mind. So at an early day He compelled the wicked prophet to testify on behalf of Israel (Num. 23:19); and so He confirmed by His holy apostle looking to the latter day. He leaves room for the action of sovereign grace at the close of the age. As we Gentiles were once disobedient to God, but now became objects of mercy by their disobedience, so also the Jews were now disobedient to the mercy that has reached the Gentiles in the gospel, that they too, instead of their old pride of law, may be objects of mercy. For God shut up them all (whether Gentile or Jew) into disobedience that He might show mercy to them all.

For the day of Noah the word of judgment goes forth. “And Jehovah said, I will wipe (or blot) out man whom I have created, from the face of the ground—from man to cattle, to reptiles, and to bird of the heavens; for I repent that I have made them. But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah” (vers. 7, 8). For those who believe the language is unmistakable while grace is shown to Noah. Is it possible to use terms more sweeping and unsparing for all that breathes on earth or flies above it Jehovah deals with the creatures set under the headship of Adam. How blessed to know on an authority equally beyond doubt that the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God! For this creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all the creation together groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only [so], but even ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:19-23). It is God's honor for Christ in this creation. As man's sin dragged it down with himself into ruin, so shall the Second Man raise it out of its degradation and misery. But the inheritance cannot be delivered before the heirs. Therefore are we now brought by faith of Christ into the liberty of grace, having in Him redemption through His blood, the remission of sins. But we await also the redemption of our bodies, and have meanwhile the Holy Spirit, the witness that we are God's children, and the earnest of the inheritance to come. And the groaning creation longs for that day, which will bring it into the liberty of the glory which Christ will have given us, Himself the Heir of all things, as we are by grace His joint-heirs. It is indeed a joyous prospect, in the midst of present weakness and manifold sorrows, truly a prospect full of glory, and most sure and indestructible, because it rests on the holy basis of Christ, the Worthy One, and of His redemption.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:9-12

SPECIAL relationship is now dropt; and we are brought back to the more general dealings of God with man. Hence it is no longer “Jehovah,” as in the previous verses of our chapter, but “Elohim” (God) henceforth to the end. The designations employed are therefore completely consistent, and could not be otherwise with propriety. The suggestion of a difference of authorship is not only uncalled for, harsh and barbarous as well as altogether imaginary, but due to a total want of spiritual apprehension; as it arbitrarily conjectures a fortuitous concourse of fragments, and thus loses the profitable design in the same mind adapting the use of each title to the object in view, as each portion or even clause may require.

“These [are] the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in (or among) his generations; Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth” (vers. 9-12).

Viewed in his relationship and its peculiar obligations, Noah, as we have already observed, “found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.” This has its importance. But it is not all. And here we are told of him on the broader ground of the faithful Creator toward all mankind. Noah's piety was recognized as real, but he is also as a righteous man among his fellows. Assuredly so it ought to be always; for the working of the divine nature, of which all born of God partake, is not only upward in dependence and thanksgiving, but vigilantly obedient, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. Yet we know too well that failure creeps in too often through lack of prayer and watchfulness. In both respects the record of Noah is excellent.

“These [are] the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect among his generations; with God walked Noah.” So it had been said, in chap. 5:22, 24, of that singularly honored saint Enoch, and with the emphasis of a repeated mention in a list of others where not one but himself was so described. Here it is applied to Noah, already distinguished by his father's prophetic expectation of comfort through him (chap. 5:29). It is of deep moral interest to note, that the Holy Spirit records the grace Noah found in Jehovah's eyes, before He tells us that Noah was a righteous man, perfect, &c., and walked with God. This is really and emphatically the true order. Even the manner in which scripture presents the account ought to have guarded (Matthew Henry, for instance) from the thought that Noah's character in ver. 9 comes in here as the reason of God's favor to him. Reason of grace! What an idea and expression! Had he forgotten the real truth of grace? Had he not before him the pointed negation of any such thought in the apostle's words in Rom. 11:6? “If it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace” (R. V.). His alternative (but how strange for a pious commentator to waver between oppositions!) is alone right: Noah's righteous ways, his walk with God, flowed (as always) from God's favor. Old. or N. T. makes no difference as to this, save that the N. T. is most explicit. See 1 Cor. 15:10 expressly; but is it not really so everywhere?

Further, it is not correct to say that he was a just man, that is justified before God. The confusion is similar to what we have already noticed. The grace that justified him wrought in and by him practical righteousness before man. So in the N. T. the doctrine of James is no less true than the apostle Paul's. They are not the same; and when mixed together, instead of being distinguished, the result is darkness and error. But apply the latter to what the soul wants before God when arrested about its sins, and “to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4, 5). Whereas in James 2:14-26, where baptized Jews were making Christianity a merely new law and school of dogma, instead of living faith in Christ, the word is “Show me thy faith apart from works, and I by my works will show thee my faith” (ver. 18). The one (in Rom. 4) is justification before God, the root of all; the other is the resulting fruit “shown” before man. Each is indispensable in its place; both united in their season in every true believer. Practical righteousness is the effect, in no way the cause, of justification by faith. Here we are on the ground expressly of Noah in his generations, just, perfect, walking with God. But we know also from Heb. 11:7, that faith was the originating principle through grace of the conduct which distinguished him in that day, by which too he condemned the world as heir of the righteousness that is according to faith.

“Perfect” here simply means as in Job 1:1, 8; 2:3, &c., one of integrity or blameless. The evaporation of the old man, or absorption into the new, even with the richest N. T. privileges, is a dream, and a dangerous one.

But “Noah walked with God,” as Enoch had before him. And this is a blessed thing for us to learn authoritatively of men far from enjoying much which could only come in Christ and His redemption, and in the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. Alas! we all offend in much, as we are told; yet it is inexcusable, for if the flesh lusts against the Spirit, what of the Spirit against the flesh? And are they not opposed, one to the other, that we may not do the things that we would? The A. V. here is sadly astray, and excuses sin, instead of leaving no room for any such thing.

The three sons Noah begot are again named (yen 10); and solemnly runs the word: “And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth” (vers. 11, 12).

Not a word here or elsewhere gives a hint of other gods or of image-worship for the true God. Scripture speaks of that religious abomination only after the deluge. But, apart from it, what floods of corruption drown men! It was so then, and violence too filled the earth. They are indeed the two ruling forms of human iniquity. But bad as the violence may have been, and it was great and prevalent everywhere, the corruption of the earth, and of all flesh in its way, we can read here at least as most of all odious in the eyes of God then, Noah, we are taught by other scripture, was a preacher of righteousness in that day of universal corruption; but we hear not a word of his voice raised to God in intercession, unless possibly Ezek. 14:14, 20, be supposed to imply it. Certainly the pleading of Abraham, when he knew the impending destruction of the cities of the plain which menaced his kinsman, is touching and instructive. And it is hard to conceive such a man as Noah not deeply moved by the awful fate awaiting an incomparably larger sphere, a world of ungodly.

Chapter 83

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:13-17

Chap. 6:13-17.

THE crisis is fully set in view by divine revelation. When the audacious and unholy mixture to which Jude refers so solemnly was stated at the beginning of the chapter, Jehovah set a term to His Spirit's pleading with man. And fearful consequences ensued, however gratifying to human pride defiant of the warning. “These were the heroes which were of old, men of the name.” A mighty impulse was thus given, on the earth, to human iniquity which Jehovah felt deeply; and the sentence was pronounced. “I will wipe out man whom I have created from the face of the ground,” as well as the subject creation, but with a careful expression of the favor Noah found in His eyes.

Yet it was important to note, not only the offense and its effects against moral government and special relationship, but for the divine nature the abhorrence of the earth corrupt and full of violence, in contrast with Noah a righteous man, blameless among his generations, walking with God when all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth. This introduces express intimation of the impending destruction for the earth and its guilty inhabitants, and of the means of deliverance for Noah, his house, and the creature, which were thus to be preserved.

“And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is full of violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with (or from) the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood: rooms (nests) shalt thou make in the ark, and pitch it within and without with pitch. And thus shalt thou make it: three hundred cubits the length of the ark, fifty cubits its breadth, and thirty cubits its height. A transparency (or, light) shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit thou shalt finish it above; and the ark's door thou shalt set in its side: [with] lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And I, behold I, bring the flood of waters on the earth to destroy all flesh wherein [is] the breath of life: all that [is] in the earth shall expire” (vers. 13-17).

The deluge was not an event according to secret ways in providence, as we may see in the history of Esther, the importance of which is great in itself and profitable for our learning. It was an inflicted judgment which prophecy made known. And It had a character of universality which separated it from other interventions of God, however real and instructive, and made it suitable to compare with the days of the Son of man when every eye shall see Him as well as with the narrower but awful doom of Sodom and the other cities of the plain when it rained fire and sulfur from heaven: “So shall it be when the Son of man is revealed.” Hence, as Enoch had already prophesied in that vast sweep which, as given by Jude, embraces the ultimate with the beginning of the senses, Noah is made the depositary of the definite accomplishment of what was at hand. The God Who predicts as He pleases, directly or indirectly, is the judge of the suitable occasion; and faith accepts it at whatever time He speaks; but all have not faith. For the believer it is enough for Him to say, Who doeth these things known from eternity. But He makes known also to His servants, as here to Noah, we have seen, expressly a hundred and twenty years before the place of longsuffering testimony closed: a fact early in the Bible and in God's revealed dealings, as irreconcilable with the fundamental principle of skeptical criticism (a very moderate leap forward out of actual history), as

with the fallacy of professed believers (prophecy only of value when fulfilled). That there should be this early prediction, with so considerable an interval as one hundred and twenty years, is plain in the one case; as in the other the folly of conceiving the profit to be only when the flood came and took them all away.

But we are fallen on evil days when men, bearing the Christian name and assuming to enlighten their fellows, are not ashamed to designate the inspired account of the deluge a Bible-legend and a poetic myth, chiefly in deference to the difficulties of physical science and the objections of natural historians. Now it is of all moment to stand firm and unbending in the faith. It is no question of mistakes in copies, in translation, or in interpretation. Poetry and its tropes are not before us, but the language of sober history treating of facts, and of God's declaration in respect of them. “Make thee an ark of gopher-wood: nests (or compartments) shalt thou make in the ark, and pitch it with pitch (or bitumen) within and without. And thus shalt thou make it: three hundred cubits the length of the ark, fifty cubits its breath, and thirty cubits its height. A transparency (or light) shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upward; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second and third stories shalt thou make it” (vers. 15, 16). It is the plain, and unvarnished expression of fact. The question is, Are believers to accept unhesitatingly the word of God? Every scripture is inspired of God. This is and ought to be absolutely decisive for all who admit that His authority is in it; as the word will assuredly judge him that rejects both in the last day. He and His word are indissolubly together. Nor is it the chiefs of science who speak thus presumptuously, unless they be also infidel. These influence the incredulous mass and the worldly-minded Christians, who are cowed by their arrogance and are ambitious of standing well with men who despise them and abhor the truth. What is it but a day of rebuke and contumely?

Of this too God has spoken. “We should remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through our apostles, knowing this first that in the last of the days mockers should come with mockery, proceeding after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For from the days that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this escapes them of their willfulness, that heavens were of old, and earth subsisting by the word of God out of water and in water; by means of which the then world flooded by water perished, and the now heavens and the earth are stored up, being, kept for fire against judgment day and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:2-7. It is man's will that ignores the deluge, his infidel will in despite of revelation. He hates and dreads God's judgment, as that was the harbinger and witness of a judgment still more scathing and final. As men easily believe what they like, so do they willingly forget and deny what is most repulsive, alas! to their destruction. But thus it is that ungodly Christendom works out against itself the fulfillment of that tremendous day; as the Jews fulfilled the voices of the prophets read on their sabbaths by judging the Judge of Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

The fact is that the heathen, dark as everywhere they were, ought to put such unbelievers to shame. It would be hard to say what race or land or age, of which we have record, forgot the deluge: so deep and universal was the impression on the dispersed children of men where the Bible alas was unknown. But the news of that awe-inspiring catastrophe of the world, that then was unexampled in fact since man existed, was carried by the dispersed families of mankind north and south, east and west; they did not forget it, but colored it by local or national pride in

self-flattery. Those disposed to examine the traditions of Egypt (Osiris, or the Sacred Ship, &c.), Greece, Rome, Asia Minor, and elsewhere may find an only too full collection (for fanciful etymology has exaggerated or erred not a little) in J. Bryant's Ancient Mythology. Vol. iii. of the third edition 8vo. is devoted to the subject; as also vol. v. 287-313. It used to be said that only the Semitic and the Aryan nations handed down the legend of the deluge. Modern research has proved its prevalence equally among the Turanian races. Captain Beechey (Vol. ii. 78) found it among the aborigines of California; Mr. Schoolcraft (Notes &c., 358, 359) among the Iroquois; Sir A. Mackenzie (Travels, ch. xviii.) among the Chippeways; Dr. Richards (Frankland's Journey to the Polar Sea, 73), among the Crees; and Mr. West (Journal 131, 133) on the Red River. So did Mr. G. Catlin (N. American Indians, i. 180, 181, fourth edition) among the Mandans “That these people should have a tradition of the Flood is by no means surprising; as I have learned from every tribe I have visited that they all have some high mountain in their vicinity, where they insist upon it the big canoe landed” &c. (ibid. 177, 178). Justly therefore has Dr. J. C. Prichard (Researches, v. 361) cited Mr. Gallatin for a judgment among Americans weighty and unprejudiced, that the native traditions had their source “in a real historical recollection of an universal deluge which overwhelmed all mankind in early ages of the world.” Again, Mr. Ellis (Hawaii, 451; Polyn. ii. 57, 58) attests other varieties of the tradition in the Sandwich Islands; and Wilkes (Exploring Expedition) found similar tales at Fiji or Viti. So with the Araucanians (Molini's Chili, ii. 82). Much to the same effect is given of the Mexicans and those before them by A. von Humboldt from the MSS. of Pedro de los Reos and from Bp. F. N. de la Vega (Researches, i. 96, 320; ii. 23, 64, 65). So he found in Guatemala, and among the tribes of the Upper Orinoco, &c. (Pers. Narr. iv. 470-473). No wonder that he, no hasty generalizer, was constrained to say, “The traditions affecting the primitive state of the globe among all nations present a resemblance that fills us with astonishment. So many different languages, belonging to branches which appear to have no connection with each other, transmit the same fact to us.” See also his “Vues des Cordilleres” &c., 226, 227. Caligero (Hist. Mex. i. 204) tells us that the Peruvians preserved the same report, as he says also of the Indians in Cuba; and Nieuhoff (Voyage to Brazil) relates it of Brazilians.

It was not otherwise in Asia: Kotzebue (Sec. Voy. round the world, St. Petersburg, 1830) found the tradition in Kamtchatka. In China the tale is that Fuh-he, their founder of civilization, was preserved from the flood with wife, three sons, and three daughters; in which legend Mr. McClatchie (Journal of Asiatic Soc. xvi. 403, 404) recognizes Noah and his family, as Archdeacon Hardwick lets us know in “Christ and other Masters,” third ed. 279. The Parsees have their strange version (Anq. Duperron's Zenday. 350-367); the Hindoos have theirs in their old Sanscrit epic, as Bopp showed in the part he translated (Diluv. Mahab. 1829); also in their later Puranas, where eight are said to have been saved from the waters (Burnouf, Bhag. Pour. Tome iii. Pref.). There is a third and simpler form in the Yajur-Veda, which with the two others Hardwick cites at length; but the detail is not worth reproducing. So the Mission Field (July 185S) reports that the Dyaks say four couples were saved from the Flood.

If we listen to the ruder voices of Africa, there too, as in Darbin near Darfour, we are told (Bull. Univ., 1830, 127-9) that the traditional story of the deluge lingers. According to it all perished; so that the Great-Great had to create men afresh. Here the traces are faint; but the form is perhaps characteristic. Mercy in God was unknown there. The true God had vanished from their knowledge.

Turning far back, the cuneiform inscription which Mr. G. Smith deciphered gives the legend as written of old in Erech (now the ruins of Warka), (Car. Milli. Frag. Mist. Gr. ii. 496 et seqq.), confirming what Berosus and Abydenus wrote (Mfiller's Frag. &c.) as cited by Eusehius (Praep. E v. 414, ed. F. Viger, Col. 1688), and indeed Josephus (c. Apion. i. 19) only with greater detail. Xisuthrus i.e. Noah speaks of the world's wickedness, the command to build the ark, with its erection and filling, the deluge, the resting on a mountain, the, sending out of the birds, &c.

How account for all this mass of tradition converging from of old on one fact of the strangest character, and withal of the nearest and widest interest, varied by the appropriating vanity of race, yet at bottom self-evidently akin? The truth explains it, nothing else. As to the coin of Philip the elder struck at Apamea, Eckhel (Doctr. Numm. Vett. iii. 132-139, ed. sec. Vindob. 1828) refuted Barrington and Jeremiah Miller in the Archaeologia iv. 315, &c., and strengthens the timid conclusions of the Abbe Barthelemy. He proves that ΝΩΕ refers to the patriarch only and without doubt, and that the emblem engraven represents him and his wife, first in the ark with one bird resting on it, and another flying with the olive branch in its mouth; next the same pair out of the ark with the right hand of each extended above in gratitude. From the lines in the Sibylline Books which refer to Ararat and the ark he clearly shows that the medal does not allude to Deucalion, as Falconeri had thought (the Greek form of the story), but to the Mosaic account, only adapted to give luster to their own city Apamea in Phrygia, formerly called Kelaenae (or near it, Dr. Smith's Diet. of G. & R. Geog. i. 153), and Kibotlis, i.e. the word given by the LXX for the Hebrew Tebet or ark.

It is needless surely to plead for Scripture in its moral power and its historic dignity, with characteristic repetition of a touching sort, brief yet committed to details found nowhere else, which would only have been given because they were known to. be true and on divine authority. It rises unadorned, adorned the most, above all competition of the glimmering lights in heathendom; though in their measure, and notwithstanding human change, they too testify with unwonted unanimity to that mighty judgment which ushered in the second birth of mankind, followed after no long interval by the lesser but momentous dealing of God which distributed Noah's descendants into their lands, after their tongues, after their families, in their nations.

Chapter 84

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 6:18-22

IN the face of the coming destruction of the earth's corrupters God is pleased next to indicate His intended use of the ark Noah was directed to build.

“But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt go into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every [kind] shalt thou bring into the ark to keep [them] alive with thee; male and female shall they be. Of the birds after their kind, and of the cattle after their kind, of every reptile of the ground after its kind, two of every [kind] shall come to thee, to keep [them] alive. And take thou to thee of all food that is eaten, and gather [it] to thee, and it shall be for food for thee and for them. Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (vers. 18-22).

He that walked with God, a righteous man, blameless in his generations, is the object of His care; and God would have Noah to know it, especially when so tremendous a blow was hanging over a careless unbelieving world. Therefore to him that believed does He intimate His intention to deliver himself and his wife and his family in the way appointed. The execution of this was a suited and notable trial of Noah's faith, involving a long time of waiting, continuous labor, and entire but active submission to God's word. Noah had before his spirit habitually, on the one hand, that the world was doomed, and that judgment would fall upon it at God's hand because of its iniquities; on the other, that he and his would without doubt be sheltered from it in the ark, with the creatures needed to renew the world to come after the flood.

It was a dealing most evidently divine in both its parts for destruction and for rescue, and with ample testimony beforehand. “Shall there be evil in a city (says Amos), and the LORD hath not done it? Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” So it was now when He disclosed to Noah that the waters should overspread the earth, yet with mercy glorying against judgment as ordinarily. No doubt it was an outward temporal judgment of His, as we find even at the fall of man; yet just as there it furnishes principles of the profoundest importance for what is inward and everlasting. Though this last is the gravest beyond question, yet is the former of so much the greater moment, as Christendom has been long prone to forget it or to merge it in the final judgment of the dead. Not so the Lord or His apostles, any more than the O. T. prophets, who constantly urge the judgment of the world (i.e., of living men here below, before He reigns in righteousness over all the earth, and therefore long before the scene of His Great White Throne). In this the unbelief of Gentiles under the gospel is in contrast with that of the Jews under the law, who were apt to overlook the everlasting judgment through preoccupation with the day of Jehovah which shall judge all the heathen and the apostates of Israel. The N. T. reveals the final judgment for the dead, small and great, far more clearly than the older books of Scripture; but it is no less distinct in warning that God commands men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He has established a day in the which He will judge the inhabited earth by the Man Whom He has appointed, giving assurance to all in that He raised Him from the dead. This is beyond controversy His judgment of the quick, not of the dead; and the

deluge is its counterpart, as the Lord shows in Matt. 24, and elsewhere.

It has been supposed by some that Moses introduced previously existing records here and there with that which was more strictly his own. But this is a gratuitous fancy to account for seeming repetitions that occur, or even for what they call discrepancies. Now, to say nothing of the irreverence implied, how vain is the expedient! For the differing accounts are presented by Moses without the slightest comment; which no human historian would think of doing. We can easily understand inconsistent reports in two distinct works. Do they really mean that such a one as Moses from different sources put together in immediate juxtaposition accounts which, do not tally, either without perceiving their opposition, or indifferent to the perplexity of readers? On their own ground is the hypothesis reasonable? If inspiration be allowed in any real sense, there can be no question.

For the intelligent believer there is, not only not a shade of difficulty, but the evidence of divine wisdom in the design which governs these respective accounts, as in fact all scripture. Take the case before us. It is God as the faithful Creator preserving a line to perpetuate the succession of all flesh, notwithstanding the flood of waters He was about to bring on the earth, when everything else there akin, in which was the breath of life, must expire. Hence in this point of view, as “Elohim” (God) is required for precision, and not “Jehovah,” so of the human family, as well as of the subordinate creatures, we find simply pairs, male and female. We shall find another aspect following, where different thoughts and languages are necessarily employed, in order to convey the truth with divine exactitude. A man left to himself would in all probability have written but one statement, and contented himself with the general fact modified by certain exceptions. God has been pleased to lead His inspired servant to give the double account, so as to mark off that which He ordered according to His rights as Creator from His specific dealings in moral government. This distinction may be trivial in unbelieving eyes; but it is of deep interest and profit to the souls that ponder His word, and learn His mind thereby. Inspiration explains it all, as nothing else can. And if we believe that the scripture is inspired, one can readily understand God using Moses to present both views distinctly; whereas it seems surely a roundabout and cumbrous alternative to imagine two unknown men uninspired to write separately each of these accounts, and Moses as a third, but inspired, editor employed merely to tack them together. The fact is however that those who keenly urge these suppositions betray for the most part their aim and desire to blot out true inspiration altogether, or, which comes to the same result, to allow inspiration only in a sense which leaves out therein divine action and the certainty of truth. For the same men strive to persuade themselves that the accounts contradict one another, that the compiler was so weak as to accept them as consistent and true, and that Christendom has had the narrative in the same easy-going faith, till the self-styled “higher critics” arose to open men's eyes and give them a Bible without God's truth. Such is their “growth” of scripture.

Chapter 85

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 7:1-10

THE decisive moment and a fresh message now arrived.

“And Jehovah said to Noah, Go (or Come) into the ark, thou and all thy house; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take [by] sevens, a male and its female, but of the beasts that [are] not clean two, a male and its female; also of birds of the heavens [by] sevens, male and female: to keep seed alive on the face of all the earth. For yet seven days and I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and all the living substance that I have made will I destroy (blot out) from off the face of the ground. And Noah did according to all that Jehovah commanded him.”

“And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was on the earth. And Noah went in and his sons, and his wife and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because (from the face) of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that [are] not clean, and of birds, and everything that creeps on the ground, went in two [and] two to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth” (vers. 1-10).

A good deal is sometimes made of the word “Come” in the A. V. of ver. 1. This is really beside the mark. The verb may be either, as best suits the context, which is often as here a delicate question if made one. When it means entering where the speaker is, “come” is the more correct in the usage of our tongue; where no emphasis of this kind calls for it, either may be used correctly, as for instance here. Accordingly they are both used freely in translating this and other Biblical Hebrew words into English; and so any special force appears to be inadmissible, except in circumstances which hardly apply to the present case.

Yet we cannot but own the mercy shown to Noah, and for his sake where there could be no personal ground of commendation. All his house benefited by its head. “And Jehovah said to Noah, Go into the ark, thou and all thy house; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.” It was not a small thing to say “righteous before Jehovah,” and especially “in this generation,” so reprobate as it was already, and so pronounced by Him.

The propriety of the change from Elohim (God) as in the latter half of chap. vi., to Jehovah (the Lout)) here is strikingly and beyond all just doubt confirmed by internal considerations. It is no longer the faithful Creator merely, but special relationship, and ends of a higher and more intimate nature. Hence we have a quite new call to the patriarch as one who had found grace in the eyes of Jehovah and was righteous before Him. “Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven, seven, a male and its female, and of the beasts that [are] not clean two, a male and its female; also of birds of the heavens seven, seven: to keep seed alive on the face of all the earth.”

Here the distinction, afterward minutely expounded under the law, first appears, where the special name of Israel's God is introduced: a distinction thus early enforced in the preservation of animals, where the claim of sacrifice was met and the need of suitable food foreshadowed. For only after

the deluge was man allowed to eat of flesh without blood (chap. 9.). How exactly this falls in with “Jehovah” speaking requires no argument; not with the shallow and unintelligent supposition of different authors or legends, which explains nothing but only confuses, but with due reverence to scripture and resulting instruction and living interest.

Next, we have Jehovah's considerate care in the notice given of but seven days before the flood, that Noah and his family might the more calmly enjoy their deliverance and the goodness of their Deliverer. The world of unbelievers had refused the warning that sounded through one hundred and twenty years; the seven days' notice was a fresh proof of gracious concern in those that believed. “For in yet seven days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; all the living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the ground. And Noah did according to all that Jehovah commanded him.” “Forty” appears to be the number of trial or endurance put to the test; as in Moses, Israel, Elijah, Jonah, and Ezekiel (for Judah): so in the legal strokes inflicted on an evildoer, with the limit not to exceed; and so here and such in the Temptation.

The special force of these five verses is the more confirmed by the general statement which follows in vers. 6-10, where “God” appears rather than Jehovah, and consequently nothing of moral relationship in particular. Here we have Noah's age when the flood came—six hundred years; and that the entrance of himself and all his house into the ark (vers. 6, 7). And this is so true that, though birds, and reptiles, as also going in, but two and two male and female are spoken of “as, God commanded Noah” (vers. 8, 9), because it is simply in view of perpetuating the race, high or low. “And it came to pass after the seven days that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (ver. 10). He who enjoyed the favor of Jehovah had the previous communication in grace; none could be unconscious of God's judgment when it came.

Chapter 86

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 7:11-16

WE have thus had clear examples of God's ways in prophecy; not only a short and precisely marked interval of “seven days” in Gen. 7:10, when the blow was to fall, but this after an amply long warning of “a hundred and twenty years” in chap. 6:3, when man's days were to close judicially for the world that then was. Both are undeniable on the face of the record: each worthy of Him Who alone could authoritatively utter, as He punctually fulfilled, both. If He executes judgment on a world that hardens itself in iniquity and disbelieves His word, He provides for the display of His mercy toward such as keep His word in faith, and obey Him, as Noah did to the saving of his house.

So, in the downfall sustained by the chosen people at a later day, Isaiah was raised up to warn of the captivity in Babylon, when no ground for hostility was dreamed of on either side, and Judah's king, saved from the great king of Assyria, too eagerly showed the treasures of his house and kingdom to the friendly Gentile envoys. But Jeremiah was given to speak of Jerusalem's ruin then just imminent, and of the exile for 70 years when Babylon should fall and the remnant return. Both prophets wrote to Jehovah's glory in different times, ways, and circumstances; both served to nourish the faith of souls looking to Him out of human elation on the one side or depression, fear, and despair on the other: and both foretold of the final destruction of the power which led the Jews into captivity. The avowed or the insinuated supposition of anything short of distinctly divine inspiration is mere infidelity flowing from the idolatry of the human mind. In the early predictions of the flood, general or specific, it is idle to imagine any historical circumstances of the smallest bearing on either. It was a divine judgment of the world then existing, and no occasion conceivable to account for the limit of 120 years, any more than for the precision; and He Who thus judged and destroyed guilty man was pleased to fix out of His own wisdom both the one and the other. But He did reveal them beforehand to Noah, not for His preservation only during the judgment, but for the comfort and blessing of his soul in the knowledge of His gracious interest and of His righteous ways, and for all believers who should profit by the word afterward. And He is the same God still, only revealed fully in Christ and known by His Spirit sent forth from heaven in such a sort and measure as could not be then.

“In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, and the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were broken up all the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. On the same day went Noah, and Shen and Ham and Japheth, sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; they, and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every bird of every wing. And they went unto Noah into the ark, two [and] two of all flesh wherein was the breath of life. And they that came came male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him; and Jehovah shut him in (lit. after him)” (vers. 11-16).

As we have seen the double form of prophecy, snore distant and more immediate, and yet both unmistakably of God only, so we have in the great event which befell the ungodly world of that day a stupendous miracle of destruction from His hand which swept away the entire generation of unbelievers, with subordinate creation, from the face of the earth, when man's corruption and violence in the face of testimony from God became insupportable. So tremendous an event is recorded with the utmost precision and solemnity. We are told of it to the year, month, and day, when the judgment was executed. From below as from above, the brief but clear account tells us of what was never before man's creation and has never been since; and we may add on God's assurance, what will never be again, but a still more solemn and significant and all-pervading dissolution of the world. It was no mere question of the clouds or of the sea, as ordinarily. The inspired narrator speaks of quite different and altogether unexampled sources. All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of the heavens, as the phrase is, were opened. Neither the one nor the other was according to the course of nature God established before or since. This is exactly what makes a miracle evident and impressive; for all admit the regular action of the physical principles by which God orders the universe. But only skepticism is unwilling to own His title, especially in a morally ruined system, to interfere whether in judgment of evil, or in the testimony and triumph of grace: both alike worthy of His goodness and due to His character, fraught too with the richest blessing to His creatures, and subserving His glory.

No doubt it was not ordinary experience, any more than the resurrection of our Lord. It is a question of extraordinary facts proved by adequate testimony and even overwhelming evidence. To set induction from experience against such facts, or indeed any facts, is essentially illogical. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” (1 John 5:9). A miracle has nothing to do with ordinary experience, less even than those primeval and permanent causes of which logic avows it can give no account; yet there they have been from the origin of all things as certainly as the actual sensible course of things which we call experience. They were miraculous, just like the deluge on the one hand, or our Lord's resurrection (as indeed His entire appearing here below) on the other. They are wholly beyond that experience, and above the ken of science; but they are the surest and most momentous of facts; and God has taken care to give His irrefragable witness to them all. The infidel argument begs the question and refutes itself to an honest mind. For it assumes that there is nothing beyond the general laws in ordinary experience; while it is compelled to own that, even for initiating that course of nature, there must have been primordial causes of which it knows nothing and can give no account. How much more was it for God, holy, righteous, and good, to judge iniquity and to reveal grace and truth, yea life eternal in His Son. For “this is the witness, that God gave us life eternal; and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).

The real reason why these illogical reasoners dislike miracles, whether judicial or in grace, is because they dread God, as they must with a bad conscience; and they are too proud to own their sins and be saved through the faith of Christ, Who died for them and rose from the dead. If they refuse to believe now, God will enforce the honor of His Son by their resurrection to judgment executed by Him Whom they refuse now as Savior.

It is striking to observe how the last touching incident here recorded rises up against the irrational hypothesis of pseudo-criticism. The hypothesis of Elohistic and Jehovistic documents so fails to account for the use of the divine designations, as well as the other phenomena of the text, that

they are obliged to imagine another modifying element, which they call “the Priest's Code,” and even a redactor of it. But all this is unintelligent jargon which explains nothing, and is as unreliable as the most trifling traditions of the Babylonish Talmud. To the believer the usage of scripture is full of interest and edification. In our chapter Jehovah's care for Noah, with his house, whom He had seen righteous before Him in this generation is attested in the opening verses.1-5. From ver. 6 we have the action of Noah in view of Elohim's word as such, where accordingly the entrance of creatures, clean or unclean, two and two, is named as in chap. vi.; and the more strikingly here, because in the previous verses the clean by sevens had been enjoined by Jehovah as befitted His dealings with His own. The difference is owing to the divine design, however dull we may be in seizing or yet more in expounding it. But ver. 16 is remarkable for its disproof of the dream. For there we read that they went in male and female of all flesh. Now this ought to be, as it is, and only could be accurately, “as Elohim commanded him.”

But there is immediately following the words, as if to explode by anticipation the diverse document notion, “and Jehovah shut him in.” On the believing view, one cannot conceive any addition more pertinent, beautiful, or consoling. It is the expression of special care on Jehovah's part to the one that honored Him and was thus guarded peculiarly at that great crisis. In judgment He remembered mercy and provided generally for the preservation of creation; but He had His affections in a closer way for Noah, and, by that divine name which expressed the relationship, He meant to let, His people know in His imperishable word that He secured His faithful servant: Jehovah shut him in.” Here the scheme of “higher criticism” not only loses the lesson of His grace, but sinks into puerility. It is well that those who believe should resist and resent these “evil workers;” who appear to be as wholly insensible to the grace of God as to His truth. They as scholars avail themselves of the plea of literary questions to fritter away divine authority, and all that is vital and God-glorifying which is bound up with it. But no faithful soul should be deceived. It is not Hebrew learning which is the point, but the skeptical mania of the day.

Chapter 87

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 7:17-24

Next we have the prevalence of the deluge described in language alike simple and impressive; but entirely free from the realistic details of horror in which the moderns delight. The effect was complete over all that breathed on the dry land and over bird life.

“And the flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth. And the waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that [were] under all the heavens were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh that moved upon the earth expired, bird and cattle and beast and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all mankind: all died which [had] breath of spirit of life, of all that [was] in dry [land]. And every living substance which [was] on the face of the ground from man to cattle and to reptile and to bird of the heavens; and they were blotted out from the earth; and Noah only remained, and what [was] with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days” (vers. 17-24).

It was for God now to accomplish His word of judgment: whether or not He caused His wind to blow, the waters flowed. It was no question of His ordinary regulation according to the laws He impressed on creation. His word is paramount. Man must learn that He is, and that He punishes, even in this world where He sees fit, the iniquity that exceeds. He is long-suffering, but He gave thus early a lesson to the ungodly which they can only forget or deny at their peril. “Behold, He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; He shutteth upon a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, He withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also He sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.” No doubt there were the deceived and the deceivers then, as at other times, who had to learn, whatever their pride or indifference, that they were His Who stood by His warnings and dealt publicly with all that despised Him and them. With Him is strength and wisdom, whereof destruction and death say, We have heard its fame with our ears, if it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the bird of the heavens. For man, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding!

God has let us know the process of the deluge, as well as the destruction outside and the deliverance for all within the ark. In vain does the writer of the “Genesis of the Earth” seek to transfer the catastrophe to the low lands of the Euphrates and the Tigris, where an inundation of fifteen cubits would little affect the earth in general or its denizens. This is to overlook or disbelieve “the mountains of Ararat” (chap. 8:4), where the ark rested when the waters were abating. Its chief peak, being 17,000 feet above the sea, may give some notion of the appalling fact. For forty days was the flood i.e., the extraordinary outburst from beneath and from above (vers. 11, 12), which bore up the enormous structure of the ark upon the face of the waters; and the waters so prevailed that “all the high hills that were under all the heavens were covered.” This seems naturally to go beyond Ararat; yet if even its highest peak were far beneath the water, what then for the earth? “Fifteen cubits upward did the water prevail; and the mountains were covered.”

As the apostle Peter comments, “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"; so here the narrative has every mark of truth without exaggeration or the least approach to imaginative coloring. The universal death which suddenly befell every living creature of the land or the air, is vividly set before the reader; no less than the security of Noah alone and those with him in the ark. It is childish and sinful to cavil at the destruction of the lower creation, which had already been subjected to vanity through the fall of its head. And now that man's wickedness called aloud for divine judgment, the birds and beasts share his ruin on earth. Yet even in this the goodness and the wisdom of God secure the victory in due time. For if the creation fell with the first man, what joy to know in God's word that all its groaning awaits the triumph of the Second man when the manifestation of the sons of God takes place! For as surely as through Adam's transgression it was plunged into sighs, and travails in pain together until now, so surely will the Last Adam appear, when it also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Christ, besides being Firstborn from the dead, the Head of the church, is also Firstborn of all creation, its Chief, and Heir of all things. And He died to reconcile, not all believers only, but all things unto Himself, whether things on the earth or things in the heavens. As the word of God is pledged, so His return will vindicate the word and display the reconciliation in power.

Chapter 88

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 8:1-5

THUS was the ante-diluvian world purged of its abounding and flagrant evils by divine judgment: the standing witness and warning of another judgment which impends over the habitable earth. There were two witnesses then, first Enoch, then Noah, each with his own characteristic points of difference, both concurring to announce judgment about to fall on the ungodly while living here below. So it will be in the day when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17:30).

How deeply and universally the judgment of the quick is overlooked in Christendom! It may be said that it is attested in the creeds; and this is true. But even when the creeds were composed, the truth had faded distressingly; and their recital seems to have been an effort to preserve it from utter ruin through the ever rising flood of failure in faith, of worldly ways, and of heterodoxy on every side. Even then all distinctness was lost, no less than the living power was dwindling. For we can read how the baptized were already mixing up the judgment of the quick with that of the dead, because the Lord is to judge both; and no wonder, for they were far and wide substituting the error of a general resurrection for a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment, with the millennial reign between them. Such confusion is an error which in itself tends to destroy enjoyment of gospel deliverance and of eternal life as present facts, to darken the proper hope of Christ's coming to receive us for the Father's house, and to frustrate all testimony to His world-kingdom when He returns with power and glory. There is little of truth left by this desolating scheme, harmless as it may appear to men who are not thoroughly subject to the written word—little more than the person of Christ, which may be and is seen truly (thank God) notwithstanding, but which cannot exercise His full power over souls, where there is feeble entrance by faith into His work.

Hence the importance of appreciating the deluge as God's then judgment of living man on the earth and of the creation subject to him there. It was used by the prophet Isaiah (chap. 54) for Israel's comfort; for they must experience Jehovah's face hid from them in overflowing wrath for a moment, before His everlasting kindness rests on them—a state which is in no way true of them yet. So did the Lord compare the days of Noah with His coming or presence as Son of man to introduce the kingdom of the heavens, not in mystery as now, but manifestly over the earth (Matt. 24:37, Luke 17:26). And the apostle of the circumcision does not fail to illustrate and enforce his rebuke of the mockers at the close of the days by a solemn application of that divine intervention (2 Peter 3:4-7). But the Judge stands before the doors. Jehovah's end will be seen, that He is full of pity and merciful; and so we find the faithful Creator here.

“And God remembered Noah, and all that lived, and all the cattle that [were] with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. And closed were [the] deep's fountains and heaven's windows, and the rain from the heavens was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually (going and returning); and the waters were abated at the end of a hundred and fifty days. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on [the] seventeenth day of [the] month, on Ararat's mountains. And the waters were abating continually (going and abating) until the tenth month: in the tenth, on the first of the month, were the mountain tops seen”

(vers. 1-5).

Here again we see, as in every previous instance, internal evidence of the Holy Spirit's design in speaking of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah. It is the general care of Him Who had created all; and hence every living thing and all the cattle are remembered along with Noah. We have not here specific relationship, where “Jehovah” (Lord) would be requisite and in keeping. So it was in describing the divine action of bringing on the flood; here, of removing the infliction for His creatures that were preserved. Thus God remembered all, and God made a wind to pass over the earth; and the waters subsided, and the extraordinary stores from below and from above were closed, and rain was restrained. It is thus simply God's way generally from chaps. 7:17 to 8:19 inclusively. From a chap.8:20 we have special relationship, and Jehovah is at once introduced with the strictest propriety. The notion of distinct authorship is merely the device of blind men groping in vain. The same writer was led to vary the expression of the divine name, exactly as the change of subject required. The design of the Holy Spirit is therefore completely lost by the dream of distinct documents and authors, where this change of title ensues, which involves also new associations and different terms, which they in their ignorance work into their hypothesis. To the believer in true divine inspiration the design of God is thus made apparent, instructive, of deep interest, and of no little fruit. On the unbelieving hypothesis all is reduced to barrenness from Dan to Beersheba.

Chapter 89

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 8:6-12

Another step was now taken by Noah after the tops of the mountains were seen. God had given necessary warning to save life, but exercised his dependence and patience abundantly.

“And it came to pass at the end of forty days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. And he sent forth the raven; and it went forth, going to and fro until the drying of the waters from off the earth. And he sent forth the dove from him, to see if the waters were abated [become light] from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and returned to him into the ark, for the waters [were] on the face of all the earth. And he put forth his hand and took her and brought her in to him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days, and again he sent the dove out of the ark; and the dove came to him at eventide, and behold the leaf of olive fresh plucked [was] in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again to him more” (vers. 6-12).

We may easily gather from scripture that “forty” is habitually used, days or years, for a term of trial, both O. and N. Testaments furnishing instances. So it would seem to have been here. And temptation must be borne, not evaded; as we have the assurance not only that God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but that He will, with the trial, make also the way of escape that we may be able to endure. So here after duly waiting Noah opened, not the light or roof, but the window of the ark, and sent forth the raven, which kept going to and fro till the waters were dried up from off the earth. He also sent forth the dove. In this case it is added to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. The raven and the dove were true to their habits. The unclean bird found congenial food in that scene of desolation, and sought no more an entrance into the ark, content with what death provided everywhere. The bird of associations afterward so hallowed found no rest for the sole of her foot, and returned to Noah and to the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; and he put forth his hand, and took her, and brought her to him into the ark. This was conclusive. They must still wait. The historic facts seem to be comprised here; and their design is evident.

But without contending for a type more or less faithful, we may readily admit the moral instruction derivable from the description. The raven is notorious for its restlessness and its voracity, as the dove for its harmlessness and expression of love; the one prohibited from the Israelite's use, as the other was expressly fit, not merely for his food, but for a burnt sacrifice to be offered to Jehovah, and in certain cases as a sin offering also. There is surely nothing far-fetched in observing how the unclean nature finds its satisfaction without where death reigns; while that which is clean returns to the shelter of the ark, first, without a sign of life, next after seven days more with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her beak, the pledge of coming “fatness” wherewith God and man are honored, making man's face to shine. Plainer if possible is the result after seven days further; for the dove, when sent forth, could find rest for the sole of her foot in the renewed earth, and returned not again to him more. The dove, strong of wing to flee from that which was out of

harmony with her pure and gentle nature, had now a sphere which attracted her; and Noah could not but draw the right conclusion.

So it is in a far more serious region. Those that are according to flesh do mind the things of the flesh; as those according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Nor is there any difficulty in apprehending this; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and those that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye, said the apostle to the saints in Rome, are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be that God's Spirit dwelleth in you. And there He is given to dwell, as had been shown in a preceding part of the Epistle, where souls justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are justified in the power of His blood, and are anointed of the Holy Spirit accordingly to have His objects theirs henceforth.

Chapter 90

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 8:13-19

Life is not all, nor life amply secured in the face of death and desolation all around. This the ark had been, not only to Noah and his house, but to every living creature which found shelter within. The power of death, the judgment of God, had fallen unsparingly on all that breathed outside; but the grace that provided salvation was equally evident. And the word of God was no less simple, intelligible, and in fact understood by all that believed it. Those who discredited the warning of God were the witnesses of its truth when the flood came and swept them all away. The waters of Noah did go over the earth, as surely as they shall go over it no more. A still more terrible destruction awaits it, however long it may seem to linger. The heavens and earth that are now by His word are kept in store, reserved for fire against a day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The one is as certain as the other. But we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Meanwhile it never was the mind of God that there should be life only, but liberty. Life out of death ushers into liberty. Christ not only quickens and shelters, but this as a preparation for the freedom of grace. With freedom He set us free. Flesh had long been tried under the legal taskmaster; and it had been demonstrated that its mind is enmity against God. But now that there is life, after death and judgment have done their worst on Him Who is risen out of both, there is liberty also for the regenerate.

But it is beautiful to note how Noah can wait. Many days had passed before he opened the window of the ark; many more while he tried the condition of the renewed earth by the messengers he sent forth repeatedly, and not in vain. A further step was now to be taken in the spiritual intelligence given to him.

“And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dried. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dry” (vers. 13, 14).

His faith had been tried not a little, but the prospect was comforting even from the first. “The face of the ground” was dry when he looked; and after near two months more “the earth was dry.” But if thus and rightly exercised and comforted, he still waited on God's word to go out, as he went in at His word. He will not hasten in the impetuosity of nature and its self-confidence; he depends on God and obeys His word; and the word in due time was given, as it ever is to those who look up to Him.

“And God spoke to Noah, saying, Go forth out of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons and thy sons' wives with thee: all the animals that are with thee of all flesh, among bird and among cattle and among every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, bring forth with thee, that they may swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives, with him: all the animals, all the creeping things, and all the

birds—everything that moveth upon the earth after their families, went forth out of the ark" (vers. 15-19).

Now comes the faithful word of God to His waiting and watching servant: how welcome to the prisoner of hope! It is the type of those preserved through the great hour of temptation which shall come upon all the habitable world to try those that dwell on the earth. Hence it is referred to in that part of our Lord's great prophecy which sets out a future remnant of the chosen people left for blessing, when the Lord comes in power and glory to establish the kingdom of God publicly here below, on the cutting off of His open enemies. So also we find it in the Gospel of Luke (chap. 17) where our Lord contrasts God's kingdom as a matter not of show but of faith, as it was then and is now, with that public display and resistless power in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

On the other hand, when Christ's coming to receive His own to Himself for the Father's house on high is brought before us, it is after the pattern, not of Noah passing through the scene of judgment, but of Enoch translated to heaven before the time of trouble came, as we may see in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. So, in Rev. 4 and onward, the symbol of the heavenly redeemed is above, around the throne during the entire period of the judicial dealings of God, which have for their object to put the Lord in actual possession of the inheritance earthly as well as heavenly. Even in that solemn time mercy will rejoice against judgment, and there will be prepared on earth multitudes of the spared (Rev. 7:14.) from not Israel only but all the Gentiles, to welcome the returning Son of man; as others slain for their faith (chap 6:13 etc.) will be raised from the dead before His world-kingdom begins, to reign with Christ no less than those caught up before (chap. xx. 4). There must be a fit condition for men on earth, whether of Israel or the nations, as He has the glorified in heaven. And when the kingdom comes in manifest power and glory, the merely animal creation is to rejoice; and indeed all that is now travailing and groaning through the fall of its head. How beautifully this suits the glory of the Second man needs no argument, however offensive to rationalists, who never rise above the first man.

Chapter 91

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 8:20-22

HITHERTO the account throughout this chapter, as also much the greater part of the preceding, has been general history: all since chap. 7:6, save the beautifully appropriate exception of the last clause of chap. 7:17. Now, as in that exception, special relationship is meant to be put forward, and Jehovah appear, rather than Elohim, in the close of chap. 8., as in the opening of chap. vii. Never was a weaker effort to account for the use of the divine names than the fancy of two distinct writings joined into one, never a scheme more utterly unproductive of good fruit. Who was ever helped thereby to a ray of light divine? What holy affection was ever exercised by it? Its direct and inevitable tendency is to destroy reverence for the sacred letters, and to undermine the Lord's authority Who declares that Moses wrote of Him, not the mythical legendists of rationalist imagination. Accepting the scripture as God-breathed, we may easily and surely learn the propriety of the change of designation in the verses before us, and the enhanced value which the name here employed imparts. “And Noah built an altar to Jehovah, and took of every clean beast and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And Jehovah smelled the odor of rest. And Jehovah said in his heart, I will not any more again curse the ground on account of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will not any more again smite every living thing as I have done. Henceforth all the days of the earth, seed and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease” (vers. 20-22).

After such grave and long detention, with death and desolation all around in judgment executed on bold and open sin, the natural impulse would have been to build a house for himself and houses for his sons. But as Noah had found grace in the eyes of Jehovah, so he remained righteous before Him; and his first thought, on emerging with all entrusted to his care from the ark, was to own Jehovah and His grace sacrificially. This needed no fresh commandment. It had already received His signal recognition from the beginning, when Abel, just because he had faith, approached Him with the slain firstling and its fat, and Cain was rejected, because he rose not above the religion of nature. There was no sense of sin in himself, nor of grace in God reigning through righteousness to eternal life through the coming Savior.

Noah perceived now the fit provision of the seventh clean beast and bird. He saw by faith that it could only be rightly for an offering to Jehovah. The seventh was not one of a pair: how suitable for presenting on the altar! And so he took of “every clean beast and of every clean bird.” It had thus afar larger range than Abel's; appropriate as his was for one coming to God by faith. Nor was Noah's any more than Abel's a sin-offering. What then suited was a burnt-offering. It was of a sweet savor, or savor of rest, and of course propitiatory; but here there was no question of individual acceptance as in Abel's case. It was no less a righteous ground for presenting the renewed earth to Jehovah. No such position was taken by Adam when set in Paradise. It was exactly right and due to Jehovah now, that man and every living creature and the earth might be before Him in the sweet savor He smelled: the witness of an infinitely efficacious offering whereby Christ in His death would reconcile all things. Now came, it would seem, the fulfillment of Lamech's word in calling his son Noah, This same shall comfort us concerning our works and concerning the

toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed (Gen. 5:29). Only Christ coming in power will remove the curse; but Noah brought in meanwhile alleviation and comfort for man in his toil.

Nor was this all; “Jehovah said in his heart, I will not any more again curse the ground on account of man, for the thought of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will not any more again smite every living thing as I have done.” How blessed was the effect even of this witness to the great Sacrifice! Compare chap. 6:5-7. When Jehovah saw, not the sacrifice, but man's wickedness great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually, it grieved Him in His heart, and He said I will destroy man, &c. Now when He (according to the gracious language of scripture) smelled the savor of rest, He said in His heart, I will not again any more curse the ground, nor smite any living thing, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Sacrifice made the difference, bringing Christ's death before Him as it should be later. And grace could flow righteously even then. Man was no better in himself; but here the chief of the new world acts in faith, and God answers in grace on this righteous ground. The earth was to be spared. During all its days the seasons should follow, not in the fullness that Christ will impart when He reigns over it, but adequately; seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And so it has ever been, though many willfully forget why it is, less grateful than the ox which knows its owner, or the ass which knows its master's crib.

Chapter 92

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:1-7

FROM the specific dealing in the last section of chap. 8., on the ground of burnt offering with its savor of rest, which necessarily brought in the name of “Jehovah,” we return in chap. 9. to the general ways of God, of “Elohim,” till the special blessing of Shem requires “Jehovah” toward the close of the chapter. The propriety of the usage in each case is apparent and undeniable. It has no reasonable connection with the fancy of distinct authors or legends, but is founded on the exigencies of the truth and the exactitude of inspiration. Interchange of the name in any, case would touch, not of course the substance of the facts, but the moral perfection conveyed by their due occurrence.

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And fear of you and dread of you shall be upon every animal of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, with all that moveth [on] the ground, and with all fishes of the sea: into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you: as the green herb I give you everything. Only flesh with its life, its blood, ye shall not eat. And surely your blood [that] of your lives will I require: at every animal's hand will I require it; and at man's hand, at the hand of each [the blood] of his brother, will I require the man's life. [Whoso] sheddeth the man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in God's image made he the man. And ye, be fruitful and multiply; swarm on the earth and multiply on it” (chap. 9:1-7).

Such is the tenure of man and the lower creation in the world that now is, in marked distinctness from the world that then was, when Adam was set up as head of the race in Eden. It was conferred dominion then for man made in God's image, after His likeness—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. Now it was a fallen world, and the fear and the dread of those blessed by God and charged to replenish the earth were to be upon every beast and bird with reptile and fish. The creatures were delivered into men's hand. Sin pervaded, and God took it into consideration as an existing fact which could not be ignored; as we saw just before in its proper place, where sacrifice intervened, spite of the evil in man's heart and its imagination from his youth.

But if God now first gave every moving thing that lives to be food for man (ver. 3), as freely as green herbage had been originally given to beast and bird and reptile (chap. 1:30), there was marked restriction put on the blood. Of this man was not to eat (ver. 4). It was the life, and this God reserved for Himself. The liberty for animal food to man's use made the divine claim more conspicuous. Life belonged to God; and woe be to those that despise or defy His rights. It is the condition of a fallen world, and God is a Preserver, or a Savior, of all men as says the apostle, especially of those that believe. He governs in His providence. It is no longer the dominion given by the Creator. Now He licenses, and He prohibits.

For this reason God stringently guards human life and death. The very governing authority placed in man's hand would soon be misused and perverted by his will without the fear of God; and rivers

of blood would flow, not merely through lawless corruption and violence as before the deluge, but by ambitious kings and governors after it. Therefore does God in His prescient wisdom and considerate goodness declare from the starting point of the new tenure, “Surely your blood [that is] of your lives will I require; at every animal's hand will I require it.” Specially of course would He require the life of man at man's hand, even at the hand of each man's brother (ver. 5). And this is set on its sacred and sound principle in ver. 6; By man should his blood be shed who shed man's blood; for in God's image did He make man.

The image of God expresses man's place and responsibility of representing God. Man alone has that image generally, Christ of course specially and alone perfectly and pre-eminently. It is not His likeness; for alas! man lost this by sin and begat in his own likeness, however grace might act as it does by faith to God's glory. But His image, even when fallen as here, man retains; and the man who slays another (save by competent authority) is guilty of denying God's right in this respect; which we see here that God asserts with the utmost plainness, precision, and solemnity. The murderer meddles not merely with man and injures him to the last degree, hut he also defaces God's image by killing a man, and God sentences him to die. Murder is unwarrantable assumption of what belongs to God. In no other way but by death of the murderer is God's honor vindicated, and God's will maintained. Men may have decreed otherwise; but they that do so are flying in the face of Him from Whom they derive their own title to govern. For here it is laid down before separate nations began, and before His special legislation for Israel where it was guarded with minute care, and not least in the exceptional case of manslaughter. To Noah was said what binds all mankind since the deluge.

Notwithstanding all He foresaw of rebellion and bloodshed, God repeats in ver. 7 His word to men, “Be fruitful and multiply; swarm in the earth and multiply in it.” This they have assuredly done.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:8-11

THUS the situation is entirely new. It is governmental distinctively, and therefore wholly different in this from the world before the deluge. Life is guarded solemnly as that which belongs to God, and may not as the rule be taken from a fellow-man without the forfeit of his that took it. It is not a sinless state like Adam's in Paradise. Innocency lost is lost forever, however grace may step in, and by the Second Man replace all in due time by a new and holy creation, Himself being both Creator and new-creator, as He became the sacrifice which vindicated God as to evil and was the basis of the good that should abide forever.

But man meanwhile had government in his hand. The fear and the dread of him, in a sinful world where man was now called to govern, should be on all the subject creation, the flesh of which, not the blood, was now to be his food, given henceforth as freely by God, as before was the seed-producing herb and the fruit-bearing tree. But the sacredness of life is all the more maintained. Whose shed man's blood, by man should his blood be shed. Details were not given; but God established government, as a root-principle, in man's hand, responsible to him as from Him he received the charge.

It is the blessing of God, Preserver of all men, especially of faithful. Through one man sin had entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned. Yet the sacrifice which faith offered, God accepted, looking on to Him Whose sacrifice of himself would be the crowning completion of His will, and the savor of everlasting rest. Even now He could, would, and did bless the delivered Noah and his sons. But all creation was delivered afresh to man; the new warrant had government inscribed also, with the license and the restriction man is called to own responsibly to God. Nothing can modify this rightly, nothing justify neglect or forgetfulness.

“And God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living soul that is with you, in bird, in cattle, and in every animal of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark to every animal of the earth. And I establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there be a flood any more to destroy the earth “(vers. 8-11).

Here again we may observe that it is “Elohim” Who blessed (ver. 1), and spoke (ver. 8); nor could it with propriety be any other designation. “Jehovah” would have been entirely out of place. For, far from being an occasion for the expression of special relationship, the object before us is of the most comprehensive character. It is the Creator Who is declaring Himself the Preserver of all here below, notwithstanding the imagination of man's heart evil from his youth, which had so recently resulted in the universal destruction of all on earth outside the ark. God could and would and did bless on the footing of sacrifice provisionally till the infinite sacrifice, in virtue of which would come in the new heavens and new earth, save for such as despised it and so justly perishing both here and hereafter in that day. In all this unfolding of His mind about the earth and man upon it unrestrictedly, it is exactly God, “Elohim,” which is requisite, to the exclusion of “Jehovah,” which

first reappears in the momentary introduction of His peculiar relationship with Shem (ver, 26), where only and precisely it is demanded, whereas “Elohim” is immediately resumed with Japhet, who enjoyed no such special place, but only providential dealings of an external kind.

Here accordingly God establishes His covenant with Noah and his sons on a footing which ignores all question of the soul or moral considerations. Where these enter as at the close of the chapter, the divine title is changed in harmony with what is revealed. But in the previous portion all is general as expressly as possible. God never forgets His rights as Creator and Preserver; and even when our blessed Lord brought out heavenly and eternal things, He was far from teaching us to despise the birds of the heaven or the lilies of the field, or God's care in either case. Their Creator and Preserver was our heavenly Father, without Whom not even one sparrow falls upon the earth. No doubt the Christian is called to things higher beyond comparison; but God did not omit to testify and teach His people His mind as to the least of His creatures in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, of which last the closing verse of Jonah is not the least remarkable. And the New Testament is quite as clear as the Old in keeping before us the blessed deliverance which He will surely effect for all the creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now. It waits for the manifestation of the Second man, Head over all things to the church which is His body. For when Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory.

Meanwhile God Who remembered not Noah only but every living thing and the cattle with him in the ark, covenants not only with. Noah and his sons and with his seed after them, but with every living creature, cattle, bird, and beast; and He so establishes His covenant as to cut off from every heart that trusted in Him the least fear of destruction of all flesh by a deluge any more, or of any such dealing with the earth. Without such a covenant, what could guilty man expect but repeated strokes of the same judgment which had just taken them all away? Would not old sins renewed and fresh sins added provoke like punishment? Not so; God's covenant with man and the earth interposes absolutely. “I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth.” He will certainly judge and destroy otherwise, as He warns elsewhere; but it was no small comfort, when the world that now is began after the deluge, that God assured their trembling hearts against a blow so naturally and justly to be dreaded.

Chapter 94

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:12-17

VERSES 1-7 set out the blessing of God pronounced on Noah and his sons for the world that now is. Man henceforth was allowed animal food, yet forbidden to eat blood due to God; and government, was put for the first time into man's hand for the protection of human life and the vindication of God where it was taken. Now vers. 8-11 give the covenant God established with mankind and every creature set under man: the largest covenant God ever made, and still subsisting under a merciful pledge that cannot fail. Neither the one nor the other applied to the ante-diluvian earth. In the verses that follow (12-17) God deigns to give a sign or token of His covenant with the earth. Of a covenant with Noah we first hear in chap. 6:18.

“And God said, This [is the] sign of the covenant which I set (give) between me and between you and between every living soul that is with you for everlasting generations: my bow I have set in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of covenant between me and between the earth. And it shall come to pass when I bring clouds over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember nay covenant which is between me and between you and between every living soul among all flesh; and no more shall the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the clouds and I will look upon it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and between every living soul of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said to Noah, This [is the] sign of the covenant which I have established between me and between all flesh that is upon the earth” (vers. 12-17).

It is an unprofitable question, seeing that scripture has not furnished adequate evidence to decide it absolutely, whether the rainbow was then seen for the first time, or had been familiarly known to the early ages. One can readily conceive that the Creator may have reserved it for the days of Noah: a slight physical disposition could have hindered the phenomenon. But the language seems rather to favor the inference that, often as it may have been noticed before, God took it up now and established it as a covenant sign between Him and the creatures here below for everlasting generations. The least that can be drawn from the words is that God was now, since the deluge, pleased to graft on it a new and merciful meaning. For men might well tremble after that tremendous catastrophe when dark clouds veiled the skies, and the rain fell in torrents, and tidal waves rose overwhelmingly. An accusing conscience would the more loudly speak of what had been shortly before experienced so disastrously. Man naturally looks for it that what once was will surely recur; and the more if old sins still prevailed, and new evils sprang up.

Hence the immense comfort which God's goodness pledged in the bow He set in the cloud. It is not seen as the rule unless there be rain, of course; and it is only seen when the sun shines brightly at one's back from the opposite quarter of the sky. Thus no sign could be more appropriate. If the rain might awaken fears, the gorgeous bow was entitled to calm them; for God Himself thus deigned to assure man of His unfailing covenant. Indeed the accuracy is the more remarkable, as its terms run, “It shall come to pass when I bring clouds over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you

and every living soul among all flesh." For "rain" does not seem absolutely indispensable, but "cloud" is. So Col. Sykes, treating of the Meteorology of the Deccan (Phil. Trans. 1835), describes a rainbow which he saw from the top of a perpendicular precipice, among the Ghauts, overlooking the Concan, on a fog cloud. "A circular rainbow appeared, quite perfect, of the most vivid colors, one half above the level on which I stood, the other below it. Shadows in distinct outline of myself, my horse, and people, appeared in the center of the circle, as in a picture to which the bow formed a resplendent frame."

The same witness describes a white rainbow which he saw in a fog bank near Poonah: "Suddenly I found myself emerge from the fog which terminated abruptly in a wall some hundred feet high. Shortly after sunrise I turned my horse's head homewards, and was surprised to discover in the mural termination of the fog-bank a perfect rainbow, defined in its outline, but destitute of prismatic "colors." Such a white rainbow has been seen by other travelers, and in other lands; but it is not so uncommon as with the usual colors on a fog-cloud. But all attest the faithfulness of God even if man forgets its meaning. "No more shall the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh."

And how affecting the condescension of the words that follow! "And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living soul of all flesh that is upon the earth." It was much that man should see it: how gracious that God too would look on! Nor is this all; but it is added, "And God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and between all flesh that is upon the earth." How good is the God we adore! Such repeated assurance is only the more to be prized by vain forgetful man.

Chapter 95

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:18-19

But there dawns another dealing with mankind, ere long to be consummated by a most striking act on God's part, here marked in an initiatory way as characteristic of the earth since the flood. We need not therefore do more at this point than present a few remarks as general as the text. In due time we may dwell particularly when details come before us.

“And the sons of Noah that went out of the ark were Sherri, and Ham, and Japheth. And Ham is father of Canaan. These three [are] sons of Noah; and from these was all the earth overspread” (vers. 18, 19).

We have already remarked on the principle of government introduced for the first time. Life, man's life, was a sacred thing. It came from God in a way altogether peculiar, as was made known from the outset in Gen. 2:8. Man alone became a living soul by the inbreathing of Jehovah Elohim; other animals without any such immediate association breathed through their organization according to His will. Adam's sons were of Adam naturally, yet inheriting the relationship which Adam had of God differently from all other creatures here below. He, and his alone, had consequently an immortal soul. But to Noah and his sons emerged from the ark there was laid down the root of government, without defining those forms which developed later, all of which have the sanction of His providence.

When the free use of the lower creatures of God was granted, beast of the earth, bird of the air, fish of the sea, every moving thing that lives was to be food for man. As the green herb, God gave all, save the blood, its life, which was not to be eaten: a most significant and instructive reserve, owning Himself the sovereign source of life. Still more solemnly does He speak of man's life. “And surely your blood, [that] of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth Man's blood by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He Man.” We repeat it, because of its signal and abiding importance; and the more so, because other and inferior grounds are often allowed to take the place of divine right with which nothing else can compare.

This, followed up by the covenant with man and the subject creation, and sealed with its appropriate sign of mercy, was settled before attention is again drawn to the three heads of Noah's race, “Shem and Ham, and Japheth,” in the same order as before (Gen. 5:32; 6:10; 7:13). Now, there is an ominous addition, “and Ham is the father of Canaan.” This receives a speedy comment in the sad incident and yet more in the solemn prophecy that follows to the end of the chapter; it not only reverberates through the Old Testament as a whole, but will be only consummated in that kingdom which awaits the Anointed of Jehovah, when all the earth shall be filled with His glory, and the knowledge of it, as the waters cover the sea. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall perform this, as surely as His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem.

Next, we read “these three [are] sons of Noah; and from these was all the earth overspread.” The last word first indicates that which has been proceeding ever since. There is no sufficient ground to

affirm it of the ante-diluvian earth. What strikes one more perhaps is to see how slowly it was carried out after the deluge. Indeed, whatever the causes which acted on men to hinder the plan of God, it soon was plain that mankind resolved on a united community, and not only to congregate together, but to build a city and a tower with its head aspiring to the heavens, and to make a name to themselves lest they should be scattered over the face of the whole earth. This, we are assured, only brought out divine power and wisdom on God's part, not merely in frustrating their vain purpose, but in the accomplishing of His will that they should overspread the earth. He judged their self-exalting folly by breaking the bond which knit them together, and by introducing in the simplest and surest way a separative principle He compelled them to scatter, abandoning their unfinished tower, the abiding monument, not of man's union for strength and fame, but of God's pouring confusion on self-will to its shame. A vast deal more was done by God's interposition, as will appear in due time; but this much may be stated here on the overspreading of all the earth, without anticipating the surprising details that are to follow. As ever, fallen man cared not for God's will—had pleasure in his own will. God was in none of his thoughts, but self which always exposes to some fresh and ruinous device of the great enemy.

Chapter 96

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:20-24

IN these verses we see the fall of him to whom primarily government was committed by God. Noah failed to govern himself by his abuse of God's creature, and gave occasion to such sin in his family as brought in a special curse there; instead of making good comfort “for our work and for the toil of our hands.” It is the sad and familiar story of the first man; directly he is put to the proof, he breaks down. Nor does the evil terminate with himself. The vilest can see it and despise the guilty, where love would cover a multitude of sins. How deep the ruin where the shame of the father drew out only the contempt of son and grandson! But God is not mocked; and His moral government fails no more than His grace, which answers every failure of man by some better thing in His goodness and wisdom, while He judges impenitent wickedness as it deserves.

“And Noah began as husbandman (a man of the ground); and he planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took the garment and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward and covered their father's nakedness; and their faces [were] backward, and their father's nakedness they saw not. And Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done unto him” (vers. 20-25).

It is not merely the fall of a righteous man, and its wholesome warning for all time; for scripture does not withhold the profit from any. But there stands the humbling fact. God reveals the truth without respect of persons. Man was no sooner put to the proof, in the new trial to which he was subjected, than he is seen breaking down in the very point which he was responsible to maintain intact before God and his own fellows. Government over life and death was entrusted by God to his keeping; and he to whom the trust was first made was beyond comparison the most suited by piety and by experience. Yet the next fact recorded of him is that, doubtless through self-indulgence and unwatchfulness, he not only sinned himself, but brought God's ordinance of government into flagrant dishonor. And the sin and dishonor wrought not godly sorrow but contempt in his own household. His younger son Ham was as insensible to God's glory as to what was due to his father, even in such calamitous circumstances; he only manifested the wickedness of his own heart by the unfeeling mockery he put on Noah, and the ready desire to spread his father's shame and ensnare his two brothers. Their reverence was as plain as Ham's impiety, who forgot to whom he owed his life as well as his preservation from the deluge.

But God is not mocked by the sinner any more than He forgets a work of love shown to His name. And it was a work of love which the two brothers did, roused to it all the more through the graceless hardness of their own near kin. Yet what sorrow must have filled their hearts, when their piety compelled them to turn their backs on him to whom ever before they justly looked up with constant affection and honor and gratitude. And this, not only in requital of his fatherly care, but as a righteous man, perfect in his generations, who walked with God, when all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.

Thus, if man quickly fell, and shamefully, where we might have least expected it, and, as far as he was concerned, tarnished irreparably from the start the new and honorable commission with which he was invested, God did not fail, even when it wrought disastrous effects where it ought not, to work in His goodness the beautiful activity of His grace. And we shall see in due time that the ways of His moral government meanwhile are no less perfect. The wicked and scornful son reaped the fruit of his evil in his own offspring Canaan; as the reverent modesty of Shem and Japheth was remembered in their posterity. Salvation is of grace, and cannot fail, because it is the work of God in Christ where all is infallibly secured to His glory. Even where salvation may not be, God puts honor on obedience and respect paid where it is due. Scripture often indicates this, conspicuously in the Rechabites whom the God of Israel brought before the prophet (Jer. 35) to reprove disobedient Judah. Therefore, when Jehoiakim Josiah's son was disgracing both God and his father, Jonadab, Rechab's son, should not want a man, Gentile though he was, to stand before Him forever.

But whether among the righteous or among the unrighteous everything opposed to God's nature and word bears its consequence Nothing is slighted by Him. And a time of evil is just when fidelity to His will becomes all the more imperative for those who love Him; while its prevalence encourages the evil-minded to become more indifferent and abandoned. Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. And there is no real believer who does not begin and go on with that self-judgment of himself and his ways before God which scripture calls repentance.

The Early Chapters of Genesis: Chapter 9:25-29

HUMILIATING as the fall of Noah was, far was he from being forsaken of our faithful God, Who knows how to restore and can make even the weakest to stand. When restored, Noah had fresh honor put on him. We may be assured that the righteous man deeply judged himself, and not the less because it gave occasion to Ham's impiety, if it also brought out the reverent sorrow of Shem and Japheth. There was no waiting in their case as in Jacob's for the Spirit of prophecy on his dying bed. It would seem to have ere long followed that event in his circle which led to the striking prediction here given. It is the first prophecy properly so called which man was given to utter recorded in Genesis. The word given in Gen. 3:15 is of a yet higher nature. It was worthy of Jehovah Elohim to make known, in judging the old Serpent, His gracious purpose in the woman's Seed. Nor is the poetic strain of Lemech to his wives more than typical of the future, though most interesting in that way. Here it is strictly a prophetic prayer.

As Peter, honored among the twelve, was reinstated after his still more grievous and inexcusable sin, so was Noah given to present the broad outlines of what should befall his sons throughout the ages, yet in an aspect precisely suiting that government of man on earth, which he was the first to exercise, and which God would sustain notwithstanding the fault of its representative. Enoch was inspired to prophesy in a wholly different vein of the judgment which the Lord, when He comes with myriads of His saints, will execute on all the ungodly here below. This, however surely uttered at that early day, and appropriate then, was fittingly reserved for its best place of permanent record and warning in the Epistle of Jude. But that of Noah is just where it should be no less certainly, and of a character and scope exactly in keeping with the context.

“And he said, Cursed [be] Canaan; and he said, Bondman of bondman be he to his brethren.

Blessed [be] Jehovah God of Shem, and Canaan be bondman to him;

God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in tents of Shem,

And Canaan be bondman to him” (vers. 25-27).

Appearances were long as usual against the truth. Experience seemed to favor the sons of Ham. His grandson Nimrod, as we know from the next chapter, “began to be a mighty one in the earth.” “He was a mighty hunter [or plunderer], before Jehovah.” It became a proverb. Wherefore it is said, Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Jehovah. Babel, that ominous tower of confusion, was the beginning of his kingdom, and his kingdom did not stop there. No doubt an evident curse, which none could deny but an infidel, fell on Canaan, when because of their enormous wickedness the guilty cities of the Plain were destroyed by fire out of heaven. But even this was far from being an event of Noah's age, nor growing out of a condition of things yet existent, nor affording any such contact with the then circumstances as rationalists pretend prophecy requires. There was of course a true link which the Holy Spirit saw between Ham's sin, and his descendants' corruption; but it was in no way the mere immediate fortune-telling to which this deplorable unbelief would pervert the prophets. Still less can it be said of Canaan reduced to the lowest bondage, as when

Israel took possession of the land of promise. Yet scripture is plain that both the curse and the blessing are not complete till Israel re-enter the land under Messiah and the new covenant, to be rooted there and blessed as long as the earth endures. “And in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts.”

Undoubtedly for the earth, and God's government, Shem has the richer promise, as that day will establish and proclaim. But all history even in the past attests God's enlarging Japheth, the great colonizer of the earth, and in the strongest contrast with Shorn as to this. For he was not only to spread nationally as Shem never was, but to dwell in Shem's tents. Europe and the north-east of the old world sufficed not, nor yet the new world of America, Australia, &c., but he must also encroach on Shem's tents in the east. So it was to be, according to this earliest oracle; and so it has been, to the letter, as no foresight of man could have anticipated. This closes the divine account of Noah: “And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years; and all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died” (vers. 28, 29).

The reader may note the exquisite propriety of “Jehovah the God of Shem” in ver. 26, and of “God” only in ver. 27 for Japheth, where enlargement in providence is meant rather than the promised blessing of special relationship with Himself. And here is an internal ground, in addition to grammatical reason, against the idea, which many like the late Mr. S. Faber adopted, that the same verse means (not Japhet's, but) God's dwelling in Shem's tents. Had this been intended by the Spirit of God in Noah, would it not have been said Jehovah Elohim, rather than simply Elohim?

Chapter 98

The Gentile Centurion and His Servant

Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10.

IN the first Gospel the leper is set immediately before the Centurion, to mark the grace at hand for the Gentile when the defiled people should reject the Messiah. So the Gospel shows from its beginning to its end. Hence it is that in its account of the Centurion (not in the corresponding narrative of Luke), the Lord declares that many should come from east and west and share the feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whilst the sons of the kingdom, their seed, should be cast forth into the outer darkness with its unspeakable anguish.

In the third Gospel, which has a moral object rather than dispensational, the Holy Spirit led to placing the forgiven paralytic after the healed leper (Luke 5:13, 14, and 18-25): the two striking pictures of sin as needing divine grace to cleanse, and the known remission of sins for power to walk and serve aright. Here too, the case of the Centurion is given in its actual place, which equally fell in with the scope of the Gospel. The Lord had laid down for His disciples in a large way and wholly above human thought or feeling that blessedness which He knew in its perfection which grace calls to and forms. Hence it is no question here of scribes and Pharisees, or of those of old time, He urges the principle of God's kingdom in words which leave the Jew out of sight and instruct the man of God where and when ever he may be.

The faith of the Gentile Centurion follows, with a detail of similar propriety. His bondman was dear, yea precious, to him, but sick and about to die. Yet the Centurion did not present himself to the Lord. He came to Him only, as those are said to do themselves what they do by others. He was no heathen; he honored the Jew, low as they were, because God chose them and entrusted them with His oracles, the scriptures. Therefore did he (a rare thing in a Roman officer) love their nation, as he even built them their synagogue. And so he sent to the Lord elders of that people, who besought Him earnestly on the behalf of one so worthy in their eyes (as rare a thing in a Jewish elder).

But when the Lord was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him, saying, Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy (adequate or qualified) that Thou shouldst come under my roof. The very grace of the Lord, which offered to come and heal the servant, awoke a deeper sense of the Lord and of himself in his heart. This was a morally right feeling in the Centurion toward One Whom he could not but regard as possessed of divine power and title; as the elders were right in their sense of the Gentile's worth and religious feeling. He was in truth a believer. This made him humble as well as reverent. He recognized in Jesus what made himself nothing, yet what encouraged him to lay at His feet his appeal for a dying slave; and this first through Jewish elders, then through friends; for what was he himself to be accounted of? Whereas He, the Lord, has but to say by a word, and his servant shall be healed. He too, a man set under authority, had soldiers under him, and says, to one Go, and he goes, to another Come, and he comes, and to his servant Do this, and he does it.

Can we wonder that the gracious Lord wondered? It was faith simple and strong, the fruit of divine grace. The word of God, for this was read and heard in the synagogue, acquainted the Centurion with God's nature and ways, as none of the Jews learned who listened with no such sense of need but claiming a monopoly of possession. Not even in Israel, the Lord said, had He found so great faith.

Those who were sent returned and found the sick man in sound health.

How is it with you who read these words? If not born of God, you are in the evil and darkness of the fall, and all the more guilty because you have heard not the law only, but the gospel from your tenderest years. Yet you have lived as if you were not a lost sinner, as if God were not a Savior, as if Christ who died for sinners was not ordained Judge of quick and dead, most of all to be dreaded by those who hear but neglect so great salvation. You are in a worse and more dangerous case than the sick slave of the Centurion. Only the breath of your nostrils severs you from death, the forerunner of the second death, the lake of fire forever. Oh! weigh the tale written to save—written by the Holy Spirit to save—a slave of sin. Christ speaks in it to you who read or hear. For Him to speak by a word is ample to save the soul that believes. And He has said many words to give you confidence notwithstanding your many sins. He gives healing, life, pardon, peace, and power. He gives all things worthy of God, all needed by man. But beware of doubting, beware of deferring. The “convenient time” never comes. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. If you put off, beware lest you perish.

Chapter 99

Glorify God in Your Body

NOTHING is more resented by the natural man than to assert that he is the slave of sin; and yet the Christian knows that nothing is more evidently true. For man is born a captive to Satan, who exercises the power of a conqueror. Only by the redemption that is in Christ can he be freed from his captivity. Naturally fallen man is the slave of Satan; to hide this fact is Satan's aim, though within certain limits man is free in choice of sin. As Joshua said to Israel, they might choose between the gods of their ancestors on the other side of the flood and those of the land in which they dwelt (see Josh. 24:15); but they could not choose between the worship of Jehovah or that of false gods. How can that which is inherently vile choose what is really good? The fact is that man is circumscribed by sin; he is like an animal tethered to one spot of ground with no more freedom than the length of his chain. Sinful man's freedom is illusory, and the derision of Satan. The Christian is delivered from the thralldom of Satan, and yields himself to Him Who has bought him with a price, not only the highest but incalculable.

Human words are not found to express its greatness: so if it is called a “price,” we cannot compute it. The Holy Ghost once says “precious blood “; and once we read, “God so loved the world.” If we can measure the love of God as expressed in the word “so,” then we may estimate the price; and, if we can estimate the price, we can measure the “so “; but both are infinite and immeasurable.

The intrinsic worth of what is purchased sometimes determines the price; or, it may be, the desire of the purchaser to possess it at all cost. We do read in the parable of a man who gave up all that he had to buy the field. for the treasure in it. We do know Him, Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. The fact that it was all the buyer had is what gives a relative value to man—not to the soul only, but to the body also; though there is an intrinsic worth besides, for the Lord asks, “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” And He says of the body (John 6), “I will raise it up at the last day.” The fact of resurrection is proof that the body is bought; the out-resurrection proves that salvation includes the body. Hence the word, “Glorify God in your bodies.” Else where were the need of resurrection? And if no resurrection, then is Christ not raised; and if Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins, and there is no salvation. The body, though formed of the dust of the earth, becomes part of the man, and has its value: especially as will be seen in the believer when glorified.

But how is this value increased by the inestimable price paid! It was a price which God alone knew. The price is infinitely beyond the intrinsic worth of body or soul; yet nothing less was sufficient in His eyes; for the price is not measured by the value of man, but according to the righteousness of God, and the precious blood is the ransom (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Thereby is propitiation and redemption. It is because of this inestimable price that the apostle says, “Wherefore glorify God in your body.” How are we to glorify God? Not merely by words of praise and thanksgiving, which are due and necessarily accompany, but alas! too often inadequately felt by the heart. How sad to sing words which express the deepest devotion without entering into the spirit of the words we sing!

Glorifying God is by the Holy Spirit in the new man subjecting the whole body to Him and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12). The body is commonly but not exclusively (see 2 Cor. 7:1) the channel of temptation, which yielded to, though it appear ever so small, brings the whole man under the power of sin. It was by means of the body chiefly that Eve fell; the woman saw that the tree was good and pleasant. Our Lord, in enforcing the principle which dealt with the externals of religion before the innate depravity of the heart was laid hare, figuratively takes up the physical members of the body; we are to pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand or foot, if they offend (Matt. 5:29, 30; Mark 9:43-48). Again, alluding to sin entering by one member, the Lord tells us the consequence is to bring the whole body under its power; if the eye be single, the whole body is full of light; but if evil, the whole body is full of darkness (see Luke 11:34). James gives as a principle of law, that to offend in one point is to break all. So with the Christian; to admit sin by any one of the members is to bring the whole body under bondage to sin— “he that committeth sin is servant (or slave) of sin” (John 8:34). The Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Colossians takes up the reality of sin in the members which are on the earth; not mere members of the body, but members on the earth. Blessed be God, we shall not have these earthly members in heaven, either in the separate or in the risen state. We were baptized to Christ's death.

But if we are not watchful to glorify God with our bodies, they may be the means of sin. Therefore “mortify,” or put to death,” your members which are upon the earth.” Satan is ever watching for an opportunity to inject sin, and that by means of the “members” which under law were symbolized by the eye, foot, or hand. But now that the true light is come, we perceive sin to be a much deeper thing (see Col. 3); it is the old fallen self, all that is outside Christ our life, which the apostle calls our members on the earth. Nor are we ever told to die to it, but (as having life in Christ) to mortify or put it to death. Not the old man, but the natural body is raised again at the last day.

Do Christians think now that the frightful list of these members on the earth is truly applied to the heathen then, and is correctly given of what they were and are, but that none can be applied to themselves now? Let us remember that the apostle applies it to those who are said to be risen with Christ, to those who had died to sin, and were crucified to the world; to those who had put off the old man and put on the new. The constituent parts of our old nature are all condemned in the cross; and we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Glorifying God is not mere avoidance of the sin which gave occasion to apostolic rebuke and exhortation; it is the obligation of all that name the name of the Lord. If these “members” were only like the thistles that grow on uncultured ground, there would be room for the opinion of some, that by appropriate training and culture the thistles would be removed and good plants take their place. These men forget or deny that the soil is evil, and so evil that a good plant will not take root. Such is the fond expectation of the world, which thinks to educate men to be Christians, and in time to inaugurate the millennium—one of their own making. Their idea of Christianity is the development of what is good in man! But what is developed? Nature is dominated by sin, and the culture of nature as it is is but the culture of sin. Stringent laws may repress crime, but will never cause a thistle to produce figs. How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? The scripture says not, Pluck off the evil fruit, but “put to death” the members, the constituents. How is this to be done? He, who has never realized (by submission to the righteousness of God) his victory in Christ over sin in his members, feels but his weakness and the strength of sin; when he would do good, evil is present,

and he cries out, “O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death”? (Rom. 7) Blessed be God, faith in Him who shed His precious blood, by which we have forgiveness of sins, also gives us dominion over sin, so that it shall not reign over our mortal bodies. For as on the one hand the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus liberated me from the law of sin and death; so on the other hand God, sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin, that the righteous import of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, condemned sin in the flesh, and by faith in Him we are free. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” In Him we have redemption from the guilt and power of sin. In Him we have put off the old man and have put on the new. For us sin is already judged.

Why then are we exhorted to mortify the “members” since we have put off the “old man"? This we have as regards our standing before God. But the Christian is viewed in two aspects—his standing and his practical condition. Before God we are “complete in Him” (Col. 2:10), “risen in Him” (Col. 3), “perfected” (Heb. 10); and Christ, Who has finished the work of redemption, now sits in witness thereof at the right hand of God. This is our standing. It is by and in Him that we are perfected forever (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς), without a break. Our Redeemer and representative is on the throne of God. Our Forerunner is already within the veil. In Eph. 4:25-32, &c., on the other hand, it is our condition or state that is looked at. It is the same in Col. 3:5-8, “Mortify, &c.” In both it supposes the standing of grace that we had put off the old man and put on the new. But our condition, while yet on the earth, with all these “members,” must be brought into consistency with our standing. So that to glorify God in our body cannot be without mortifying these members, all which are opposed to Him. It is only by faith in Christ in dependence and self-judgment that we are enabled to do this. We have the standing to begin with; and as we wait for Christ and His manifestation when we too shall be manifested with Him in glory, we meanwhile mortify our members which are on earth. These three go together. In Christ we are a new creation: all things are become new; yet we groan in a mortal body, and we long for our absolute change at Christ's coming. We buffet the body, but yet are perfected in Christ. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ Who knew no sin and was made sin for us! What wonders of grace and truth!

Now to glorify God in our body, we must bring it into subjection to Him. Thus Paul felt the need of keeping his body under. Failure there is, and Christ on high is Advocate and Priest for us. But “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;” it is part (and what a blessed part!) of our standing. And we are in Him. As He is, so are we in this world—the unchanging portion of at His own. Therefore through Him let us present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What a wondrous salvation we have!

A living sacrifice is in contrast with those slain on Jewish altars. We are to be as those that presented, not an act now and then but, the whole life: so the apostle beseeches us for our practice. And where sin does not reign, where the members are mortified, holiness of obedience, in separation from man's pride or indifference and the world's evil, is acceptable, which the things of the first covenant were not (Heb. 8:8, 13).

The spirit of such a sacrifice did Abraham offer when he preferred the obedience of faith to the promise which he, as it were, surrendered to the keeping of the faithful God. So Job, when he, spite of a body covered with sore boils, yielded himself to God, and confessed himself vile. So

Paul, when he rejoiced in his infirmities (not sins), and gloried in the thorn for which he had three times previously prayed that it “might be removed: the grace and strength of Christ were exalted and rested on him.

To glorify God in our body is not so much activity in service as subjection to His will. This may mean to suffer the utter subversion of our plans and the deprivation of all; but in every case it is heart-obedience to God. That we are enabled thus to glorify God unfolds the greatness of our redemption and the price paid. How this teaches us to bear our light momentary affliction, and to weigh everything connected with the body in the light of grace and truth! If the body is carefully adorned with the things of this world, if we indulge the desires of the flesh or the mind, how can we glorify God thus? Let us ever remember that we are bought with a price. “Wherefore glorify God in your body.” R. B.

Chapter 100

God's Ways and Testimony

Jer. 2

THERE are two distinct points in the ways and testimony of God as regards us. First, faith is the condition of soul in us which, as it is in exercise or otherwise, may either hinder or favor the enjoyment, which habitually the testimony of the word is to give to us. Then in presenting the objects of faith to our souls—the Father's love, the Son's work—the word of God applies itself to the conscience and heart; for where the conscience is not in exercise, the heart will not be, and all will be hollow. When the affections are dull, then self comes in, and I attach these holy affections to myself; for when I am thinking about my affections, I am thinking about myself. But when the conscience is in exercise, we are thinking of the object presented: otherwise the heart is turned in upon self, the Lord is forgotten, and weakness ensues; consequently we sink into a feeble state. But then the word of God presenting the object of faith applies itself to the conscience, bringing that into exercise; and thus the heart is brought back to God.

There can be no true love to Christ while there is the sense of wrong done; for I cannot love a person I have wronged. What is needed then is the consciousness of the wrong done: “I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” When the conscience is aroused, and the heart is brought into play, we rest in the presence of God. The Spirit of God may humble us on account of what we have done, but when conscience is in play, it brings out our whole condition before God. It is not the law coming in again, but God presenting Himself. Thus there will be right affections, and the conscience will be in exercise. Self-confidence and self-exaltation in every form are always the effects of an unexercised conscience. Only put a man in the Lord's presence, and that will keep him lowly, and in a spiritual state of discernment. But there is nothing out of which we so easily get as the consciousness of the presence of God. So also in our prayers. You may often be sensible that you go on praying after you have lost the consciousness that you are speaking to God: still the soul goes on expressing itself; so that the manner will be all wrong, though the words might be right.

Though all this be true, whenever the Lord recalls a soul, He recalls it to His own presence. He will act on the conscience; He will speak plainly to us. Why? Because He is conscious of the relationship which ought to have produced the conduct befitting the relationship which we have forgotten. “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him.” When the Lord recalls a soul to Himself, He may reproach it with having forgotten the relationship in which it stood to God, and God to it; but He cannot reproach it as not having known that relationship. The power of every rebuke is founded on the relationship, and God remembering the relationship acts on the ground of it with all the affections belonging thereto. Thus every rebuke comes to us as the expression of the most wonderful tenderness; and the more deeply we learn that there is no failure in God's affection, the more deeply we lament our short-coming and failure in that relationship which never fails.

God said to Jeremiah, “Go, say in the ears of Jerusalem;” but, alas! Israel would not hear. Now this was most disastrous; but God remembers His relationship to them, and says, in Hos. 2:16, “In that day thou shalt call me Ishi” (that is, my husband), “and shalt no more call me Baali” (that is, my Lord). Evil as their state was, He recalls with all its force and energy the remembrance of their relationship— “Go, cry in the ears of Jerusalem.” It is not, “He that hath an ear, let him hear,” but God goes and speaks in their ears. Oh that He may speak in our ears! When God spake comfortably to Jerusalem, then He spake to the heart, and that was after chastening; but here He is at another work, speaking in the ears of Jerusalem that they might hear what God had to say to them. He—the true Servant—could say “The Lord God hath opened mine ear” to hear what God had to say to Him, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back; but Israel “had forsaken him days without number.” They had done a terrible thing, such as no other nation had done. “Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which cloth not profit.” And again, “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” And now that God is sending a message after them, does He say, “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember thy sins”? No, but “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” He is recalling what Israel was to God Himself. I remember the outgoings of thy heart towards Me; “I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.”

Now what a thing it was for God to say to Israel, I have not forgotten what you were to me in the days of thy youth, when the heart first turned to me. In all this we have the same principle as “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations,” when they were quarreling which should be the greatest. And so Israel were always murmuring, thinking their leeks and cucumbers better than God; but God remembers the principles on which Israel acted— “When thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” They got much of this world's goods in Canaan by following God; they got cities that they had not built, wells that they had not digged, palm-trees that they had not planted, and the like. All these things were the consequences of following God; but He does not mention these. But “thou wentest after me in the wilderness, which was a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt.” Thou wentest after me in the wilderness, where there was nothing to set your affections on but myself; I myself was the whole and sole object of your affections. And this it was that God remembered. He overlooks all failure. The condition which God notices is that He Himself was everything to them; and this is what characterizes a heart when first converted to God—the Lord is everything to it. What is the world to that heart? Dross and dung. At that time cares and pleasures are alike forgotten, everything counted as nothing, except what is found in God Himself. The praises of Israel were freely given, “I will prepare him an habitation;” “my father's God, I will exalt him,” because they had found Him who was everything to them, and the world and all it had to give a mere nothing.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture, and see the desperately bad state which the heart of Israel had got into, remembering they are but types of us. They were dissatisfied, and cried, “Would to God we had died in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full.” And again, “Wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? It is

no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.". In the wilderness there is not a thing to see, nor a thing to look at; which is what Israel wanted. God says, “I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.” They felt their own importance, and forgot the Lord; they had the blessing, and did not want the Lord of the blessing. (Vers. 6-8).

And so the church of God. We bring in self, which is but a broken cistern, and depart from Him, who is the living fountain and power of blessing, forgetting that “a Syrian ready to perish was my father.” Consequently there is moral weakness, and Satan gets power. A believer cannot get back into the world; a mere professor may, and enjoy it; but a Christian cannot. An Israelite could not get back through the Red Sea again. You cannot think with satisfaction to your own souls of yourselves and the Lord together. The Lord's presence in the soul will bring self into utter ruin and nothingness. We have only to let the Lord have His place in our souls, and that will put us into our place. If I am walking through the world, shall I find it a wilderness? To be sure I shall; but then I shall not be thinking about the wilderness if the Lord is my joy and my strength. Are your hearts saying, This is a land we cannot see? If so, what does that prove? Why, that you are looking for something to see; and this is the thought you find in your hearts, “It is a land not sown,” although you may be ashamed to own it. But God remembered Israel when they thought it worth while to follow God for His own sake.

We feel bound to say in the faith of Christ, it is a happy thing to be a Christian; but when we are alone, do not our hearts say, “It is a land not sown”? If it be so with you, do not rest until the Lord Himself alone satisfies your soul; for you should delight yourself in Him. Lot saw a well-watered plain and a city, and then dwelt in it on the earth, and consequently was in the midst of judgment; while Abraham sought a city out of sight, and he enjoyed the blessing and comfort of God being with him, go where he might. When the soul is down, like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of shoals and sandbanks; but when the tide is up, sandbanks are nothing, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ, it will go on in peace, independently of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow-saints. We are called to walk together through the world, and a mere natural fitness will not do for that. No, we can only go on so far as Christ fills the soul; and thus going on in the tide of divine goodness, forgetting everything else, we can be together happily, occupied with Christ, and not with each other.

But notwithstanding what Israel was, still God does not forget Israel. And why? Because He remembers her affection in the day of her espousals, “when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” The soul, when occupied with God alone, is holiness to the Lord. God says to Israel, “If thou wilt return, return unto me.” It is of no use to attempt to set the soul right except it be set right with God. Israel was “holiness to the Lord.” Now holiness is not innocence. God is not what we call innocent, but holy. He perfectly separates between evil and good. So Christ Himself when on earth was separated unto God; and when about to depart out of it He says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;” for the meaning of the word “sanctify” in this place is separation to God. So it is with the church of God. She is separated from the world unto God, taken out of creation for Himself, the first-fruits of His increase. There will be a harvest of blessing when Israel and the nations are brought into blessing; but the church is the first-fruits of God's increase. God remembers this, though the church may have forgotten it; but if

we know what it is to get back into the affections of God, we must enjoy the love that fails not; for God says, “I remember.” The soul then apprehends what the church of God is in the affections of God, and what it is down here. Christ was the corn broken and bruised, and afterward the wave-sheaf before God. So the church is to be in a low and oppressed state, and afterward to be exalted to where Christ is. God will have the whole harvest, but the first-fruits of His increase is that which occupies His affections.

“What iniquity have your fathers found in me?” Have I failed towards you in goodness? What is the matter now? Is the Lord changed? Is He worth less now than when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness? No; but we have got far from Him, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain. We have enjoyed His blessing, and have got fat and kicked, and consequently have fallen down into the weakness and wretchedness of our own hearts. When did the Lord bring up His people? When the very circumstances through which, and into which, He brought them was the proof that the Lord was bringing them there; for He brought them into a land of deserts and pits where they had no need to lean on “a broken reed, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it,” because they leaned on God Himself. “Neither did thy raiment wax old upon thee, nor thy foot swell, these forty years.” And why? Because “the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him.” So was it with Gideon (Judg. 6). He remembered what God had been to Israel in the day of their espousals, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” And the Lord looked upon him, and said, “Go in this thy might.” Thus we see that Gideon's remembrance of what God was to Israel in the day of their espousals was the secret of his strength. In Gideon was a soul near enough to God to say, “Where is the Lord?” and then what a burden is taken off the heart. Only let us place ourselves before the Lord, and see if He does not come in, remembering the day of espousals.

If I am thinking of the cucumbers of Egypt, the wilderness will not suit me; but if I am thinking of the Lord, I shall have no thought at all whether I am in the wilderness or not. The affections of my soul will be going on with God's affections for me; for He ever remembers “the love of thine espousals” when He first revealed Himself to our souls. It is true we may see chastening, but God never forgets the work of grace in our souls. He never forgets “the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness, in a land not sown.” And now thou art “holiness to the Lord;” and though God will have His joy in the harvest of the earth, yet thou art the first-fruits of His increase. J. N. D.

Chapter 101

The Healing of the Blind in the House

Matthew 9:27-31

Healing of the blind was a marked work of the divine Messiah. So Isaiah predicted in his earlier announcement (chap. 35:5): “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened"; nor was it otherwise in his yet more personal anticipation later (chap. 42:7; 61:1). So in the synagogue of Nazareth the Messiah applied the last scripture to His own service. “To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Without doubt we are justified in giving the largest scope to the language employed; but the figurative in no way supersedes the literal.

Nor was there any act more characteristic of Messiah than giving the blind to see; as the testimony to His Sonship was rendered by His raising dead men (Rom. 1:4), most of all in raising Himself from the grave, after the Jews crucified and slew Him by hand of lawless men. Many a wonder had been wrought in days of old by Moses and Joshua, by Elijah and Elisha, and others; but never do we read of eyes given to a single blind man before His advent; so that the Jews justly regarded it as a special sign of the Anointed of Jehovah.

The present miracle is also peculiar to the first Gospel. There are two blind men specified: a fact which made it very suitable to him who was inspired to testify of Jehovah-Messiah to the circumcision. For it was a well-established maxim of the law for them to look for at least two witnesses. Hence the mention of the two demoniacs in Matthew's account of the last fact in chap. 8; whereas for Mark and Luke it sufficed to dwell on the more striking of the two (Mark 5, Luke 8). A similar principle applies also to the two blind whom Matthew shows healed at Jericho (chap. 20:29-34: compare Mark 10 and Luke 18).

As the Lord then was quitting the scene of raising up the Jewish ruler's daughter, two blind men followed him, crying aloud and saying, Have mercy on us, Son of David. Even Mark and Luke record the like appeal in their account of a similar miracle at the close. In all cases it strikingly attests that He was owned as the Messiah, pre-eminently that Son of David Who alone could avail those so afflicted. Thus they could with assurance appeal to Him on the ground of plain and positive warrant of scripture— “Have mercy on us, Son of David.”

Even the Jewish leper of chap. 8 made no such appeal; still less the centurion, as recorded next. Nor do we find it in the general account of the healed, any more than the particular case of Peter's mother-in-law in the same chapter. The call of those imperiled in the boat during the tempest on the lake was, “Lord, save us: we perish.” When the demoniacs cried out, it was “What have we to do with thee, Son of God? It was not the paralytic that cried to the Lord (chap. 9), but Jesus (seeing their faith) said to him, Child, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. Even Jairus did not so address Him on Whom he counted for his dying daughter; nor of course did the woman who only approached behind and touched the fringe of His garment.

On the other hand in Matt. 15:22-28 we have the converse, so full of instruction in the ways of God. The Canaanitish woman, real as her faith was, failed to receive the answer she sought or

indeed any at all because at first she called amiss. The grace of the Son of David to the distressed of His beloved people is a clear and blessed encouragement for a Jew; but what had a Canaanite to expect from Him? When He brings in the power of His kingdom by-and-by, it will not be as it was in the day of His humiliation, and as it had been ever since the entrance of Abram. “The Canaanite was then in the land” (Gen. 12:6); “the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land” (Gen. 13:7). Even Judah in the days of Joshua failed to purge his portion of that accursed race: those of the hill country were driven out, but not those of the valley. And so it was for others yet less. But the sad issue to their ruin was that the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites,” etc. (Judges 3:5).

When the kingdom by-and-by is in Messiah's hand, “there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts” (Zech. 14:21). Was it then hopeless for the woman of Canaan? By no means; but He answered her not a word, when she cried substantially as the blind men, On that ground judgment for the Canaanite is predicted rather than mercy; and the disciples had nothing better to say than “Send her away, for she crieth out after us.” This the gracious Lord did answer with a word that cheered her tried spirit. “I was not sent (said He) but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Therefore there was an answer to the blind who so cried out, and none for her as yet; for she was not only a Gentile but of a race specially cursed (Gen. 9:25). She drops accordingly a claim of relationship valid for the most wretched of Israel, but wholly void for her, and paid homage, saying, Lord, help me. Then He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The truth fully burst on her, and she submitted to it. Her faith, already real, threw off its hindrance and became great. She abandons claim, for she had none; she confesses sovereign grace, and receives the blessing at once. She said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then the Lord answered her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

This helps to give the emphasis of the miracle in our chapter. And when the Lord came into the house, the blind came to Him, and He said, Believe ye that I am able to do this? and they say in reply, Yea, Lord, So it was in that day, and so it will be for the people by-and-by. Jehovah will bring the blind with a deeper blindness by a way that they know not. In paths that they know not will He lead them, when He will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. In the day that is coming the blind will look to Jehovah-Jesus that they may see; as we see a little earnest of it in the two who followed into the house, and confessed their faith. How graciously Messiah touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you! And their eyes were opened.

Has this no echo of comfort and blessing for you, my reader? Granted that you have eyes to see naturally; but your lack is of the deepest. You see not Jesus for your soul, nor believe in Him. If you too are Gentiles, the gospel is expressly sent to you to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. This is much more and better even than the boon the Messiah gave the blind Israelites. It is the fruit of yet richer grace and of His own unfathomable sufferings. It is what the love of God sends to the poorest of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ. How blessed to see the Son and to believe in Him, and have eternal redemption! May it be your portion now through faith I For this cause is it of faith that it may be according to grace. It is not your righteousness, for then it were of works; it is God's righteousness founded on the redemption of Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.

Chapter 102

Healing of the Nobleman's Son

The story of our Lord, in His dealings with the Samaritan woman and the town's people that followed, is all the more admirable, because there was no miracle. It was His power in bringing the conscience face to face with its sins before God and in revealing the Father in the Son, the Savior of the world by His Holy Spirit.

Here we are in presence of our Lord not only giving a blessed sign of gracious power when all else was hopeless, but correcting unbelief in a Jewish courtier, who came to Him in Cana and appealed for his child sick in Capernaum. “When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.” It was not surprising that those who only looked on Jesus as the Messiah should connect His power with His actual presence. But one of the great designs of our Gospel is to make known in Him God, the Son eternal, superior to all times and circumstances. When the nobleman then entreated him to go down and heal his son, the Lord laid bare the error that demanded a visible wonder; his condition was as yet little different from the Galileans of whom. we read in ver. 45, of whom it is written that they received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast. “Unless ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” This only increased the father's importunity, who says, “Sir, (or Lord,) come down ere my child die.” Then comes the word of power, “Go thy way: thy son liveth.” The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went his way. If the Lord did not go with him and lay His hand on the sick child, it was but for better and in a better way. His word was given and believed.

Thus was the blessing wrought, a two-fold one; to the father's soul, and to the son's body. The father believed the word of the Lord Jesus, the son had his fever cured, and the Lord was honored in both ways. And we readily see how different the case is from the Gentile centurion and his bondman about to die of the palsy. For there the Lord went with the Jewish elders, and was only stopped when not far from the house by friends whom the centurion sent to say, “Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof. Wherefore neither did I count myself worthy to come to thee. But say with a word, and my servant shall be healed.” Yes, his was faith of the simplest and strongest character, formed by the sense given him of the Lord's glory. The word of Jesus was ample: He had but to speak, and it was done. Yet some famous men in early days have confounded these two distinct cases.

But to a similar point of simple faith was the nobleman now brought as the centurion took himself. “Go: thy son liveth” was received in his heart from the lips of the Lord Jesus. And as he was going down, his bondmen met him, saying, Thy child liveth. He inquired therefore from them the hour when he got better; and their answer was, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. It was clear as light, the immediate unmistakable action of divine power, not beginning but complete. At that very hour, as the father knew, Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. Here at least it was no form, but a reality without danger of accrediting what might be untrue, and a fact which helps us to understand other statements of like kind.

But how is it with you, my reader? For this is written, like the rest of the Gospel, “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name.” It was blessed when sickness drove men to Jesus for healing; it is more blessed still when sinners feel their sins before God and look to the Savior for that deepest need. He is the Life as well as the Resurrection; and He gives life eternal now to every one that believes, as He will raise their bodies at the last day. Undoubtedly the Savior is now in heaven; but this assuredly detracts nothing from His power or His love. The same Jesus is now exalted on high and shall so come in like manner, as He was seen to go up into heaven. The more urgent is it that you should neither slight God's call to believe, nor forget the consequence of neglecting so great salvation, for either is to brave the judgment.

If you are looking for a sign or wonder in order to believe, profit by the Lord's gracious correction of one far more to be excused than you who have all the word of God, and the N. T. in particular which leaves no room for such an error. Is it not plain to you that all depends on the Lord Jesus, and that His grace is as great as His glory? When He does not answer a word, it is to draw out self-judgment in faith. When He does not comply with a request, it is to lead by His word into faith of the unseen.

Sometimes souls are discouraged by a harsh rebuke of their feebleness at first. Never does the Lord so deal with any. He corrects in order the more to bless and prove and strengthen. Here we perceive faith growing exceedingly, when the mixture of sight, so natural to a Jew and indeed to flesh and blood, was removed by His word. And next we are told that the whole house was brought under the blessing of living faith: a result by no means unexampled in the ways of the God of all grace, but rare enough at any time, yet, where or when ever it is, full of interest and encouragement to those who would learn of Him, and seek the honor that comes from the only God. With Him you must have to do. If you hear Christ's word and believe Him that sent Him, you receive life eternal and do not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life. If you refuse now, you cannot escape the voice of the Lord, when He summons men to stand before the great white throne, and be judged for works of which you may boast now—but oh! the shame and horror when the truth is out. May the goodness of God lead you without delay to repentance at the feet of Jesus.

Chapter 103

Heaven Opened

IN the New Testament we have four great occasions brought before us of the heavens being opened. At the baptism of Jesus, when the Father expressed His delight in the Blessed One; at the death of Stephen to whom was granted a sight of the glory of God, and of Jesus standing on the right hand of God; at the public appearing of the Lord Jesus as given in Rev. 19; and in a subsequent day when the angels of God shall be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. The last scripture (John 1:51) look s forward to the millennium.

At the baptism of Jesus we have a very lovely scene. He is there seen coming forth from the retirement of Nazareth to bear His public testimony for God among men. John had been sent of God to the nation to make ready a people prepared for Jehovah; he had called upon the nation to repent of its sins, and submit to his baptism. The result we know; the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and spurned John's baptism; while the publicans and sinners, those in whose heart God had wrought—the true remnant of their day—took their true place before God in the waters of Jordan, confessing their sins. This was surely a movement of faith, an act morally pleasing to God, fruit of His gracious operation within. And Jesus would, in grace, take His place with them in this; in His eyes they were the excellent of the earth in whom was all His delight (Psa. 16). Not that He had sins to confess—far be the thought—but the act was in His case a fulfillment of all righteousness, as He Himself said to the hesitating Baptist. He had taken His place in wondrous grace, as man below to be obedient in all things, and He would be with the remnant therefore—perfect spotless One though He was—in this movement of their souls toward God. Luke tells us He came up “praying.” I may say in passing that such a notice of the Blessed One is quite in keeping with the character of the third Gospel, which presents Him to us as Son of Man (see especially Luke 6:12; 9:29; 11:1; 22:44).

And coming up thus from the water, “the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” What a sight and what a thought for our hearts! The very heavens opened unto a Man below, and the Father was heard expressing the infinite delight of His heart in Him! To whom had the heavens been opened in such a manner before? To whom had the Father rendered such a testimony?

Constantly in scripture does God express pleasure in certain of His saints (witness Enoch, who “pleased God,” and David, described by Jehovah as “a man after mine own heart”); but never had God seen perfection till the Son stooped to walk below. There the Father saw what gave His heart perfect delight, satisfaction, and rest—dependence perfectly displayed, obedience begun, which would not stop short of even the cross of Calvary. One is reminded of the angel's utterance on the wondrous night of the incarnation: “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men” (Luke 2:14, Darby's Translation). These are some of the results of the coming into the world of that wondrous Babe: God has been and shall yet be glorified, peace shall yet obtain upon the earth (delayed because of Christ's rejection, Matt. 10:34), and God's pleasure in men, which has

been marred by the entrance of sin shall be restored. But in Jesus on earth God beheld One in Whom He could find pleasure—anticipative pleasure, one may say— “I am well pleased.” What an answer to any one who would lower the glory of the Blessed One by insinuating a life of sin-bearing! Sin-bearing involves the displeasure of God, as is solemnly seen at the cross. What a change for the blessed Jesus there! No opened heavens, no Father's voice, but three hours of (to us) impenetrable darkness and abandonment of God. He cried in the day-time but was not heard, in the night season and was not silent. He was alone, forsaken, because bearing sin. But sin-bearing is not seen at Jordan, nor anywhere else during His path till the cross was reached; there and there alone had He to do with sin; there He suffered for our sins.

But not only do we see the Father's delight in Him shown out on the occasion we are considering, but there was the anointing with the Holy Ghost. The meat-offering of old was mingled with oil, and the unleavened cake was anointed with oil when made (Lev. 2): type of Christ begotten by the power of the Spirit, and anointed as man on earth by the Spirit, as here. Nor needed He to wait until the accomplishment of His sacrifice, before the Spirit could be conferred upon Him. He was owned as Son, and the Spirit descended because of the perfection of His Person, and of the Divine pleasure in Him. Far otherwise is it with ourselves: we are brought through grace into the place of sons, we are owned as such, and the Spirit has been given as the seal of the relationship (Gal. 4); but the ground is the accomplished work of Christ. The gift of the Spirit to the saints is the expression of divine delight in Christ and His work.

The scene at the stoning of Stephen is wholly different. We there see one who had borne a faithful testimony for Christ, sharing his Master's rejection and sufferings, drinking of His cup. The Lord had forewarned His disciples of such treatment. “They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me” (John 16:2, 3). But Stephen was wonderfully sustained: his very face shone as an angel's; and “he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” Here again is heaven opened, but not upon Jesus as Man on earth, but to a saint, who beholds his Lord in the place of glory on high. And one cannot but remark here the contrast between Stephen's death, and the death of the Lord. To Christ whilst bearing sins upon the tree the heavens were as iron and brass; in the hour of His deepest woe He was forsaken, He stood alone. But heaven is open now in virtue of His blood, and His martyr could look above and behold Jesus, the object of his heart, at the right hand of God. Thus was he “strengthened with all might, according to the power of His glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness” (Col. 1:11).

To us also heaven is open, and faith can say, “we see Jesus” (Heb. 2:9). Of old God dwelt in the midst of His people in the sanctuary, but the veil was there, and there was no way of approach to God. Now, the veil is rent; heaven—not the sanctuary on earth—is open. The way into the holiest of all is made manifest. The Epistle to the Hebrews throughout maintains this, for our place is shown as worshippers in the presence of God, in “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8:2). And not only is heaven opened to us as worshippers, but 2 Cor. 3 presents to us a rather different thought. In the context the apostle contrasts the glory of the law, as seen in the face of Moses, with the glory of God, which is now seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and concludes by saying, “But We all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed

into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." Wondrous privilege! To gaze by faith upon Him there in the glory! Thus do we become like Him, we are changed into the same image. Is there a truer way of becoming practically heavenly? Mere acquaintance with the doctrine of our heavenly position will not have this transforming effect; but occupation of heart with the heavenly Man cannot fail to influence the soul, and to detach us from all here. Christianity is in this respect altogether higher than law; it presents to us (not a legal code, but) a blessed Person, Whom we are set to learn.

Did Stephen look up "filled with the Holy Ghost"? It is one great feature of Christianity that the Spirit of God is here, the gift of the Father to all who believe in the Son. There is a difference however between being "sealed" with the Spirit, and being "filled" with the Spirit, which surely is to allow the divine In-dweller His own blessed way with us, producing in us precious fruit to the glory of God. To this we are exhorted.

The third occasion of the opened heavens is deeply solemn. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." It is the day when God will bring His First-Begotten into the world once more to establish His throne and His kingdom, and to deal with men for their sins, and rejection of His grace. The world has not seen Jesus since the day of Calvary (His disciples alone saw Him during the forty days, Acts 1:3); but it will see Him yet again. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7). He is called Faithful and True, and this in connection with judgment; for not a word spoken concerning judgment for the ungodly will fall to the ground: all will be solemnly accomplished. He judges and makes war in righteousness; men will have no ground for complaint on that score, but what will righteousness, unmingled with mercy, mean for them? He is "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood "; not the blood of atonement, but of foes, as declared by the prophet in Isa. 63:3. "His name is called the Word of God," for He is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of men's hearts. He also bears another name on His vesture and thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords." The time will then have arrived for the world-kingdom to become our Lord's and His Christ's; and He shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

And, manifested in all this glory, He has companions; for the heavenly armies follow Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen and clean. Here we have the heavenly saints in whom He will be glorified and admired, the objects of His grace and the sharers of His throne. Angels attend—so 2 Thess. 1:7 speaks. They are His ministers who do His pleasure, but they do not reign; "unto angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

But Christ shall reign "till He hath put all enemies under His feet." Then will heaven and earth be morally united—no longer severed as now. The angels of God shall be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of Man (John 1:51). When the Psalmist thought of the day when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory, he said, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" (Psa. 72:20). What had he left to ask for?

W. W. F.

Hebrews 11:1-3

The close of Hebrews 10 leads naturally into the rich unfolding of the power of faith which follows an order truly remarkable. It was the more in season here, as there had been defection; through the absence of it; and its value for God's pleasure as well as man's salvation is evident and undeniable, as had just been pointed out. The Jew was peculiarly exposed to overlook its virtue, surrounded as he was by a ritual which appealed to his sight every day; and the Christian Jew had to watch against his old habit, and needed to learn that the great distinctive principle of blessing now as of old lies in faith. Did he value antiquity? Faith distinguished all whom God honored from first to last; not the law but faith. “Thy faith hath saved thee,” said the Lord; whilst the law is but a ministration of death and condemnation.

Undoubtedly the source of all blessing for sinful man is in the grace of God working by His Son and in the Holy Spirit; as this Epistle shows the ground of it all to be in the glorious person of Jesus our Lord and in His efficacious work of redemption. Still it is by faith that we receive the blessing; and faith is never without repentance to God as its accompaniment, never without love as its fruit, with works and ways suitable and inseparable, in the Husbandman's care. It is of faith that we have been justified; it is by faith that we have had and have access into this grace, the true grace of God, wherein we stand; it is through faith that we are all sons of God, as through faith we received the promise of the Spirit; by grace have we been saved through faith; as the believer only has eternal life in the Son of God, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. This is far from all that scripture attaches to faith; but how immense is the blessedness even here intimated “Now faith is substance (or, confidence) of hoped-for things, conviction of matters not seen. For in virtue of this the elders were testified of. By faith we apprehend that the worlds have been framed by God's word, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things that appear” (Heb. 11:1-3).

Thus is laid down, what every intelligent believer knows to be true experimentally, that faith realizes things hoped for, a demonstration to the soul of matters not seen. It is no new principle, though it shines, as all that is morally noble, in Christianity. All of whom the world was not worthy, all who honored God and looked above the present and the visible, were marked by it. The O.T as the New is full of its blessing, and the lack of it opens the door to all ruin. As it inspires with present confidence in the future we hope for, so it affords demonstration of matters not seen: we look at the things not seen and eternal.

Some have made a difficulty for themselves by the mistaken assumption that we have here a definition of faith. This is clearly not the object, but rather a description of its power and range. Faith scripturally in itself is simply believing God, accepting His word because He says it; and now, under the gospel because of its all-importance, receiving the testimony of God which He has testified about His Son (1 John 5:9), believing (not exactly “on,” but) Him that sent the Son (John 5:24); or, as in John 3:32 it is expressed, he that receives His testimony sets to his seal that God is true; while he that does not believe God has the awful guilt of making Him a liar (1 John 5:10).

Before presenting the bright array of believers, the great truth of creation is set out as a question for faith. And so it truly is. Among the heathen all was as confused as the chaos they generally made co-eternal with deity. Yet the fact was once known, but got corrupted and lost, notwithstanding the testimony to God's invisible power and divinity in the things that were made. It might seem an easy inference that there must be an Almighty Maker; yet who drew it plainly?

Scripture reveals it simply, suitably, and solemnly; and faith received it of old as now. And it becomes all the more needful to heed it, when the course of this evil age runs strongly to the darkness of heathen thought, and men find their Bible in science which knows not a single truth of God, being too self-satisfied to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word. Yet even the proudest and most hostile of these modern philosophers is constrained to confess, that they can only investigate phenomena, and are absolutely ignorant of the originating power which gave birth to them. Only the mind cannot but own that such there must have been. It is an “unknown God” still, though they are hardly as candid as the Athenians in erecting an altar, and inscribing their ignorance. Yet there is no excuse now, where not only the scripture is read, but the Son of God come has given the amplest proof of the truth.

The inspired statement will reward the closest scrutiny. By faith we apprehend that the worlds have been framed by God's word, and that what is seen hath not been originated out of things apparent. This leaves ample room for whatever changes can be adequately shown to have followed the original creation of the earth; while it also maintains that what is seen did not derive its being from what appears. That all was made out of nothing is what no Christian would say; but that, where nothing existed, God created all things out of His own will and word is just the truth, alike simple and profound; and all other hypotheses are as unwise as they are uncalled for and untrue.

It is natural enough that science should boast of what it has discovered and can teach of material phenomena, the laws which govern them, and the results that flow from them. Nor is science to be blamed, because from its nature it cannot rise to moral truth, still less to the knowledge of God. Only those who speak for it are out of court when they venture to deny that anything higher and far more momentous can be learned. They are wholly wrong and illogical even, when they affirm that there is nothing to be known beyond the blank wall where all science necessarily stops, unable to lead or go farther. The most thorough-going, the grossest, of materialists must and does confess that science can give no account of the originating cause of all, or, as they say, “the origin of the permanent causes themselves." Science, says another of these sages, “is wholly powerless to penetrate the mystery which lies behind.” But if science cannot discover, God can reveal. And the Bible begins with His revelation in words simple, clear, and worthy of Him. God would not have His people ignorant of the origin of all things through His power and goodness and wisdom, having called them into relationship with Himself, unworthy as they are till the only Worthy One bring them to Himself in mercy and truth, then to shine with His light.

Meanwhile, during Israel's unbelief, grace has provided “some better thing” in Christianity with its heavenly association, wherein we who now believe, while Christ is on high, have our blessed portion.

We may just notice how readily even commentators stray, who speak without entire subjection to the words of scripture. Thus one who objects justly to those who trust not only the ascertained

facts of geology, but the changing and uncertain hypotheses of its teachers, cites “In six days God created” &c. But this is erroneous. The Bible never speaks so. See Ex. 20:11: “For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea,” &c. This is the express testimony of the Holy Ghost. The creation proper (Gen. 1:1) was before the six days when particular objects were no doubt created for the Adamic earth. Again, others err by confounding the original creation with the empty and confused state into which (not the heavens, but) the earth is shown us in Gen. 1:2; where the idiom as other scripture (Isa. 45:18), rejects the assumption of God's originally creating a chaos: an idea natural to paganism. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The break-up described in Gen. 1:2 was a subsequent state, in contrast with the original order, and with the final one for man.

Hebrews 11:4-7

None should be surprised that God's creating should be an object of faith. For as creation brings in the activity of God, so the denial of it, which is the danger of modern speculation, excludes God, and exposes souls to the debasing delusion of materialism. But creation is not all, though it supposes God and, as we are here told, the word of God, without which all is uncertain reasoning. By faith we understand not only that God created the world, but that the worlds have been framed by the word of God. His word therefore reveals the power of that word. This is much, but not all, for man is fallen, a sinner departed from God. He needs a Saviour, and a Saviour by sacrifice, that he may be brought to God. This accordingly is the next truth presented to us.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness to (over) his gifts, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh” (Heb. 4:4).

No need is deeper than this. Abel felt the truth of it by faith, having weighed the testimony of God to a coming Saviour as well as the solemn effect that His parents, our parents, having rebelled against God, had brought in for themselves and their posterity. There is no way out of sin to God, except through sacrifice. But the only sacrifice that could efficaciously deal with sin before God was that of Christ. For Him therefore all saints waited in faith and had witness borne to them. Meanwhile Abel offered by faith a sacrifice in witness of death for sin, the confession of his own guilt, the confession of the grace of God that would righteously deliver from guilt.

Cain had no sense of this an unrepentant, unbelieving, unconverted man, who brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. “Of the fruit of the ground!” What could this avail for sinful man? “Cursed is the ground for thy sake” had the LORD God said; thence forward it should bring forth to man thorns and thistles, but no salvation. Of the ground was man taken, for dust he is, and unto dust he shall return. But the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit, the Second man is of heaven; He only could avail for fallen man. Alas! Cain looked not to Him but to himself, as natural men do and perish. Believing Abel looked for the woman's Seed to bruise the serpent's head, and “by faith offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous.”

There is no righteousness without repentance and there is no repentance without faith. Abel had both; and, as he looked for the Saviour in due time, he meanwhile offered his sacrifice by faith. Thereby the best confessed himself a sinner; therein God saw the witness of the sacrifice in Christ, and bore witness to his gifts. It was a serious thing for the soul of Abel, and God appreciated the gifts that attested the truth of both God and man: of man acknowledging his sin; of God about to send the Son of Man the Conqueror of Satan. “And through it he being dead yet speaketh,” and who that believes and heard his voice, has not profited by it? God Himself heard that voice from the ground, though he had died, and to every believer it never ceases to speak. Even if Adam had been after the fall a believer, his voice is not heard; he had brought in sin and death for all men. But Abel died for his faith, as the witness of righteousness in all the power of

sacrifice and of its meaning in the word of God; and by it, he though dead, yet speaks.

But as faith does not always assume the same shape, although it be the same divine principle working in man by the Spirit of God, so in the next witness we see the power of life, not the man of death. Both are true in Christ, in Whom alone they appear in their fullest character, but believers enjoy according to the measure of their faith. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God translated him; for before the translation he hath had witness borne to him, that he had pleased God; and without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder of those that seek Him out” (Heb. 11:5-6). To the same Messiah Enoch looked. There is no ground to suppose that he did not see death written on all, and sacrificial death the only way of deliverance, as Abel did. He knew as his predecessor that the woman's Seed must be bruised; but he knew also and felt assured that He would bruise the serpent's head. He saw life triumphant over him that had the power of death; in that faith he walked, and was well-pleasing to God. And his close on earth was accordingly, not by death like Abel, but by a power of life peculiar to himself. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him.”

We may therefore say that to him it was according to his faith, the witness to that truth a little before the deluge, as was Elijah long after it. Both lived in the times of great and growing wickedness; both were prophets of judgment that should not slumber; both were translated on high without death, in witness of the great translation which will be the portion of all the living saints that remain, when the Lord Himself shall descend for them from heaven, and they shall be caught up together with the dead saints raised to meet the Lord in the air. Enoch testifies of the change that awaits Christ's coming, the mystery shown us in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

The Holy Ghost comments on this well-pleasing walk of faith as concerning every believer, and possible only to faith—faith day by day in our walk with God, faith receiving that He is, and becomes a rewarder to those that search Him out.

The next case attests rather God's government of the world, than the heavenly grace displayed in Enoch. “By faith Noah, warned concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). Enoch had warned others, himself caught up to heaven, before the deluge came and took away all save those in the ark. Noah had an oracular warning about things not yet seen, was himself warned and moved with godly fear. So the godly Jewish remnant will be at the end of the age, who pass through that solemn time of divine judgment, and emerge to inherit the earth as well as righteousness according to faith, for lack of which the world was condemned. It would have been Noah's ruin, as it was theirs, not to have believed the prophecy till it was accomplished; and so it will be with the world again in a day that hastens.

Any Christian can see that the faith of Enoch is of an evidently elevating character, and aptly finds its answer in our awaiting the Son of God from heaven to take us there; as the godly Jewish remnant corresponds to Noah, looking by-and-by for deliverance through judgment. But we have surely to share his faith also in testifying of that day and the world's doom, a revealed element of separating power. However offensive to the false hopes of men, we are the more bound to proclaim the approaching judgment of the quick, as Noah did. The wise and prudent may mock;

but faith owes it to God to be outspoken, and love to man should add vigor to the warning, now in particular that we perceive children of God blinded as to the revealed future by unhallowed commerce with the world and the influence of its philosophic incredulity. For men willfully forget what God has already done in judging the race, and the Saviour's solemn warning that so it is to be again shortly when He is revealed suddenly and unexpectedly as Son of Man.

Chapter 106

Hebrews 11:8-10

Among the elders attested in virtue of faith Abraham has a most honorable place. Of him first is it written in the O. T. that he believed [in] Jehovah, and He counted it to him for righteousness; and in the N. T. he is called father of all that believe; in both, the “friend of God.”

Abraham gives occasion to a large and varied scope of faith, and stands at the head of those who illustrate its patience, rather than its energy which shines in Moses and those that follow. And this is the true moral order: first, waiting on God who had promised; secondly, overcoming difficulties and dangers in His power.

“By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as one not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise; for he awaited the city that hath the foundations, whose artificer and maker [is] God” (Heb. 11:8-10).

Abraham is the first sample of God's call as a public principle. Whatever the secret working of grace in all the saints heretofore, as in Abel, Enoch, Noah, no one had ever been called by God to quit his country, kindred, and even father's house, as Abraham was. It was the great and new fact of separation to God, and in a land which He would show, sustained by His promise of blessing to himself, yea of blessing in him to all the families of the earth. It was the more remarkable, because after the deluge He had instituted government to repress evil; and in the days of Peleg the earth was divided by the sons of Japheth, Ham, and Shem, after their families and tongues, in their lands and nations. In Abraham's time even Shem's progeny served other gods—an evil most portentous, and unknown before the deluge. Out of this was Abraham called of God. The rest of the world was left to itself. God called the man of His choice, not to attack or reform the evil, but to Himself and a land He would show him, with blessing assured. Separation to God on the call of His grace we see in the man, the family, the nation in which He will be magnified forever.

This, if believed, involved obedience at once; and so it is here written. The old relationships remained for all but Abraham, the sphere of divine providence, as of judgment at the end of the age.

But the separated man was to follow as God in grace led. He is the depositary of promise, and thus his faith was tested, not at the start only, but continuously. The land to be shown in due time was as yet unknown, so as to cast him on simple-hearted confidence in God. He went out, in subjection to God's promise, not knowing whither he went. God would show the next step when Abram took the first. He did not ask, Whither? He trusted God implicitly. Thus his faith was unmixed with calculations of self, resting solely but fully on His word Who loves and never deceives.

It was the wise and wonderful working by ways suited to His glory in a world departed from God into idolatry, where present ease, wealth, honor, power, are the bribes of the enemy for all misled

by him. Faith gives up all at God's word with not one thing gained for the moment, but the certainty of His guidance and ultimate blessing in the richest manner. Yet in the history of Genesis it was not faith unmixed: in Haran they halted till Terah died; then “they went forth into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.” The Canaanite too, the power of evil devoted to God's curse, was still in the land while Abraham moved about a stranger. Even after this, faith failed under pressure of famine, and Canaan was left for the plenty of Egypt, and the denial of his wife through fear, and the treasures of the world which followed. But God was faithful, judged the prince of the world, and brought back the pilgrim to the land he ought not to have left without His word Who had brought him there.

But Heb. 11:9 points out a fine and new trait of the Spirit's working. “By faith he sojourned [not in Egypt, but] in the land of promise, as in one not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise; for he awaited the city that hath the foundations, whose artificer and maker [is] God.” As faith led him into the land, unnamed and unknown to him, so when in it faith not only looked to have it another day from God, while he was content to be an alien without a foot of it as yet, but learned to await a brighter and better scene. For the city here described stands in contrast with all that is earthly or can be shaken and removed. It is the scene of heavenly glory. Compare Heb. 11:16, and Heb. 12:22. The word he heard gave him to look up; and believing he made no haste nor shall he be ashamed. Returned from Egypt he has his tent, as had Isaac and Jacob in due time. What did Egypt know of the tent? still less of the altar unto Jehovah. Even the called-out man had neither there: back in the land he has both. The spirit of the world is incompatible with either strangership or worship. And both helped him to draw, from His word Who is now before his soul, higher things than those he saw, more durable than the earth, and more worthy of Him Who devised and executed the universe but is above it all. “The God of glory,” as Stephen says of him, became far better known than at the first. Abraham walked by faith, not by sight. Men have not been wanting to say that the city which God here designs and forms is the earthly Jerusalem. It is impossible to conceive an idea less spiritual or more ruinous of the truth intended. The Epistle as a whole assiduously raises the eyes of those addressed to the city out of sight and on high, which Abraham saw by faith and was glad. Here we have no continuing city, whatever the Jews may receive by-and-by.

Chapter 107

Hebrews 11:11-12

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, at this point of setting before us the worthies of faith, to present the lesson taught by a woman who had learned from God. And it is the more instructive to us, as perhaps no one without the inspired comment would have drawn it from the inspired text. We are quick to discern failure. It needs great grace to appreciate a little grace. How slow to admonish the disorderly, to encourage the fainthearted, to support the weak, to be long-suffering to all!

“By faith also Sarah herself received power for deposition of seed even beyond seasonable age, since she counted him that promised faithful. Wherefore of one, and that become dead, were begotten even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the innumerable sand that is by the seashore” (Heb. 11:11-12).

Here is made good the fresh victory of faith. It surmounted utter weakness aggravated by lapse of time far beyond the due age; and on both sides, though the mother is named in the first place, and the father described so as to heighten the wonder of such an overflowing progeny from one as good as dead. If any looked at the parties concerned, if they considered themselves or each other, there were the amplest materials for doubt. And it is evident from the history in Genesis 17, that even Abraham at first had no confidence to boast in an accomplishment so unprecedented, and prayed at that very time that Ishmael might live before God.

Sarah, however, persisted longer in her unbelief; and when Jehovah at a subsequent day set a time for Sarah to have a son, she laughed incredulously and stood gravely reproved—the more because she denied it. But all this makes the grace of God so marked and cheering, as we find an entire oblivion of these early failures, and the later triumph alone here recorded. How undeniable the proof that He loves to speak well of His own! “Is anything too hard for Jehovah”? He overthrew all the thoughts and reasonings of her mind. Her doubts, her equivocations, deepened her self-judgment. His own word carried its own convincing light along with it; henceforward she “counted Him that promised faithful.” Abraham appears to have been peaceful in faith before the turning point came for his wife. But come it did; and God singles it out for the permanent blessing of souls, tried with doubts as she had long been, that they may rest as she at length did on the word of Him Who cannot lie.

And it may be added that, if ever a people passed through difficulties and dangers, distresses and destructions, calculated and planned to defeat the promise of God, even on the comparative narrow question of their numbers, it was the lot of the Jews. Who knows not the express design and cherished policy of nations great and small, near and far off, often reappearing in the ages, to cut them off from being a people? But even when the power of Rome took away their place, scattering them as captives over the earth, it could not absolutely destroy their nation. Long, long have they abode without king and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim. Yet scattered though they be after this anomalous sort, they are perhaps as numerous as ever. Not yet indeed have they returned into the land of their possession; they are in the city of refuge grace has provided for them, however little they think so or

understand His way with them. But the day hastens when, freed from their pollution of blood, they shall look on Him Whom they pierced, and be planted in the land that Jehovah gave their fathers, and their blessings be as countless as themselves in that day. For He is faithful that promised. “Thus saith Jehovah, If ye can break My covenant of the day and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David My servant, and the Levites that minister unto Me.”

That Abraham now has children spiritually in Christians is quite true, as the Epistle to the Galatians demonstrates; but that God has cut off His ancient people, Rom. 11 expressly and solemnly denies. His word on which we rest by faith is no less faithful for Israel by-and-by, whom He will surely restore and bless nationally, and through them all nations. Psa. 67 teaches it with a crowd of other scriptures, whatever Gentile casuists may argue to the contrary.

Hebrews 11:13-16

From the rising above difficulties insuperable save to God on Whose word they relied (Heb. 11:11-12), we have a summary in Heb. 11:13-16, which brings out the patriarchs refusing all temptation, and holding on the pilgrim way to death consistently with faith without the accomplishment of promise. This is the reason why the phraseology changes in the beginning of verse 13. It is no longer “in” faith, that is, in virtue of the power of faith, as in verse 2, where such a force is requisite, and not the mere notion of element or matter as in 1 Cor. 11:20 and very often. Nor further is it the proximate cause, the dynamic or instrumental dative as in verses 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, and again in 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, and 31. Still less does it distinguish faith as the means “through” which, as in 33. Here (ver. 13), if we say “in,” we mean according to faith, contrasted with sight or possession of the things promised. What indeed would be the sense of saying that “by” or “through” faith all these died? Nor is it “in” i.e. in virtue of faith, but in or according to faith as in Heb. 11:7, where the precisely same phrase occurs. The Vulgate gives “juxta fidem” here, “per fidem” in Heb. 11:7. We may see it again in Titus 1:1, and modified by “common” in 4, in both of which the Vulgate has “secundum.” Conformity with faith is here predicated of Abraham and those patriarchs that followed, not for its perseverance to the end, though this was the fact, but in being content to wait for God's fulfilling the promises in due time.

“In faith died these all, not having received the promises but from afar having seen and saluted [or, embraced] them, and confessed that they were ["are,” historical.] strangers and sojourners on the earth [or, land]. For they that say such things clearly show that they seek after a fatherland. And if indeed they were calling to mind whence they went out, they would have had opportunity to return; but now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:13-16).

The aim in these verses is to present vividly that common pilgrim path in which the patriarchs walked, even to their death, before the Spirit takes up characteristic workings of faith, even in Abraham, as well as in each of those that followed, as far as it bore on the subject in hand and the special help of those virtually addressed. How timely and needful it must have been we may gather, because they expand the truth already set forth briefly in Heb. 11:9-10.

Neither death, nor the unseen state that succeeds, was the accomplishment of the promises. On the contrary their death without receiving what was promised was in accordance with faith, and the witness of its single-eyed integrity. And the accomplishment of the promises supposed, what they could not as yet understand any more than anticipate, the second advent of the Lord even more than the first, although the first was the more solemn in itself, and the righteous basis of the blessings and glories which await the second. Hence the force of our Lord's word in John 8:56, “Abraham rejoiced that he should see My day; and he saw and was glad.” Neither technically nor substantially was the first mainly in view, as has been thought, but that day when God's word and oath shall be vindicated before a wondering and rejoicing world. The patristic dream, which some dream over again, that it refers to what Abraham beheld after death when our Lord was here, is as

unwarranted a perversion as the Socinian interpretation which Meyer justly stigmatizes (Abrah. exultaturus fuisset, si (■να!) vidisset diem meum; et si vidisset, omnino fuisset gavisurus). The design of our Lord and of that chapter is to prove Himself the Light and Word and Son and God Himself; and hence the contrast between Abraham who believed and his seed who did not. Whatever glimpse Abraham may have had of the truth to which the sacrifice on Moriah pointed, it was to the full accomplishment of the promise he looked, and saw by faith what still awaits fulfillment, the period of Christ's manifested glory, “My day.” In this hope brightly breaking through the clouds Abraham exulted, and he saw, as faith ever sees, and rejoiced. He, like the rest, saw the promises from afar off.

And so died these all in accordance with faith as they lived, looking forward to Messiah's day for making good the promises. The additions of “and were persuaded” in the Received Text has scanty support of no account, though Dr. J. Owen makes much of it in his Exposition, as have many others since. It really enfeebles the truth. It is a delicate question whether the next clause keeps up the figure of “greeting” as well as seeing from afar, or adds the differing side of truth in their warmth of taking their hope by faith. But the practical result is as weighty as undeniable: they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth.

The land even of promise was not their home, still less Chaldea which Abraham left at God's word. They looked higher—to heaven. Life and death alike bore witness that nowhere were they dwellers on earth. Even as they dwelt in tents as pilgrims, strangers in the land of promise as a land not their own, (yet theirs in hope that makes not ashamed), so they declared plainly throughout that they were in quest of a fatherland on high. Many an opportunity presented itself to return to their old country, had such been their mind. Though they knew not Jesus as we, nor had they as yet known redemption or the Holy Spirit as the Christian, yet their path may well engage us to sing more steadfastly the well-known lines, slightly modified,

We're bound for yonder land

Where Jesus sits supreme;

We leave the shore at His command,

Forsaking all for Him.

'Tweer easy, did we choose,

Again to reach the shore;

But this is what our souls refuse—

We'll never touch it more.

We look for Him Who is not here but risen. It is the world, and we are not of the world, as He is not, Who is coming to receive us to Himself and give us a mansion in the Father's house. For His rejection unto the death of the cross and ascension to heaven have made the earth to us His empty tomb. But we await the glory to be revealed when all the groaning creation shall follow suite of God's heirs, and our bodies changed into the likeness of Christ's body of glory shall herald the regeneration in the delivering power of the Redeemer.

No interpretation is farther from truth than that of Grotius and his followers who cannot rise above Judea and Jerusalem in a better state. Had this been all God saw in the life and death of these fathers, He would have been ashamed of them, to be called their God. But it is not so. They were men of faith, and looked above, not as a mere sentiment but in living power, as their detractors did not. And God is not the God of the dead but of the living. They live to Him, and shall appear in glory with Christ, when the promises too take effect fully in that day of reprisals. God prepared for them a city better than man's eye looks on.

Hebrews 11:17-19

Last of these instances, which set out the patience of faith, comes the crowning trial of Abraham; and worthily does it close the list.

By faith Abraham, being tried, (hath) offered up Isaac, and he that accepted to himself the promises was offering up his only-begotten son, as to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, having counted that even from the dead God [is] able to raise; whence also in a figure (parable) he received him" (Heb. 11:17-19).

It was indeed putting the father of the faithful to the severest test conceivable, not only abandoning to the altar his only son and heir, and sacrificing him with his own hand, but jeopardizing to all appearance the promises both for his seed and in it blessing for all families of the earth. Alike natural affection, and religious hope when raised to high degree and wide extent by God's word in Isaac, seemed to reason by such a command arbitrarily, distressingly, and irrevocably lost. But we can see with James (James 3:2), that faith wrought with his works, and that by works faith was perfected. In earlier days in hope against hope he believed, to his becoming father of many nations, according to what had been spoken, So shall thy seed be (Rom. 4). Now when the child of the promise was given, how tremendous the wrench at the summons of God so true and gracious! Yet he hesitated through unbelief no more at the surrender, in its form to him most painful, than before at the promise in spite of its utter improbability. Such is faith, in which Abraham found strength, giving glory to God.

But there is somewhat more precious and specifically instructive in this instance reserved to the final place for Abraham after the general notice of the patriarchs. Nowhere in the O.T. do we find such absolute trust in God, as when the father was proved willing to sacrifice his only son, with whom were bound up all God's promises and his own expectations. To man death is the end of hope; to God it is but the occasion to exercise the power of resurrection; and in the assurance of this power on behalf of Isaac Abraham confided without a waver. He rose early in the morning, he took his beloved son, and "on the third day" he saw the place afar off. Arrived there he built the altar, laid the wood in order, bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, and took the knife to slay him, when the angel of Jehovah interposed at the last moment. The proof was complete. Faith then could go no farther. God was absolutely counted on to make good in resurrection the seed (and the promises in the seed) given up at His word to die. What fresh gain for Abraham, as for all who, doing His will, give up all that is dearest after the flesh, to receive all better than ever in resurrection! In a figure Abraham recovered his son as from among the dead.

God Himself beheld in that solemn transaction the figure of His own gift of the Only-begotten Son of God, Whom He spared not but delivered up for us all. For Him no substitute was or could be found, if our sins were to be judged and borne and blotted out. In the antitype, far more truly and fully than in the type, God did provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, in His Son the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. In His case the death was as real as the resurrection; and the efficacy of the Saviour's death such that, while the special promises remain for the

numerous seed another day fast approaching, in Him the one risen Seed blessing is come, as the apostle showed the Galatians (chap. 3.), to Gentiles as freely as to Jews. It was outside flesh and beyond law, it was founded on sacrifice and declared in resurrection, heavenly glory being its full and proper display.

See now Christ has made the truth plain in this case as in every other; for indeed He is the truth. He was the true grain of wheat, which, if it fell not into the ground and died, abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit. He came that believers might have life and might have it abundantly. He is the Good Shepherd and laid down His life for the sheep. And on this account the Father loved Him, because He laid down His life that He might take it again. No one took it from Him, but He laid it down of Himself. He, and He only from the glory of His person, had title as well as power to lay it down, as He alone had just the same authority to take it again. Hence He, the Son of man, was glorified in death, and God was glorified in Him. And as God was thus morally glorified in Him, God also glorified Him in Himself, and glorified Him immediately after redemption at His right hand, instead of only waiting for the day when He shall come again in power and glory for the world-kingdom. It was Christ cut off and having nothing (Dan. 9:26); but if He thus gave up His rights as Messiah and accomplished redemption in His death, God raised Him, not only to secure all that seemed lost but to better things, to be heir of all things in heaven and on earth, and to have heavenly joint-heirs, as well as His ancient people and all nations here below.

To the Hebrews addressed, what could be more telling and instructive? Was it hard to see a light that bedimmed the golden lamp of the temple, and all the splendor of the law? God has provided for us some better thing through Christ dead and risen and ascended.

Chapter 110

Hebrews 11:20-22

This portion is a kind of supplement to the setting forth of that patience of faith, which had its fullest illustration in Abraham. Yet each case has its own distinctive lesson for the disciple.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau [even] concerning things to come. By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph when ending life made mention of the departure of the sons of Israel, and gave charge concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:20-22).

The structure of the phrase in Heb. 11:20 draws attention to the difference in the objects of the blessings; for each of Isaac's sons has the article in the Greek. There might have been no article at all, in which case the mention would have been simply historical. There might have been but one article for both names the effect of which is to associate as a company at least for this occasion. The repetition has of course the opposite aim of marking their distinctiveness, even though both were blessed concerning things to come. And this is precisely what Gen. 27. clearly indicates, a chapter not a little humbling throughout. Of Esau nothing more need be said than to recall his profanity in selling his birth-right for a pottage of lentils (Gen. 25), and in his Hittite marriages which caused bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26). Yet Isaac loved him because of his venison, as Rebekah loved Jacob, as to whom Jehovah had given her a remarkable word before the twins were born (Gen. 25:23). This Isaac slighted at a critical moment (Gen. 27) when his faith failed at first, no less than his dim eyes. Rebekah was the instigator of Jacob to deceitful ways instead of both crying to the Lord Who would surely have heard Rebekah, corrected Isaac, and honored Jacob. Alas! sin wrought shame all round; but grace did not fail to secure the purpose of God, while chastising each in his moral government, for all were grievously to blame. Yet the full blessing of promise fell to Jacob in spite of his bad ways, and Esau got through his father's blessing more than he deserved. Isaac's trembling very exceedingly (Gen. 27:33) was on the discovery, not only of the guilt of Jacob, but of his own will against God Who had overruled him; whereon he says emphatically that he had blessed him, “yea, he shall be blessed.” Nature in Isaac sought to bless otherwise, and had seemed all but to prevail; “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” according to God.

What a contrast appears next! “By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped on the top of his staff” (Heb. 11:21). When young, he was a sorry saint, a supplanter of his brother, a deceiver of his father, an outcast from his too fond mother, cheated of Laban though cheated too, a wanderer to Mesopotamia, living a checkered and sorrowful life once more in Canaan, and a stranger in Egypt, loving his family, yet every one of them one way or another a source to him of grief and shame; his closing scenes were lit up with blessing, himself kept and blessed of God in spite of himself, that it might plainly be not of him that wills, any more than of him that runs, but of God that hath mercy. He is just a miniature of the people, of whom he was progenitor, and to whom he gave his own name of honor through grace. Yet he, the aged pilgrim, blesses the greatest king then on earth, but without any dispute the less is blessed of the

better; and when dying he blessed each of the sons of Joseph, though not at all so sundered as Jacob and Esau, yet with a distinction which at the moment displeased Joseph usually so quick to discern and interpret the mind of God. But Jacob's eyes, dim as they were and unable to see naturally, were illuminated then with light divine; so that Joseph's arrangement of his sons according to nature, with Ephraim toward Israel's left and Manasseh toward his right, embarrassed not the patriarch for a moment. For he laid his right hand upon Ephraim's head, albeit the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly or crossing them, for Manasseh was the first-born. It was of God to set Ephraim before Manasseh. But how worthy of grace that he who in his youth used such base means to gain the blessing he valued, should ere he died resist, in calm and believing earnestness, the importunity of his godly and honored son, their own father!

Nor was this all, he “worshipped upon the top of his staff,” clearly leaning on it in his weakness. It is remarkable that this act really preceded the blessing of his grandsons and is recorded in Gen. 47:31, as given in the Septuagint. No doubt both the Hebrew “bed” and the Sept. staff are alike true; and the Sept. gives “bed” in Gen. 48:2. He reminds Jehovah in Gen. 32. he first passed the Jordan, before he re-crossed it when he had become two companies. And what changes he had proved since that day, God ever chastening Jacob's ways and ever faithful to His purpose, even then blessing him afresh while He crippled his thigh. Now his eye of faith anticipated His glory Who would make all good when pilgrimage should yield to dwelling in the land; and he worshipped.

As Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons is put immediately with Isaac's blessing, so Joseph's faith follows immediately Jacob's worship (compare Gen. 47:29-31). “By faith Joseph when ending life made mention of the departure of the sons of Israel and gave charge concerning his bones.” Only it seemed good to the inspiring Spirit to record it here of Joseph; who also impressively charged his sons not to bury him with his fathers, as Jacob sought and had, but to embalm him as the pledge of their quitting Egypt in God's time for the land of promise. No splendor in Egypt dimmed the light of promise to his faith: the nearest to the throne of the world, he is a stranger, looks for resurrection, and anticipates Israel's restoration to the land according to the divine oath to their fathers.

Chapter 111

Hebrews 11:23-26

Now comes a fresh series in the display of the power of faith no matter what the enemies, the dangers, or the difficulties; Moses has a place marked in its power as Abraham had in its patience.

“By faith Moses, when born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw the child [was] beautiful; and they were not afraid of the edict of the king. By faith Moses, when grown up, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-usage with the people of God than to have temporary enjoyment of sin, deeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking away unto the recompense” (Heb. 11:23-26).

Patriotism and family affection could have little play in a strange land; but be as it might, all alike were defied and trampled under foot by the cruel mandate of Egypt's king; and neither feeling, though benumbed by oppression and slavery, could be lacking to a race called and guided and kept as the seed of Abraham had been in and out of Canaan. But a still deeper principle lay underneath the promises made to their fathers, which bound together with these grand family expectations a hope still disclosed by Isaiah, more ancient, mysterious, and wonderful. From the beginning of man's sinful and sad history the revelation of the Woman's Seed shone as a star from the darkened heavens, the sure pledge of the serpent's destruction one day; and the blessing not of their own line only, but of all families of the earth in one of their line, might be dormant but should not be forgotten, especially in a day of affliction. And had not the word of Jehovah come to the first and greatest of their fathers, telling him that his seed would be a sojourner in a land not theirs, in bondage and affliction four hundred years, but that the nation which oppressed them should be the object of divine judgment, after which the chosen people should emerge with great substance? Was not the fourth generation to see them return to Canaan?

Faith is ever by the word of God; and by what He had spoken of old, supplemented by the dying but inspired words of Jacob and Joseph, faith wrought in the parents of Moses. Nor was the extraordinary beauty of the child a vain sign to the mother's heart. Much more was felt by both than either their own natural instincts of parental love or the horror produced by the merciless command. They looked for the people's deliverer from Egypt ere long; they looked for the Deliverer from Satan they knew not when. Might not this very babe be the leader out of Egypt for Canaan in the fourth generation? Certain it is, they believed in God's intervention for His people and judgment of their enemies, and acted on their faith in hiding their child for three months. It was no slight matter to keep their child so long despite the unscrupulous monarch's edict, and apparently near his palace. When the mother could no longer hide her child, she took for him an ark of papyrus, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and laid it with the child therein among the flags of the river's brink, as we are told in Exodus 2. How God used Pharaoh's daughter, and little Miriam, and the mother for the child's care, is known from the same source. Stephen could add that he was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in his words and works. Never was there a case more strikingly providential.

But faith wrought in Moses himself, and in a way full of instruction to us, who need to stand on our guard in a world of appearance and unreality. “By faith Moses, when grown up, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter.” If providence brought him into her house, faith led him out. It was assuredly from no want of ability to estimate the advantage of his position. If the object, again, had been merely the relief of Israel by influence, or even their peaceful migration to Canaan by the skilful use of circumstances, no one could have a fairer opportunity or be better fitted to accomplish the event diplomatically or otherwise. But this would have redounded to the praise of Moses, not to the glory of God, as faith ever and rightly seeks. Accordingly Moses turned his back on all natural and worldly advantages, that God might act for His people and against His foe and theirs.

Here too we are briefly but distinctly shown how it was: “Choosing rather to share ill-usage with the people of God than to have temporary enjoyment of sin” (Heb. 11:25). It is, till the kingdom come, an undying claim, and even more imperious since Christ's rejection, and the intimate mutual relation of the members of His body. But Moses is declared here to have entered into its spirit by faith. He apprehended what the people of God are to God, and the responsibility that attaches to the privilege, as he himself was one of them. They were at the lowest ebb, debased, oppressed, hated, feared, and persecuted. He was the nearest man to royalty, and fitted in mind and manners and opportunity to enjoy all that was in and of the world in that day. But he read the sorrows and shame and sufferings of Israel in the light of God's choice, and the intentions of His goodness for a day of power and glory; and be saw the pleasures and pride and pomp in the same light which wrote death and judgment on all as alien from God and hostile to His nature, will, and plan. This is faith; and it was that of Moses, and facts made it clear in due time. For as he went out to his brethren and saw their burdens, he saw an Egyptian smiting one of them, and smote him, supposing that his brethren understood that God by his hand was giving them deliverance. In this he was premature, as fleshly zeal mingled with his faith; and he and they had to learn experimentally ere deliverance came. The day following taught him a serious lesson, when he would have reconciled two as they strove: vainly appealing to them as brethren when he that did his neighbor wrong, as usual, thrust Moses away as more intolerable still? Yet God made the repulsed peacemaker a ruler, judge, and deliverer.

Here however it is faith which is notified, as not only refusing the grandest associations of the world, but, harder still when the people of God were so unworthy in their own spirit and ways, choosing to share ill-usage with them rather than to have temporary enjoyment of sin, were it glossed over not only with position in a court quite unsought, and the duty of gratitude to a benefactress, but with prudent regard for the interests of his brethren, as well as the plea of providence rarely heard under trial, rarely missing when flesh and blood are flattered. When will saints learn that God tries the heart now, and often allows overtures most alluring to test not conscience only but the heart purified by faith? If therefore thine eye be single, said the Saviour, thy whole body shall be full of light; and no man can serve two masters. We have to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, “deeming” (as Moses did) “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:26). It is faith's reckoning which is sure of the end; and thus makes the narrow way pleasant as well as safe. “For he was looking away unto the recompense.”

But here it is not without importance to remark that the reward, even in glory, is never the motive which wins the heart to God, but His grace in Christ, when nothing but this could meet or save us.

It is only grace that puts us in our true place or gives God His place. Grace does both fully, and grace maintains the truth from first to last. But when grace has called us, looking away to the recompense comes in happily and mightily to encourage the heart in the path of trial. Otherwise it would be a balance of other worldliness set against this world, playing into thoughts of self at bottom, to the exclusion of Christ.

Hebrews 11:27-29

The faith which rises above difficulties, and is strong in the power of God in face of the apparently overwhelming and adverse resources of man, is next set out.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not afraid of the wrath of the king; for he persevered as seeing the Invisible” (Heb. 11:27).

It is the more striking and instructive, because we know at first how far it was otherwise. Then he consulted his eyes and “looked this way and that way; and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.” When an unjust and heartless Israelite gave him soon to learn that it was no secret, “Moses feared and said, Surely this thing is known” (Ex. 2:14). Such is the most heroic man, that no flesh may glory; but he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. So we see in one that seemed to be a pillar and was named of the Lord honorably in accordance: yet did Peter fail miserably wherein he was most confident, and grace, when natural force was gone, intervened to effect all he vainly hoped in himself and let him know long beforehand that so it would be for his cheer. How wholesome these lessons are! For the believer too readily assumes that he acts in faith when he is trusting his own thoughts and feelings, and so falls under rebuke. We need to look to and lean on the Lord habitually and in detail. So did Moses at length when he forsook Egypt, not afraid of the wrath of the king. The great secret is added; for he persevered as seeing the Invisible. It is something to realize that He sees me; but there is might in my seeing Him.

“By faith he [lit. hath] instituted the passover and the sprinkling of the blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry [land]; of which the Egyptians made trial and were swallowed up” (Heb. 11:28-29).

A previous difficulty is now faced, the most solemn which can arise between God and the creature; for it is about sin. And the creature when awakened owns its sins, and accepts now in faith His judgment of them as He reveals it; while unbelief palliates and puts off till destruction falls. This was the question raised for Israel in view of Jehovah smiting the firstborn throughout Egypt. Were not the sons of Israel obnoxious too? Could God slur over sin in their favor? Impossible: God cannot deny Himself. Sin must be judged adequately in His eyes. Thus only can He righteously secure from judgment, which otherwise must surprise the guilty to their inevitable ruin.

Therefore was the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood. Its standing value lay not in the mere rite, but in the truth it attested; for its most unique feature, the putting of the blood upon the door posts, was never repeated. What a witness to the one offering which avails forever, in the midst of a system of many and manifold sacrifices till He came Whose death vindicated and fulfilled it! Sin was only judged with absolute perfection in the Lamb of God; and herein was God glorified.

So here “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Jehovah was executing judgment (pledge on a small scale of what was to be complete by-and-by; and the seen blood of the lamb staid His hand. He that destroyed the firstborn did not touch those who had it for a token on their houses.

Faith is not our estimate of the Lamb's blood, but resting on His estimate of it. How blessed for every believer!

But God has given us more comfort still, though nothing can be morally deeper than what the Passover expresses. In it, however, God was judging sin and kept outside by the sprinkled blood. But in Christ's death and resurrection we have more: God intervening manifestly as Saviour, and not only as Judge, God turning the waters of death which overwhelm the enemy into ramparts of victory, where He is for us in van or rear. Such is the force of the Red Sea typically: not God staid and kept outside by the Lamb's blood, but now, with that basis laid, His power on our behalf in Christ dead and risen. We believe on Him that raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus, Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. The type of redemption was not complete till the passage of the Red Sea was added to the Passover.

Many souls stop short at the Passover and lose consequently the assurance of God for them. This may be faith, but “the gospel of our salvation” goes farther and they should receive it simply and heartily. So even, in the type of Exodus, however safe Israel was on the paschal night, only at the Red Sea do we hear “Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah.” Truly Jehovah saved “that day.” Salvation in the gospel sense goes far beyond safety or life, though many to their own loss make it less; and how does not Christ's work in death and resurrection suffer unwitting disparagement thereby! The word of truth supplies all defects of ignorance or of prejudice.

How impressive too is the Holy Spirit's allusion to the Egyptians essaying to cross the Red Sea and drowned! It is just what a large form of unbelief follows in Christendom. They have adopted the idea of salvation, and we may add of heaven, and strive without faith, without Christ, in their natural state, to claim the hope—at any rate on a deathbed. We do not hear of a single Egyptian sprinkling his doorpost with a lamb's blood. People would like to be saved, without confessing their sins or God's judgment of them in the cross of Christ, which is the sole righteous ground of their remission.

Hebrews 11:30-31

It is instructive to observe that the passage of the Jordan is entirely omitted in this Epistle which notices so many persons and facts in the line of faith; notably the Red Sea crossed by the sons of Israel. The omission of the one is as characteristic of the truth in hand as the mention of the other. They both illustrate the divine wisdom of inspiration as carrying out the design of God, often if not always beyond the cognizance of the writer. Thus is all scripture truly God's word. If the Jordan had to be introduced in any of the Epistles, that to the Ephesians would have been the place; as in fact the last chapter does distinctly allude to the main scope of the book of Joshua, the antitype to Jewish conflicts with the Canaanites. But this is not the theme here, which has in its foreground the wilderness and the tabernacle, and the High Priest, and the sacrifices, especially that of the day of Atonement. Here therefore the Passover and the Red Sea have an all-important and emphatic place, because they present in figure redemption as far as it is accomplished, not yet of course that of the body or of the purchased possession. It is not only shelter under the Lamb's blood, but bringing out to God from the power of the oppressor. Those who hitherto had been slaves were set free to hold a feast to their Deliverer in the wilderness. The answer to these shadows of the past is in the death and resurrection of Christ, Who was delivered up for our offenses and was raised for our justification. On this, grounded of course on His personal glory, rests the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews unfolding Christ in the presence of God on high for us.

But the Epistle to the Ephesians goes farther and brings out our death and resurrection with Christ, and characteristically our being seated in the heavenlies in Him. In the Passover God was a Judge, in the Red Sea a Saviour; He brought Israel thus to Himself by a deliverance judicial and complete. So for the believer it was His work in Christ dead and risen for us. But in Ephesians we learn that, when we were dead in offenses and sins, God quickened us together with Christ and raised us up together, and seated us together in the heavenlies in Him. This is what Jordan prefigures: not redemption, but our death and resurrection with Him and our place in Him on high before we are actually with Him. Hence conflict follows in its season with the principalities and the world-rulers of this darkness—in short, the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenlies. This clearly answers to the main contents of the book of Joshua; not the future rest in heavenly glory, but our wrestling against the wiles of the devil who would hinder our taking possession (in the Spirit of Christ) of our heavenly privileges now, as one with Christ above.

Although therefore it fell not within the divine plan to develop here what we find thereby elsewhere, two illustrations of the power of faith follow of deep interest.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been compassed for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with the disobedient, having received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:30-31).

Jericho was the first city that confronted the host of Jehovah; it was the key of the land, and a fenced town with a wall such as to admit of a house upon it. It was of all moment that Israel entering on the promised land should learn, that, however they might have to fight, victory

depended on Jehovah, and their place was unqualified obedience of His word with confidence in His power. Hence the directions were such as tried the faith of His people and cast them wholly on His intervention, nothing could be devised less reasonable to the eyes or mind of man. The circuit of the city made once for six days by the men of war, following seven priests blowing seven trumpets of rams' horns after the ark, was a strange sight to the warriors within, each day increasing their scorn. Then came the seventh day with its seven circuits, and the long blast of rams' horns followed by the loud shout of all the people. Who ever heard of a siege so conducted? Yet was it suited above all to impress on not Israel only but their enemies, that He was there to make them more than conquerors. For the city wall fell down in its place, so that the people went up into the city, each straight before him, and took Jericho devoted to utter destruction. It was evidently and unmistakably before Jehovah, prince of His host. It was only His doing in power, it was theirs in faith subject to His word. It is ours to notice, to believe and obey now.

And this was the very time when grace wrought conspicuously, where no man could have looked for it, if God had not revealed it there. “By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with those that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace.” The people of Jericho were no more ignorant of Jehovah's doings in the midst of Israel than Rahab. “I know (said she to the spies before the approach of Israel) that Jehovah hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when ye came out of Egypt, and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites” &c. Grace wrought in this disreputable woman, and gave her to believe the bond of goodness on Jehovah's part to a people utterly unworthy. Grace found not but produced in her the fruit of righteousness by faith, and gave her a place in Israel, Gentile though she was, in the direct line of David the king, and so of One incomparably greater, at once David's Son and David's Lord. If the king and the people as a whole perished, it was not through ignorance but disobedience of the testimony which she believed, and because of which she risked her life, receiving the spies with peace. For real faith is energetic and dares to please God in the face of death, deaf also to the pleas of nature and the reasonings of unbelief. Therefore has she her place, not only in the noble army of faith here, but with Abraham himself in the record of the works of faith in the Epistle of James. But these works were not what men call “good,” they were καλ■ (comely) rather than ■γαθ■ (benevolent).

Chapter 114

Hebrews 11:32-36

After Rahab the Holy Spirit leads to a summary of the faithful without drawing out individual cases as before.

“And what more do I say? For the time will fail me telling of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David too, and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped lions' mouths, quenched fire's might, escaped sword's edge, were strengthened from weakness, became powerful in war, turned to flight camps of aliens. Women received their dead by resurrection, and others were racked, not accepting their deliverance (redemption), that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, and of bonds and imprisonment” (Heb. 11:32-36).

It is remarkable, and surely not without purpose that historical order is not observed in the names enumerated, any more than in the acts or sufferings of faith which follow. Thus in time Barak comes before Gideon, Jephthah before Samson, Samuel before David; and again the known instances of lion's mouths stopped, and of fire's might quenched, were long after women received their dead by resurrection; as others making trial of mockings and scourgings, and bonds and prison were before the conspicuous cases of those racked or tortured refusing the deliverance they might have had, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

In the Judges as they are called, who succeeded Joshua before the kingdom, faith shone in times of crisis during the ever advancing declension; and individuality becomes prominent. Gideon's faith stands justly before that of Barak who shared it with another—a woman—to his reproof; and the captain of a freebooting troop has no such place in divine history, as the mighty Nazarite, morally feeble though he was, alone against the Philistines at their zenith. Had he been truly separate, instead of guiltily seeking marriage and evil intercourse with the enemy, what had not God wrought by him! But what a proof of the state of Israel, that all the witness for Jehovah their God then hung on that most failing man! Still Jephthah, especially by his terribly rash vow, so clouded the testimony of faith that one cannot wonder he finds here a place after Samson. It is impossible, if there be any force in what is now suggested, to accept the view that Jephthah, David, and Samuel constitute a second group as compared with the previous three, on the common text which shows a connective particle after Barak, as there really is after David.

It would appear most correct that David only is thus distinguished, to introduce a new character, and Samuel named after him, not only as less marked but to connect him with the prophets. (Compare Acts 3:24; 13:20).

In what follows Heb. 11:32, where names begin to disappear, we have the converse of the earlier order in our chapter. For examples of the power of faith are first given in Heb. 11:33-34, and the first clause of Heb. 11:35, while the patience of faith is celebrated thenceforward. The introductory “who” passes from those already mentioned down to the latest times of O.T. inspiration if not later still.

We need not particularize, where the scripture before us recounts only signal acts without further specification. But it may be profitable to remark that the energy of faith in subduing kingdoms, being made strong in war, and putting to flight armies or camps of aliens, however in keeping with the time which preceded the gospel, is in no way the model of what the Christian is now called to. Working righteousness must ever rule for man on earth, even when “promises” shall be fully accomplished instead of “obtained” as of old, miracles or no miracles, such as lions' mouths stopped, fire's might quenched, or the edge of the sword escaped. “Made strong out of weakness” has quite a different application in ordinary Christian experience from its meaning of old as here referred to. The ground of our difference is plain. Grace is now revealed and reigns as it did not till Christ came, died, rose, and took His seat in heaven. This, as the N. T. shows throughout, changes the whole state of things. To faith old things are passed; new are come. Who can wonder that believes the grand truth even of personal privilege through Christ dead, risen, and ascended? If one is in Christ, he is a new creation, though the body awaits His coming to change it to the likeness of His glory. But already even it is the Holy Spirit's temple. Our bodies are Christ's members. With this go new and heavenly relationships and responsibilities. We are not of the world, as Christ was not, and we are called to suffer with joy from earthly enemies as He did, our conflict being with the spiritual powers of darkness.

After the transitional first clause of Heb. 11:35, we find an array of sufferings in which faith triumphed of old. Here is what is more akin to what the Christian may have to face at various times and places.

Hebrews 11:37-40

The sketch of suffering in faith is pursued still further in these verses; for the Spirit of God delights to set out the endurance of the saints for the truth's sake in the worst of times, to encourage souls thus persecuted, after Christ came, which Jewish disciples least of all expected. The solution of the enigma lay in His coming again, we who now follow filling up the gap chiefly, though not exclusively, as the prophetic part of the Revelation clearly shows. Hence verses Heb:11:39-40, point out the connection and withal distinction of the Christian calling, that no intelligent saint might confound things which differ not a little, whatever their partial agreement.

“They were stoned, were tempted, were sawn asunder; they died by sword with slaughter; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and dens and the caves of the earth. And these all, having been testified of through their faith, received not the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for (or concerning) us, that apart from us they should not be perfected” (Heb. 11:37-40).

Stoning was a punishment enjoined by the law for Jews guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, or other forms of profane rebellion against Jehovah. Hence the peculiar enormity of the death of Naboth and of Zechariah, the wickedness being wholly in those high in authority who perverted it to hurt saints. Nor can we conceive ordinarily a grosser and more daring wrong than that the pious should suffer the death of impiety at the hands of impious rulers, whether by crafty falsehood or in ungovernable rage.

“Tempted” has perplexed the commentators. Some, in the face of overwhelming evidence for the text, have dared to invent readings out of their own heads; as the Syriac (Pesch.) has wholly dropt it. No believer ought to question the wisdom of God in giving so striking a place to a sort of trial peculiarly dangerous to certain souls, as the history of even Christian martyrs recalls to mind some inflexibly resisting at all cost; alas! that had run well yielding to their shame; others again, who did yield, strengthened to suffer triumphantly at last.

“Sawn asunder” was indeed a brutality unknown to the Levitical institutions. David was in a wretched state when he dealt thus savagely with the Ammonite prisoners; as the Syrians retorted at a later day with the inhabitants of Gilead. That the heathen should be cruel was no wonder; but it ill became the generous king, himself long schooled in adversity. Power and prosperity proved greater dangers.

Massacre by the sword was a common death for the prophets in Israel, if we only hear of Urijah thus slain in Judah.

Next, follows the more prolonged suffering in life of those who for one reason or another were not slain. “They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated": to some a still more trying test of their faith than if suddenly dispatched, whether law or violence compelled them. The apostle himself had experience of both beyond most—perhaps all. But so it was when

the faithful had not the same privileges.

Still before or after Christ the substantial fact remains: God has ever had a line of sufferers that believed. And it was their faith which made them objects of dislike and persecution. Nor was it so much their denunciation of the world, its pursuits, pleasures, iniquities, or impieties, but that most quiet and most telling of all testimonies—separation from it to God and His word. Now we can add distinct and positive witness of Christ crucified, yet glorified. This is above all things offensive, especially when backed by the solemn assurance of His coming to judge the world, yet surely (as being true) due in love and compassion to it, as to His glory. Hence the deepest hatred underneath the placid pretensions of today's liberalism. But it will break out afresh, as the Revelation proves. They are those whom the world cannot overcome, say or do what it may. “Of whom the world was not worthy,” though they were counted unworthy of a place in it or even of life. But, as it has been said, in condemning them, it condemned itself; and God forgets neither.

Hence they were outcasts often, roaming in deserts and mountains, and dens, and the caves or chinks of the earth. How this was repeated in pagan and papal persecutions since the Epistle was written needs no evidence here. In the world's eyes they were implacable and impracticable. Nothing won them, wealth, ease, or honor; nothing subdued them, detraction, hatred, prison, or death. They refuse present glory. They remember Who was crucified; they await His day and see it approaching.

“And these all, having been testified of through others their faith, received not the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for (or about) us, that they apart from us should not be perfected.”

Whatever the differing circumstances, enemies, or sufferings of these saints, this is true of them all.

However attested through their faith, and receiving promises to sustain them, they did not receive the promise fulfilled, for which all wait. For God had meanwhile to bring in a new and better thing on our behalf, while Christ, having been rejected, is at the right hand of God on high. Hence, though the ground was laid for all blessing when Christ came the first time, the fulfillment of all awaits His coming again; and when God's provision for us is complete, they will be perfected, not before.

Hebrews 12:1-3

The distinctly hortative part of the Epistle now follows, though we have had exhortation interspersed almost from the first. But henceforth it greatly predominates with weighty words of instruction also in both the closing chapters. The object throughout is to deepen the faith of those used to religious objects of sight, to establish souls in the unseen and heavenly through the word and Spirit of God, and to unfold Christ's glory in person, work, and offices. He is here accordingly introduced not as the object of faith as before, but as the Chief, fullness, and crown of all who from the first trod the path of faith here below.

“Wherefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, lay aside every weight and the readily besetting sin, and run with endurance the race set before us, looking off unto Jesus the leader and perfecter of faith; who for the joy lying before Him endured crucifixion, despising shame, and is set down at [the] right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that hath endured such contradiction by the sinners against Himself, that ye be not wearied, fainting in your souls” (Heb. 12:1-3).

The witnesses who lie all around are those described and summarized in the chapters before, not spectators of us, as some have unintelligently imagined, but men that obtained testimony from God in virtue of faith. Now and then, here and there, mainly of the chosen people, but carefully shown to have lived and suffered in faith before Abraham, they form a grand cloud, each characterized by some proved fidelity to God's will, a few by more than one, none more than “the friend of God.” But what was he, variously tried and faithful, compared with “Jesus,” as this Epistle often and with divine intent calls our Lord? In His path, in His testimony, for this is what is here in question, the light shone full and unretracted. Its unwavering equality marks its unity of perfection. Yet never had been, never can there be again, such depths and such comprehensiveness of trial, apart from that which it was His alone to bear, in His suffering once for sins to effect everlasting redemption.

Hence the saints are urged, laying aside as a settled thing every weight and the sin that so besets and entangles them, to run with endurance the race lying before them, looking with full view on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. To be sanctified through the offering of His body is a divine act of grace with an abiding effect (Heb. 10:10). Reconciliation to God, and justification, as in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere, are not a gradual process, like growth or practical holiness. But even in practice we are called on, not to be getting rid of every weight that encumbers and the sin that besets in continuous detail, but, to have done with such and all as a fixed principle and an accomplished act. There are habits and superfluities that hinder the Christian, anxious thoughts and cares, that oppress and distract the spirit. To run well in such circumstances is as impracticable as if the sin broke out which demands self-judgment and humiliation. Parley is fatal, delay dangerous. Both weights and sin therefore are to be put off absolutely. It is in vain to trust our moral power. We must look away, from everyone and everything without or within, to Him Who is as mighty to deliver as He graciously waits on our need. Power is not in the first man but in the

Second; and even here, surely we may say, that God is thereby as in all things glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom is the glory and the might for the ages of the ages, Amen.

But it is not without importance to understand that our Lord is here presented, not as the objective channel of the grace we ever need, but as the unrivaled leader and completer of faith in the whole extent of its course. “Our” faith misleads, especially with “author and finisher,” as if the Holy Spirit were here setting Him forth as beginning faith in our souls and carrying it on to the end, its source and sustainer. Not so: He is viewed as the chief and perfecter in the race of faith in its entirety. In that race let us run. It cannot be without endurance, any more than faith, right through. But “through” or “by means of” endurance is here inadequate. The apostle uses the preposition also to express condition, as in Rom. 2:27. “With” in this case is right. In a world departed from God the believer's course lies through persecution, detraction, and hatred; and thus he must make his way with endurance or patience.

Herein our Lord was proved to the uttermost; “Who for the joy lying before Him endured crucifixion, despising shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Compare Matt. 11 at the end, and John 13:31-32; 14, 17, as testimony of the joy in His view; but love, yea the Father's glory, was His motive, however the future joy cheered Him along the way. Even for us it is the same thing in principle; and the new nature, in the knowledge of God and His Son, renders us capable of it. Reward, however glorious, is never the motive; yet is it most animating in the face of danger and trial.

“Crucifixion” is here used to express the character of what the Lord endured, as we cannot say “cross” in English without an article, though we can speak of “shame” in being despised. The answer to it is His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. The suffering and the glorious issue are alike His only. No one sits there but Himself Who vindicated the glory of God compromised utterly by man. Now is man in His person set on an immutable foundation by the death of the cross. God is glorified in Him, as He glorified Him in Himself, and this immediately, without waiting for the day when the world-kingdom of Him and His Christ shall come. The Son of Man is set down at the right hand of God's throne. He has carried manhood into that glory whence He came down in love to do the will of God, accomplished redemption, and gone back again in God's righteousness, which we are made in Him.

Therefore the word is, “consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying, or contradiction, by the sinners against Himself, that ye be not wearied, fainting in your souls.” This is a great danger, and never excusable; for there He sits to cheer and bless Who has endured such gainsaying as none other did or could. They were sinners against themselves undoubtedly, as read the Sinaitic, and the Clermont MSS., &c. But the far more solemn fact is that they were the sinners against Himself, Who endured all in love to win them to God. Who ever met with a people (His people!) so rebellious? Disciples so fearful and cowardly? Betrayed by one, denied by another, deserted by all the most trusted! It was not only the sinners contradicted, but the saints fled, yea, God Himself forsook, as it must be if sin was to be judged fully. Oh, how little have the saints to weary them in comparison? and why faint in their souls who see Him on high, their sacrifice and Priest, life, righteousness, and glory?

Hebrews 12:4-8

From persecution causing saints to suffer the transition is easy to the needed discipline of our God and Father.

“Not yet did ye resist unto blood, contending against sin; and ye have quite forgotten the exhortation such as discourseth with you as with sons, My son, despise not (the) Lord's chastening, nor faint when convicted by him; for whom (the) Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. For chastening ye endure: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son [is] he whom a father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, of which all have been partakers, then ye are bastards and not sons” (Heb. 12:4-8).

There is danger of relaxation and shirking the consequences of fidelity to the Lord and the truth. It was very far otherwise with Him, Who, when He had finished His work of living testimony, Himself the substance of it necessarily alike from His glory and His love in humiliation, gave Himself up the willing captive and victim that the will of God might be done in every way to His glory. But the saints were not yet resisting unto blood, whatever had been the case with some in early days of whom we hear in the Acts of the Apostles. And they had utterly forgotten the fatherly exhortation such as speaks to us in the Proverbs, as to sons expressly. It has a two-fold character that we should neither despise the divine chastening, nor faint when so dealt with. He never causes a needless tear; He acts towards us in perfect love. Can we not trust Him? Contending against sin in an evil world entails suffering, and in the same suffering without chastisement.

But they may and do sometimes coalesce; and in every case we wrong Him Who watches over us in love, if we either slight His hand or repine under it. How often His action which calls us to suffer is to guard us from what would grieve the Holy Spirit of God, rather than because we have sinned! And it is happy for us when it is so. He who was employed to write to these Christian Hebrews knew it in his own experience better than any other, though many in their measure have proved how true it is still. So in the Gospel of John our Lord speaks of His Father purging every branch of the Vine that bears fruit, in order that it might bear more fruit. We need to believe His word that we may interpret His dealings aright.

The commonly received text which substitutes the conditional “if” (ε■) for the preposition “for” (ε■ς) is an unquestionable mistake, resting on few and late witnesses opposed to weight and antiquity, and due apparently to a presumed simplifying of the clause. Tischendorf who had wavered returned to the true reading, as do all critics who adhere to diplomatic evidence, unless a motive for change were probable. Here the motive wrought the other way in the modern copies; for it seemed to balance the seventh verse better with the eighth. Whereas in fact the ancient reading preserves the application of the O. T. citation simply and with far more directness and energy. Erasmus led the way wrongly, following a Greek M.S. of not much value, and others followed the Dutch scholar. The Vulgate too had the mistranslation of “in disciplina,” which should of course have been the accusative as in its Fulgentian copy. The Velesian forgery made the Greek to match the error. The sense is, Not for harm but for good, for chastening ye endure. It is the

unfailing portion and token of God's family here below. Therefore the challenge follows, What son is there whom a father chastens not? To be without such dealing, of which all have become partakers, would rather warrant the inference of being spurious, not legitimate sons.

(Note: ε■ς ADKLP and some 50 cursives (the Vat. B. and Rescript of Paris, C, failing); ε■ has but some cursives, Euthal-God. and Theophylact, all the ancient Vv. and Ff. being adverse.)

How blessed for the believer that as grace saved, so it abides; not in the least to hinder the moral government of God, but to bind up inseparably His holy watchful oversight and discipline of our souls with His unfailing love! Easily might we all, as many a one through unbelief does, misunderstand His ways in chastening us, as if they indicated nothing but His displeasure and our own danger of course still; and the more, because of having tasted in a small measure that He is gracious. But such a doubt really wrongs both His love and His truth, and loses sight of the relationship He has established between Himself and us, and of His faithfulness if we have to mourn our faithlessness to Him. It is utterly a mistake that, where life is, a bright sense of His unchanging grace, even in scourging every son whom He receives, enfeebles our practical devotedness to His will. On the contrary, His word calls on every child of His to cherish confidence in His grace, as our standing before Him (Rom. 5:2, Heb. 12:28, 1 Peter 5:12), that we may the more deeply judge ourselves, our inconsistencies, and our failures. So even the irreverent and careless Corinthian saints are told that we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world; as all unbelievers are, for their works are only evil.

Hebrews 12:9-11

The general principle and the necessity for present chastening have been shown, which every Jew would but recognize as a familiar truth from that great repository of divine wisdom applied to the life on earth, the book of Proverbs, so characterized throughout by the O. T. title of relationship. Certainly this is not enfeebled but deepened by the more intimate name in which God has now revealed Himself by and in His Son. Here however all as to this is intentionally general. It was through the Gospel and Epistles of John that the Holy Spirit brought out the Father in relation, and the divine nature in all the fullness of God.

Now we have a development, closely connected with and following up what has been already considered. “Further, we used to have fathers of our flesh as chasteners, and to pay reverence: shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they for a few days chastened as seemed good to them; but he for profit in order to the partaking of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be of joy but of grief; but afterward it yieldeth peaceful fruit of righteousness to those that have been exercised thereby” (vers. 9-11).

These words appeal to what nature itself teaches to be inherent in the relationship of father and son. We could not but know in our own experience, when the folly bound up with the heart of a child had to meet a father's discipline. Yet did we stand in awe of them. Thus has God constituted man. Shall we not then be much more in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For this is a grand aim of the epistle; not only faith in the person, work and offices of Christ, but living by faith, instead of drawing back: so Heb. 10 urges, and Heb. 11 illustrates, crowned by the beginning of chap. 12. The superior dignity of the Father of spirits, over the fathers of our flesh is evident but not more so than the unfailing character of His training, and the worthy end no less sure. Many an earthly father vacillates, some are manifestly unwise and unworthy, none absolutely and in all things reliable: yet we used to pay them respect during the “few days” of their authoritative training, whatever might be the failures now and then through the infirmities of the flesh. For they could not rise above what “seemed good to them;” and they might be and were mistaken sometimes. Not so the Father of spirits, God alone wise, Who is good and does good, acting unerringly for our advantage in order to our partaking of His holiness.

This is a high standard undoubtedly; but it could not be other if He undertakes the charge of us, as He does. Even with His ancient people His word was, Be ye holy, for I am holy; and so the apostle of the circumcision cites and urges on the elect of the dispersion. The same truth our Lord Himself impressed on the disciples when He compared Himself to a vine, the true Vine, His Father to the Husbandman, and them to the branches. Every branch bearing fruit, said He, My Father purgeth, that it may bear more fruit. Here it is the discipline God carries on in every son He receives to Himself. The child-training may seem, while it. goes on, not joyous but grievous; but the end is as sure here, and not merely in an after-state, as the loving wisdom that directs it for profit. What can there be comparable (we being what we are, and the world so perilous and unimprovable and ensnaring) to our partaking in His holiness? What a practical privilege!

It may be noticed that Hellenistic literature, in none of its copious and varied remains uses this word ■γι■της. Yet is it the simplest derivative that expresses quality from ■γιος, holy. It occurs in the apocryphal second book of Macc. 15:2, but is not correctly rendered in the Vulgate, followed by Wiclif and his follower, and the Douay, &c. For “with holiness” qualifies “Him Who beholds all things,” rather than the day forehonoured by Him. Some may not be aware that Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Westcott and Hort adopt it in the text of 2 Cor. 1:12, where others have ■πλ■τητι, a word easily confounded with it by a hasty eye. It is adopted without even a marginal question by the Revisers.

Ver. 11 closes this part of the subject with the effect of chastening in another form, which is still more nearly akin to John 15. Afterward, chastening yields peaceful fruit of righteousness to those that have been exercised by it. God effects the profit in such as have submitted to the trial: it is lost so far as we slight the trial or doubt His love in sending it.

Chapter 119

Hebrews 12:12-17

The apostle resumes his exhortation after the episode of divine discipline which had occupied the previous verses, wholesome for any but especially for such as confessed the Lord Jesus from among the Jews. Christianity deepens that personal training which Job opens to us from early days and on the broadest ground; as the book of Proverbs, which is here applied, carried it home with minute care and sententious wisdom in Israel, where Jehovah's name was known. But the figure is now enlarged, from running the race to the straight paths for the walk, specially desirable for the weak in the way; and we know from Rom. 14; 15 whence these came, and wherein weakness consisted in collision with Gentile brethren.

“Wherefore lift up the exhausted hands and the enfeebled knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all, and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord; watching [it] lest any one lack the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you] and through it many be defiled; lest [there be] any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one meal sold his own birthright. For ye know that, even when afterward wishing to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place for repentance) though he sought it earnestly with tears” (Heb. 12:12-17).

We see here the all-importance of faith for the walk, as Hebrews 11 had illustrated from of old, and the Epistle throughout had urged as the spring of power and hinge of blessing for the Christian. It is failure in this respect that exposes to all feebleness; and confidence in God and the word of His grace that kindles the spark into a steady flame. To this the Jews were peculiarly prone from their system; and the thought it nourished disposed to look for immediate effects and displayed power. As Greeks seek wisdom or philosophy, Jews ask for signs; and this was apt to affect unconsciously the baptized; and disappointed expectations, which had no warrant from the truth, left them jaded, weary, and weak. Hence the call to restore the exhausted hands and enfeebled knees; and to make straight paths for their feet, that what was lame should not turn aside but rather be healed. The joy of present love and of future glory are set before us with the strongest assurance; the needed sorrow in our experience is turned into blessing by the way; and our chastening shown to be the fruit of divine love for profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness Who loves us. For so we read here of that which we are not to regard only in the light of requirement. Such is the object and end of His discipline.

But if His love be lost sight of, the hands hang down and the knees are paralyzed. Faith has no energy save in the confidence of His grace. So it is everywhere as a matter of teaching from Romans to Hebrews, and from Hebrews to the Revelation. It was always true; it is clear as light since Christ came. He Himself is the unflagging witness of it in sufferings beyond all comparison. And none can forget it without immediate loss.

Further, the word is “pursue” (which is stronger than “follow") “peace with all and the holiness without which none shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Having peace with God through our Lord Jesus, we are exhorted to seek it diligently in practice, where there are so many sources of

disagreement; and this not only with one another but with all. God Himself is the God of peace; and His children are to reflect His character. But there is a still more imperative warning attached to the exhortation to “holiness,” “without (or apart from) which none shall see the Lord.” Here it is ■γιασμ■ς, not merely the quality in its abstract form, but in its action or its result as applied to us; and so found throughout the N. T. (Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:3-4, 7; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:15; and 1 Peter 1:2). There is nothing to alarm the most timid in this, more than in all the scriptures which insist on conformity to God's will in all that are His (Rom. 2:7-11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 9:27; Gal. 5:19-20; 6:7-8; Eph. 5:5-7; Titus 2:12; 3:8; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:3; 2 Peter 1; 1 John 2:3; Jude; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

This is only strengthened by what follows: “Looking to it lest any one lack (or fall short of) the grace of God.” Without the heart's resting on His grace and consequently on Christ and His work, all is vain; because all is man, and fallen man, presuming otherwise to seek acceptance with God. In such a condition there never can be an adequate sense of sin any more than of holiness. Grace, the grace of God, enables the soul to judge itself unsparingly, and to delight in the unsullied nature of God; because it gives in Christ the life which suits God perfectly, and the propitiation which blots out our sins. This indeed is love, not ours (though we do love) but His in its blessed display. It is sovereign grace; of which souls fall short, who dare to approach God in virtue of their own doings or of acts done for them by mortal man, to both of which Israel had recourse, perhaps as much as the heathen.

If self-righteousness be excluded, and outward rites be in lieu of Christ, more evidently hateful to God is “any root of bitterness” which springing up should trouble, and thereby the many or mass be defiled. For such is the effect of evil, as is shown in 1 Cor. 5 and Gal. 5 under the figure of leaven, as here by a root of bitterness. It might take a variety of forms; and here we have specified carnal impurity, and profanity, both intolerable where God is and is known. Of the latter evil Esau is the instance, who for one meal sold his own birthright. Every Hebrew was familiar with a tale, humbling indeed for all concerned; but Esau stood on unhallowed ground, where God's promise yet more was despised than his own birthright. What a warning to those Hebrews in danger of giving up incomparably better blessings with Him Whose kingdom did not immediately appear, as they fondly hoped! It was not repentance that Esau earnestly sought with tears, but the blessing which his father even had wished wrongly to alienate from Jacob, the heir designated of Jehovah from before their birth.

Hebrews 12:18-21

From the unbelieving despisal of grace in Esau and from its sad issue, we turn on the one hand to a tremendous yet undeniable view of the law with its menacingly fatal accompaniments, and on the other to a comprehensive assemblage of the bright objects which grace will effect and display, into which faith even now introduces those who believe. Both parts of the contrast powerfully carry on the argument and aim of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Were any disposed to slip away from Christianity and return to the Levitical system of their fathers? Here they are invited to look on the two sides of the picture sketched by the unerring hand of the Holy Spirit, where every element is derived from scriptures which no Jew could dispute. 2 Corinthians gave a similar antithesis admirably suited to enlighten and admonish the church of God in the capital of Achaia, where Jewish boasting was at work to act on those who came from the Gentiles. Here the mode of dealing is not less skillfully directed to warn and win those of Israel who were tempted to return to Judaism. Let us look at the dark side which comes first.

“For ye have not come to [a mount] palpable and aglow with fire, and to gloom and darkness and tempest, and a trumpet's sound and voice of words, which [voice] they that heard entreated that no word more should be addressed to them: for they could not endure what was charged, And if so much as a beast touch the mount, it shall be stoned; and, so fearful was the appearance, Moses said, I am affrighted and trembling all over” (Heb. 12:18-21).

The Christian position is not the Jewish one improved, but contrasted with it distinctly and fully. Israel did come to Sinai. There they received the law in which they boasted over the Gentiles who know not God, who have no polity from Him nor covenant with Him. As for the nations, their judgment and their dignity proceeded from themselves. Might and craft were their deities, and demons behind them. Therefore they sacrificed to their net; and burnt to their drag. The Jew, instructed out of the law, was sure he himself was a guide of the blind and a light of those in darkness; whereas in truth through his transgression of the law he habitually dishonored God. The name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the Jews, as their prophets attested.

But here we are given to see God in the most solemn way at Sinai intimating the end from the beginning. The law of God is and must be crushing to the pretensions of man as he is; for Israel were sinners as others, and the law could only be to such a ministry of death and condemnation. If law be the ground of action, how could God acquit the guilty? Here therefore our attention is drawn to the entire scene from the first as one of the most awful signs on God's part, of abject terror on His people's. The mount to which their fathers had approached was palpable, like the rest of their system, but, more than that, it was all aglow with fire, the symbol of God's destructive judgment. And, adding to the horror, gloom was there and darkness and tempest, not light and peace serene and bright, but just the opposite. Above the glare and the black obscurity and the storm, an unearthly trumpet sounded its alarm, and a voice of words more awful still: so that those who heard that voice deprecated its reaching them more.

Most ominous was that which is charged: who of mankind could endure, when even if a beast touched the mount it was to be stoned? If such must be the doom of the unconscious brutes, where should the sinner appear? Yea, the very mediator of the law, honored of God and familiar with His presence, could only say at that fearful vision, “I exceedingly fear and tremble.”

Such was the characteristic approach of Israel to God when about to hear the law. Their own scriptures declare this, and the like only, to have been God's aspect toward them—this their feeling and state before Him. Assuredly it is not so that the confessors of the Lord Jesus approached God in the gospel. There we hear of the gift of His love in His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth may have eternal life—in Him Who suffered for our sins on the cross. It was He Who bore the judgment and went down into death. The gospel reveals the Saviour as life and propitiation, God sending His own Son for both purposes; that as we live through Christ, so through His stripes are we healed. We are saved by grace; but the cost was God's through the reconciling death of His Son; and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And if any of the Jews who confessed such a Saviour were growing weary and turning back to Judaism, let them weigh what they give up in the gospel, and to what they must return under the law.

Hebrews 12:22-24

We have been shown what does not stamp the Christian confession but the Jewish. Here we are told in a few expressive clauses what is our portion, though in hope.

“But ye have come to mount Zion; and to a living God's city, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, a universal assemblage; and to an assembly of firstborn ones enrolled in heaven; and to God judge of all; and to spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus mediator of a new covenant; and to blood of sprinkling better than Abel's” (Heb. 12:22-24).

This bright statement was pre-eminently suited and intended to disabuse and raise the hearts of the unbelieving Hebrews, as it is admirable for the instruction of any and all saints who desire to learn. The conjunction simply and effectively introduces and connects each of the objects in a remarkable order after the first, as we shall see. This was overlooked in the Authorized Version following other translators to the ruin of the meaning between the latter clause of Heb. 12:22 and beginning of Heb. 12:23.

No mountain in the O.T., stood in such formal contrast with Sinai as Zion. The one was, as just noticed, the never to be forgotten scene of national responsibility to the law; the other the intervention of Jehovah in grace for His king when all was ruin, people and priests alike wicked, the ark taken by the Philistines, Ichabod confessed, Israel's king and his sons slain, and the Jebusite not only in the center and stronghold of Jerusalem but defiant and insulting. Then it was that Jehovah, as He chose David, so also chose the mount Zion which He loved. And there will He set His King “upon His holy hill of Zion.” “I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” These psalms and others speak of a future day, of a new age when Messiah shall reign over Israel and the nations. But our epistle simply introduces mount Zion compared with Sinai and its legal associations, as the signal expression of divine grace interposing to establish the kingdom after a scene of grievous sin and long humiliation. “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” “There Jehovah commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

To mark this aim, we may notice how the Holy Spirit connects with Zion, not as a Jew might have expected, the well-known city of David, earthly Jerusalem, but “a living God's city, heavenly Jerusalem.” If Zion was morally the highest to be descried here below, we now leave earth behind and above behold the city for which Abraham looked, as God prepared it for such as were pilgrims and strangers on earth, a city which hath the foundations, whose maker and builder is God. It is the seat of glory in the heavenly places for the holy sufferers with Christ who shall also be glorified together; and He Who is a living God is bound in love and honor to give it thus effect.

Then follows the mention of “myriads of angels, a general assemblage.” They were the natural, the indigenous, denizens of heaven, all God's hosts that excel in strength, that do His

commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Here they are presented in their fullness of various order. Another inspired writer tells us that he heard their voice, and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

Further, the Christian Hebrews are said to have come “to [the] assembly of firstborn enrolled in heaven.” There need be no hesitation in identifying this heavenly company. It is the church of God, of which we hear so much and of the deepest interest in the Acts of the Apostles and the other Epistles, as the Lord when here below spoke of it as about to be founded (Matt. 16:18), so that Hades' gates should not prevail against it. The day of Pentecost (that followed His death, resurrection, and ascension) first saw the new sight. It is described here according to the divine design of the Epistle. This accounts for putting forward the aggregate of those who compose it, firstborn ones, rather than the elsewhere familiar figures of the body of Christ, and of the temple of God—His habitation by the Spirit. And those who compose it are here characterized: (1) in relation to Him Who was carefully shown us in Hebrews 1 to be the Firstborn, the established Heir of all things; (2) in relation by grace to our proper and destined sphere of glory, heaven, and not earth, where Israel as such rightly look for their blessedness and triumph under Messiah's reign. Those who are holy, brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, being children, are heirs also, heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs. He is Firstborn, alone in personal right and result of His work, but they are also firstborn truly though of divine grace. And further, they are unregistered or enrolled in heaven by divine counsel and the same grace, citizens of heaven which justly pales and lifts above every other citizenship.

When this glory is presented, we can have none higher than what rises before us, the due and necessary summit of all, “and to God, judge of all,” to Whom the various objects preceding are an ascending scale. It is God in His judicial, His universal judicial glory, not of His people only as in the magnificent Psa. 55 but here of all without exception. The millennial era will be the grand display of this, as doctrinally set forth in Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20 (cf. Phil. 2:10-11) and prophetically in Rev. 21:9 et seqq.

Thence we of course descend, “and to spirits of just made perfect.” These are the O. T. saints. They had had to do with God before grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, as we know it in the gospel, when faith rested on promise and looked for the Coming One; and they will have blessed part in His kingdom (Rev. 20), when they too shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2). The like distinction from “we” may be seen at the end in the Heb. 11:39-40 and it is remarkable, as this instance proves that they are shown, not as they will be, but as they are, “to the spirits of just made perfect.” They will not be in the separate state when “that day” is come; and the same thing applies to what follows.

Next we read “and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant.” This is the pledge of the enduring mercy which awaits the two houses of Israel. Of this all the ancient revelation speaks fully, the law, the psalms, and the prophets; so that there is the less need of now dwelling on it particularly, even if the Gospels and the Acts, and the Epistles and the Revelation did not also confirm it. It is only necessary to say here that “new” means “fresh” or “recent,” a quite different word and thought from the usual “new covenant,” which means covenant on a new principle, not letter but spirit, not man's responsibility as at Sinai, but God's grace in Christ. Here the added comfort is given that when in days to come Jehovah makes the new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of

Judah, when He will put His law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and be their God and they His people, with other blessed and abiding consequences, it will also be as “fresh” as when the blood was shed by which the True mediator founded it in His death before God. The Christian Hebrews had come to Jesus its Mediator, not yet to its actual connection and establishment with Israel, but to Him Who has done all for this purpose in due time.

But the prospect makes the way for another consequent blessing: “And to blood of sprinkling speaking better than Abel's.” If a new covenant points to Israel put under new and sure and everlasting covenant mercy in virtue of Jehovah-Messiah, the voice of the blood of sprinkling does not cry for vengeance and curse, as Abel's did (Gen. 4:10-12); it speaks of reconciliation for the earth (and indeed all things) assured by that blood which is alone precious and efficacious with God. It is clear however that this, however truly a guarantee, is like others we have seen, not yet in actual accomplishment; if we have come to them in hope, yea in full assurance of hope, we do not yet see them, and so with patience wait for them all, surely to be manifest in the day we see approaching.

Hebrews 12:25-29

It could not be, save by the power of faith, that Hebrews would fail to boast of the early wonders of Israel, and recall with pride the fervent words of Moses, “What nation is there so great, that hath God so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is in all that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?” “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 essayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation by temptations, 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 that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes” (Deut. 4)?

Yet the force of Christianity shows itself in lifting believing Jews no less than Gentiles, above all that was or can be seen on earth, to the incomparably higher glories of Christ on the right hand of the Majesty on high revealed now to our faith. Such is the keynote of the Epistle before us. And as the Gentile enamored of philosophy needed to be delivered from his vain dreams, we may apply here what the apostle said to the Corinthians in his second epistle (2 Cor. 3:10), “For even that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect on account of the glory that surpasseth,” not to speak of its abiding in glory, instead of being done away in Christ as the Mosaic economy is.

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that divinely warned on earth, much more [shall not] we that turn away from him that [doth] from [the] heavens; whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once will I cause to quake not only the earth but also heaven. Now the Yet once signifieth the removing of the things shaken as having been made, that the things not shaken may remain. Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace (or, thankfulness) whereby let us serve God acceptably with godly fear and dread. For our God [is] a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:25-29).

The Lord Jesus, the Son of God is regarded as speaking in the New Testament, and speaking from heaven. So it is in this Epistle, Heb. 1:2, God has spoken to us in a Son, not merely in the prophets. The person and the place give His speaking the highest authority and immeasurable value; especially as it is on the ground of that eternal redemption, and the purification of sins made by Himself before He set Himself down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Hence the danger of refusing Him that speaks. It is not excusing ourselves because of our inability to meet divine requirement as in the law. Now “the will of God” is done by the Lord Jesus, the Son—done so perfectly in His death as a sacrifice that God is absolutely glorified; by which will we who believe have been sanctified through the offering of His body once for all—nay more, perfected continually (ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς),without a break. Man, weak and guilty man, is excluded from this great doing, this infinite suffering. It is God acting for His own glory in His Son, that the believer might be perfectly blessed. He is therefore called, in the sense and confession of his evil, to bow to God in His grace, Who, having thus wrought His will, speaks that man may hear and live, may believe and

be saved, blessed now and evermore.

Those who trust their own thoughts and feelings do refuse Him that speaketh. They strive to find a reason in themselves or in the nature of things; and they strive in vain, for no answer can man or nature give why unclean and depraved man should be thence made fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, and entering boldly even now into the holy of holies. They believe not Him that speaks; they credit not the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. The reason is not in man, still less in nature, but in the grace of God Who has brought a new and everlasting glory to Himself by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Thus can He not only afford righteously to save all that believe, but to find His joy in saving the most unworthy, yet only on their heeding Him that speaks. See that ye refuse Him not!

Just because it is God coming forth in His Son to do the work, after man (tried in every way with the utmost patience on God's part) had failed in all, it is fatal forever to refuse to hear Him and bow. The law was the grandest possible experiment for testing on the score of duty to God and man; and the cross of Christ ended it by man's greatest sin against both God and man. But that very cross saw God's will done forever by Him Whose death completed and closed all sacrifice for our sins before God. It was Christ's work: it was God's will; and the Holy Spirit testifies its efficacy forever. Thereby is remission of our sins; and where this is, there is no longer an offering for sin. And a bloodless sacrifice is a mockery and worse.

But if you refuse Him that speaks, you have nothing but your sins now and the wrath to come. The Jews had in earthly sacrifice no remission, only a calling to mind of sins. An unbloody sacrifice is a nullity and no better than Cain's, and now that Christ has died for sins, still more presumptuous and guilty. And all other blood is incapable of taking away sins. Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those that look for Him the second time apart from sin for salvation. For such He will have no more to do with sin, having ended that question by His sacrifice the first time. The second time He will appear to His people for salvation, when their bodies will be saved as their souls are now. But if you refuse Him, destruction awaits you, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might, not annihilation which is but an ungodly dream and perdition. And is it not just?

“For if they escaped not when they refused Him that divinely warned on earth, much more shall not we that turn away from Him that doth from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once will I cause to quake not only the earth but also heaven.” How plain, conclusive, and overwhelming! It was wicked to refuse the divine warning of the law; it is incomparably worse to turn away from Him that speaks from heaven. For He speaks, not of the yoke which neither the fathers nor the children were able to bear, nor yet of their rebellious restiveness under it, but of redemption through His own blood Who was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities, of peace already made through the blood of His cross Who sits at God's right hand in witness of full acceptance for all who believe. To turn away from His voice is the gravest sin and the surest ruin.

Do you ask a proof? His voice then shook the earth when the law was given; for the Son was ever the One that spoke and acted even of old, no less God, the one Jehovah, than the Father. And soon His voice will be heard again still more tremendously. Then Israel heard, by-and-by every creature must hear. For yet once, saith He, will I cause to quake not only the earth but also

heaven. Yet such is the efficiency of His work, that for those who believe it is a “promise.” What can harm those that are His own? If God be for us, who is against us? He Who has not even spared His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall lay accusation against God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather was also raised up, that is also at God's right hand, that also intercedeth for us: who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Hence what is an awful menace to unbelievers is a promise to faith. Even the quaking of the universe “He hath promised;” it is no threat to us, for His love will rest on us then as much as ever, and we shall peacefully enter into all that is for His glory.

“Now the Yet once signifieth the removal of the things shaken as having been made, that the things not shaken may remain.” It is only creation that passes away under His rebuke, that the new creation may alone stand. “For He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” And no words are more true or faithful. They will surely be verified in their season. But the wonder of the Christian is that this is in principle true of him even now; not a promise merely, but a fact, no doubt spiritual, but only for this the more real and abiding and unchangeable. For if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation. And this is a great advance on an O.T saint who was born of God, born anew, a blessed and divinely given subjective reality. But we have not this only, but our part in the objective reality. We are in Christ risen, the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead. It is true of every Christian; if any one be in Christ, a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new: and all things are of God, Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5).

Hence we look as a promise for the removing of the things made, this creation, that the things not shaken may remain. God's purpose is to head up all things in Christ, to reconcile all things to Himself; but He has reconciled us already in the body of His flesh, yet not through incarnation, but through death. Compare Eph. 1, Col. 1, Heb. We died with Christ, and “reckon ourselves therefore dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The removal of the things shaken, of the things not in Christ, awakens no terror, but rather satisfaction; and we exult in the glory of God.

“Therefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace (or thankfulness), whereby let us serve God acceptably with godly fear and dread. For our God is a consuming fire.” See the beautiful picture of this in Rev. 4, where the glorified elders are wholly unmoved by the lightnings and thunders and voices which proceed out of the throne; but when the living creatures render glory to Him that sits on it, they are all activity, leave their thrones, fall before Him, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O our Lord and our God. And this is revealed to act on our souls now. For we are qualified already, true worshippers in the hour that now is to worship in Spirit and truth. By grace we fear yet love Him, and would serve Him. Undoubtedly “our” God is a consuming fire; notwithstanding is He our Father Who loves us perfectly. And He loves us equally as “God.” None the less does He hate sin, as He has proved in the cross of Christ; and He has given us a nature that hates sin, even Christ Who lives in us, as He died for us. Nothing more opposed to truth than making grace a veil or excuse for sin, as every believer confesses. Therefore says the apostle to the saints in Rome, “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law but under grace.” If we were under law, it is powerless for holiness, and can only condemn, being a ministry of death. Christ is the rule of life working by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 123

Hebrews 13:1-6

Next follow exhortations of a practical kind for holy brethren of a heavenly calling on the earth. And first the word is, “Let brotherly affection abide” (Heb. 13:1). This is very needful in the long run; and the epistle was among not the early but the later ones. It was easy enough in the glow of first love, and was strengthened instead of checked by prevalent persecutions for the sake of the faith. But when these trials do not so much press, the very nearness of the saints to each other, as God's family here below, exposes them to danger. For the less grace souls have personally for daily difficulties, the more they expect from others, and the harsher the judgments they hastily form. In the world there is distance kept up by mutual consent, and reserve is cultivated as to the affairs of one another, without which things could scarcely go on decently for any space; but the closeness of spiritual relationship, where it is loyally felt and in lively exercise, as it was and ought ever to he, soon brings to light self-will and the world at work, unless there be a walking according to the light into which we are brought in Christ. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him. When this fails in the practice of the saint, brotherly affection will ere long give way, and hasty speech engender variance, or suspicion cloud the light of love. In Hebrews 6:10 the love they have shown to His name was recorded, in having ministered and still ministering to the saints. In Hebrews 10:34 we see how it wrought in deep trials and afflictions. Here the word is for the continuance of brotherly affection. There is much to try such love.

The verses that immediately follow give the direction that was more particularly needed. “Forget not hospitality; for by it some unawares entertained angels. Remember the prisoners, as bound with [them], the ill-treated, as being yourselves also in a body” (Heb. 13:2-3). To entertain strangers is a happy form of exercising brotherly kindness. Yet is it especially liable to be imposed on, were it not that the Lord's over-ruling eye is over all, and He permits nothing that does not work for good to those that love God. The danger for the believer is that he should be vexed at advantage taken, and lest he should slacken in consequence. But if men abuse kindness thus, the Lord accepts the good and forgets it not. The encouragement assigned is that some, as Abraham and Lot of old, entertained angels unawares. To receive God's children now is assuredly no less honor in His eyes. Another mode of brotherly kindness is in active remembrance of those who, as early Christians, had to bear the stigma of public bonds or prison. If we failed to realize the uncomeliness of holding aloof from brethren thus put to shame, the affecting reference of the apostle to Onesiphorus in his own case at Rome, which we find in 2 Tim. 1 and with less detail elsewhere, may give a just sense of its sweet seasonableness and value before the Lord. Then again how many are the “ill-treated” though not in a prison! Let us not forget such, as being ourselves also in a body. Compare Heb. 10:32-34.

A new topic comes before us in Heb. 13:3 “[Let] marriage [be] honorable in all things and the bed [be] undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Here the Jewish Christian is called to stand the more on his guard, as the law allowed a latitude which the Lord showed to be far from God's mind. The A. V. is faulty in two respects. It is not a mere affirmative sentence stamping the relationship with dignity, but an exhortation in the imperative calling us to carry it on worthily, and

to guard it from all taint of unchastity or impureness. And we are bid to set it in honor, not in this respect or in that, but “in all things.” Thus it is in no way a certificate of respectability which all people possess because they are in wedlock, but a solemn charge to married saints that their use of the relationship be thus pleasing to the Lord in every detail. To say it is honorable “in all men” overlooks, if it does not destroy, the force of the scripture for the Christian's conscience. And this is the more evident as we hear next that God will judge every violation of its sanctity whether in neglect or in misuse.

Then comes the call, “Let your course of life be free of avarice, contented with things present. For He hath said, I will in no wise leave thee, no, nor at all forsake thee; so that we say confidently, Jehovah [is] my helper, [and] I will not fear: what shall man do to me” (Heb. 13:5-6)? Avarice, sordid and unworthy of moral men, is peculiarly beneath those called to follow Christ in faith and love, with their eyes opened to their better and enduring substance where Christ is. Discontent with things is natural to unbelievers. It is good and due that we confide in His word to one, which is no less meant for all His own. The vulgar text falls far below the impressive promise and challenge the O.T. furnished: and God as a Father only gives it more force.

Hebrews 13:7-9

The hearts of the brethren are next recalled to their departed guides, who, as they had been remarkable for their faith, had closed their course faithfully to the Lord's praise.

“Be mindful of your leaders, who were such as spoke to you the word of God, and considering the issue of their course imitate their faith. Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday and today and forever. By teachings various and strange be not carried away; for [it is] good that the heart be established with grace, not meats; in which those that walked were not profited” (Heb. 13:7-9).

It is well that we should distinguish in our tongue what the Holy Spirit had distinguished in Heb. 13:3, Heb. 13:7: the former (compare Heb. 2:6) is practical remembrance of need, trial, and suffering; the latter is calling to mind those apt to be forgotten who had passed away. Hence the text of the A. V. is not in accordance with the truth; nor is the margin though more literal. But in this case we must say were, not “are,” your guides, for their course was closed, as the verse itself intimates. They had been “leading” men among the brethren like Judas Barsabbas and Silas (Acts 15:22), whether elders or not; and the saints are exhorted to hold them in honored memory; as the clause that follows characterizes them as having spoken to them the word of God, not the bare fact that they had so spoken in their day. It is probable that some of their “leaders” had the rule among the saints; but this is not the force of the word here employed, which is of a more general import, and may not have been other than prominence in teaching and exhortation.

There is another word it is well to observe, (προ■στ■μενοι) of similar import, as we may see in Rom. 12:8, 1 Thess. 5:12, which these scriptures show not to have been restricted to elders, though of course applicable to the exercises of their office. It means “presiding” and has its importance in its due place. But the great present value, as in the past, is that it depended on the spiritual strength which God supplies, and not on official position to which an apostle or an apostolic delegate appointed: a thing also to be fully owned where the fact was so, as scripture clearly proves. However this may have been, they had been their leaders, and the brethren are told, considering the issue of their course of life (in old English “their conversation"), to imitate their faith. Some among the Hebrew confessors were in danger of drawing back, as others seem to have actually done. There had been in earlier days a noble stand and severe endurance for it; and here they are exhorted to that which shone in departed guides, some at any-rate of whom, it would appear, had resisted to blood.

But a far higher object follows: the great Sufferer, He of all glory, Who always abides. “Jesus Christ [is] yesterday and today the same, and forever (unto the ages).” Such is the true meaning. There is no real ground for viewing it in apposition with “the end (or issue) of the conversation” that precedes, which not only violates grammar, but destroys the bearing of both clauses. It does beautifully introduce Him Who not only remains, alive again for evermore, but changes not. It is the creature's weakness to change, and of all creatures none more given to change than man, though he be head of all and endowed beyond all on earth; yet most changeable, like a reed bending to every wind, through his will and his passions. But here we have a real man, and tried as none

other ever was, yet the Unchanging One, as indeed He was and is God no less really. What a stay for our faith! For we who believe on Him have still that fallen nature; and who so competent as He to deliver us from our liability to swerve from the good, holy, and true into some snare of the enemy! To look to Him, depend on Him, delight our souls in Him, follow Him, is an immense safeguard, given of grace to this end; and He knows how to keep and hold the least steadfast of saints that wait on Him. Truly He is the rock that never moves, to sustain such as without Him must be the sport of wind and wave.

Of all men the Hebrews had shown themselves of old the most ready to adopt the strange and false gods of the nations. So their own prophets reproached them with a folly beyond example; yet were they the only people favored with the living God, Jehovah of hosts, deigning to be their God

But they rebelled against Him, people, priests, and kings, till there was no remedy; and except He had left them a very small remnant, they had been as Sodom and like Gomorrah. None but the Messiah could meet their desperate case, when they had become Lo-ammi, and even He only by the sacrifice of Himself when they had rejected and crucified Him. But now He was risen from the dead and glorified, crowned with glory and honor, and all things put in subjection under His feet, as David sung in Spirit. True, now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Himself exalted on high, the pledge of all that will surely be displayed at His appearing. To this blessed object of faith and hope are the eyes of these believing sons directed, that they might cleave to Him with purpose of heart, as their fathers never did, and that they be no more tossed to and fro. “Be not carried about by various and strange doctrines.” Such is the connection of thought, such the preservation in fact from that great danger. By this all saints may be blessed. “For it is good that the heart be established with grace; not with meats,” however much the lovers of tradition discuss and commend them, “in which those that walked were not profited.” How indeed could it be? Meats perish in the using, as those do who look not to the Highest. He is now dealing in nothing but sovereign grace, that the weakest may be sustained, and that the most wicked be saved through Christ and His redemption.

Hebrews 13:10-16

The Holy Spirit is not content with repudiating various and strange teachings, and such ordinances of flesh as He had already shown to characterize an imperfect system and a provisional time (Heb. 9:9-10) when the way into the sanctuary had not yet been made manifest. He affirms for the Christian the positive realities which the Jews might have thought non-existent. So He had shown throughout the Epistle. What Judaism had in form and shadow, in an earthly measure, those who are Christ's even now possess as heavenly truth in unfailing and abiding virtue, while ample scope was still left for the power of hope. The purification of sins was already made (Heb. 1:3), the great salvation confirmed unto us, by most ample and excellent witness, God Himself deigning to testify in the powers of the Spirit (Heb. 2:3-4). He even declares that, though we see not yet all things subjected to Jesus, the Son of Man, as we surely expect, we do behold Himself, because of the suffering of death too, crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:8-9). We are invited to consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus indeed (Heb. 3:1), but Jesus already shown to be unique, Son of God and Son of Man (Heb. 1-2), passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14), a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:10).

Oh! the folly, if we have Him, of hankering after a blasphemer like Caiaphas, or a Sadducean persecutor like Ananias. Nay, was there to be ever so ideal an heir of Aaron, “such a high priest became us” (said He, Heb. 7:26), “holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens.” For He has sat down on the right of the throne of the greatness in the heavens, as befits the surpassing glory of His person and His office, thus proved incontestably superior to Aaron's at his brightest; as He is become surety of a better covenant, which the prophets declared was to supersede the first and faulty one of which the Jews boasted (Heb. 8). Now only was the work of God done by the Son, and witnessed by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10). Truly, God provided for us some better thing (Heb. 11). So He speaks now:

“We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.” So run the words, not only because the Epistle ever looks at the wilderness way and its accompaniments, but because they were to know that “these great buildings” had no longer glory but shame, and that shortly should be left not one stone upon another. What altar can compare with Him through Whom we draw near to God and approach boldly even unto His throne?

Let them understand better the figures of the true. “For the bodies of the beasts, whose blood is brought for sin into the holies by the high priest, are burned without the camp.” It is only in Christianity that the two-fold truth is realized; in Judaism it was unknown, still less enjoyed. The two extremes meet in the true sin-offering, which points to the blood which fits for the holiest, and to the body burnt in the place of rejection outside. The Christian has access into the sanctuary, but along with this he shares the place of scorn here below. So it was with the Master and Lord. “Wherefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate.” Here is not type only, but fact, the ground of the exhortation, so needed then by the Jewish confessors, so needed at all times by the Christian: may we not add urgently now, when

men revive Jewish elements?

“Therefore let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after that which is to come.” We are not of the world, as our Lord was not; and as He never sought its ease or honor, but accepted its shame, so are we called to follow His steps “outside the camp,” the scene of religious respectability; as Heb. 10:19, &c., sets forth our boldness to enter the holies by the blood of Jesus. We are now constituted meet to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. The Jewish system by its nature not only offered no such privilege but denied it to all, even to the high priest who could approach but once a year its figure, and then with awful fear lest death should avenge any failure on his part.

And where are God's children now as to all this? Are they not in general, as far from availing themselves in practical ways of approach to the holies, as they run after man's mind and the world's honors? In fact, as in doctrine, the two things are closely tied together. And as grace makes us first free of the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, we are the better strengthened next to obey the call to go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

Soon the unbelieving or half-believing Jew had to learn that here he had no abiding city. But this should be ever true to Christian faith, if he dwelt in Rome or in London, as then in Jerusalem. Like Abraham we look for the city which rests not on sand, but “hath the foundations.” But it is “to come,” and will never be built of human hands, let men vaunt as they may. Its architect and maker is God; and Christ has prepared us for it. “Through Him therefore let us offer sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, fruit of lips making confession to His name. But of doing good and of communicating be not forgetful, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:15-16).

However serious our souls may well be, as we justly estimate the enmity of the world to God, His grace, truth, word and ways, as well as our own danger of compromise or of sin in any form, we are exhorted to offer sacrifice of praise continually to Him. It is through Christ. This explains and accounts for it. For He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever; and our blessing through Him is as complete as it is everlasting: salvation (Heb. 5), redemption (Heb. 9), inheritance (Heb. 9), and covenant (Heb. 13), all everlasting. No wonder we are called to praise God, not as Jews now and then, but “continually.” So in 1 Thess. 5:18 the apostle bids us “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Here it is appropriately said to be a sacrifice of praise which we offer to God continually. Is it, can it be so, where souls are under law? Are we not under grace? It is making confession to His name, and in no way our own righteousness any more than a form. But the Holy Spirit carefully reminds “of doing good and communicating” (i.e., of our substance to others in need). It is a real exercise of love and in faith, that it be a sacrifice, if of a lower sort than praise to God. “Forget not"; for there was danger of overlooking. These acts were also acceptable: “with such sacrifices God is well pleased,” although those of praise have the higher place.

Hebrews 13:17-19

In Heb. 13:17 it is no question of remembering the dead leaders (as in Heb. 13:7), but of the attitude which becomes the saints to their living guides. And this is shown by an obedient and submissive spirit.

“Obey your leaders and submit; for they watch for your souls as having to render an account; that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this [would be] unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to behave well. And I more abundantly beseech you to do this that I may more quickly be restored to you” (Heb. 13:17-18).

Reaction from new truth is a danger at one time, and at another a return to old ways when the new become irksome. So these Christian Jews are exhorted to that which is a constant duty for us no less than for them. Self-will increasingly characterizes this present evil age; and self-will is always sin. Elsewhere, as in Rom. 12, 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1, those called to preside or take the lead, elders or not, are exhorted how to fulfill their work in the Lord. Here, as in 1 Cor. 16 and 1 Thess. 5, the saints are reminded of what God looks for on their part. Scripture sanctions neither assertion of human right nor arbitrary claim of divine authority in the church of God. All are bound to serve, all responsible to obey the Lord Who has made His will sure and plain in the written word. But there is such a thing as spiritual wisdom, and experience which grace forms by the word of righteousness; there is practical power which faith gives by the action of the Holy Spirit, which is eminently serviceable to those less exercised in, discerning the path of Christ. Hence in the intricacies which so frequently beset the saints in such a world as this, and with a nature on which the enemy can readily act through present things, there is ample room for constant need of godly counsel, serious admonition, or even sharp rebuke; and as to all this the word is “obey your leaders and submit.” How often a real guide can point out what a perplexed saint saw not before it was set before him, but, when so set, at once perceives to be of God! For if there be a word of wisdom given to the one through the Spirit, the same Spirit dwelling in the other appreciates the true and the right, through the grace of Christ which sets independence aside as well as worldly lust or any other evil thing. Thus is the Lord honored in the chiefs no less than in those who submit to them. Sacerdotal claim is now excluded; and lawlessness is judged as hateful to God. Christ Himself led the way here below in this path of invariable and unswerving obedience; and those that guide will only guide aright who walk in the revealed ways of God which they urge on others; as these are only blessed as they walk in obedience and submission, instead of a vain clamor of their own rights, which if realized would be Satan's slavery.

But it is well to note that the Vulgate has fallen into the perversion, so natural to the official mind, that the guides will have to give an account of the souls under their supervision. Such is the strange reading of the Alexandrian MS. followed by Lachmann in his Greek Testament of 1831. Tischendorf who noticed this should have seen that L. corrected the error in his larger ed. of 1840-50. Certainly there is no excuse for any one failing to recognize the overwhelming testimony

in favor of the ancient copies as well as of the Received Text, which speak of the guides exercising wakeful care on behalf of the souls of the saints, as having to render an account. But this means not of other men's souls, but of their own conduct in relation to them. For each shall bear his own burden; and whatever, or whoever, comes between the conscience and God is of the enemy. Herein Romanism is the chief, but far from the only, offender in availing itself of a transparent error, and pursuing its most evil consequences. As the saints are shown the solemn responsibility of their leaders, they are told to cultivate a gracious readiness to obey and submit, that the guides might do their watchful work with joy, and not with groans over their refractoriness, which would be profitless for the saints. Compare for the other side 1 John 2:28, and 2 John 8; and for this side 3 John 4.

There is a fine link of connection in the request of the next verse: “Pray for us; for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience,” &c. How many more ask prayer because their conscience is bad! But the inspired writer could ask that the hearts of his brethren might plead with God for sustaining in his work, as the Spirit was leading him on without the sad need of getting morally restored from this or that evil which burdened him. For the fact is that of all saints none more need prayer—their own and of others—than such as are very prominent and active in the Lord's work. Habitually occupied with preaching and teaching others, how great the danger is of going on with a conscience not good about themselves! And what can more decidedly defile or harden? The apostle, in writing to his brethren, could all the more ask their prayers, because he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men, as he could say before the governor Felix and the high priest Ananias, both of them grievously and notoriously far different in this respect.

There is added an appeal to their affection. “But I more abundantly beseech you to do this, that I may be more quickly restored to you.” Compare Philemon. 22. It is beautiful and cheering to know that he counted on the love of the saints in the evil day, and that their prayers were so highly valued as efficacious with God.

Hebrews 13:20-25

The closing prayer is as worthy of this great Epistle as it corresponds with its character.

“Now the God of peace that brought up from [the] dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in [virtue of] blood of an eternal covenant, perfect you in every good work to the doing of His will, doing in you what is well pleasing before Him through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] the glory for the ages of ages” (Heb. 13:20-21). There is no blessing of the gospel, no need of the unbeliever, more characteristic than peace. As to the Roman saints peace with God was assured, so here to the believing Jews as well as the believing Greeks of Philippi, God is proclaimed as the God of peace. The peace of God has its suited limits; the God of peace is unlimited. The departure of some disheartened others. Ere long city and temple would be destroyed. But wants, difficulties, and dangers only furnish Him the occasion to bring His children through, purged of earthly associations and more than conquerors. The proof and pledge they see in our Lord Jesus, Whom God brought up from the dead, not only the good and chief but the great Shepherd of the sheep, Whose blood is of no temporary covenant but of an eternal, avails not only for the present redemption and heavenly nearness of those who believe, but their sure title to be similarly brought up from death at His coming.

Nothing can move such a Savior, standing, and hope. The “better thing” we possess rests on the God of peace and a Shepherd so great that those of Israel are utterly small and weak in comparison. And God is no otiose or capricious being such as Pagans feigned, but active unceasingly according to the perfect and perfecting work of His Son. He lends an ear to His own in their perilous pilgrimage, and is ready to fully adjust them in every good work to the doing His will, even as Christ has shown us the example unfalteringly. Thus only can be what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; as He is the One Who does all the good in His saints who deny self and depend on Him by faith. To Him then be the glory forever and ever, Amen. For an end so holy, what can others, what can self do? “There is none good but One, God.” And the Son is the way to the Father, the truth, and the life. So the Holy Spirit works in glorifying Him, Whom the Father will have all to honor, even as they honor the Father. Thus only is His will done in principle and in detail.

“Now I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation; for also in few words have I written to you. Know that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty, with whom if he come soon, I will see you. Salute all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy salute you. Grace [be] with you all, Amen” (Heb. 13:22-25).

The Epistle as a whole abounds in exhortation, based as ever on the truth of Christ, His work, and His offices, drawn from the O. T. with a skill and power and simplicity, which the Holy Spirit alone could give the inspired vessel; yet vast and profound and far-reaching as the result is, in what few words comparatively has all been conveyed! What scope for others to enlarge and enforce in their exhortations! and how subversive, without controversy, of all that Rabbinism loves to hear, not only hiding the waste to which their unbelief has reduced “the pleasant land,” but shutting out from

their disciples the more than fulfillment of their highest aspirations in Him, Who as concerning flesh came of Judah and of David's lineage doubly, but is infinitely more—Who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen.

The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets are seen in a N. T. setting, self-evidently intended to be so understood when the due time came, which also saw the blotting out even of the restored remnant, and most righteously; for they hated and rejected their own Messiah. And marvelous is the way in which all the unfolding of His person and work and offices is turned to practical profit in detail; so that it is with the best right styled “the word of exhortation,” about to yield unfailingly varied appeals for all the unfoldings of His servants, whose eye is simple to His glory, whose heart appreciates His grace, whose faith in the crucified Christ follows Him on high and approaches God in the holiest. And this is Christianity, the present living truth with its heavenly and everlasting issues, before a remnant in the latter day shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah, before the Lord Jehovah too shall say to the dry bones in the open valley, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. Yes, they shall surely live, those dry bones of Israel in that day, stand up an exceeding great army, and be placed in their own land. Yea more, the twelve tribes shall be one in Jehovah's hand, one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and that king the true Beloved, great David's greater Son; and there shall they dwell forever, and the Beloved, Jehovah's Servant, their prince forever.

This will be His kingdom, for His world-kingdom is not yet come, but will assuredly. But those that now share His rejection and wait for heavenly glory have the “better thing.” The reference to Timothy suits the Apostle Paul fully, while the omission of his own name is most intelligible, as writing outside his province of the uncircumsion, yet just the expression of his heart always toward his brethren after the flesh, and characterized by the knowledge of Christ dead, risen, and ascended as became him beyond other men. The allusion in 2 Peter 3 is decisive that the apostle Paul wrote an Epistle to the believers of the circumcision, to whom Peter addressed both his Epistles. That letter of Paul can only be the Epistle to the Hebrews, unless we suppose God allowed such a unique document to perish and someone else to do that work over again for a permanent place in the canon of scripture. Only speculative rationalism could receive suppositions so harsh, capricious, and unworthy; but those who do not give its true value to God's word are proverbially credulous of fancies such as these. No doubt the style differs strikingly; but even men of genius only have often shown themselves equal to some such difference in their works. And it would appear that saints from Italy, not of Rome only, were with the writer when and where he wrote. The greeting here desired embraces “all your leaders and all the saints.” This was emphatically called for then, but seasonable always. How many are apt to be narrow, if not alienated! Not so was his heart who wrote, “Grace be with you all, Amen.”

Chapter 128

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl: 1

Matt. 13

THE fact that the series of parables in Matt. 13. consists of seven in number is sufficiently obvious to arrest the attention of a very ordinary reader of the chapter. But it is further to be noted that Mark is commissioned to record an additional parable (that of the secret growth of the seed, Mark 4:26-29), spoken, (it should seem) on the same occasion but omitted by Matthew, while on the other hand, Mark does not give more than two out of the seven in the first evangelist, but adds that “with many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it” (Mark 5:33). This consideration justifies the thought, if indeed justification of such a thought be in any wise necessary, that the seven parables before us were selected by the Holy Ghost, and so arranged for some specific purpose.

Without illustrating by examples the remarkable prevalence of the number “seven” throughout the Holy Scriptures, it may be helpful to refer to a well-known series in the Old Testament and another in the New.

Under the law, the Israelites were commanded to observe seven feasts in the first seven months of the sacred year (Lev. 23.). Each of these was typical of succeeding events in the national history. The feast of the passover has a reference to the sacrifice of Christ as 1 Cor. 5. conclusively proves. This was immediately followed by that of unleavened bread, typifying the holy state which is the sure result of the shed blood of God's Lamb, true to faith now and universally in a future day. The sheaf of firstfruits undoubtedly points to the resurrection of Christ on the third day; even as the feast of wave loaves, baken with leaven, shadowed forth the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was outpoured from on high and the church was formed. This feast was in Sivan or the third month, and the fifth feast was not arranged till the seventh month. After this considerable interval the feast of trumpets came at the new moon, with its prophetic reference to that still future and effective summons God shall make to His ancient people. This was quickly succeeded by the day of atonement, in which they were to afflict their souls. It will be duly fulfilled when Israel is restored and shares the results of Christ's death for them. Then shall ensue the millennial joy of which the final feast, that of tabernacles, was the appointed type.

This rapid sketch will suffice to show that the series of feasts of Jehovah was meant to outline a complete cycle of events in the history of God's people, part of which even now awaits fulfillment.

Somewhat analogous are the addresses to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2; 3). They present successive phases in the history of the professing church from the decline of heart at Ephesus, through stages of indifference to and abandonment of the truth, on to the lifeless profession at Laodicea. These epistles therefore span the period from the apostolic days until the removal of the true and the destruction of the false church.

By these instances the way is prepared to see in the seven parables of Matt. 13. a representation of the rise, progress, and end of the kingdom. But while this is true, it must be remembered that

the Lord delineates the kingdom in that peculiar form which it assumes in consequence of the rejection of Himself the King and during the time of His absence. And this fact is very clearly and definitely conveyed in the former chapters of the Gospel. There it is very carefully shown that Jesus of Nazareth was undoubtedly Israel's Messiah, perfectly fulfilling what God had spoken beforehand by the mouth of His holy prophets. It is likewise shown with equal distinctness that, though He was undoubtedly the Savior Who was to come, and though He wrought many mighty works in proof of the same, the nation refused to own their King; so that the kingdom could not then be manifested in the glory of which the prophets had spoken. The implacable spirit of rejection was displayed by the Pharisees in a most unmistakable way when they ascribed the miraculous power He exhibited to a Satanic origin (Matt. 9:34; 12:24). No manner of sin or blasphemy could exceed this. It struck not only at the Son of man but against the Holy Ghost by Whom He was ever energized. It could not be passed over (Matt. 12:31). Accordingly in the succeeding chapter we find that the Lord commenced to teach by means of parables the new form that the kingdom would assume in consequence of this irreconcilable opposition of the Jews.

The parables of Matt. 13 are divisible into two groups, into one of which the first four fall, as having been spoken to the multitudes, in contradistinction to the last three which were spoken privately to the disciples in the house. In the former group the man-ward aspects of the kingdom are portrayed: and in the latter those divine characteristics discernible alone to faith.

In the introductory parable of the sower and the soils, the Lord shows that all depended on the manner of the reception of the word of the kingdom. The sons of the kingdom would be not the natural seed of Abraham, but those who heard the word and understood it (ver. 23). In the other three parables of this group (the wheat and the tares, the mustard tree becoming a great tree, and the leavened meal) the Master unfolds the strange fact that, so far from evil being rooted out of the kingdom by the exercise of inflexible righteousness, it will spring up side by side with good, and eventually so permeate the kingdom as to impart its character to the whole.

The fulfillment of this prophecy, after the Lord went away, may be gathered from the inspired history of apostolic times, and may be observed in the condition of things surrounding us at the present moment. An absolutely pure Christian association is unknown. Evil men and evil principles creep in unawares, so that the Lord's servants are unable to distinguish between the wheat and the tares, and both are growing together until harvest. The poor and despised assembly of God left its first estate and became a prominent worldly power in the earth, thus affording a shelter for the very emissaries of evil that in its early stage were its sworn foes. And not only does this debased state of Christendom arise from an unholy alliance with worldly power, but evil originates from within, going on to leaven the whole lump. So the apostle warned the Ephesian elders, both of the grievous wolves that should enter in, not sparing the flock and also of men that should arise from themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:29, 30). Deterioration would originate from interior as well as exterior causes.

This then would be the outward aspect of the kingdom as existing upon the earth, subsequent to the Lord's departure and prior to His return when His angels will gather out of His kingdom “all things that do offend and them which do iniquity” (Matt. 13:41). Herein it afforded a direct contrast to the prophetic descriptions of the Old Testament. They describe a state of righteousness and peace when the Lord Jesus sits upon the throne of David. Then evil will be subdued; and “truth

shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Psa. 85:11). But until then, as these parables show, evil is seen in closest association with good, even in that which bears the Lord's name.

However, in the succeeding parables spoken to the disciples only, that aspect of the kingdom is given which can be apprehended by faith alone. The natural eye would never discern the truth foreshadowed in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. What appears among men as an indiscriminate and heterogeneous mass is here shown to contain what is valuable and beautiful. At these two parables it is proposed to look more closely (D. V.), on a future occasion. In the last picture the final separation is presented as it affects the good rather than the evil.

THE “body” and the “house” differ manifestly. The church is the house of God, and the body of Christ glorified. God's body it never is nor could be called. “My dead bodies” in Isa. 26:19 simply expresses Jehovah's affection for the Jews when restored after so long a death.

Chapter 129

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl: 2

IT has already been intimated that, in the two parables or similitudes given in Matt. 13.4-46, the intrinsic worth and spiritual beauty to be found in the kingdom of heaven are shown as existing, in spite of the intermixture of evil which is apparent to the cursory glance. The wheat mingled with darnel, the wide-spreading, umbrageous tree, the meal permeated with leaven were discernible to all, and must plainly set forth the general outward appearance. But the hidden treasure and the rare and costly pearl imply qualities that could only be appreciated by the finder. And so in the great mass of Christian profession, the eyes of the world are able to very readily detect the iniquity that shelters itself under the guise of religion; but only the Eye of omniscient grace is able to mark the internal worth and the indestructible unity existing beneath such an unpromising exterior.

The former of the two parables likens the kingdom of heaven to “treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matt. 13:44).

The two prominent features in this parable are, first, the treasure hidden in the field; and second, the purchase of the field for the sake of the treasure. In the first place then, what is signified by the figure of the bidden treasure? Some have hastily assumed from Prov. 2:4 (“it thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God”) that the treasure is Christ; and that the parable has a figurative reference to the manner in which the blessings of the gospel are acquired. Without doubt, in Proverbs, the point is to inculcate a spirit of earnestness in pursuit of wisdom. As in seeking for silver and treasure, the energies are by that very fact stimulated, so it should be in the spiritual analogue. But in Matt. 13 we have a similar figure used for a different purpose. Here it is not the diligence of the searcher, so much as the value of the treasure sought that is most prominent. Besides it is not the king but the kingdom that is likened to treasure hidden in a field.

If the general trend of the series of parables be borne in mind, the meaning of the figure before us appears on the surface. In the enunciation to the crowds of the similitudes of the outward form of the kingdom in mystery, the Lord used figures that spoke of good being largely alloyed with evil. Subsequently, to his own disciples, He gave the interpretation of the wheat and the tares which in general intention resembled the leavened meal and the wide-branched mustard tree. The Lord then likens the kingdom to hidden treasure, using a similitude that suggested a pure, unmixed character and not an amalgam as before. In point of fact, the terms in which this parable is expressed forbid us to think of anything but a view of the kingdom of heaven contrasted with those that precede. In the latter, elements (such as the tares, the leaven, the birds) are introduced which tend to diminish the value it possessed in its incipient stage: but here there is nothing of the kind, its value is given without a single mark of qualification.

The first consideration of this truth leads to the reflection that God's ways of sovereign grace must be marvelous indeed when He finds, in spite of man's irreparable sinfulness and his invariable abuse of everything entrusted to him, that which from His own point of view He represents by

treasure. For whatever may be the slowness of man's heart to believe all that is written, the truth abides, here and in not a few other scriptures, that God in and by means of Christ has found His good pleasure in men.

But though undoubtedly the New Testament gives us this blessed revelation in its fullest application, a similar expression is used in the Old Testament concerning God's chosen nation. From Mount Sinai, the word of Jehovah came unto the children of Israel— “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples” (Ex. 19:4, 5). On account however of the transgressions of the people under the first covenant, this purpose of God was never realized. Not that it was thereby abrogated, for it still holds good that Jehovah “hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure” (Psa. 135:4). And in the millennial day this shall be owned by every nation, from the rising to the setting of the sun. For then Jehovah will save Israel, He will rejoice over her with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing (Zeph. 3:17).

But in the present interval, while Israel is in strange lands, the Lord finds in the midst of His nominal kingdom where evil lifts its head in unrebuked defiance of good, that which His own heart esteems a special treasure. This treasure is not the favored nation of Palestine, which, as has been shown does not come within the scope of this series of parables, but it is the N.T. saints in that ideal character which they possess in the mind and eternal purpose of God.

Now in the epistles of Paul, especially in that to the Ephesians, we have this character presented in the form of doctrine. In Matthew the time had not come to give more than a figurative reference to what the great apostle of the Gentiles was subsequently commissioned to communicate in detail. In his writings therefore, we learn that the church is destined and designed to be the vehicle for the display of divine grace and wisdom.

Thus in Ephesians, we are not only introduced to the inexpressible fullness of our blessing in Christ, but also to the inconceivable fact that by means of us His holy name will be magnified and exalted. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph. 1:5, 6), and again, “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” (Eph. 1:11, 12). Here then (it is submitted with all due deference to the judgment of others) we see that character of the church in which it corresponds with the figure of “treasure” in Matt. 13:44. Treasure is such because of the use that may be made of it. And the saints are of value simply because God has deigned to utilize them as the media whereby to display His manifold wisdom. So the scriptures declare the purpose of God to be that “now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).

But this treasure is said to be “hidden in a field;” and the church, described in the Pauline epistles as a “mystery” (that is a secret, hitherto hidden but now made known), remarkably tallies with the figure. Compare Rom. 16:25, 26, Eph. 3:4, 5, 9; Col. 1:26; 2:2, 3. In this respect the church affords a contrast to the nation of Israel. For when the Israelites were called out of Egypt to be Jehovah's treasure (Ex. 19:4-6), it was not said to be hid in a field. Because their deliverance from the

oppressor and their introduction to Canaan was but the due accomplishment of promises made centuries previous to Abraham their forefather. But the calling and privileges of the church were never the subject of promise. From Genesis to Malachi no revelation from on high was given concerning the church of the heavenly calling. The mystery was hidden from the sons of men, hidden in God. The divine seeker alone was aware of its existence; He alone knew and appreciated its worth. Truly there is a day coming when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43). But Christ discerns beforehand and divests Himself of all to obtain the treasure—a treasure whose value is the product of His own grace and which apart from Him is worthless and worse.

(To be continued, D.V.).

Chapter 130

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl: 3

THE second striking feature in the similitude of the hidden treasure is that the field was purchased for the purpose of acquiring the treasure: “the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.”

In this particular, also, the analogy is in strict accordance with the doctrinal truth conveyed by inspiration to the apostolic churches, and through them to us and to all saints. For the Lord by means of His mighty work of redemption, purchased not believers only, but the world out of which they were taken. This is no matter of speculation but of revelation. Indeed the fact that in consequence of His death, the Lord bears a relation to all mankind and further to all creation, is repeated in scripture in various connections. He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). He has received power over all flesh as well as to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him (John 17:2). He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:6), as well as giving His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). He tasted death for everything as well as for the many sons He is bringing to glory (Heb. 2:9, 10). He reconciles not only those who were sometime alienated in their minds by wicked works, but all things whether in heaven or in earth (Col. 1:20, 21). The saints of to-day are His purchase or peculium (Eph. 1:14; 1 Peter 2:9); but also of false teachers it is said, “who privily bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord who bought them” (2 Peter 2:1).

There is therefore abundant witness that the Lord Jesus has obtained a right over the whole world including those who become heirs of salvation. So in the days of old it was under the title of the “Lord of all the earth” (Josh. 3:13), that Jehovah drove out the Canaanites and established His chosen people in the promised land. And in a coming day the Lord Jesus shall be manifested in the fullness of His acquired glory. Then shall He receive the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psa. 2:8). But this is not in the present day. For in John 17:9, the Son said to His Father, “I ask (■ρωτ■) for them (the treasure); I ask not for the world (the field) but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.”

Along with this parabolic assertion of the universal Lordship of Christ, two attendant circumstances are given which call for remark—(1) the joy of finding the treasure and anticipating its possession, and (2) the renunciation of all in order to acquire the treasure.

The prophets had borne witness to the joy of Jehovah over His people Israel when they shall be restored. “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married...and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (Isa. 62:45). Compare also Isa. 65:19; Zeph. 3:17. This however is during that blessed epoch, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). But the truth in the parable is that, even during the period when tares, and leaven and unclean birds defile the kingdom of heaven, the saints constitute such a treasure in the Lord's own estimation as to afford Him abundant joy.

It is indeed marvelous and incomprehensible that grace should be delighted with objects such as we; nevertheless the fact remains. For Luke 15 shows that even one repentant sinner causes joy in the presence of the angels of God. Who then shall conceive with what exceeding joy the whole company of redeemed saints shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory (Jude 24)?

Doubtless the supposition that it is impossible that Christ should find joy in the acquisition of His own, or that they should be of value to Him, has led to the popular interpretation of the actor of the parable being not Christ but the sinner. A well-known writer declares that to see Christ in the passage “strangely reverses the whole matter” and he characterizes the view at its best to be no more than “ingenious.”

But to any who are bound by the scripture the phrase, “for joy thereof,” should offer an insurmountable difficulty to making the interpretation of the parable descriptive of man's entrance into the kingdom. For it is to be observed that the word nowhere teaches that the sinner receives the gospel with joyfulness, whatever joy may and does follow in due course (Rom. 5:2, 3, 11). In fact the same may be gathered from the parable of the sower in this very chapter. There we find that the one who received the word “with joy,” was he who had no root in himself, and who, as soon as tribulation and persecution arose because of the word, was immediately stumbled. And not a word is mentioned as to joy in connection with the “good ground” hearers. And no support can be obtained from Acts 2:41. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized “; for scholars are agreed that the word “gladly” is an unwarranted interpolation, It is true the truth heals, but it does so because it first wounds. It leads to the Savior which is joy indeed, but it previously convicts of sin which is never a pleasant process. The view in question therefore does not correspond with the plain statements of scripture. But passages have already been pointed out which show that the Lord finds joy in the redemption of His saints. In Heb. 12:2, it says of Jesus, “Who for the joy set before him, endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.”

We may therefore conclude that it is Christ who “for joy thereof” sold all He had and bought the field. For the sinner is never told to sell all that he has to purchase the gospel which is without money and without price. And the reference to the word to the ruler— “Go and sell that thou hast” (Matt. 19:21), is of no avail whatever. For this was a test whether so rigid an observer of the law was able to take the path and position of a disciple of the rejected Messiah. He failed as all must, and thus really condemns the theory of those who rob the parable of its force. The allusion to Paul's renunciation of all things for Christ's sake, detailed in Phil. 3:4-9, is also without point; for this was the experience of one who knew Christ. It is quite a different thing, having found Christ to yield up all for His sake, from surrendering all things as the condition of finding Him. The latter exists in the imaginations of men but not in the gospel.

But this leads to the second point: that the finder sells all that he has and buys the field. In what way was this fulfilled in Christ?

Surely in this that, though He came to the house of Israel as the promised seed of Abraham and of David to reign over the house of Jacob forever, He renounced that earthly glory, which was and is His by oath and promise, in order that He might have the saints of the heavenly calling which manifestly could not be, had the kingdom then been set up in power. Thus in Matt. 16:20, directly

He speaks of the assembly which will be composed of those who confess His name in the hour of His rejection, He charges His disciples to tell no man He is Christ. He puts aside His Jewish title, comes before them as the Son of the living God He is however rejected and crucified (Matt. 16:16; John 19:7). But in resurrection He is offered to all, not to Jews alone; for the gospel delivers those who believe from all earthly distinctions and associates them with Christ on high. And this goes on even now, when the Lord waives His Jewish rights that He may gather His treasure out of the field.

Chapter 131

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl: 4

IN considering these two parables, one can scarcely fail to be struck by their general resemblance. In both, the finder esteems his prize so highly that he is thereby constrained to part with all for the purpose of acquiring the same. This points to the conclusion that the main subjects of the parables are intimately connected, if not identical. So that as the treasure has already been shown to indicate that nucleus of truth and faithfulness existing in the midst of a heterogeneous mass of profession, so does the pearl of great price figure that same nucleus, though of course in a different aspect. For the two parables before us give a double view of the “good” in the kingdom of heaven, just as the third and fourth of the series give the two characters of “evil,” viz., the mustard tree, showing the outward conformation to the world and its ways, and the leaven, marking the corruption that permeates to the very core.

The difference between the parables of the treasure and the pearl seems to be that the first views the saints of God in their individual capacity as precious in the sight of the Lord, while the second discloses that remarkable unity which is a distinct characteristic of the children of God during the present interval. The term “treasure” might include gold, silver or any articles of value, and thus be of a very composite nature; but the beauty and value of the pearl depends entirely upon its homogeneity. So we find that in the latter parable the merchant is especially declared to have found “one pearl of great price.”

It is of no small importance that the distinction thus laid down by these two parables at the very inception, so to speak, of the present order of divine things should he borne in mind. Dilating upon the privileges and responsibilities of the church to the obliteration of those of the individual is as far from the truth as exalting the individual at the expense of the church. To ignore, or even weaken either, must result in confusion of mind and failure of testimony.

And it was undoubtedly seen needful to unfold this dual relationship of the saints of God, at this juncture, lest it might be supposed that, in their remarkable unification, their recognition as individuals was thereby destroyed. We have therefore the parable of the treasure preceding that of the pearl. The interest of Christ in His own is shown to be towards them personally before it is collectively. They are said to be His, first severally, and then jointly.

We have this order in the presentation of these truths in the Epistle to the Ephesians even as here. The apostle there writes to the saints and faithful, and unfolds God's eternal purpose concerning them. He first enumerates the blessings they possess as individuals rather than as a corporate body. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (chap. 1: 3). They were elected in Him before the foundation of the world (ver. 4). They were predestinated to the adoption of sons (ver. 5). They had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (ver. 7). In Him they had obtained an inheritance (ver. 11). In Him also, after they had believed, they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise (ver. 13). These all are the sure portion of every soul saved in this day of grace, both at Ephesus and everywhere else, Gentile or Jew. The blessings are common, as is the mighty power of God which quickens and raises them though previously dead in trespasses and

sins.

But more than this. It is then particularly dwelt upon that Jew and Gentile, so long and so widely separated, are now seen alike children of wrath, once alike dead in sins; yea, also quickened together, raised together, and even seated together in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2) To faith it is now displayed in the very heavenlies that the ancient distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished. Indeed it could not be expected that any mere earthly privilege should hold good in the heavenlies, much less when all are viewed in Christ Jesus. Nothing could be a stronger affirmation of the establishment of an entirely new order of things than is here given. Far-off ones are made nigh in Christ Jesus. Both are made one by Him. He has made in Himself of twain one new man. Both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. He preached peace to the distant and to the nigh. Through Him both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Titus the Gentiles who were strangers and foreigners share, not only the personal blessings (“fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God”), but also the corporate (“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 a habitation of God through the Spirit”), Eph. 2.

Clearly this was a revelation not heard of nor even hinted at before. Neither Old Testament history nor prophecy; spoke of Jew and Gentile on one common platform. The mystery of Christ “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” (Eph. 3:5, 6). Here again it is declared that the Gentiles, beside being “fellow-heirs” which might not exclude class distinctions, were of the “same body.” So that the “unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:4) is of an altogether unique character, and neither known nor prophesied of before.

In the millennium, Israel most certainly will not be merged in the other nations, nor on the other hand will the Gentiles be advanced to the same level as the Jew. In that day God's ancient people shall be the “head” and not the “tail.” The seed of Israel “shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Isa. 54:3). The supremacy of the people shall be owned; for “many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:22, 23). Again, “Many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off” (Mic. 4:2, 3). These scriptures are surely sufficiently explicit to decide that the pearl would be no suitable figure for the kingdom set up in power, when the Gentiles will be subordinate to the Jews, in no way brought into such an intimate unity with them as is described in the Epistle to the Ephesians as existing at the present moment.

In the Epistles the figure to which this unity is referred is that of the human body. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body whether we be Jews or

Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). Compare also Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:18. This figure is beautifully adapted to illustrate the unity resulting from the co-ordination of the various component parts. The members however diverse in themselves are harmonized by the Spirit of God and brought into a state of mutually interdependent relationship, so that each member is essential to the perfect unity of the body and also to the due performance of its functions. And herein lies the difference between the two figures—the "pearl" sets forth unity joined with beauty and value, while the "body" indicates unity along with activity and mutual co-operation. In the parable the church is viewed as in the Divine mind and purpose, but in the Epistles as in actual life and practice upon the earth; hence the variation in the emblem.

The beauty and consequent value of the pearl in question transcended that of all other pearls. Here we are brought in presence of the inconceivable fact that the Lord Jesus saw that in the assembly which called out the ineffable delight of His heart. It is not ours to question here whether that quality be inherent or derived, though we may well be certain we shall never discover in ourselves any adequate cause. It befits us rather to ponder, wonderingly and adoringly, the words of Holy Scripture, "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present to himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:24-27). He then is the Lover of the assembly in its entirety; He gives nothing short of Himself for it. His object is to present to Himself the church perfected and unblemished in glory. And He lays claim to it because of His sacrifice. When He came to Israel, He came to "His own." But He "gave Himself for us" (Titus 2:14). So that the Lord takes the church on the ground of His work on the cross, and not on that of promise or prophecy. In the expressive words of this parable, He "went and sold all that He had and bought it."

We have seen therefore that, in this comprehensive survey of the kingdom of heaven in its corrupted form, two parables are given to assure the hearts of the Lord's people, that however extended may be the influence of evil principles and persons upon that which professes His name, they themselves are too much upon His heart, to allow His purpose regarding them to be thwarted. The Lord knows, loves, and rejoices over them that are His.

W. J. H.

Chapter 132

Dr. Salmon's Historical Introduction to the New Testament: Review

IT is late to notice a work which is already in its sixth edition, the expansion of lectures delivered in the divinity school of the University of Dublin. Renan's Histoire des Origines du Christianisme was then in course of publication; which gave it perhaps a greater place in the lecturer's notice than would have been due a little later. Baur too, notwithstanding his extravagance and the time which has sufficed to make it manifest even to many daringly speculative, seems to have rather too much honor paid him, though it be in the shape of refutation.

There are six and twenty lectures, the first three introductory; (1.) the principles of the investigation, (2.) Baur's theory of early church history, (3.) the Anti-Paulinism of the Apocalypse. The next four are on the reception of the Gospels in the early church. Lectures 8. and 9. discuss the Synoptic Gospels; 10. the original of Matthew; 11. Apocryphal and Heretical Gospels. No less than six are devoted to the Johannine books. Lectures 13. and 19. deal with the Acts, and Apocryphal Acts; only one (20.) with the Pauline Epistles, that to the Hebrews being handled apart in 21. Lecture 22. treats of 1 Peter; 23. of James; 24. of Jude; 25. of 2 Peter; and 26. of non-canonical books.

Some of our readers are familiar with Westcott's elaborate History of the New Testament Canon. Others will prefer the vigorous common sense of Dr. S. in this compact, closely and correctly printed, volume of more than 600 pages (including preface and contents). It is really the genuineness of the several N. T. writings historically defended, and a refutation of the spurious books issued in comparatively early times: both with the known learning and ability of the present Provost of Trinity College, Dublin. For helps in studying those books critically and exegetically, which the Christian reader most values, the latter in particular, he must search elsewhere. Dr. S. here argues all out on a ground which makes irrelevant inspiration itself, with all its holy and grand issues, though believing it.

Chapter 133

On Hymns, No. 1

As many are exercised about the selection of 1856 and its revision, a few words may help by furnishing the light of revealed truth. The wisdom which comes from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruit, without contention, without hypocrisy.

Hymns properly are addressed to God in Himself and His relations, His grace and holiness, His attributes and mercies, His counsels and His ways, &c.; and so with our Lord Jesus in His person and offices, His work, love, glory, coming, and kingdom, &c. A didactic form is surely to be avoided when God or the Lord is approached in praise or thanksgiving; though nothing can in effect more truly instruct and admonish the saints than such outpourings of heart under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a hymn one looks for the elevated expression of communion rising from true and deep spirituality, or that charming simplicity in celebrating grace and truth, which is due in homage and gratitude to God and His Son, and most widely acceptable. Hence those which address the saints, or again the church, &c., as the rule (not perhaps without exception) fittingly fall into a place separate from what is suited for worship; so those of experience, and of course others of a gospel character. These may be excellent, more so than some of direct praise. But the difference is just, and ought to part many otherwise good.

A didactic statement, like 18, 64, &c. has no real right to a place; nor is Watts' (30) quite suitable, as being a sermonette with a hymnal preface and end, (or Haweis' (32) with its warm individual feeling). Is it well for assembly worship to use verses which teach “Jesus!” or even us the difference between the Levitical economy and Christianity? It may be in the later pieces. The Good Tidings' Hymn Book, again, more appropriately has such as 39, 40, 53, 62, 67, 111, &c. Number 22 is a touching record, but not a hymn. Take 54, 63, 82, 93, 98, 99, &c.: however fine in varying degree, they naturally follow those of adoration.

Undoubtedly, as a literary question, it is due to an author to give his words as they originally or last left his pen; for some of those most valued were often retouched by the author. There may be a delicacy while he lives and refuses his consent to alterations for public use, desirable in the judgment of spiritually competent men. But when he is departed, personal feeling should yield to higher demands. Why should the worship of the assembly lack a hymn admirable but for an error more or less easy of emendation? Or why should they be forced to use one which offends in some serious point? When nothing of moment is gained, the author's form should be observed, as in the opening of Hymns 2, 123, 283, &c.

But the reverence which scripture teaches and forms is of prime moment: else God is not worthily honored, and saints are unconsciously but really injured. How unbecoming to address the Lord by His personal name without some title of respect! It is a habit come down from the early fall of Christendom, through Monkish hymns to Moravians and almost everybody. The book of 1856 abounds with this serious oversight. Can there be a more valid reason for amending Hymn 6? The rest of the stanzas well fall in with the necessary change. “Thy” afterward is quite proper. The fault

demands care everywhere, especially in an age of levity, so increasingly far from real reverence or respect even among Christians.

Truth again is of at least equal importance. Take an early and mild instance, “sons and daughters” in Hymn 3: does this express the Christian relationship? The apostle in 2 Cor. 6 refers to Isa. 43:6; 52:11, and other scriptures for enforcing separation from evil in every sort and degree on the Christian as the condition of his relationship with God. He is no more defining what is special to us (where male and female vanish), than he is holding out a long life on the earth to Christian children in Eph. 6 as the motive for obeying their parents in the Lord. Again, abstract competency to win our love is surely inadequate to express our praise in 6, which is therefore rightly changed to “'Twas Thine alone” &c., though this necessitates a modification of the following line of the stanza. Further, in 7 “sin's” heavy burden needs correction to be scriptural (and so often elsewhere), besides other improvements called for in the same stanza. Nor can any reasonable Christian doubt that in the favorite 8 “The depth of Thy riches,” though alluding to, does not express, Rom. 11:33, but is vague and unmeaning; while the correction is easy, not harsh or extreme as elsewhere. Next, can any one doubt the improvement, at the least cost, of 9? And is it not well to abolish the uncalled for capitals and italics, not only in 10 but in many more? The doctrine of 11 is bad in the second stanza as in others; and 12 is so indifferent that many would reject part if not the whole.

To fair minds it seemed safe to substitute here the hymn of one inferior to none in depth of thought and spiritual feeling, though clothing generally in rugged phrase even his loftiest (as 14, 76, 79); especially as the substitutes for 12 and 25 (a prayer-meeting hymn) were already familiar in the Appendix as 18 and 24, and valued by all capable of appreciating them. Little could one anticipate any outrage now. But he is dead: not a whisper while he lived. Others will not forget nor cease to love and respect. Any one can cast mud; and the hand that could not build a hovel might burn down a palace.

Dismissal hymns, like 17, 161, 247, 248, 311, it is thought best to group with 340; and those speaking of the Lord's Supper near the first half of the book. For this an old one of Sir E. D. is reserved, correcting any word or thought in danger of evil construction, as others were sent about in a not duly corrected proof. Hymns of such effort of thought and swollen words as 24, 26, 31, and not a few others, may not approve themselves to all, any more than new ones of simple language and fuller matter than the ordinary; but in a compilation general edification to the Lord's praise ought to be sought, not to gratify personal taste or prejudice.

When the book of 1856 appeared, great opposition or even animosity was entertained, both by those who resented the public discontinuance (save by a very few for a while) of the “Hymns for the poor of the Flock” (1842), and by those who lost many fine hymns there which deserve and will now have an honored seat. Further, there were strange and sorry importations which astonished even such as shared in its correction, who were few. Yet as a whole the improvement was marked and by degrees appreciated. Still the failure in a measure was felt from the first; and this led more than a dozen years ago to a Revision and a Re-revision, the character of which, whatever the good omissions and changes here and there, as well as the insertion of several fine hymns, did not at all satisfy many intelligent brethren who were expected to use it publicly. It will be the shame of those who are now laboring diligently in the proposed new edition, which is in course of being

printed, if a better and more correct Hymn-book be not produced; as true-hearted men helping it on now are assured that by grace it will be.

Understanding of hymns depends sometimes on the right or spiritual feeling of the individual. Moral state not infrequently blinds, to say nothing of capacity. But a few instances in the book of 1858 may prove how pious men, not fitted in all respects to revise, may unintentionally falsify and destroy the sense. Hymn 76 (“Rise, my soul”) had appeared if not before in the 1842 collection; where, though the punctuation was not erroneous, it did not help the slow, or the self-confident, to understand the last splendid stanza. In fact, it was very generally misunderstood. But in 1856 it is printed so mistakenly as to mislead every one who trusts this edition. “Then no stranger,-God shall meet thee, Stranger thou” &c. Not only should the opening word be “There,” but, what is of far more consequence, the punctuation introduced utterly ruins the author's thought, and makes the first line even contradict the second. The true and only intended force is: God no stranger but well-known, meeting the saint a stranger in courts above. Another error equally gross, if not worse, is in the last line of the same author's sweet personal hymn, 82, where he is made to say, as thousands have sung for near forty: years, that “my hopes shall crown Christ,” instead of its reading (as he wrote) that Christ will crown my hopes: the error of printing “shall” for “shalt,” as was pointed out to the publisher many years since. There is a third, which still remains unredressed in the opening stanzas of 79 (of the same author). This nobody can explain or understand as now printed. Proper stops help to make it plain.

There is another class of change, as in the omission of stanza 3 in 65. It is both a poor drop from what precedes, and not in consonance with what follows. The only question is, whether the hymn does not call for another stanza to finish: for a hymn ought to have a beginning, a middle, and a close.

Confessedly the plural for hymns of worship in the assembly is more proper than the singular. Many songs easily lend themselves to this change; not least 48, which seems rather enhanced by the expression of fellowship, or even 49, which is not a mere gospel hymn, the 4th stanza easily made correct English, and the 5th far from pointless. In revision patient consideration in love with regard to the general feeling is of all price: nobody can or ought to have his own will or way.

On Hymns, No. 2

THERE is another consideration of great moment in a hymn book for the assembly's use. It should be, in the genuine sense of the word, catholic. While no hymn deserves a place which fails in reverence or offends against revealed truth, there ought to be the most comprehensive adaptation to the varied condition of the members of Christ's body. None ought to sink below what is proper to the Christian enjoying the light and peace of the gospel. But the assembly, on the one hand is entitled to have the expression of the highest strains of praise, which the Holy Spirit awakens in the heart with the grace of Christ before it, or the fruit of it in our union with Him, or His glory on high with the love of the Father and the Son, or the manifold ways in which the Spirit of God reveals the depths of God. On the other hand, as grace is ever watchful over the need and blessing and joy of the youngest in God's family, this should be fully reflected in the due provision of hymns for their worship. There should be no stint of those sweet and simple songs of thanksgiving in which such as just know their sins forgiven and cry Abba, Father, can heartily join in the praise of the Savior and of their God and Father. Even the babes of God's family, as all may know from 1 John 2, are characterized by their knowledge of the Father; and no wonder, as they have an unction from the Holy One and know the truth.

But it is a spurious catholicity which allows mere sentiment or traditional mistake contrary to Christ and scripture. The bane for the Christian and the church has ever been the return to Judaism or to a fleshly mind. Hence what toleration can rightly be of a doubtful mind as to salvation, of enfeebling of the hope, of denial of the Holy Ghost's presence, or claim of earthly place? Time was when we used to sing with no bad conscience in Hymns for the Poor of the Flock, “Since the bright earnest of His love So brightens all this dreary plain.” But when the truth became better known, it was impossible to justify the error, and it was rightly changed to “Since the blest knowledge” &c. Who now can doubt the necessity of that correction except a self-willed person who slights God's word? “Lift up Thy face and on us shine” again is exactly the blessing, which the Jewish priest pronounced, certainly net the expression of Christian standing. And assuredly “I'm often weary here, Lord” is very short of what becomes a Christian hymn or even experience. It sinks below Israel too, whose foot did not swell during the forty years of the wilderness, and who have the promise that they shall run and not be weary—shall walk and not faint. Once it was otherwise with us; but Christ gave us rest, and we find rest to our souls, for His yoke is easy and His burden light.

As instances of errors and shortcomings may be helpful in showing, not only the desirableness but the duty of correcting the 1856 selection, I add a few more.

The fine and valued hymn 54 is not changed to the plural, but reserved for a later place like 30, &c. No considerate person can question that 56, excellent as it is, is now in better form; and that 57, 58, and 59 are replaced to advantage. Hymns 60 and 61 remain; not 62 and 67 which are in the gospel book, No. 19 in the Appendix and now 64, and No. 23 being 67. Hymns 68 and 70 &c., are conformed to truth, 71-77 being nearly as before, and 78 more correct assuredly. Of 79 one may say no more.

Hymn 80 surely needs more conformity to the scripture in view. “Cleansed our sins” is indefensible. Christ washed us from our sins in His blood; and so we ought to sing.

Hymn 81 begins with “Arm of the Lord,” a comforting word to the Jew by-and-by in their last extremity. “Eternal Word” is more in consonance with N. T. revelation. Also the second stanza, far from rising adequately, seems better dropped.

Hymn 83 is beyond question better for the experimental hymns, with others reserved for a later place in the volume.

Hymn 84 has a history attached to it of so painful a character morally, that none who knew the facts could wish it retained. The substitute is also a better hymn.

Instead of a mere chorus rather than a hymn, given in Good Tidings' Hymn-book with Hymn 95, there is introduced a short and good ascription of praise as Hymn 90.

In Hymn 91 there is not a word which forbids but demands fellowship throughout, instead of retaining individuality. And no intelligent person will doubt, that while “heavenly” is in beautiful keeping with the Gospel of Matthew, “holy” in stanza 3 is the suited term for the Christian.

As Hymn 92 stumbles not a few in the beginning of stanza 2, it has been sought to express the truth guardedly as well as stanza 3.

Hymn 94 being transferred to the G. T. Hymnbook, a beautiful hymn, long missing, is here given.

Hymns 95 to 97 remain substantially as before. The old Hymn 98 (which may come in later) yields to one more in keeping with the praise of the assembly; as also Hymn 99 is adopted with correction and abridgment from the Appendix.

Hymn 100 remains with the change, one might call necessary, of blest” for “dear” which is too “familiar with the Lord in line 2; and of “Savior” for “Jesus” in the last of every stanza. Has anyone the hardihood to defend “Our Jesus” as scriptural? Stanza 3 properly vanishes from assembly use.

Hymns 101 and 102 are nearly as before: what change occurs is the least possible but desirable. The sweet simplicity of Hymn 103 is all the better for omitting stanza 4. It is complete as it stands, and only weakened by addition or alteration.

Hymn 104 is changed in stanza 2, “saints” for “church” and “purpose” for Jesus. Both are due to scripture. Choosing or election in the N. T. is (as far as we are concerned) individual, not a or the body. 1 Peter 5:13 does not mean “the church” but the sister referred to. So “in Jesus” is here wholly incorrect.

Hymns 105 and 106 remain unaltered. From Hymn 107 the omission of stanza 3 is better than changes are likely to effect. In the last stanza, line 3, “The fruit” has been well suggested for “They taste.” So in Hymn 108, stanza 3 is well dropped. In Hymn 109, stanza 4, line 3, all perhaps will feel “With Thee how happy then!” to be a distinct improvement, where the original was questionable.

In Hymn 110, stanza 2, line 2, the original is replaced for the better. As the old 111 is in the G. T. II., we have now in its stead No. 28 in the Appendix slightly cleared of awkward expression, and

No. 21 from the same displacing a gospel one. The considerable change adds not a little to the flow of 112, which is not always possible.

It will hardly he doubted that “bliss” falls in with Hymn 113, stanza 2, line 2 better than “life,” as being larger. The last line is also made sound, which it was not.

In Hymn 114 the only change is abolishing “Love” for the simpler and more becoming “He” in stanza 2, line 7; and for “blissful” we have the more expressive “restful” at the close of Hymn 115. There is nothing to say of Hymn 116.

In Hymn 117, stanza 3, we read

“No more we dread God's wrath,

Thy perfect love we see.”

as decidedly preferable, and omit stanza 4, besides toning down the sweeping “all” of the last line to in.

The present Hymn 118 is suitable for praise; and the fine Moravian Hymn 119 is cleared from address to the head &c., of our Lord, to which many strongly object for years.

From Hymn 120, stanza 2 is retrenched to advantage, to speak of no other improvements.

Next, the acceptable Hymn 121 is made, it is trusted, more so by “our guilt” in stanza 1, line 2, and “sins” in line 3. The last stanza also has already been improved. So has Hymn 122 in the opening and stanza 3. Again, Hymn 123 has an intermediate stanza supplied; but the author, like most, fell into the very ugly error of making us bear Christ's cross, instead of our own. There is no excuse for such language. Those who try to apologize by a non-natural interpretation might similarly explain away anything. A new hymn of praise takes the place of the old Hymn 124 now in the G. T. H. book; and No. 4 in the Appendix is the new Hymn 125. Hymn 126 is as before; and No. 35 in the Appendix replaces the old Hymn 127, which, as being a gospel one, is in the G. T. H. B. collection. Hymn 128 is now suited for praise in the assembly. The old Hymn 129 comes later, and No. 7 in the Appendix takes its place.

Hymn 130 only loses the unnumbered stanza in italics. Hymn 131 is as before; and Hymn 132 is made correct in stanza 2, line 2 “have died,” which involves in line 4 “with Christ now glorified.” Hymn 133 stands, but Hymn 134 is now what was No. 6 in the Appendix, slightly touched. Nor will most question that Hymn 135 is now better expressed, or that Hymn 136 is cut down for the best. Hymn 137 is now what was No. 12 in the Appendix and liked by most. Hymn 139 is relegated to the later hymns, and one for praise by the same hand inserted.

Hymns 140 and 141 are also put later, and hymns of worship substituted in their place. In Hymn 142 no instructed Christians can doubt as to stanza 4, line 3, that not “sin” but sins are forgiven. In Hymn 143, stanza 2, we have “Blessed Savior” for “Jesus, mighty” &c.; it now stands as 140, and a new one for 193. Hymn 143 which is to be 141, stanza 1, line 2, has “To purge from every sin “: as the line now is, no one could defend it honestly. Hymn 145 will be a hymn for the Lord's Supper (cleared it is hoped) from objections; then the present Hymn 146, with stanza 2, line 3, “Remembering Him” &c. Hymn 147 will be later, and another hymn for the Lord's Supper, “Here

around Thy table," &c. Hymn 148 (later) will be in stanza 1, line 2, "From Thee the life-blood flowed "; which removes the old objection. Hymns 149, 150; abide as before; and 151 so as to express fellowship. Scripture assumes that all saints share such aspirations. In Hymn 152, stanza 3, line 7, "The" for "Our" bitter cup; and stanza 4, line 4, "Our judgment hast sustained."

Hymn 153, stanza 3, line 4, "In trusting to His blood." We only retain the first stanza of Hymn 154; but Hymn 155 remains, save "God" for "Lord" in the last line but one, which renders it homogeneous. Hymn 156 is very little interfered with except excluding stanza 4. But we have a new hymn of praise for Hymn 157, a paraphrase rarely if ever used. Hymn 158 has "life" for "Head" in line 1. Hymn 159 remains; but Hymn 160, not being praise, goes later, and a more suited one is given.

On Hymns, No. 3

To a revision there must attach many a difficulty. If revealed truth be, as it ought, the paramount condition of our expression of worship, as in all else, it is far from easy to heal the wound made in a familiar or favorite hymn, without leaving a too easily seen scar. Thus in Hymn 161 "'Tis immortality" is unhappily so equivocal, especially in this day of increasingly lax thought, that an unobjectionable alternative seems needed. "What joy His face to see"! sounds abrupt, after the smooth original; but it is adopted for want of a better line. It is hard to suppose that any person will not prefer the correction of stanzas 3 and 4, save one that objects to all amendment. There is another fact which has to be faced—the most competent hand will fail to satisfy everybody; while the least competent who has no experience can readily flatter himself that either he or his friend is able to do better than anyone.

Hymn 162 is a recent song somewhat improved in every stanza: so is the old Hymn 163; but 164 finds a place among later hymns of dismissal. Hymn 165 is little touched, but for the better. The old 148 sufficiently corrected figures as 166; its predecessor of individual experience is put later: so with Hymns 167 and 168. Hymn 169 is all the better for dropping stanza 3, with "from," for the incongruous "in" of stanza 4 (now 3). The slight change in 170 adds somewhat to its value; and 171 is a new hymn, the old one appearing later with 172 in its present form, a prayer, for which a hymn of praise appears now. But Hymns 173-177 are substantially the same—certainly none the worse. G. Keith's Hymn 178 is reserved, and a hymn of praise substituted. Hymn 179 retains its place not a little corrected. Doddridge's "Hark! the choirs" is the new Hymn 180, the old one by J. R. Taylor following duly like 181, for which the old 339 is here given. For Hymn 182 is a fresh hymn of thanksgiving, 183 is nearly as before; but 184 seems all the better, as well as 185, both abridged: so is Hymn 186 at the beginning and end to its improvement. The following is as of old, but 188 yields to another corrected.

For the old unbelieving interpolation, there is now as Hymn 189 Sir E. D.'s fine hymn, not "Tis past" but "Far spent the dark" &c., and for 190, T. Kelly's hymn, "The stream that from" &c. Again for the old petitionary 191 is a worship hymn, and for 192 stands No. 16 of the Appendix. For the old. 193, perhaps never sung, like several here, is a new song of praise, and for 194 placed later is another fresh hymn, Hymns 195 to 199 being nearly as before. Hymn 200 is a new one, 201 has appeared elsewhere, both in place of less suitable hymns; while 202 and 203 stand their ground, but Hymn 204 (for burial), is postponed, and a short new one inserted. For the experience Hymn 205 we have the old hymn numbered 12, only the second stanza is now omitted; as 206 also has the last stanza removed, but 207 remains. For 208 is substituted No. 26 of the Appendix; but of 209 stanzas 4 and 5 are dropped as interrupting the address to our Father. The old 330 takes the place of 210, which is now Hymn 30; and 211 is still in its old position.

As the old 212 is in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book, a hymn of J. G. Deck's is here given, only omitting the stanzas 5 and 6, followed by Sir E. D.'s "Oh, what a bright" &c., and two more of Mr. Deck's. Then comes No. 13 of the Appendix as 216, and a new one for 217 which itself comes

later. Hymn 218 is almost as before, but 219 gives place to one of J. G. D.'s., and 220 is the second stanza of the present hymn, 221 being reproduced with one impropriety removed. But the old 222 is itself removed for the worship hymn 20 in the Appendix; and 223, 224 remain slightly improved. For 225, which goes later, is a hymn of praise; but the first two stanzas of 226 are given, 3 and 4 being in G. T. H. book and 227 also, for which we have a hymn of worship, while 228, 229, and 230 remain more happily. Hymn 231 is postponed for a more suited one, and a hymn of Sir E. L.'s displaces the actual 232, which needs much change even so it is scarcely for worship; nor is 233, moreover, being addressed to the bride, like 255, and both therefore later. A suitable and well known hymn is now given. Hymn 234 abides, with stanza 3 omitted. Hymn 235 is a new hymn, and 236 simple praise in place of Doddridge's piece. hymn 237 retains its place, but 238 is reserved appropriately, and a new hymn of praise appears instead of it. As hymn 239 is now in G. T. H. book, we allot here No. 29 in the Appendix; and as 240 is really the beginning of 259, it is placed there, and a worship hymn given here, 241 somewhat modified, and 242 following in their old places.

In No. 2 of these brief explanatory notes, Hymn 119 was by inadvertence called Moravian, which it may perhaps be considered in its realistic style. But in fact it was written by Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), a Lutheran, before the epoch of Count N. L. Zinzendorf and his friends, so prolific in hymns warmly emotional, but rather sentimental, and lacking reverence as well as depth.

On Hymns, No. 4

The present Hymn 243, being more suited to a meeting for prayer, takes its place, somewhat curtailed, among the compositions of that class; and No. 30 of the Appendix is its substitute. A new worship hymn replaces 244, which in fact is not quite appropriate to either position; and a hymn of J. G. D.'s, new to many, appears as 245: so is 246, the old one following later. As the old 247 is for dismissal, it goes among a few such hymns, and one of praise succeeds: so it is with 248, replaced by a new thanksgiving. For 249, which is objectionable for more than one reason, we have No. 14 of Appendix. But the old 250 is made rather better to express communion, as it contains nothing wherein the simplest cannot join. Hymn 251 goes later like its companion by the same author, and a simple strain of praise is inserted, valued by many; but 252 appears nearly as before, and 253 improved, it is trusted. As 254 is in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book, there is a new worship hymn, and the old 255 follows a little simpler and shorter. Hymn 256 holds its ground, save stanza 5; and for the gospel hymn that follows, a worship one is now given; while 258 is as nearly as of old.

It has been already explained that the old 240 belongs to 259 as its beginning; they are here combined. Then for 260 which is by no means a hymn of adoration, and for 261, which is in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book. we have Mr. Deck's two fine hymns—2 and 3 of Appendix. Next for another inappropriate piece comes a new 262; but 263 keeps its place, and a new one replaces 264 which goes later. For 265 there is now No. 9 of the Appendix, but 266 remains, followed by a new hymn of praise for Fawcett's one reserved for elsewhere. So 268 is a hymn new to most, as is 269; but 270 abides. For the paraphrase in 271 is another hymn not here before; but 272 is only a little modified, and 273 less still. Hymn 274 is also here more suitably. A new worship hymn displaces the old 275 which is not up to the mark; 276 remains, save stanza 2; and a hymn of praise not known generally is now 277. The old 278 goes later, and one of Mr. Deck's modified comes in; and a new one for 279, which is reserved. But 280-285 stand in rather better form. Hymn 286 is really the close of 109 and goes there; but 287 being now in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book, we have a new worship hymn, and for 289 No. 25 of the Appendix.

The old hymn 290 is still kept in its place; but 292 is new and more in keeping; 293 as before; and 294 cleared of some blots, especially in its last line, which in its previous shape is a grave offense against truth and reverence. How it passed muster hitherto is a marvel, save by violently accommodating bad words to a more decent sense: a demoralizing expedient on which in other people we have little mercy. Will is a blind guide. Hymn 295 is an old hymn revised instead of one hardly in place; but 296 is the old one here, as is 297 abridged to its good, 298 is a new piece, the former postponed; as 299 loses its middle stanza, and 300 abides. For the old 301 (reserved) comes 334; but 302 remains. Hymn 304 is an anonymous hymn, but more adapted for praise than the old one; and so the present 305. For 306 we have the old 333, but 307-310 remain, the last relieved of its needless titles. For 311 which goes later we have 337, and the old 312 in its place. But 313, which is scarce worth remedial measures, gives way to an appropriate hymn; and 314 retains its position. As 315 is in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book, we have a hymn of one well known

and sufficient for worship, and the old 316 in its place; also 317 (omitting stanza 5) and 318. As 319 goes later, there is a hymn not familiar to most and shorter for it, Hymn 320 is the old hymn, but abridged. As 321 is a gospel hymn and in the Good Tidings' Hymn Book, we have here a new worship hymn, and for 322 a hymn of J. G. D.'s; but 323 is the same with stanza 3 omitted, as 324 also. Hymn 325, being below par, yields to a foreign hymn translated and shortened; but 326, 327, and 328 stand but little touched. An anonymous thanksgiving takes the place of 329 and a new one of the vacancy caused by moving 330 to an earlier position (210). Next come a few hymns for the burial of Christians, 331, 332, and 333. The remaining ones (334-340) are hymns of dismissal, and do not call for particular remarks.

It remains to notice the later hymns which are more characterized by the expression of individual experience and prayer. This may follow D.V.

On Hymns, No. 5

THE later hymns, chiefly individual or experimental, follow 340, and are ranged alphabetically. The first is the familiar, strain of J. Fawcett, which used to be hymn 267; the next by J. Berridge, then P. Doddridge's which we had as hymn 306. The present 344 is one not familiar to most, but excellent, and the one after is the translation of an ancient composition. The next three are hymns known to us hitherto as 118, 129, and 32. But 349 is less familiar. Then follow well-known pieces of Sir E. D. already before us as 141, 251, 237.

After them (353) is a hymn of J. Kent, and one of Robinson known as hymn 93, followed by Watts' which was 329, and by one of Thos. Kelly's. Then H. Stowell's “From every stormy wind” (hitherto 246) is given, and another less known as 358; next is Cowper's “God moves,” our present 278, and “God's sovereign grace to us has given” follows. Th. Kelly's “Gracious Lord” (the present 97) is 361, and Job Hupton's “Had I ten thousand tongues,” a favorite with some, though its good taste is open to question; then Doddridge's “Hark the glad sound,” and one less known as 364; Wesley's “He bids us come” as 365; Watts' “How can we sink” as 366; and Keith's (or rather of one otherwise unknown named Keen) “How firm” as 367, with J. Newton's valued hymn following (“How sweet the name”). As by general confession stanza 4 mars the strain, it is here as often omitted. As it stands, stanza 3 forms a transition to the personal address in what follows. The next is from the Appendix abridged for obvious reasons; and one by Miss Waring follows as 370; then de Courcy's “In weakness,” 371, with Yerbury's “King of glory,” S. Harrison's “Look, look, ye saints,” and Th. Kelly's “Look, ye saints,” respectively 372, 373, and 374.

The next two are not new, any more than 377, though not known to many, 378 being even less familiar to most; but 379 is the old 271 of Watts? and 380 the old 166 of Toplady's, freed from some danger of misconception. 381 is a fine strain of Sir E. D.'s; of 382 the author's name is to me unknown; but the next five are well-known, 388 less so. Hymn 389 is J. Irons', 390 a more recent one, 391 is Doddridge's and used to stand as 275, as 392 is a new one, 393 Yerbury's, and 394 Berridge's. The old hymn 30 is now 395, and 82 is 396. Again hymn 253 (Ryland's) is 397, and 257 (C. Wesley's) is 398. Then 399 is S. Medley's, and 400 J. N. D.'s.

Hymn 298 is 401, and 402 is by S. Medley, 403 the much enjoyed writing of J. Hutton, and 404 will be new to many, simple as it is. Another of Medley's (the old hymn 99) comes next, and after it the old 301 (Lyte's); but 407 is new. Then the old 319 is 408, and 409 is T. Kelly's; next Kent's, the old 264; next a hymn of M. Bowly's; and then the old 232 (Toplady's). A new one follows as 413, and 414 is an old Latin one translated, and 415 a modern by Hollis, and 416 Seagrave's in the 17th century. The old hymn 128 (Sandeman's) is now 417, and 305 as 418, 331 is 419, and 322 (Cow-per's) is 420. J. N. D.'s song for the wilderness (139) is 421; and Hammond's “Thou, Savior, art one,” &c. is 422. Then hymn 205 (Newton's) follows as 423, and a hymn of Baptist source, wrongly attributed to J. N. D. is next, with another of Newton's after it (the old 160). One of Josiah Condor's is 426, with Kent's as 427, A. T. Russell's as 428, and J. Montgomery's as 429. The old 262 (T. Kelly's) is 430, and 180 (Taylor's) 431. Rowland Hill's “We sing his love” is 432, and “We

sing of the realms," &c. 433; then 232 as 434; 216 (Gandy's) as 435; and a new one in conclusion as 436.

Chapter 138

Jehovah Reigneth

Psalm 43

THE Psalms, as is generally known, are divided into five parts (though not so marked in our A. English Bible), each book having its own particular character stamped upon it. The fourth book, in which Psa. 93 is found, has, as its central theme, the bringing in of the First-begotten into the world, to hush the groaning of His tried faithful ones, to put down iniquity, dealing particularly with the great adversaries of the last days, and to set up His kingdom in the midst of the tribes of Israel, extending thence over all the earth.

“Jehovah reigneth.” This will be true when Christ appears, and not till then. Psa. 100i. establishes the immense fact that the once humbled One and Jehovah are one. In the day of His sorrow He said, “He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.” The answer was, “In the beginning thou, Jehovah, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands” &c. (Compare Heb. 1 Psa. 102). Thus in His humiliation and distress was His title owned, and in the day when He builds up Zion He shall appear as Jehovah in His glory. His kingdom will be introduced by terrible judgments, all scripture being witness. Babylon must be dealt with and removed (though this rather by the agency of the Beast and his ten kings before Christ actually comes out of the heavens), the tribes must be purged of their rebels, the Assyrian laid low, and the Beast and the man of sin consigned to the lake of fire. The thought is quite erroneous that the reign of peace will be brought about by quiet means, such as the propagation of the present gospel of God's grace. God's purpose by the gospel is to gather out a people for His name, to be co-heirs with Christ, members of His body by the Spirit while He is yet on high. It is not denied that the gospel is efficacious for all the world. Blessed be God, it is; but scripture nowhere states that the whole world will receive it: everywhere the contrary is taught. But in spite of man's unbelief and rejection of His truth, God is silently carrying out His purposes for the honor of His Son. He sits at the Father's right hand, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool; then will He come forth, not only appearing for the destruction of some foes, but sending the rod of His strength out of Zion, ruling in the midst of His enemies, and striking through kings in the day of His wrath.

It is equally wrong to suppose that the reigning time is now. God over-rules no doubt, at all times restraining, if not judging iniquity, and causing man's evil to subserve His will; but it cannot yet be said in the language of our Psalm, “Jehovah reigneth.” The times of the Gentiles are still running their course, the Beasts have not yet had their dominion taken away, nor has the Son of man been invested with His royal power. To suppose that the reigning time has come is to fall into the disastrous error of the Corinthians to whom the apostle said, “already ye are full, already ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” Reigning time had not come for the apostle, whatever the carnal Corinthians might think. He faithfully bore the stigma of the cross, and was content to be as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things, quite unwilling to be in honor and comfort where his Lord had only a cross

and a tomb. It is Babylon, who glorifies herself, and lives deliciously, and says in her heart, “I sit a queen and am no widow” (Rev. 18:7). The kingdom during the present is connected with tribulation and patience (Rev. 1:9; Acts 14:22); presently it will be displayed in power and glory. Now Christ is hidden, then He will be manifested; now the righteous suffer and the wicked are exalted, then the righteous will be exalted, and the wicked be as ashes beneath the soles of their feet. Now creation groans and travails, then it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. How complete the contrast!

Then will be the time of Jehovah's intervention. “He is clothed with majesty; Jehovah is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself,” the result being that “the world also is established, that it cannot be moved “: a moral expression, I doubt not, for the foundations of the earth will not then as now be out of course, but all settled and sure under Christ. It is no new power, for we read, “Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting,” but it is power put forth. God has permitted iniquity to have its way—has allowed the floods (“of ungodly men” Psa. 18:4) to lift up their voice; but in the day of which we speak, He comes forth in His strength to put evil down. Lawlessness shall no longer rear its audacious head: “Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day.” Still it is a comfort to the soul in the midst of the turmoil of the ungodly, that “Jehovah on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” The Jewish remnant in the sorrows of the last days will prove the sweetness of this; our hearts know it in our measure too and rest there.

Two important principles come out in the last verse—the sureness of the word of God, and the holiness that becomes His house forever. “Thy testimonies are very sure.” What a resting place for the true heart in the midst of the rising tide of ungodliness and confusion, when iniquity is triumphant, and the power of God is not put forth! We are here on distinctly Jewish ground, as elsewhere in the Psalms, but we get the word of God brought forward in the same way in the Second Epistle to Timothy, where the evil of Christendom is set forth in dark colors by the Spirit through the apostle. The scriptures in all their perfection are set before us as our only resource; they are given by inspiration of God. They are able to make wise unto salvation, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof. &c. And Timothy was to be careful to preach the word, even when the mass have itching ears, and turn from the truth unto fables. The word of God—His testimonies furnish a solid ground for faith, when all else bids fair to give way. Do we really believe this?

But further, however deep and widespread the evil, faith ever maintains what is due to God; hence we read, “Holiness becometh thine house, O Jehovah, forever.” God's nature and character never change, and His claims are never lowered, whatever the day may be. Faith refuses to go with the stream, however smoothly flowing, but contends for holiness, and that of a collective as well as individual character. We are never free to walk with evil—better far to walk alone than do so. The truth of God must be maintained apart from evil at all cost, if we would earn His approval. It seems to be an axiom with many in our time that God's way is to continue in the midst of evil, groaning over it, and protesting against it. Yet such is not the path marked out in scripture, but separation from it all to the Lord's name. The world will tolerate a protestant not a holy separatist. What can be plainer than the injunctions of 2 Tim. 2? “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” “If a man therefore purge himself from these (i.e., the vessels to dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work.” This is God's path, and the best for our souls, if we would do His will. In the “great house”

holiness is not the characteristic, but a form of godliness without the power, and the very features of heathenism under the cover of the Lord's name (compare Rom. 1; 2 Tim. 3). Separation from evil is God's principle, though a costly one oftentimes to those who carry it out. But our God always will have His 7000: may it be our honor to be numbered by Him among them.

W. W. F.

Chapter 139

The Jewish Leper

IN the first of the Gospels this is the earliest miracle given in detail: a suited testimony of Messiah to His people, a testimony that He was Jehovah in their midst acting in power and grace. Indeed even here the account is brief. The fact is in some respects all the more significant. The real state spiritually of the chosen people was no better in God's sight. The law had singled out leprosy as the standing sign of uncleanness and exclusion from His presence. Hence the more manifest was grace toward the Gentile in the action of the prophet of old, when Israel was sinking down more and more into apostacy.

But now a greater than Elisha was here. Immanuel was on earth, in the land; and this unhappy Jew prostrates himself before Him, and makes his appeal: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” The chosen people were morally what he was physically; but they knew it no more than they bowed to His glory. But it will dawn on the remnant by-and-by, when they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” Far different was it in the day of Messiah's visitation.

Even the leper, who did pay Him homage then, feebly apprehended the grace that was in Him “Lord, if Thou wilt.” Why question? Why doubt? Wherefore was He come, and come Himself, the Holy One, to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? A man, yet the King, Jehovah of Hosts! If the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped, and the lame to leap as a hart (and prophecy had bound up this and more with the advent of Messiah) was the leper to be an exception? Was he without the pale of mercy? The leper, abject as he was, acknowledged His power without hesitation.

But grace rises over all difficulty and applies the power to the need, however desperate; and here Luke lets us know, suitably to his own character, that the man was “full of leprosy.” But if faith was small, grace comes forth in its own immensity. “And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him.”

It was not always thus that the Lord wrought in cleansing lepers. When the ten met Him, as we hear in Luke 17, they stood afar off, and the Lord cleansed all, but touched none of them. Here we have the beautiful sign of His mercy toward Israel another day, when He will bless them with His gracious presence and heal all their diseases, as He will forgive all their iniquities.

Now, present in humiliation, His glory could not be hid. Had He been merely man under the law, there was no license to touch the leper. Jehovah Messiah was there; and however He might stoop in love, He could not deny Himself. He and He alone could touch the leper, not only undefiled, but banishing the leprosy. How manifestly it was God in Christ winning the overwhelmed heart, and blending power with grace in a way beyond all human thought! Mark tells us that He was “moved with compassion “; and indeed the act was exactly suited to express it.

But He added words, recorded in all three Gospels, of the utmost weight— “I will; be thou clean.” None on earth but He was free so to speak. His Person gave Him the right. He, Who could truly

say “I am,” was entitled to say “I will.” In every other born of woman it would have been not only presumption but sin. He could say these words Who does say in John 8, “Before Abraham was, I am.” “Be thou clean” was immediately followed with power that could not be disputed. “Immediately” the man's leprosy was cleansed. The Lord Jesus spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It was but a sample; and, as the Lord enjoins, “for a testimony unto them.” Therefore Jesus said unto the leper, “See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded.” A greater work was needed for man before God. A deeper want than any created by disease, however fatal, lay upon Israel; but this was “for a testimony unto them.” To show himself to the priest ought to have raised the question there, if his lips kept knowledge, or if his heart sought it, Who has healed him? It would have drawn out the answer from faith; Jehovah is here; Jehovah has healed him. For no one knew better than the priest that man is powerless here; and the law has no provision for healing leprosy, only directions for cleansing ritually him who is already healed.

Alas! like people, like priest; all were unbelieving then, save the little remnant which heard the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. How is it with my reader? The Gentile professor, though christened, if this be all, is no less a leper in God's sight than the Jew; and the outward bearing of the Lord's name cannot bring to God without living faith. Nay, to possess externally was and is a great danger for the flesh, which goes asleep under privileges now as Israel did of old.

Oh, listen to His voice, that speaks still from heaven, and assuredly with no less power than to the Jewish leper. Why is the tale recorded so fully, if it be not a multiplied witness, that you should believe on Him? Your case is no less desperate than the leper's. But the Savior and His word are the same forever if your faith may be as small, your appeal as hesitating, as his was of whom we read. The grace of the Lord Jesus meets faith however little and weak, and acts according to God's glory. May you then hear and live!

Chapter 140

A Letter on John 16

DEAR BROTHER, I have long purposed to write to you, but have been hindered by the multiplied avocations of a new, or at least renewed, work here, and communications with brethren elsewhere, and a little shrinking from the difficulty of giving you the thoughts on John 16. in the midst of these avocations. I will proceed to do this at once, as what will be best worth in my letter, coming (I hope) from the Lord. I must be brief and give you only the heads.

The Lord had been telling the disciples, as a little flock now separated from the world, that they would be put out of the synagogues, and that the time was coming when they that killed them (so obnoxious were they, and so blinded were the others) would think that they were doing God's service; and this because they had not known the Father, nor Him the Son. This spirit and this darkness they showed in their rejection of the Son: had they known and received Him, they would have known and received the Father. But as in all this Gospel, so here, the Lord takes His departure, not in the light of His suffering and rejection—dying as a man here, but according to the dignity of His person, “departing out of this world to the Father.” And it is in the light of this He sets the disciples that had loved Him. “And now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? and because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.” They had received Him as their Master and as Messiah from God, but were quite dim as to the economy of grace, founded on the resurrection of the Lord, and His glory with the Father. Nevertheless, by their owning Him, they were set in complete contrast with the world, which rejected Him. The Father had sent the Son into the world: the world had rejected and refused, or not known nor received Him; and He was returning to the Father. This is just one principle of the gospel. But He had attracted in grace these few hearts to own Him, witnesses of what He really was. These were naturally sorrowful at His going away, specially accompanied as it was with the declaration of their being left to the relentless enmity of a world of power, to those who would conscientiously, and therefore with no scruple, even kill them.

But He proceeded to explain to them what their portion and place would be, and that by virtue of another and most important truth. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go away, I will send Him unto you.” Such, then, is the position in which the scene of this world is set in this passage. The world has rejected, not believing in, the Son of God; and He goes away to the Father. The disciples, a little remnant, had believed. On Christ's going away, He sends the Spirit to them. The fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost, consequent upon the departure of the Son, is then the point of this passage. And the presence of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter, supposes the rejection of the Son, being sent by Christ from the Father. That Comforter is then looked at as personally present with the disciples in the world, as come on the Son's departure to the Father. The world is therefore viewed only as having rejected the Son; for the Spirit would not be thus here, but for the Son's rejection. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go away, I will send Him unto you.” But, He being thus sent by the Lord Jesus from the Father, His presence was the evidence, not only that the world had rejected Jesus, but that the Father owned and had received

Him. Towards such a world God might deal in “grace, and the greatness of that grace be enhanced; but such a world it was.

The Spirit had ever wrought, even in creation and onward; but the Comforter had not come personally till after the ascension of Jesus, any more than the Son till the incarnation, though He had created all things. “For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Thus come, He would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (or, convict it); His very presence would do this. Of sin, because they believed not on Jesus. The world was convicted of it, not a few wicked men; many had been their sins and evils. But there was now one plain universal question between God and the world in which these, had been summed up: they had rejected His Son.

The world before the flood had sufficed to prove that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil, and that continually. The law had shown the willfulness of man in breaking through the prohibitory enactments by which God had forbidden the indulgence of their evil imaginings. The prophets God had sent in vain to man, rising up early and sending them, till there was no remedy; and God said, “I have one Son; it may be they will reverence my Son.” And the Son came in direct mercies, even those which nature could feel, as well as grace, and in grace ministering to all their wants, proving in grace (coming into a world into which they were all driven out by sin, and into the midst of miseries which told that they were outcasts from paradise) Who He was. They saw it, and said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours.”

Thus was their hatred of the Lord, and the ripeness of sin, fully shown. Therefore, because nothing more could be done but through a change by divine power, the Lord says, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.”

The presence of the Holy Spirit, then, being sent down by the Son of God received on high, convinced, the world of sin in their rejection of Him, for He was there only by virtue of the Son's rejection. But He was also the evidence of righteousness. Righteousness on earth was there none, not even on the cross. The one Righteous Man had been crucified and slain by men; and then, to man's eye, God had not owned Him. Why, He had been constrained to say, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The saint may and does see all security in this by faith, and the necessities of our eternal righteousness; he may be fitted for heavenly places by it; but there was no manifested) righteousness to the world in it. The Righteous Man suffered, and God in no way interfered, and that Righteous One had openly to proclaim that God was not with Him. We, indeed, know why, in His infinite grace: it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, that “with His stripes we might be healed.”

But the Lord had previously declared that, if He went to the Father, He would send the Comforter. The coming and presence of the Comforter, then, was the testimony that the Father had received the Son. And here was the witness of righteousness and the full estimate of the value of Christ's work, even His reception on the Father's throne; as His rejection by man had been the proof and full estimate of their sinful state. Therefore it is that Christ appeals to His Father in the end of John 17. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee!” In reference to the

children, He says, “O Holy Father, keep, &c.”

Thus the presence of the Holy Ghost, sent by the Son from the Father, or (as it is also said) sent by the Father in the Son's name, proves the sin of the whole world in having slighted and rejected that Son, and shows that the only righteousness is found to be in the reception of the Son by the Father. Then and thus consequently the believer is found “accepted in the Beloved.” But the great fact is what is here stated: then, and then only, in God's sense of it, righteousness is found.

A mere saving and recognition on the cross would not have been righteousness; for why should the righteous Son of God have been ill-treated? Why should He have suffered at all? But sitting on the right hand of God, after leaving the world, and going to the Father—this, while it was in a certain sense righteous discernment as against the world, was the only worthy public estimate of what He was, of His person, and work. They saw Him no more: of Him above all “the world was not worthy “; but He went to the Father, the true testimony of His excellency, and the due estimate of His acceptance. The Holy Spirit's presence was the testimony of this also.

But was all to be left thus? The rebellious and rejectors, unjudged? those that loved Jesus, sufferers (as He had told them in the beginning of this chapter 16.)? and Jesus still rejected as regards the world? No! The coming and presence of the Holy Ghost convicted the world of the judgment due; and that it would come, because, the prince of this world was judged, had been proved by the cross (in whose hands the world was). “The prince of this world,” saith the Lord, “cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Whether religion among the Jews, or power among the Gentiles, or self-will and recklessness amongst both, all had been led up under his guidance, under one ministration of selfishness and blindness, to the murder of the blessed Son of God. Fear possessed the few that owned Him; and all the disciples forsook Him and fled. They were proved to be the strong man's goods. But, in order to attempt to hold them, he was obliged to commit himself, in all the power he had, against the Prince of Life, One stronger than he, the Captain of our salvation. He is here looked at, as the leader and prince of a sinful world; and so the world's judgment is involved in it.

Now the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, proved by the presence of the Holy Ghost, convicted or proved the world's judgment. For one shown to be its prince, of whom it was the slave, was now judged; and this, consequent on what was previously noticed, His reception on high, Whom under his guidance they had rejected. Satan had put forth all his power, the power of death; and He Who had willingly bowed under it for our sakes was risen and glorified; and, in evidence of it, the Holy Ghost was in the world (among the disciples, but in the world).

The world might not receive the Spirit of the witness of Christ's power whom they had rejected, listening to, and led by, that other and evil spirit. But the predominance of the power of the Holy Spirit, yea, His very presence in the world, was the witness of the judgment of a world under the dominion of him who was thus shown to be judged. Therefore, in speaking of gifts which were the manifestation of the Spirit, it is written, “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gives gifts to men.” But, though it might be publicly manifested by them, the truth itself is what is here, and what concerns us; for I know the Spirit not by the gifts, but by His being in us. Thus the believer and the church know it. The other is a consequence of course valuable in its place, and its manifestation in whatever respect given to profit withal. The force of the judgment of the world, being proved by the presence of the Comforter, is in attacking him who is still prince of this world.

Thus was state; the operation and effect of the Spirit's presence as to the world; whereby, if a man by grace be actually convinced, he is a believer. This is the efficacy of grace; for in the passage it is spoken, not of efficacy, but fact; a fact understood by faith. The Lord, having stated all this, then goes on to show what the Holy Ghost would do among the disciples. He had many things to tell them, which they could not bear then. For they knew Him after all, after the flesh, not having yet received the Comforter. But when He was come, He would guide them (the disciples) into all truth; He would show them things to come; and in all He would glorify Christ, taking of His and showing it unto them, that is, all that the Father had, for all this belonged to Christ the Son. It is not here simply as the Spirit of adoption and sonship, but as present to communicate the truth, and knowledge, and glory which belonged to them as children. This also was theirs, consequent upon the ascension of Jesus; and this was communicated to them in the sending of the Comforter.

A little while, then, and they would see Christ no more; and a little while, and they would, because He went to the Father, on which all this hung, partially fulfilled in pledge and witness on His, resurrection, but fully, really, on His return in glory, when He had gone to the Father, to receive the kingdom, and to return.

The difference between us and the then disciples, I should perhaps notice. They received this communication of truth primarily as a fresh revelation; and, according to the wisdom and dispensation of God, they have by His will treasured it up in the written word, so that it is now to be revealed as a previously unknown truth. But to each of us the Spirit works the same work, actually guiding us into all truth. That truth is only revealed in the written word, as says the apostle John: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Thus is it connected with our life; for the unction is from the Holy One. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned. J. N. D.

Chapter 141

The Latest Sect: Part 1

It may not be generally known, though familiar to many readers, that a portentous effort has been recently made in an ecclesiastical way, which is not without instruction if only for warning. It emanates from those professing Christians, who fell back on compromise when the question of a true or false Christ was raised not quite 50 years ago, and ecclesiastical independency was adopted as the means of appearing united, notwithstanding real division.

As nobody who looked beneath the surface could be satisfied with an expediency so hollow, the inevitable reaction has come; and conscience at length confesses from among themselves that these easy-going assemblies are “lawless.” Throughout a considerable part of Great Britain this cry has been heard from men who ought to be credible witnesses of the facts among their old associates; as others outside them had long testified that so it was and must be on their principle, or rather on their total lack of it in any divine sense.

It seems that three canons are set up as the new distinctive standard. First, they are strict Baptists, refusing to receive any member of Christ's body who has not conformed to Christian immersion as believers. Secondly, they require that every one allowed to partake of the Lord s Supper shall have previously broken off all ecclesiastical association in order to stand in their ranks. Thirdly, they claim to appoint elders over their associates, as the expression of rule in the flock of God on earth.

Now on all three points these retrograde innovators convict themselves, however self-confident, of not being guided of God.

First, it is as certain as some other facts in scripture, that the twelve apostles, though charged by the risen Lord to baptize unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, were not baptized with that baptism themselves. Some, perhaps all, were baptized by John; but this was no equivalent, as Acts 19 proves incontrovertibly. Nor was their own baptism during our Lord's lifetime Christian baptism; for this is based on His death and resurrection, and instituted after that. To these we may add other disciples before Pentecost, of whom we hear of above 500 brethren who saw the Lord risen at once (1 Cor. 15:6), and how many more we know not. But we do know that the Holy Spirit baptized them at Pentecost into one body. Thus signally even from the beginning must letter hide its diminished head before spirit; as of old the Lord said, even under law, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”

Still more does the principle of grace apply in these days of Christendom's moral ruin, when the great majority of the members of Christ must be owned to be christened as infants, which they regard as valid baptism even when confessed to be irregular in some respects, and would conscientiously object to be re-baptized as unscriptural. Any company therefore that insists on this rigid view is of necessity a sect or party; for it sets up a rule which the Holy Spirit rejected at Pentecost, and deliberately excludes (without and against scripture) thousands of members of Christ who object to their rule as not of God.

Hence, when souls were deeply exercised 60 or 70 years ago through the light of scripture and in the hope of the Lord's coming, it was learned that God had provided for the difficulty of jarring views on what was after all but an administrative sign, however important in its place. For baptism is essentially individual, as the Lord's Supper is plainly collective or ecclesiastical. Baptism is never once tied to the assembly, but might be at the shortest notice, by the wayside, or in a prison, or along a river. Therefore long ago some of us found ourselves on the ground of that liberty which is due to individual conviction, and only opposed to the fanatics on either side, who would force the question into the assembly and break it up in honor of their predilections. These considerations are evident, which may help: that baptism, believer's baptism, is initiatory; that it is an individual confession; and that, as scripture demonstrates, none ever thought of getting baptized after recognition in the assembly, though room may be left for the scruples of a troubled conscience. But this is not the only principle, learned and acted on then, which has of late been forgotten in the haste and contention of a later day. There are frequent irregularities in baptism; as many feel, who are not novices, yet decided against more than “one baptism.” To insist rigidly on letter, especially as things are now and have long been, and to make it an assembly question, is to err grossly, and fall into a sect, or “heresy” in the scriptural sense of the word.

Secondly, while there is a path graciously provided in a day of ruin for those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, farthest from it are such as assume to be “the” church in fact, even though they may verbally avoid the pretentious claim. And what can one think of Christians whose bond of union, or test, is the acceptance of discipline in a local case, at best dubious if not mistaken and unjust! If ever so just, it would be sectarian to make it a test as is done. The more truth Christians profess to have, the guiltier they are if they forget and ignore the members of Christ who in general know scarce anything of the church, of their own relationship to it, and of their consequent duties. It becomes those who know these things in their measure to act in a spirit of lowly grace toward such as know them not. And so those acted who first and most deeply learned from the scriptures how the children of God should walk in the midst of Christendom fallen and departed from His will, broken up into sects (misnamed churches), great or small. For themselves they fell back on the truth of God's assembly surviving the failure, claiming truehearted obedience, and open to all that are Christ's, were they but two or three gathered to His name.

This is in no way to become a sect, because it abandons sectarianism for the ground of His church, and contemplates in faith and love all members of Christ's body, save such as are or justly ought to be under discipline. But the self-same principle demands our owning and receiving in the Lord's name all godly-walking saints who desire to remember Him, notwithstanding their ignorance of the church and consequent inability to judge denominationalism. Hence it was ever felt a privilege to welcome all saints walking with God according to their measure, unless they were tolerating plain heterodoxy preached in the place they frequented. (For if they held it themselves, there could be no question). This were ungodliness, at least as pronounced as any other iniquity.

Some excellent brothers who detest laxity have wavered as to this openhearted attitude toward saints in the denominations, especially from 1849 and since. Such hesitation however is groundless. Largeness of heart is as right as laxity is bad. The neutrality which characterizes a party then and subsequently has to be met on its own ground, to which 2 John distinctly applies, with other scriptures. But this is no reason for swerving from a first principle of scripture and denying to saints of God that to which grace entitles them, as no less members of Christ than

ourselves. The denial is itself a false and sectarian thought, unless it be for fundamental evil, and betrays ignorance as to the one body, in defense of which it is mistakenly invoked. It is the more manifestly unsound, because not a few already received know little or nothing of the body and are therefore weak in fulfilling their responsibilities. It is lack of spiritual intelligence, because it awards to true thoughts or fidelity what is really due to the relationship of Christ's members, and therefore puts an unintended slight on His name and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11: 17). You are not intelligent, if you set up knowledge and attainment, instead of Christ, as the title.

But this newfangled party goes to the utmost in unitedly rejecting Christ's members at large, and claims for itself exclusively all part and lot in God's church now on earth. No saints do they receive unless they are decided to follow themselves. They are self-condemned, being despisers of Christ's members, who may be more intelligent and spiritual and separate to the Lord in every way, but are rejected in principle because they utter not their Shibboleth. Nothing more ignorant, nothing more presumptuous; and the more so, as they are on the same ground of indifference to Christ's truth and glory as the leavened lump which was known for more than 40 years ago for its openness to evil.

Thirdly, their attempt to invest elders with authority is a mere sectarian assumption. According to scripture apostles chose elders in each assembly, as the Holy Ghost led them, either directly, or, as in the case of Titus, one commissioned by an apostle to appoint elders in a definite sphere. Never do we find any minister without such a commission doing such a work; still less do we hear of the assembly choosing Elders. Calvin, Beza, and others have labored to draw up the latter brief; but it is labor lost. Scripture not only does not indicate the least trace of such a practice, but excludes the theory by the proof that such local charges required apostolic authority, direct or indirect. But there is ample provision otherwise for edification and order as every Christian may read in Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12.; 1 Cor. 16: 15-16; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-22; Heb. 13:7 24; 1 Peter 4:10, 11; 3 John 5-8. The Holy Spirit, sent down to be with us forever, fails in nothing, to glorify the Lord and care for His work in every needed way. No doubt, the pretension to imitate the apostles in ordaining, without their power or authority, is in no way peculiar to the new party, but just a falling into the prevalent tradition of Christendom; but here it is the more reprehensible, because they assume to reject all such errors, while in fact they only retrograde less excusably. The only right walk, in the present broken state of Christendom, is in obedience with all humiliation. For ought we not to feel that sin brought about the scattering, which is only increased by the claim of an authority or power we have not?

The Latest Sect: Part 2

As a leader of this movement declares that they do not “appoint” elders, the writer in the B.T. feels bound to accept and repeat the disavowal. It is not denied that they claim to have “elders,” and insist strongly on their authority, as one of their cherished and distinctive tenets. Others who make a similar claim, though not with the same pretension, have a solemn form of appointment, which probably led one to suppose it in their case virtually, if not formally. It looks rather like self-appointment.

Now it is indisputably according to scripture that the apostle did “choose” elders church by church (Acts 14:23), and that Titus was apostolically commissioned to “appoint” or establish elders city by city in Crete. This was “God's way for His people having bishops.” It was not a question only of such qualities as 1 Tim. 3 lays down, but of adequate authority appointing them. Scripture only recognizes as presbyters men thus inaugurated. Whatever their qualities, they were only eligible for elders without or before that; but elders scripturally they were not till so chosen. It is well to know, honor, and obey those who have the requisite traits, as we hear enjoined in 1 Cor. 16, 1 Thess. 5, and elsewhere. But they were not called elders, nor ought to be so, until duly established as such. Clearly therefore to dispense with this is not subjection to scripture. The brethren of the new movement offend against God's word in pretending to “elders” in their midst without the essential title of a valid appointing authority.

Not to appoint, then, would be right, if they did not claim to have “elders” scripturally entitled to rule. To appoint now is altogether invalid, because they have not the requisite apostle or his delegate so charged. Hence to claim “elders” according to scripture without the due appointing power is contrary to scripture and presumptuous. The paper on “Bishops and Deacons,” in the little vol. of Addresses is an evasion as to this and inconsistent also; for it asserts in pp. 90, 91 what refutes p. 93.

A gift from the ascended Christ made one responsible to exercise it, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Gifts as in 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4 needed no appointing authority; but, if scripture is to decide and govern, the local charge of an elder did. It is therefore evil to set 1 Tim. 3 or any other text against Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. The one may be “the only instance where we have the apostles pointing out elders.” But this one is as conclusive to faith as ever so many. And why use men's mistake about Timothy to enfeeble the certainty that Titus was delegated to appoint elders in Crete? Does either one or other give license now to claim “elders” without analogous appointment? To do the work without that claim is what we see of old at Corinth and Thessalonica; it is accordingly sanctioned of God as the right, humble, and comely way when we have neither apostle nor delegate to appoint. So Christians have long learned and practiced; whereas the device of the new movement on their own showing is baseless pretension as well as retrograde. They might and ought to have known better, but for self-importance, which hinders true intelligence of God's mind, never more needed than in a day of ruin. To dispense with due appointment is as wrong as to unduly appoint. '

Chapter 143

The Leaven

THE Lord Jesus here pronounces the fourth parable of the seven, the third likeness of the kingdom in these mysteries.

“Another parable spake he unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened” (ver. 33).

Individuals are not the question here any more than in the two that precede, especially in that of the mustard seed which is most akin as the structure marks. Individuals had their place in the opening parable, and, hearing, were born again, and were each fruit produced by the seed. If received into good ground, there was life and fruit; if not, the word of the kingdom had no vital effect. But in the parables that follow before the multitude, we have successive states which characterize the kingdom while Christ is hidden on high. The first is the ruin of the harvest here below by the mixture, while men slept, of darnel with the wheat; which mixture must be left for the returning King to deal with at the end of the age. The second is the portentous rise of what was planted an exceeding small thing; but it grew into an earthly power of attractive pretensions. Neither of these clearly has to do with the individual, but, as it suits “the kingdom,” with the state of things, and each in its due sequence.

What then signifies “the leaven”? Does the bearing of it revert to the opening parable and its appeal to individuals? Does it not rather continue the line of the comparisons of the kingdom? Surely the latter only, setting forth the assimilating effect of a doctrine, or creed, over a certain measured sphere till it was wholly permeated. This very distinctly differs from seed with a principle of life that bears fruit, a suited and frequent figure in scripture. Never is leaven so employed elsewhere. From earliest days it symbolized a corruption that tended to work and spread, as in the Passover, authoritatively applied in 1 Cor. 5 to evil which must be purged out. By our Lord it was used to set forth the teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees, of which the disciples were to beware. Compare Gal. 5:9 for doctrine, as 1 Cor. 5 for immorality.

In no case then does scripture warrant leaven as a figure of quickening, in no case identify it with the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit which God shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Living water is as different as can be from leavening; which, being a process of fermentation, causes dough to rise and makes it pleasanter to the natural taste. If Christ be in Levitical language the unleavened bread the redeemed eat, leaven has its appropriate use in the two wave-loaves which represent the Pentecostal first fruits; for the regenerate have still evil in their nature. Hence the sin offering which always accompanied the wave-loaves; whereas for the wave-sheaf, figuring Christ risen, as there was no leaven of course, so no sin offering could be thought of. The same principle explains the leavened bread alone with the sacrifice of peace offerings for thanksgiving. Where fallen nature enters, so does leaven; whatever the promises of grace, God takes account of it. But quickening is the direct energy of Christ, Who is life acting by the word of faith.

Hence, the best that can scripturally be said of leaven is of doctrine working among men, as here in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened. The kingdom was not only from the humblest beginning to become a towering power on the earth, like any worldly state, with its elevation coveted by those that found shelter there. It was also to penetrate men's minds within a definite sphere, forming and fashioning them according to the teaching presented. What the spiritual character of that doctrine might be is hardly within the scope of what is said before the crowds. And we know that what spread over a large part of the shattered Roman empire and beyond, after the Christian profession rose up to worldly power and influence, was a mere creed, and by no means God's gospel for faith obedience: an idolizing of the sacraments and of the crucifix, and a setting up, if not of gods, yet of mediators to the dishonor of the One; not the word of the cross as His power to those that are saved. It was no longer God choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, or the weak to shame the strong, but the wise, mighty, and noble choosing the symbol of Christendom as the object of visible homage, and even the means of advantage or ambition. Such was the work of the “woman.” The Lord had long been in the back ground.

My reader, see that you be not deceived nor deceive yourself. The unseen enemy has boundless and subtle wiles; and you are exposed, but ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Christ only can avail your soul for salvation. And He is as acceptable, as He is unfailing. Other foundation can none lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. It is not when we become strong or godly; but just as we are that He saves and to the uttermost: while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Only hearken to God's call. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Chapter 144

Dr. Dale's Legacy to Christendom: Review

An address given in Birmingham on Dr. Dale's book, “Christian Doctrine,” and revised, by George Kenwick. Price 3d. Birmingham: printed and published by J. L. Allday, Edmund Street.

MANY will like to read this earnest protest against fair words which conceal undermining of the truth, as to both the first man and the Second. They might have the tract no doubt of the author, Oakfield, Blenheim Road, Moseley, Birmingham.

Chapter 145

Lord's Coming and the Church

IF there be a spiritual coming of the Lord, it was clearly the first coming. For though He came truly in flesh, He was not so known save spiritually. None could come to Him as He came in flesh, save the Father Who drew them. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Accordingly He spake and was known in testimony. He was known as the Word by His words: they had the power in which He appeared to draw to Himself then. “He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”

It was only spiritually He was known, though He was manifested in flesh; it was only in the word which He spake that He was received (John 1:12, 13); for to those that believed on Him by miracles He would not commit Himself (John 2:23, 24). In short, as it was hearing the word and keeping the word which was the sowing of the Son of man, so it was not manifestation to men but veiled. He was manifested to be the Person (although men ought to have known Him) only to those whose eyes were opened by His word to see Him through the Father's grace. This is argued in John 6. and its principles opened out in chapter 8. So John came in the spirit and power of Elias, though He was that very, true, One of Whom the prophets had testified.

If we would distinguish, the real personal coming of the Lord Jesus, though the same true One then, is thus clearly in manifestation the second, when it shall not be merely a revelation of Him to believers. For the point of John 6. is that it was as really so when He was present in the flesh as when He was exalted and hid in God. But “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.” It is clear, this is far more thoroughly personal than appearing as the carpenter's son, revealed only to those drawn of the Father as given to Him. Christ is spiritually present now; so effectually He was when in the days of His flesh; for He then came not judging or executing judgment, which He must do in Person, but testifying in the word of testimony—spiritually received then indeed in Person in the execution of judgment—the great governing ordinance of God, in which He Himself is honored in the execution of it (John 5:27).

So also the church now knows Him and the glory in spirit. In fact in respect of this all are on par. As Jesus appeared so as that they only who were taught of God could know Who He was—the Son; so those, who knew Who Jesus was in the flesh, did in moral fact only see the Son as we see Him now. That is, the moral character of the perception was the same; so that, blessed as His presence was, it was expedient that He should go away. Nor has the glory of the Son ever been assumed in manifestation at all. Jesus glorified the Father upon earth; and now saith He, “O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

It was the time of the Son's humiliation, not His glory. The transfiguration was in part an exhibition of it. God was also glorified in Him in the perfect ways and obedience of the Son of man. But the Son of God as such has never had, i.e. as regards us, His proper glory; it is reserved solely for His coming; and if it be not personal with this object, there is no honoring of the Son in His proper

honor. It is the only real personal coming of the Son of God—the fulfillment of the great object of the Father, of God—that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. To that end judgment was given Him. Therefore the Revelation speaks of Him previously as the Faithful Witness i.e., of God the Father. The character He gives Himself on earth, and now from heaven, and having accomplished our redemption, is “Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.”

Here then is properly the personal coming of the Lord. Before, He manifested God in flesh, ascribing the glory to the Father. Then all glory is ascribed to Him. If it were by the Spirit only, it would be only what was before; it would not be the proper glory of the Son. What we want is the proper manifestation of the Son—in the glory of all surely—but precisely and properly in His person, so that all shall see Him; for the Son's sake, though with the delight and in the glory of the Father, when shall be the manifestation of the sons of God now hid with Christ (that is, as Christ is) in God.

If there be no personal coming in glory of Jesus, specifically in Person as the Son of God, all as it were is lost, though this cannot of course be. But His Person ceases to be the great question of glory, which it is with the Father—with the Divine Being—with the ε■δοκ■α (good pleasure)—with the I AM (Jehovah) of glory.

His first coming was in witness, though it were indeed the Son; His second coming is in Person, when every eye shall see Him, and the glory of Him Who was hidden be known. On the questions solved in this hinges all, all true divinity—the knowledge of the Son: all rests in this glorious appearing; and the church is just a witness, till that appearing, of the truth of Him (to its own blessing) Who shall then be manifested, and the saints (being also in the truth, believing the truth) with Him in glory.

Let the church deny this, and it ceases to be a church; it ceases in its place and acceptance; it is gone and must be cut off in its form, God may pass by, He may bear with (as He does daily with all of us) ignorance and slowness of heart; but let the church deny this, and the ground of its existence has ceased. It has ceased in the sight of God. The Spirit has no office in it, for His office is to testify of Jesus, of the glory of Jesus as having all things that the Father has; but if this be not accomplished, it is a false witness. The church is to be a witness that it is true—a painful suffering witness, because He has it not now: let her deny that He is to have it, and what is she suffering for? Nothing She is joined to the world, she has ceased in her existence. Hence also he who denies the voice of the Spirit in the church ceases to own the witness of the glory; for the Spirit alone can bear witness of the glory, as the apostles also bore witness of all that they had actually seen in Him from the beginning; and therefore the church ceases.

J. N. D.

Chapter 146

The Lord's Coming, Not the Saint's Departing

IT is deplorable to think that the sweet and comforting promise of the Lord to His saints before His departure is so little valued by those for whose daily encouragement it was given. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

One would suppose the terms of the Lord's promise are so precise, so positive and withal so welcome to those who love Him, that they would be eagerly grasped, and tenaciously held in all their sweet literalness. But on the contrary carnal imagination intrudes upon the domain of simple faith and distorts the words of the Lord into a meaning quite apart from the truth. Many godly souls persuade themselves to their own detriment that the Lord means that at the decease of the saints, He Himself will be present to convey them to the mansions above, to the place He has gone to prepare for them. This is only so far true in itself that there is no interval between being “absent from the body” and being “present with the Lord.” But it is only blinding the eyes and wresting the scripture to import such an idea into the words of the Lord in John 14.

If this coming is merely spiritual as misguided men will have it, then His going away was spiritual too. For the Lord links the two in an unmistakable manner. “If I go I will come again.” And the angelic testimony to the apostles on Mount Olivet was not less emphatic, nor less explicit. “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Now none can deny that the ascension of the Lord Jesus was literal and personal. And the same One that went will return and in like manner. Is it difficult to receive these simple words of scripture? If words mean anything at all, the Lord would cheer the hearts of His desponding disciples by the thought they shall be with Him where He is. But this does not at all convey that the Lord's comfort consisted in telling them that He will be with them in all their trials. This is truly so, as the blessed Master said elsewhere, “Lo, I am with you alway.” But the apostle nevertheless declares whilst we are “at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:6). And here the Lord says that the result, the very object of His coming, is “that where I am, there ye may be also.”

But mark that this blissful reunion is inseparably associated with His coming “again.” He had come before to His own (John 1:11). He promises to come again for His saints. If His first coming was personal, His second will be no less so.

For a time He had been with them in the world. He was now about to leave them and go to the Father. And this period of His absence on high would after an unnamed interval be terminated by His coming again to receive them to Himself. Then they would be with Him as truly as He was with them that night in the upper room.

But the question may be interposed whether saints who have passed away are not even now with the Lord. And scripture is clear and decided in the affirmative. The Lord's assurance to the

converted robber on the cross was “To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). This unfailing word was undoubtedly fulfilled that very day. The disembodied spirit of the justified malefactor was blessed beyond compare in the presence of the Lord of grace.

But this was departing to be with Christ rather than the return of the Lord Jesus, such as we have in John 14 So the apostle speaks in his epistle to the Philippians, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). And later in his ministry he writes, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. 4:6). Nothing short of a special personal communication from the Lord could have enabled Paul, like Peter (2 Peter 1:14), to speak so confidently of his own decease. But the very fact that he was in this respect an exceptional case confirms that the general hope of the saints was not of departing to be with Christ, but of the Lord's coming to receive them unto Himself.

It is true therefore that the saints who have put off the earthly tabernacle are even now with Christ and “far better” than when in this world. But it is not to be inferred that they are “with the Lord” in the sense of 1 Thess. 4:17, or John 14:3. The concomitant events, described in the epistle, utterly preclude any thought of its reference to passing into the separate state. Thus we read (1) the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, (2) with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God (3), and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (4) then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (5) to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. So far from departed believers being already “with the Lord” in the sense here mentioned, they compose one of the two classes mentioned—the dead in Christ.

Further, it is evident that when the Lord spoke of the disciples being with Him where He is, He meant not the spirit only, but body, soul and spirit complete (1 Thess. 5:23). Hence the bodies of the sleeping ones are raised, and the bodies of the living ones changed at His coming (John 11:25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 2 Cor. 5:1-9; Phil. 3:21). It should be remembered that the Lord Jesus presents Himself in the valedictory chapters of John's Gospel, as going on high as the perfect Man. It was unprecedented that a Man should be in glory. Old Testament saints were in bliss, as far as their spirits were concerned, but not glorified (which is inseparable from the body in scripture). But the same Jesus that was crucified rose from the dead, ascended into the heavens, and was glorified at the right hand of God (Acts 2), in accordance with His own prayer, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me (along) with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:5). In consequence of His finished work, He entered the glory of God as Son of Man (Acts 7:55).

In the light of this thought, we must read John 14. It was as Man He was going into His Father's house to become an object of faith. And because He would be there as the glorified Man, they could be there also. None could come unto the Father, but by Him. He was going to the Father as the very pledge of their going also, and that not in a partial way, their bodies sleeping in the dust, but all together and all complete, possessing bodies of glory like His own (Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:3), bearing the image of the Heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49). This constitutes our hope. We wait not for the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, but for the instantaneous assumption of the house which is from heaven, which shall be ours whether we wake or sleep at His coming to take us. W. J. H.

Chapter 147

The Love of Christ for His Own: Review

HERE are four booklets by Mr. Burbidge, consisting of addresses on John 13-16 respectively. No reader of the B. T. will need a word of commendation; especially as the themes here treated are of near and undying interest to the Christian. These addresses have not appeared before.

Chapter 148

Man Fallen and Christianity

MEN have lusts, passions, ambition, avarice. Alas! though restrained by Christianity, so that society is altered, the heart of man is still influenced by all these evil principles. Now all this must dim the spiritual perception, and render it more or less incapable of rightly judging of God and a revelation. How get the thought of God which is to set it right? Christianity has no need to be ashamed of its axiom, “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.” How are the impure to be capable of judging? The skeptic has no revelation to act on them. Is the soul, as having in fact corrupt lusts (that is, corrupt desires, perhaps) capable of judging? If not, this large class is incompetent to form any estimate of the scriptures. These lusts will not correct them: what is to be done for them? They may sink, on the skeptical plan, to the level to which their lusts may carry them. In whatever aspect we view man, all is uncertainty if man's mind be the measure of truth.

But you will say, This is undermining; it is the Pyrrhonism of a Pilate. No; the Christian believes God has spoken and has been active in love toward man; and he bows. He is not a judge but a receiver of truth. As a new born babe He desires the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby, having tasted that the Lord is gracious. He is not on the same ground on which he is who considers man's mind to be the measure of truth. He has said, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth “: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do"? He has bowed to what he believes to be absolutely certain, and to be the truth—absolutely such. He may have a great deal yet to learn of it; but he believes it is there revealed by God. “He who hath received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true; for He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” Faith then has certainty, because it bows to Him Who cannot lie, and receives His word as the truth itself.

Here is the real question. The skeptic takes his own thoughts, and excludes wholly God's making Himself known; the believer brings Him in, and thus changes everything. There is not a greater fallacy, a more impudent presumption of man's self-sufficiency, than that it is the capacity of the organ (that is, of the soul) in itself, which is the measure and limit of its knowledge; even if we embrace in the word “capacity” all knowledge acquirable by its own powers, and all affections acted on by objects known within these limits. It can be acted on by that which it has no intrinsic capacity to acquire; as light enters into the eye, and gives a capacity of seeing by action on it; as medicine or even food on the body. A susceptibility of being acted on, so as to have effects and even powers produced, is not a capacity in oneself to measure or acquire.

The entering in of the word giveth light, and understanding to the simple. Now this is the operation of a revelation where it is really received. No doubt it is adapted to man in every sense—to his conscience, to his actual state, to his heart; but it is nothing acquirable by man as he is. God is active in communicating to him what operates on his soul, but which is true whether it operates or not; and which has no place in it, nor ever will have, nor its effects, unless it be positively communicated. Evidently a revelation has this for its proper character, though it may enforce known responsibilities by sanctions known only by that which is revealed, or by the Revealer Whose perfections and claims are made known. Has man no need of such communications? Has

God nothing to communicate, which may be a blessing to man, which morally and spiritually elevate him? Is He incapable of doing it?

This leads to another very important point. Morality, properly speaking, is relative; that is, it flows from relationships in which we stand to others, and in which we owe such and such things of them in virtue of the claim upon us which their position gives them. Not but intrinsic purity of heart is to be sought, and the subjugation of passions in their workings within us: no Christian could question it for a moment. It is peace in itself. We ought to be pure: it is a good in itself, and it is the practical condition of communion with God. “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” This claim of purity distinguishes Christianity as revealing God. No other religion knew it; for none associated man with a God known to be light, and Who called us to walk in the light as He is in the light. Love also in exercise, where it is not relatively due, is the proper characteristic of the Christian. And these two distinguishing characteristics flow from the blessed and glorious truth that the Christian partakes of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and hence is called in practice to imitate God (Eph. 5:1). “That eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” in Christ (as John teaches us, so that He should be an absolute practical example to us) is also “true in Him and in us” whose life He is, “because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

This is the Christian life, and not to be called morality, though really what is the spring of morality and accomplishes it, because this display of life in us is not properly obligation, though that life may in this display fulfill obligations. For morality is, properly speaking, the maintenance of obligation. In its nature and by the force of the term “Obligation,” morality is relative. But our partaking of the divine nature enables us to fulfill moral obligation. “Love worketh no ill to the neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Here this principle of the divine nature communicated to us is said to accomplish what would he a moral obligation enforced by the law. But love goes farther also, because there is positive active energy in it, where no relative obligation exists. On the other hand he who has this nature clearly has to live in it, and so to please God, which itself is the highest obligation. Hence “he that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” So the Lord united both, even to the giving of His life. “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do.” The precepts of the gospel are the guidance of this nature, according to the perfection and perfect wisdom of Him Who is its source; they are needed by us in the obscurity of our feeble nature and distracting passions; and they give (as it ought to be, as it was in Christ) to the movements of the divine nature in us the additional character of obedience.

It remains then true that what is called generally and properly moral obligation is necessarily and in its nature a relative thing. Hence the measure of it is the claim of the being in relation to whom one stands in virtue of that relationship. In this sense it is that morality is “eternal,” though the expression be very incorrect. If we consider as morality our own state (to which the word scarce properly applies), the love and holiness which become a man are the communication of the nature of God Himself, and are eternal in their source and character. And morality, properly so called, drawing its source from the claims attached to certain beings with whom one is in relationship, is as unchangeable as the relationship itself. For “eternal” in this case has only the meaning of absolute and unchangeable when the relationship exists. That is, the relationship being known, the duty attaches to it essentially.

But this shows the importance of a revelation. As to our likeness to the divine nature, it is absolutely necessary; for God is unknown in His real perfection without it. As to moral obligation, properly so called, it has equal importance in this way, that the revelation which God makes of Himself creates an obligation commensurate with that revelation. If the Son of God has died for me, if He is my Savior and my Lord, it is clear that He has a claim upon me according to what He is as so revealed, and what He has done. That is, a revelation creates a part of morality; just as a woman's marriage does by her entering on a new relationship with her husband; with this difference that the obligation of marriage is known in itself, whereas what is newly revealed then first begins even to be known as an obligation. The obligation takes its origin from it.

The mere capacity of nature to enjoy or stand in certain relationships does not constitute a base of morality; the relationship itself must exist. An orphan may have a nature susceptible of all the feelings and obligations of a child toward a parent; but the moral tie does not exist, because the claim of the parent cannot be there.

Next, holiness in its nature, and love as we speak of it here, suppose sin. Innocence is not holiness, but ignorance of evil. God is holy, for He knows good and evil; He is perfectly good, and evil is utterly abhorrent to Him. We have since the fall the knowledge of good and evil. Hence naturally our conscience is bad. But if holy and as far as holy, we abhor the evil we know, and know as such when present in the measure of our holiness.

Love too, as we know it in God, is exercised in respect of evil; for evil exists and exists in us, and He loves us in that state. Now the understanding of perfect holiness by a sinful nature is as to its own capacity impossible. Conscience may so far understand it as to see its opposition to sin, and angrily or in terror dread the consequences; but an unholy nature does not comprehend or know a holy one in its separation from evil, as to affections, will, delight; for it has contrary ones. So indeed with love: “he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

To say that man is not a sinner is mere folly and insensibility to good and evil, the strongest possible proof of ignorance of God and hardness of conscience. “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done.” To say that he is a sinner is to confess his incapacity of knowing God, or judging of Him, or the revelation He gives of Himself. unless sin (that is, an opposite moral nature in thought and desire, in insubjection too of will) be the capacity to know Him.

But if we consider morality (properly speaking) as grounded on relationship, it is clearly and easily evident that man cannot and ought not to suppose in his own mind the only thing which God can be to his comfort. For that for which man is responsible to God, he has failed in. He has failed in the relationship to God and man, in which he stood as a responsible creature, and that by his own proper perverseness, to speak of naught else. He needs mercy, forgiveness, a God of goodness, Who cannot hold the guilty for innocent, and yet forgives iniquity. But if a person has sinned against One to Whom he owes so much, his taking it for granted that he is to be forgiven, as a matter of course, is hardness and impudence of heart. If my child had been very naughty and offensive to me (and it is nothing compared to sin against God), and he were to say, “Of course my father will forgive: forgiveness is a proper thing that suits his character, and becoming conduct, would not his state be really worse than his offense? Conscience—right feeling—thinks of what we have merited from those good and gracious, when we have offended, and judges itself, though it

may be attracted by grace. The heart which coolly expects it, because it suits His character we have offended, is in a state which unfits for receiving it. If God reveals grace, it does indeed suit Him; and I bow in thankful adoration when He has shown Himself gracious (this is revelation); to expect is to be insensible and unfit for it.

And here is Christianity, declaring a love of God which for vile and polluted sinners gave His only begotten Son, One with Himself, the object of His infinite delight before the world was. It declares that the Son in the exercise of that same love, came, giving Himself for them, to suffer for their sins and bring themselves to God, then known to be perfect love to them, and with a conscience which knows He imputes no sin to them (yet giving a far deeper sense of His holiness), because His character had been perfectly glorified about sin in Christ's cross.

Chapter 149

The Manslayer

IN Num. 35 we have a striking picture of the holiness and grace of God in His dealings with the slayer. He instructed His people here, and in Deut. 19, to set aside certain Levitical cities on either side of Jordan, “that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.” The holiness of God is seen in that He would not shield the guilty (for when the case was gone into before competent judges and witnesses, the guilty was to be given up); and the grace of God shines brightly in preserving the unintentional slayer within the refuge that the revenger of blood might not lay hands upon him. Here we have set forth in a typical way the gracious dealings of Jehovah with Israel—the beloved yet blinded nation, which is responsible before Him for the shedding of the blood of Christ. He graciously regards Israel as a “slayer,” rather than a “murderer,” to be restored in due time to the good land, the land of their possession. The Lord, when crucified, made intercession for the transgressors, and put the deed upon the ground of ignorance: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). And Peter, when bringing home to them their great sin in Acts 3, echoes his Master's word: “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; Whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life.” But he proceeded further to say, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” Saul of Tarsus is in many respects a type of his nation, in this particularly; “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). Some have been charged directly by God with the murder of Jesus—witness Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrim (Acts 7:53)—and have been handed over to judgment accordingly. But the nation as a whole, or at least the remnant, is treated by God as a manslayer to be restored.

When once the slayer reached the city of refuge, he was safe under Jehovah's care; away from his possessions certainly, but preserved by Jehovah. This exactly describes the position of Israel to-day. Away from their possessions—for the proud Turk still holds sway in the city of David—but with the eye of the ever faithful God upon them, they are preserved as a nation still. What a striking witness to the man who disbelieves God's word! After all their unparalleled vicissitudes, and heavy discipline under the holy hand of God, after all the hatred and persecution of the boastful Gentile, east and west, they abide. Where is Moab? Where Edom, Assyria, Babylon, &c.? Men may excavate and discover the ruins of their palaces and fortresses; but as nations they are dead and gone, they have long ceased to exist. But Israel abides as distinct a people as ever, in striking confirmation of the Lord's own words, “This generation shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled.” The term “generation” here must be regarded not as historical, or the beauty of the scripture is lost, but as moral; the words really guarantee the preservation of Israel as a distinct people until the end, and until the whole prophetic word is fulfilled.

The servants of God (the Levites who dwelt in the cities of refuge) were in Jehovah's mind about this; they knew the slayer was being preserved for ultimate restoration. This is our privilege as

Christians. Our God not only tells us in His word what He is doing for us, in bringing us into wondrous blessing before Himself, but He acquaints us with all His purposes. And in such scriptures as Rom. 11 we have the unfolding of the divine mind concerning the people in question. God will yet restore them; they shall yet possess the good land, on the ground not of law, but of mercy. Can we wonder that Paul, when writing of these dealings of God, broke out with, “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out”! (Rom. 11:33.)

It is interesting to note when the manslayer was restored to his possessions. “He shall abide in it (the city of refuge) unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.” “After the death of the high priest the slayer shall return unto the land of his possessions.”

Not, while Christ carries on His present priestly work within the rent veil on high, will Israel be restored. While He ministers there in the presence of God for us, they remain out of their lands, in the places whither they have been driven. But the moment will arrive when the present work of Christ will come to an end (for we shall be in glory beyond the need of it), and then God will turn His attention once again to the seed of Israel. There are two characters of priesthood belonging to our Lord Jesus, which it is important to bear in mind—the Aaronic and the Melchisedec. He is not a priest after Aaron's order, His priesthood being untransmissible; but Aaron's functions furnish the type of what He is now doing on behalf of His saints in the sanctuary above. This will come to an end; and then will follow the Melchisedec priesthood which is directly in connection with the remnant of Israel. Melchizedec’s priesthood was not characterized by sacrifice and intercession; but he brought forth bread and wine to the man of God, and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

Thus will Christ act in the latter day. He will come out for the blessing of those (Jews) who will stand for Him in an evil day—His overcoming ones; and He will bless and refresh them, as the patriarch was refreshed of old. So, while the Lord carries on His present gracious work as Priest in the presence of God, Israel as a nation remains unblessed; but blessing is in store for them, through the mercy of God. He “hath not cast away His people which He foreknew” (Rom. 11:2). Then shall they know and understand that the precious blood, shed once by their fathers, is that which alone makes atonement for the soul, and is all only foundation of blessing for them as for us. Zechariah tells us of their mourning in that day: “they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). The manslayer in that day will not attempt to justify his deed, but will adore the grace that covers all. W. W. F.

Chapter 150

On Ministry

ONE cannot do too much for so blessed a Master; indeed when one pauses to consider the riches and magnificence of His grace toward us, the desire is naturally fervent to serve Him, and to serve Him abundantly. And it is well-pleasing to Him. How refreshing it must be to His heart to see souls in this cold selfish world willing to spend and be spent for Him! It is treading surely somewhat in His own blessed footsteps, Who came into the world as the girded One, “not to be ministered unto (even though Lord of all) but to minister.” “I am among you as He that serveth” (Luke 22:27).

But it is highly important that our service be according to His mind, or service may become not service; and bring His heart no joy, and His laborers no reward. Just a few remarks, on service, and ministry in general, may be helpful to you at the present juncture.

Ministry (whether toward the world or in the church) properly viewed is an expression of God's grace. His grace is its spring; it is His blessed way of supplying the need of souls. “When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts” says Eph. 4. And the spirit of all true ministry is, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:33-35). His servants are called and appointed by Him (Gal. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, Acts 20:24), are fitted by Him (2 Cor. 3:4, 5), and are responsible to Him, and will ere long stand before Him and give account at His judgment seat (1 Cor. 3:2, 12-15 Cor. 5:9).

Dear brother, you are apparently willing to allow another party to come in between your soul and the Lord, and to receive an appointment from men, to be paid by men, and to be responsible to men. Alas! this is what we see all around us in Christendom, both in the National “Churches” and in Dissent; but is it really God's order? At the least, it is faith pushed aside and dependence upon human props substituted for it. And is not the Head dishonored when “official” men take into their hands functions that belong to Him?

If you will read 1 Cor. 9. carefully, you will get a few thoughts of value upon this matter. Paul protested in ver. 19, that he was “free from all men.” Could he have said this, if He had been their employee? He says in ver. 18, that it was his glory to make the gospel of Christ “without charge.” And when men criticized his service, and required an account of him, did he not indignantly repudiate their right, and remind them that he was the Lord's servant, not theirs, and that to his own Master he stood or fell?

There are cases where the Lord calls His servants to such a peculiar path of service that they cannot take up work and supply their own bodily needs; and. in such cases the saints, of God should look after them and see they have no lack; but such instance, I firmly believe, are very rare. The apostle was not one of them, peculiar though his path of service was; he labored with his own hands, aid ministered to his own necessities, and refused to be chargeable to anyone (1 Thess. 2:9). And in so doing, he told the Ephesian elders, he had left an example (Acts 20:35). Blessed and honored servant! ready ever to sacrifice himself in order that his Lord might be glorified and the saints served.

In a general way, it is the Lord's will for His saints that they keep to their occupations. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a servant? care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called therein abide with God” (1 Cor. 7:20-24). I am aware that slaves, not preachers, were before the apostle's mind in penning these words; but the principle applies nevertheless. The Lord guide you, my beloved brother, and deliver you from making any mistake. We cannot serve Him too abundantly; but let our service be according to His revealed truth.

“Grace, mercy and peace, be multiplied unto you.”

W. W. F.

Chapter 151

Morsels From Family Records: 1. Genesis 4-5

STARTING with Gen. 4:16-24 we have a list of the descendants of the man Cain, who “went out from the presence of the Lord,” and in the land of Nod “he builded a city.” There he and his descendants made themselves comfortable, and cultivated mechanical and fine arts. Meanwhile plunging deeper into sin, until the wrath of God being out-poured, every representative of that guilty family perished by the Flood. Now, turning to 1 Chron. 1:1, we read, “Adam, Shah, Enosh;” but not one word about Cain and his descendants. The reader mighty “Neither is Abel's name there given.” Quite so, for he left no son; but hew very often in the New Testament is honorable mention made of Abel?

SETH'S DESCENDANTS.

Gen. 5, in giving us a list of these, presents some very striking facts. For not only are their respective, ages given, but the very great ages, to which most of them attained, enabled certain “holy prophets,” whose names are here given, to testify to many succeeding generations the wondrous works of God. Before the flood there was delivered an oral testimony. Adam and Methuselah were contemporary for over 240 years. One interpretation of the name given to the latter by his father Enoch is, “At his death the breaking forth of waters.” These two things are certain, viz., that Enoch foresaw coming judgments, and that the days of the long life of his son was in itself a manifestation of the longsuffering of God ere that judgment by water was outpoured. For Methuselah died just before the flood. The words, “and he died,” repeated so many times in this chapter, furnish us with a striking contrast to the words, “And He shall live” written with reference to David's Son and Lord in Psa. 72:15.

NOAH'S DESCENDANTS.

For a clear and concise explanation of the origin of the many different nations of the earth men search in vain among the ancient records of Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt. The inspired record given in Gen. 10 stands alone in its very simple, clear, and accurate account of a matter, which, but for the information therein supplied, would to this day have remained an unsolved problem. (That many of these nations will take a prominent position in the ratter day, and be visited with swift judgments, is clear from Ezek. 38.) Gen. 10:25 tells us exactly when that division of the earth amongst the nations took place; as Dent. 32:8 explains the impose the Most High had in view in separating the sons of Adam. One remarkable fact (Gen. 11:10-26) disclosed is the longevity of Shem, who out-lived quite a number of generations of his own descendants; which in its turn discloses God's gracious purpose in his very long life. Eye-witness of the flood, and honored saint of God (Gen. 9:26), he lived to bear witness to very many of the things which he had himself seen and heard. How the heart of Shem must have grieved when not only the sons of Ham and Japheth, but his own children, declined to gross idolatry (Josh. 24:2)! He was living at the time when God called Abram. The sons of Ishmael (Gen. 25:12-16), and the sons of Esau (Gen. 36.) became great, numerous, and opulent, while as yet the chosen seed of Israel were born into adversity and bitter bondage. Both families are briefly mentioned in 1 Chron. 1. but the Spirit of

God proceeds no farther in the register. Henceforth their posterity are not written with the righteous.

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Chapter 152

Morsels From Family Records: 2. 1 Chronicles 1-6

May be attentively read with much profit. The Spirit in chap. 2. first presents the parentage of David, while in chap. 3:10-16 the kings of Judah are given down to the captivity.

The line of the high priests from Aaron unto the captivity is given in 1 Chron. 6:3-15, with the exception of Eli and his descendants. These latter were descended from Ithamar (1 Chron. 24:3), but the curse from God rested on the house of Eli (1 Sam. 2:29-34):-

“Their priests fell by the sword;

And their widows made no lamentation.”

Sheshan married his daughter to his servant Jarha, an Egyptian, and their children were reckoned with Israel (1 Chron. 2:34-41). On the other hand Mered the son of Ezra married Bithiah, the daughter of Pharash (chap. 4:17, 18), and had sons. Had Joseph's wise advice been followed (Gen. 46:33, 34) as years rolled on, there had not been these mixed marriages. Manasseh and Ephraim do not appear to have ever aspired to become nobles in Egypt. Before Beriah was born, it had gone evil with the house of Ephraim, whose posterity is named down to Joshua, who led Israel on to victory in the Land of Promise (chap. 7:20-27).

The prayer of Jabez (chap. 4:9, 10) has made his name famous. Who was Jabez? And from whom descended? No connecting link is given in chap. 4. to show that he was born of Judah; in the midst of whose family register his name suddenly appears. Was that “coast,” which the Lord enlarged in answer to his prayer, called after himself? If so, chap. 2:55 favors the impression that he was of the family of the Kenites, who were the descendants of Hohab, a Cushite, who came with Israel at Moses' express invitation (Num. 10:29), and his children dwelt among the people of Judah (Judg. 1:16). A Kenite could not claim a portion in Israel, on the ground that he was of Israel; yet he might call on the God of Israel, and ask to be blessed with Israel.

To 1 Chron. 6:33, 38 we are indebted for clearly establishing the fact that Heman, the central one of the three leading singers of Israel (compare verses 33, 39, 44) was the grandson of the prophet Samuel; and that both were descendants of that very man Korah, who led the great rebellion in the wilderness. The children of Dathan and Abiram went down with their parents alive into the pit. “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not” (Num. 26:11). These appear to have left their father alone in his wickedness; and of the sons of the very man that disputed the authority of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, came that prophet who spake unto Israel, and said, “It is Jehovah that advanced Moses and Aaron, &c.” (1 Sam. 12:6, 8).

Many of the Psalms are expressly dedicated “To the sons of Korah,” of whom, in the days of David, Heman was the leading representative. He had a numerous family (1 Chron. 25:5).

The sons of Moses “the man of God” could not, like their brethren the sons of Aaron, officiate as priests. They were named of the tribe of Levi (1 Chron. 23:14-17). During David's reign, “Shebuel the son of Gershom,” Moses' eldest son, was “ruler of the treasures “; while Shelomith, descended

from Moses' second son, was, with his brethren, the custodian of “all the treasures of the dedicated things,” given expressly for the maintenance of the house of Jehovah (1 Chron. 26:24-28). The honorable position they were privileged to occupy, in David's kingdom, enables us to point to the sons of Moses as a striking example of the fulfillment of that gracious promise, “The children of Thy servants shall continue; their seed shall be established before thee.”

Nor were “the sons of the stranger” overlooked at a time when the Lord so bountifully blessed Israel. For the Spirit of God, “when He writeth up the people,” graciously includes in the list of David's mighty men, Zelek the Ammonite (1 Chron. 11:39), Uriah the Hittite (verse 41), and Ithmah the Moabite (verse 46). In this connection we would also mention the name of Ittai the Gittite, whose faithfulness to David, when a fugitive (2 Sam. 15:19-23), rebuked an ungrateful nation, and was rewarded by his being made one of the chief commanders of David's army (2 Sam. 18:2). Honorable mention is also made of Oman the Jebusite, who readily offered to give his threshing-floor, oxen, and implements, to his acknowledged sovereign lord the king of Israel (1 Chron. 21:18-28).

Chapter 153

Morsels From Family Records: 3. Ezra 2:59-63

“And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-parsa, Cherub, Addan and Immer; but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred, fifty and two. And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai (which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their own name). These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore were they, as polluted, put from their priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim” (Ezra 2:59-63; Neh. 7:61-65).

The above quotation conclusively proves how great was the importance to Israelites of carefully preserving their several family registers. Having drawn attention to this particular portion, we need add nothing further with respect to the same: because we rather desire to make a few remarks upon those two remarkable lists which immediately preceded those given above.

Proceeding backwards we read (Ezra 2:55; Neh. 7:57) of

“THE CHILDREN OF SOLOMON'S SERVANTS, &C., &C.”

Who these persons were descended from, is made perfectly clear in 1 Kings 9:20, 21. Of these brought before our notice as bond-servants in the glorious days of the first kingdom, on Israel's return from captivity—the children of eleven of these aborigines are honorably mentioned as sharing the fortunes of the nation. Had these eleven, whose names are recorded, specially distinguished themselves by their whole-hearted devotedness each to his particular servile task? But their children should ever be clearly distinguished from

“THE NETHINIM,”

who at the very same time occupied a very different position. We believe that it is very generally understood that these latter were descendants of those Gibeonites, who obtained a league by craft from Israel, and were by Joshua condemned to perpetual servitude, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God (Josh. 9:22, 23).

But though their first step proved thus faulty, their second step redounded to their own honor, when they, perceiving that peace with the people of God involved conflict with their neighbors on all sides, hesitated not to show that they preferred peace, with the bond-service to Israel, to returning to their old footing with their former acquaintances (Josh. 10:6). And the sun and moon stood still while Israel avenged themselves upon those who gathered themselves together for the purpose of crushing the power of Gibeon.

Because Saul slew the Gibeonites, Israel was visited with three years' famine (2 Sam. 21:1, 2). During Saul's reign, where was the ark of God? In obscurity certainly (1 Chron. 13:3), but kept in safety in Kirjath-jearim, one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:17). When David reigned,

where was the Tabernacle pitched? Even at Gibeon! so that, during those very critical times, to the honor of the Gibeonites it redounds, that one of their cities proved a safe resting place for the Ark, and another held the Tabernacle (2 Chron. 1:3, 4).

When Ezra would lead up a company of Israelites from Babylon, and found that no Levites were present, he sent to Iddo for “ministers for the house of our God.” Certain Levites promptly responded, and with them came 220 Nethinim, “whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites.” His company being now considered complete, he started, after fasting and prayer, to go up to Jerusalem.

With reference to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, the allusion to the Nethinim is couched in language rather obscure. Whether the meaning intended to be conveyed is, that while others rebuilt the wall, the Nethinim renovated the tower of Ophel (situate on the wall, 2 Chron. 27:3) is not quite clear (Neh. 3:26).

One fact, more remarkable in itself than even the very long list of the Nethinim who returned with Zerubbabel, given in both Ezra and Nehemiah, remains to be mentioned. When gathered in solemn assembly, the covenant was sealed by the leaders of the people, the Nethinim (i.e. Amorites on Israel's first entrance into Canaan, 1 Sam. 10; 11:2) entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law he., and not to intermarry with the peoples of the land! For though they were actually descendants of the Amorites, they were now most thoroughly incorporated with the nation of Israel. With the faithful in Israel, these men of faith were blessed.

Chapter 154

Morsels From Family Records: 4. Matthew 1

Is naturally read with especial interest, and has been made the subject of much comment, with great profit to souls. Upon it we venture a few remarks, which we hope will prove profitable and instructive.

The marvelous grace that brought three Gentile women to share with true-born daughters of Israel in the high distinction of being progenitors of the Messiah has often been noticed.

Viewing all that precedes it in the light of Matt. 1:17, we see that all the generations from Abraham to Christ, are equally divided into three fourteens.

The first fourteen flourished during the patriarchal age; “the patriarch David” (Acts 2:29), completing the list. They were for the most part “men of renown” and “elders,” who received a good report through faith, whom the Lord greatly honored, each in his own generation, by taking them up, and using them as instruments in His hands, of shaping the destinies of the nation that grew so very rapidly, and was so highly favored of Jehovah.

For the moment passing over the list of kings, we would say of the third fourteen, that, with the exception of Zerubbabel, they appear to have been what we now understand by the term “nobodies” in the nation. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was, as we all know, a working carpenter. Yet, though of no reputation in the nation, we are persuaded that Mal. 3:16, 17 accurately describes these who lived in a day of small things, and yet cast not away their confidence in the Lord God of Israel.

One remarkable feature in the second fourteen is the omission of three generations of kings in ver. 8, and of one in ver. 11. In ver. 8 we read, “And Joram begat Uzziah;” whereas in point of fact, Joram begat Ahaziah, whose son Joram, and grandson Amaziah, each wielded in turn the scepter of Judah. The insertion of Ahaz, Manasseh and Amon, each one infamous for very great wickedness, appears to preclude the thought that they were omitted for such a reason from the list. Why are they excluded? Ah! here we have a striking example of the practical carrying out of the principle, so clearly expressed in the second commandment, viz. “I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” The names of Ahab and Jezebel are painfully familiar to us all; and in marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah their daughter, Jehoshaphat, though a good man personally, brought down upon his own descendants, to the third generation, the curse that rested upon the house of Ahab. For three generations we read of wholesale massacres in cold blood. Jehoram slew all his own brethren on his accession (2 Chron. 21:4); the Philistines and Arabians slew all his sons (22:1); and Athaliah, on the death of her son Ahaziah, slew all the seed royal of the house of Judah save Joash (22:10,11). The names of the son, grandson, and great-grandson of “Athaliah, that wicked woman,” herself inheriting the fierce and idolatrous spirit of her mother Jezebel, are excluded from mention in “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” Those who esteem it to be a light thing to become unequally yoked with unbelievers, should attentively

consider the sad history of the house of Jehoshaphat unto the fourth generation; and such may readily perceive, that, by means of his having married his son to Athaliah, Satan all but accomplished the extermination of the royal house of David. The fact, made evident by the list given in Luke 3:23-38, of a reserve line from David, carefully preserved, does not in the least lessen the honor that rightly attaches to the name of Jehoshabeath the wife of Jehoiada, because her faithful preservation of the infant Joash prevented such a calamity from falling upon the nation (2 Chron. 22:10-12).

We simply need to refer to Jer. 22:13-19, as furnishing ample reasons why the name of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, and father of Jeconiah, is excluded from mention in Matt. 1:11. “Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

IN Proverbs it is always “Jehovah “; once only is “Elohim” used (25:2), and (in 2:17) “Elohey-ha,” her God. In Ecclesiastes “Jehovah” is never used, always “Elohim “; and, where it is not “a man,” “ha-Adam” is regularly used. This falls in with the different objects of the books.

Chapter 155

Morsels From Family Records: 5

WHEN we review “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ” with Heb. 1:1, as our standpoint, the list given of the kings becomes very deeply interesting.

By the Lord's express command, Joshua, the successor of Moses in the leadership of the people was to stand before Eleazar the priest, who should inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord (Num. 27:21). This did Israel on one occasion, in the days of Phinehas (Judg. 20:28), but when Abiathar fled to David to Keilah, the ark rested in obscurity in Kirjath-jearim, and of all the priestly vestments he brought with him simply an ephod in his hand. And when in perplexity David bade Abiathar bring hither the ephod; and David inquired of the Lord, who answered him in condescending grace (1 Sam. 23:6-12).

As all know, David was no sooner established in the kingdom, than he set about bringing up the ark to Zion: Solomon built the temple, that house of rest for the ark of God. At the dedication of the temple, first appeared the overshadowing cloud; “Then spake Solomon, the LORD hath said that He would dwell in thick darkness.” Would He who dwelt between the Cherubim indeed shine forth? When Solomon had made an end of praying, all the children of Israel saw the fire descend from heaven, and the glory of the LORD filled the house; seeing which they bowed and worshipped with thanksgivings.

So far as we have ourselves gleaned, scripture gives not the slightest intimation for how long or how short a period that glory-light, which had been at once the defense and the sure guide to their fathers in the wilderness, was openly discerned upon the house. While God shined out of it, Zion was the perfection of beauty.

In the reign of Rehoboam, Shishak spoiled the temple. During the reign of Abijah the form of godliness was maintained (2 Chron. 13:10-12), yet the king's heart was not perfect with the Lord his God (1 Kings 15:3), and idolatry was practiced (vers. 12, 13), which in its most glaring forms Asa removed. This last king began his reign well, and by his offerings enriched the temple; and his faith was rewarded in the overthrow of Zerah and his 1,000,000 warriors (2 Chron. 14:9-12). But the closing years of his reign saw his own spoliation of the temple, in order to bribe Benhadad into an alliance with himself against Baasha.

The one remarkable event which we wish to draw special attention to in the reign of Jehoshaphat is that related in full details in 2 Chron. 20. Moved by his fear of the confederated forces of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, he proclaimed a fast; and all Judah stood before the LORD in the temple, while the king prayed. The answer was instantly given, in the hearing of all the people. by Jahaziel.

To Jettorain's alliance with the house of Ahab and its disastrous consequences, we have already referred. Passing over the three kings whose names are omitted in ver. 8, as we have seen, we come to Uzziah; who, like Asa, started well, and ended badly. The one event of his reign we refer to is his presuming to enter the sanctuary to burn incense upon the altar of incense, in the face of the earnest protest of Azariah and those eighty priests who were likeminded with him; and his

being smitten with leprosy as he stood beside the altar, and thrust out of the sanctuary (2 Chron. 26). Was the sanctuary defiled by this fearful visitation?

In the year that king Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah saw such a vision of glory that his description of it favors the thought that it far transcended the glory as openly discerned by Israel on the day of the dedication of the temple. Because he saw the Lord, high and exalted, His being the transcendent glory (John 12:41), the skirts thereof filled the temple. Though Israel's kings had failed, and sinned grievously, the cry of the Seraphim bore witness to the fact that the throne of God is established in holiness. The prophet and Israel were of unclean lips, yet was the prophet's iniquity taken away, and “he spake of Him” Whose glory he had been privileged to behold. Jotham reigned well, and built the high gate of the house of Jehovah. Had it been like king like people, Judah had prospered during his reign; but of them we read, “and the people did yet corruptly” (2 Chron. 27:2).

Ahaz was so infamous for his very great wickedness that the Spirit of God has characterized his very name thus, “This is that king Ahaz,” or “This same king Ahaz.” He “wearied men “; he spoiled, and shut up the temple. Oh the tender mercies of our God! In those distressing days He appointed for His people a sanctuary, even Himself! (Isa. 8:14). In the reigns of other wicked kings honorable mention is made of faithful priests; one thing that characterizes the wicked reign of Ahaz is, that here we have a scarcely less wicked priest in Urijah, who lends himself to become the ready tool of his sacrilegious sovereign in building an idolatrous altar (2 Kings 16:10, 11).

Hezekiah “trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he slave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him.” If we looked only upon the surface, we might have considered that the piety of Hezekiah would have been rewarded in the exaltation of the nation over which be reigned. That his reign was very greatly beneficial to his subjects we freely admit. When however we draw a comparison between the days of Jehoshaphat and those of Hezekiah, we are struck by certain sure signs that, notwithstanding the latter's godliness, the nation has declined to a much lower footing before the Lord.

On the Assyrian coming upon the scene Hezekiah proclaims no fast, as did Jehoshaphat; instead of the nation standing before the Lord, its godly king enters the sanctuary to make his own earnest prayer as an individual. In a day of national adversity we read of two individuals simply, as praying, and crying to heaven (2 Chron. 32:20). Hezekiah indeed spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, but instead of an instant answer, the reply is sent by Isaiah t3 him (2 Kings 19:20). Then the army of Judah is in no way associated with the overthrow of the Assyrians; and instead of gathering spoil, poor Hezekiah had already endured the mortification of humbling himself before his enemy (2 Kings 18:14), and what must have grieved him not less, of the sanctuary despoiled of silver and gold, in a vain attempt to satisfy the greed of his powerful adversary (vers. 15, 16).

All this tells its own sad tale. The prophet Isaiah draws aside the curtain, and shows that hypocrisy existed, and that deeds of darkness were done, behind that form of godliness outwardly retained by the nation (Isa. 29:13-15).

Had Hezekiah been content to set his house in order and die, the nation had been spared much suffering. During those added fifteen years was born Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1); the heart of Hezekiah became lifted up, to his own and to the nation's hurt (2 Chron. 32:25, 26); and those hidden workings of evil appeared to have gathered great strength. It may be observed: as Isaiah proceeds with his prophecies, he becomes by the Spirit more and more vehement in his denunciations of Israel's transgression (Isa. 58:1-7; 59:2-8). All the more positively awful is the state of things disclosed by Isa. 28:14, 15, when we consider its existence in the very face of that prophet's sublime testimony concerning the glories and honors that all find their center in the Person of the coming Messiah!

Very significant indeed is Isaiah's lamentation, doubtless with the death of Hezekiah before his mind (Isa. 57:1, 2), and in full view of that wickedness which he saw was gathering strength continually (vers. 3, 4).

It is made very clear by Heb. 11:39, 40, that the three verses immediately preceding this reference directly refer to a period of fearful persecution that raged before Christ came. It would be very remarkable indeed if scripture furnished us with no clue as to the precise period at which it slew its thousands of faithful men and women.

It will help us much to apprehend the real state of affairs during the reign of Manasseh, if we bear in mind what has been written above concerning the workings of evil in Israel, and observe at the same time that for three previous generations of kings the Spirit of God had raised up and maintained a very powerful prophetic testimony, in the mouths of the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Micah.

Now coming directly to Manasseh’s reign, we find events recorded which give us a most complete picture or foreshadowing of a still more awful period, in which the man of sin will for a time practice and prosper. For here we have a wicked ruler, despising all reproofs, and compelling his subjects to do iniquity. He places an abomination in the house of God. He persecutes to the death those who will die, rather than do evil. Jehovah's “watchmen,” His prophets, hold not their peace day nor night; and the abundant fruit of their powerful testimony is proved by the immense numbers who die the death of martyrs (2 Kings 21:16). While Jehovah's saints are hunted to the death within Jerusalem, the merciless Assyrian comes against the city from without, so that they are placed as between two fires. At such a moment it became faithful priests, who could not enter within the sanctuary, because of the abomination set up therein by Manasseh, to “weep between the porch and the altar,” and say, “Spare Thy people, O Jehovah, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

Chapter 156

Morsels From Family Records: 6

IT has been often and truly said that coming events cast their shadows before themselves. Those very carefully tabulated and preserved family records retained their importance until the descent of the Messiah from Abraham (Matt. 1), and the full list of all the progenitors of the Son of Man in a direct line up to Adam (Luke 3), could each be duly registered. Even before, for our instruction, the Spirit employed the pen of Matthew to write the first, and that of Luke to transcribe the second. Connected with John the Baptist and his powerful ministry, we have a very marked foreshadowing of the fact that the old order was on the point of passing away, to be succeeded by that which was new and infinitely better.

John's father had occupied a position of some distinction in his service as a priest of the course of Abijah. His mother was of the daughters of Aaron. So that in this “man sent from God,” we have one qualified by birth and physical perfection to officiate as a priest, who neither dressed in priestly attire, nor performed priestly service in the temple, nor ate of the holy things in the holy place.

Crowds “went out to see” a man who was neither shaken by adverse circumstances, nor drawn aside by indulgence in luxuries, from the due performance of his great mission.

“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Begin not to say within yourselves, ‘We have Abraham to our father:’ for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Thus did he shatter at one blow all their preconceived notions as to the spiritual advantages of birth and parentage, upon which they had grown so accustomed to pride themselves.

The forerunner having leveled all such distinctions, it remained for Him Who came after him to draw the attention of “the seventy” to one infinitely higher, and subject to no such leveling process, by saying to them on their return, after having fulfilled their mission, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

To those who had been taught from their earliest infancy to consider it one of the direst of calamities for an Israelite to be cut off without posterity, how very comforting these words of our Lord Himself must have proved, when fierce persecutions raged! For James was slain by the sword, and Stephen stoned to death, and many otherwise suffered martyrdom.

That register, kept on high, of all those called with an heavenly calling, rendered it to such a matter of no importance to trouble further about preserving earthly family registers. In the Gospels we frequently find the father's name given, as in the case of Peter; but after Pentecost, even this was dropped. The surname Barnabas, given to Joses (Acts 4:36), was an evident departure from the rule almost invariably adopted in the case of Old Testament saints. As for Paul, he himself mentions quite incidentally that he was of the tribe of Benjamin; but we are no where told the name of his father. More than this, Paul by the Spirit, warned his beloved sons in the faith (1 Tim. 1:4;

Titus 3:9) against giving heed to “endless genealogies.” For though a believer in Christ were in a position to prove his descent from David, or Aaron, this gave him no right to claim higher position in the church than that occupied by another member of the body, who happened to be descended from Ammon or Moab, or even the cursed Canaan. In the assembly therefore no distinctions of this character were to be observed, since all were one in Christ.

Our citizenship is in heaven; and none shall have the privilege of entering within the gates of the holy city, new Jerusalem, “but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life “; that heavenly register of saints, called with an holy calling, which is not subjected to periodical cancellations, as are those oftentimes faulty burgess-rolls of earthly citizens.

Yet there is another family record, as brief and concise in its wording, as it is full of pathos, while most exquisitely tender in the manner in which it clearly expresses the Lord's unwearied and unweakened personal affection for His earthly people. “I am the root and offspring of David” —saith He Who now sits exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Surely this redounds to the praise of the glory of His grace; that, while occupying His present exalted position, He forgets not, nor is ashamed to acknowledge, those ties of relationship as existing between Himself, the Perfect Man, and the children of Israel; even though the natural branches of the olive tree have been long since broken off, and that nation has for many centuries past been experiencing the bitter consequences of the carrying out of the solemn prophetic sentence— “Not-My-people.”

They acknowledge Him not; still is He to Israel (who will yet mourn for Him, as a man mourneth for his only son) the pledge of the fulfillment of every promise made before unto the fathers by the prophets. Rich and abundant blessing is in store for Israel. “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness!”

This brings us to the consideration of those family records, which once again in the future, as in the past, will have an importance which they do not now possess. “The lost ten tribes” has become a proverbial expression; no man living knows who they are or where definitely to be found.

But when the right moment for it arrives, the Lord God of Israel will call their representatives by their distinctive names; and we doubt not grace will enable each individual of those 144,000 sealed Israelites (Rev. 7:4-8) to attest the fact that he is actually descended from that particular son of Israel whose name he bears.

We have adequate scriptural authority for proceeding into minuter details, as we point out that the house of David will be known as such, and that the house of Nathan will be as clearly distinguished from the former, as each will be distinct from the house of Levi and of Shimei (Zech. 12:11-14).

One particular family of the sons of Aaron is expressly named as that which in the future shall have the exclusive privilege of coming near to minister unto the Lord. Every other representative of the priestly family must then of necessity take a subordinate place to that occupied by the sons of Zadok alone (1 Sam. 2:35, 36). So far as we have ourselves gathered, we will endeavor to show under what circumstances they won for themselves this high distinction.

In a former paper was pointed out the great contrast in matters of detail between 1 Chron. 20 and 32. We would now add that 2 Chron. 34 presents as great a contrast to both as those two chapters do to each other.

But first observe that the untimely death of the wicked king Amon was an event fraught with blessing to Judah; for the throne thus suddenly rendered vacant was now occupied by a child, whose name had been announced at Bethel, several hundred years before, by the man of God that spake against the altar of Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:2). The blessed results of the piety of Josiah early became apparent. Yet he that attentively reads the long catalog of the abominations which he destroyed and abolished (2 Kings 23:4-20), and also observes that it took him six years to purge the land and the house, cannot fail to form at least some faint idea of the awful magnitude of Judah's idolatry during the respective reigns of that king's two immediate predecessors (Jer. 2:28).

Hilkiah the priest having found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah, its contents were read before Josiah; and this brought that pious king deep exercise of soul: he rent his clothes and wept, for he clearly saw that the wrath of God had been aroused against His guilty people. Yet he did not, like Jehoshaphat, proclaim a fast; neither did he, like Hezekiah, enter into the temple, and there personally appeal to the God that dwelleth between the Cherubim. He sent the high priest and others to Huldah, that they might inquire of Jehovah for him. This may appear strange; but still more strange is the king's command to the Levites, recorded in the next chapter, to “put the holy ark in the house.” For such a command implies that it was at that moment outside of the house! Had those who wickedly set up an idol in that house, also removed it from its resting place with sacrilegious hands? Or had certain faithful priests, desirous of preserving it from sacrilege in those terrible days reverently borne it away to some place of safety (as those Levites intended to have done when Absalom threatened the peace of Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 15:24, 25)? To me it seems that this latter supposition is correct, and that Ezek. 44:15, 16; 48:11, refer to this pious action on the part of faithful sons of Zadok.

Chapter 157

The Mustard Seed

IT is well to understand that “the kingdom of the heavens” does not mean heaven itself but its reign over the earth while the King rejected by man is seated on high. The six later parables present successive comparisons of that kingdom in its chief characteristics: three are its public aspect, and so, like the first, were addressed without to the great multitudes; the three last, like the explanation of the first similitude, or Parable of the Darnel, were spoken in the house only to the disciples, as dealing with what needed spiritual intelligence.

Another distinction is obvious. The Parable of the Mustard Seed, like that of the Leaven, shows what the kingdom is like, in marked difference from its predecessor, as it becomes more apparent still in its successor.

“The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard which a man took and sowed in his field; which is less than all the seeds, but, when it hath grown, is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches” (vers. 31, 32).

Here the Lord gives us to see the least and lowliest beginning of Christian profession growing to be a power in the earth. In Luke 17:6, He employs the same figure of a grain of mustard; as indeed it was a proverbial expression for what is diminutive. But the grain soon shot up so as to leave the pot-herbs behind, and afford shelter to the birds it notoriously attracts.

So it was to be, so it has long been, with that which bears His name here below. The Lord marks beforehand the surprising contrast between the extreme littleness of its first estate when sown, and the height to which it was ere long to advance. He is not here pronouncing on its inner or moral nature. He shows from the first what all the world can see when it came to pass. It is one of “the mysteries (or secrets) of the kingdom of the heavens,” but secrets given for the disciples to know. And the Lord here sets out the fact, in due time palpable to all mankind, that what began the most minute was to develop into a conspicuous and protective power on the earth, according to the well known figure of a nation or political system in Isa. 11:33, 34; Ezek. 31; Dan. 4, &c.

Now this was no mystery for Israel any more than for the Gentile powers. It was expressly allotted to the ancient people of God, as we read in the Psalms and the Prophets. So in the days of depression when captivity befell “the rebellious house,” God made use of a tree to illustrate His ways with them, and their ways before Him which drew out His sternest chastening. But He adopted the same figure to assure the believing heart that in His mercy all will be reversed in the day to come, and that He will plant the tender twig on a mountain high and eminent, even the height of Israel. “And it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I Jehovah have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I Jehovah have spoken and will do it” (Ezek. 17). It is all of His mercy; but how could the result in this case be otherwise? For Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem and before His

ancients gloriously.

Wholly different was to be the proper portion of the Christian on earth. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth...Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are ye when they shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you” (Matt. 5:3-12). Even those whom God set first in the church were expressly charged by our Lord against power and glory of an earthly sort. “Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you. But whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you, let him be your slave: even as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28).

Thus the Lord lets us know in this parable that, in the face of His revealed will, Christendom would soon manifest a portentous change, and from its primitively low estate vie with the powers of the world in earthly grandeur and influence. We are called now to walk apart from the world, its power and its glitter, content to be hated as our Master was (John 15), cherishing also the secret of God's grace and the relationships it gives us, and suffering with Christ meanwhile. “But if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him” (Rom. 8). “Faithful is the saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11, 12). Now is the time for us to have tribulation in the world, till He come to take us to the Father's house, and we be manifested also with Him in glory when He is manifested. The day of glory with Christ will make ample amends.

But how is it with you, dear reader? Is Christ the object of your faith? If so, it is well indeed with you now and evermore. If He is nothing to you beyond any other whom men discuss, notwithstanding God's testimony to Him, it were better for you that you had not been born. Refusing God's light and love in Him Who went down below all depths for sinners, you cannot escape the judgment which He will execute on all the impenitent and unbelieving, that despise Him and the saving grace of God in Him. Before that everlasting judgment there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and mighty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low. Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. Meanwhile God commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent. Oh, that His goodness may lead you to repentance! The time is short: delay not. Your sins are many and great. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from every sin: nothing else can.

Chapter 158

The Mystery of Godliness: Part 1

“AND without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God (or, He who, R.V.) was manifested in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into (in) glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

That which introduces “the mystery of godliness” is well worth considering. The apostle had spoken of the church in a practical manner. He is not unfolding its heavenly relationship nor entering into particulars as to the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling there; but he speaks of it as the “house of God.” And it is the only house of God that is now recognized on earth. The church is the assembly of a living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is never called the truth: Christ is the truth; but the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is that assembly which has, as it were, the truth inscribed upon it, and presents it on a firm basis as well as a distinct manner. The church, at any rate, is responsible to present the truth of God stably and impressively before man. The world has not got the truth—on the contrary is under the power of error; and error as to God is of all things deadly for the soul. The heathen never had the truth; even the Jews, although they had the law, could not be truly said to have the truth, which is altogether beyond the law. The law is the expression on God's part of man's duty to God as well as to his neighbor. The truth is the revelation of what God is, and of what man is, as indeed of every other subject-matter of which it speaks. It is not like the law a claim of what ought to be, but a declaration of what is.

Christ is the One Who brought and was the truth: “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” and that, in express contrast with “the law” which “was given by Moses” (John 1:17). Now when the people, who were entrusted with the law, so fell away from it as to lose their position before God, and did so flagrantly and finally, not only by idolatry, but by the rejection of their own Messiah, then it was that God was pleased to bring truth in the person of Jesus Christ into the world, as He subsequently set up His monument of it inscribed so to speak livingly. This is the church here below. It was not to be a question merely of so many individuals; but of an assembly, a body of men in the world who possessed the truth from God in the Lord Jesus on Whom they believed, and witnessed it practically through the Holy Spirit Who made them to be God's habitation, His house on earth. So it is declared here.

There is no other representative body that He owns, as there is no “truth” from God save the Word personal and written; and this truth from God is not only for the life that now is but for eternity. Christ, being the Word, the Son, was exactly the suited person to declare God the Father, Whom none saw at any time (John 1:18). He was Himself God, the Eternal, the Only-begotten Son. None but He Who was God and in the beginning with God, through Whom all things were made, was competent, as being the way, the truth, and the life, to reveal the truth. But the Lord having been rejected, and thus accomplishing redemption on the cross, sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven, in order that there might be here below the assembly of believers united to Him in one body. “For in (or 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" (1 Cor. 12:13). Life never unites, but the Holy Spirit of God, the baptism of the Spirit present on earth. There was life for all saints before; they were born of the Spirit. Some of them were Jews, and some of them were Gentiles; but as yet there was no union in a single body. The Gentile remained of i lie nations, and the Israelite was kept apart as such. But Christ is our peace, Who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, that tie might create in Himself of the twain one new man, making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross. Thus the rejected and crucified Messiah became the effectual sacrifice for sins; and those who believed in Him had redemption in Him as well as life eternal; and the Holy Spirit was given from above to unite in one body all the redeemed who had in Christ the truth—to unite them in every place (separated necessarily from all others who remained Jews or Gentiles in the refusal of Christ), yet them also called to testify grace, as Israel of old to represent God's law.

But we are also Christians individually; and therefore are we called, each one, to be a witness of practical grace, and to suffer with Christ and for His name. For grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and the attempt of any Christians to present the truth without grace can only end in total failure, pride, and corruption, in oppression and every evil way. Nothing but grace and truth will God acknowledge in the Christian; and this we have in Christ. Let us see to it, not only in faith but in our ways. And the Spirit is life because of righteousness—a Spirit of power and love and a sound mind. He it is Who is also called the truth (1 John 5:7), and Who has made it known to us. If it were not that He is given for the Lord's sake, He would have left us long ago. But the Holy Ghost came down not in honor of the Christian or the church, but in virtue of Christ and His redemption. Therefore the Holy Ghost abides forever, and He it is that makes the church to be Christ's body and God's house, as we read here. He is that divine Person Who, when Christ was glorified, came down and dwells there. Thus it is no mere figure, as of old with the Jewish temple, but a great reality, God's habitation in the Spirit. And here it is used practically; here, not Timothy alone in his place, but each one in his own, has to know by the written word how he ought to behave himself in that holy place. For the church, thus founded and formed, furnished and characterized, is the pillar and support of the truth, presenting and maintaining the means by which the truth is held up before the world.

Having stated this plainly, the apostle next gives us to know what in very deed the truth is, and why it is called the mystery of godliness. The truth inscribed as a whole consists of that great mystery. It goes far beyond the accomplishment of Old Testament prophecy. "Mystery" does not in scripture mean something unintelligible or inexplicable, but that which could not be understood without God's revelation in the N. T. The O. T. scriptures properly speaking do not contain mysteries, though alluding to them (as in Dent. 29:29). It is in the New Testament from its first part to its last, where we hear of mystery—so much so, that those who are ministers of grace now are called stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Some people have long been disposed to make mysteries of the sacraments: but such is never the meaning of the word in scripture. It was a spurious force put upon it when the truth got perverted, and men turned to fables. Mysteries are New Testament revelations—truths which God in the Old Testament reserved to Himself, but which are now revealed in the New Testament. So in this chapter, ver. 9, the apostle speaks of the mystery of faith— "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." What God has revealed

through His own Son by the Spirit is for faith now to receive. The test is not the past but the present call of God.

The Old Testament in general treats of a state of things when people would see and know what God says and does: so it was of old, and so it will be in the glorious days to come. That is not the case now. As Christians we are called to believe and confess what we do not see and can not know by our mind merely, but what God has revealed by His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-12). It is therefore called “the mystery of the faith.” But here is another remarkable expression. It is called “the mystery of godliness:” “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” How is it then that the Spirit of God calls the truth the mystery (or secret) of godliness (or practical piety)? “The faith” and “godliness” are thus bound up indissolubly with “the mystery” here revealed. There is nothing so practical as the truth of Christ; and all practice which flows not from it is vain. The law demanded, but gave no power any more than life. Christ I is the life as well as the truth: and the Holy Spirit honors faith in Him risen with power.

Again, the mystery is no longer “hid in God;” it is divulged. You must always bear this in mind when you read about the mystery, that it is now revealed and nothing left in the dark. It is all now set forth in the light of God, and the simplest Christian is expected to receive it. So Christ said to His disciples, “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” All other mysteries of God are given to be known in a similar way. Can words more completely dissipate the prevalent idea that mystery means something incomprehensible, which piety dares not to pry into—at least while here on earth in time? By the Lord and the Spirit acting through the apostles in the N. T. the mysteries of God are given for us to receive and understand and enjoy them.

Nay, more, what more indispensable for practice? For we may observe that being here called “the mystery of godliness,” it is inseparable from true proper Christian piety. How can truth be “the mystery of godliness?” You can easily understand the mystery of the “faith;” but why is it called the mystery of “godliness?” Because the Holy Ghost will not allow that “godliness” or Christian piety can he without the truth, nor that the truth can be received in the love of it without producing godliness. The truth implies living Godward.

I am aware that, unconverted men can read and admire the Bible, and have done so. But the Bible is addressed to the conscience, and to the heart also when the conscience is reached and purged. It is not addressed to the mere understanding; and whenever it is thus intellectually taken up by men, the issue is that such men become heterodox, or infidels. How is this? For the simple and sufficient reason that the understanding as a matter of course judges God's word; whereas God gives His word to judge man's conscience, as he is indeed a sinner, none righteous, none that understands, none that seeks after God. Hence God gives the word to convict of sin, and to establish His own authority, which always exercises, as it ought, a moral judgment over the soul. This therefore, raises the question in the person who reads it, as to his own practical state of ruin through sin; and there is no greater calamity for a man than to read the Bible without that effect. The absence of this is the reason why in our day what is very absurdly called “higher criticism” is the fashion. Unconverted men presume to judge the Bible in the vanity of mind and learning: hence they turn out, not real critics, but blasphemers of God's word. Ignorant of the mystery of the faith, what real intelligence of a spiritual kind? For God is always God in light as in love and authority, where the truth is received, and man is put in his own true place of dependence and

subjection. This never was so until Christ came (for the O.T. saints had promise which left much in the dark), and this is exactly what Christ did, and always does when the truth is received by faith. God has His own absolute authority over the soul, and he who receives the truth is subject to God.

Now the only way in which a person is brought into subjection is by receiving Christ, because it is Christ Who makes God known to the soul. If we know the only true God and His Sent One, this is life eternal; if we do not, we find ourselves lost: but when we receive Christ and His redemption (and we needed it deeply), we know ourselves justified and saved, as well as brought into the certainty of the presence of God. When people are vague and hesitating, it is quite plain that, darkened by tradition, the law, or some other means, they have received the truth in a feeble manner indeed. The effect of the truth is that we walk in the light as God is in the light. How can He be uncertain? His word is the word of One Who is certain and communicates the truth to produce the certainty in our minds which is due to His communication.

Hence therefore “confessedly great is the mystery of godliness.” And surely it is a wonderful fact that the truth taught of God should produce godliness as by grace its simple and unfailing effect. Wherever it is received in faith, godliness follows; and, further, as there is no truth anywhere else, so also no real goodness.

Clearly then the question is, what the mystery of godliness, the truth inscribed on the church, is. Can any other subject be of greater importance? Now, in a most striking verse, we have the answer set before us. The truth is presented here as Christ from beginning to end; and Christ in a way peculiar to N. T. revelation as a whole. There is nothing more explicit than this. It is not a body of doctrines, still less is it an exposition of Christian duty. He is the truth: the essence of all Christianity is that all doctrine and all duty is embodied in a person, and that person is the Savior. What is there that a simple soul can understand better than a person? Even a child can believe in Christ, can find Him life, and can feel His love. Christ then is the blessed truth according to (or after) godliness. Indeed it is stronger than this: it—He—is the secret of godliness; Christ First and Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End; a great mystery or secret, but a secret now revealed of God with consequences commensurate for souls that believe and for those that believe not. For God is not mocked.

And what, coming to details, is the first view as it were, that is afforded us? What is this first presentation of Christ in the verse? “God (or, He Who) was manifest in flesh.” It is not as we find in the Prophets, Mighty God, Father of the age to come, God revealed with fire before Him.

The God of the Old Testament was God in the exercise of power and judgment; God bringing His reward with Him, and dealing with men according to their works. But in a wholly different aspect is He shown here. God was manifested in flesh, in human nature. If ever there was a mode of manifestation in the universe where we should not have expected Him Who is true God, it was “in flesh.” The flesh had been busy from of old in pleasing itself, in rebelling against God, in yielding to evil lusts, and, from the flood at least, in religious abominations. Who could or would have looked for Him manifested in human nature?

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 159

The Mystery of Godliness: Part 2

No more solemn history than man's: even Satan or his angels never practiced anything like the evil that man does habitually. One single sin, and angels lost their place—lost all forever. But man, oh, how active and pertinacious, and how futile in evil! How audacious and provoking against God! Again how ready to seduce his fellows into moral evil! and with what love of proselytizing into error and falsehood! Such is man: yet God bears with him. How astonishing the long-suffering of God with the race! Now this was the nature in which God was to be manifested. It was not in angelic nature; nor was it to be simply in divine nature. The mystery of godliness was thus to be far deeper and larger; yet is it ineffably sweet and intimate to us. The foundation of it is the Son of God incarnate; and not merely this, but manifested here below in flesh, albeit the Holy One of God, in Whom was no sin (not merely He never sinned). Never was any one manifested like the Lord Jesus Christ: in obedience, dependence, devotedness, humility, patience, righteousness, holiness, zeal but self-abasement, majesty yet love, unswerving truthfulness, beyond measure. It was He that was manifested in flesh. He was the Word, He was God, He was the Son; and if none had seen God at any time, He was now manifested in flesh, and He declared God the invisible perfectly, that man might know Him. Man wanted it, oh! how badly; God's people had the deepest reason to feel their lack. Never had there been seen the like before; never will there be the like again. For at His appearing He will be displayed in the exercise of judgment: how different was His first coming! For the first time in the ages and generations was He thus manifested when the world was old in falsehood and iniquity.

In the Revised Version they do not say “God,” but “He Who.” It matters practically but little, though one would not say there is not a shade of difference. If we take the reading “He Who was manifested,” there is but one person that can answer to it, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It could not be either the Father, nor yet the Holy Spirit of God. Without dogmatizing, we may say that the best authenticated reading is us, that is, “He Who” (cf., John 1:1-3). If it be so taken, the person of the Son is implied; whereas if we read “God,” this would look at the Godhead as such. But as the Son was God, and Christ the image of the invisible God, it is substantially true, no matter how it be taken, whether as in the Authorized or as in the Revised form. Here certainly is predicated a manifestation such as was meant for faith at this time; and as it was “in flesh,” so also in this world, when most evil and flesh utterly corrupt (save in the Holy One of God). So that reason judging morally would conclude that God had nothing to do but to execute His most solemn sentence, if He sent thus His only-begotten Son.

But here is a sight altogether new and unexpected. He came in pure grace. The Jews who had the prophets had no such expectation. They looked to the great King to set up His kingdom n Zion. This is what is largely and often proclaimed in the Old Testament. But as it predicted also His rejection even by the Jews, the Lord was to have in the first instance a kingdom of the heavens, which was altogether a mystery to them. For He is ascended on high, and sits on the Father's throne, not yet on His own throne (Rev. 3:21).

Accordingly the Lord's position is a most peculiar one. Rejected by the Jews, crucified by the Gentiles, He bore all shame and suffering and is seated, risen and glorified, at the right hand of God, till His enemies be made His footstool, when He will appear in glory to their confusion and take His “world-kingdom” (Rev. 11:15). There He is waiting, to take His place by and by on His own throne; and when He does come, the Jews will be broken down before Him, made to say by the Holy Spirit, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” And in that day all nations will follow the Jews. God (as Psa. 67 says) will bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. Compare Psa. 68:26-32. When the time comes to bless the world, Israel will be redeemed from the enemy's hand and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. The Stone the builders refused they will recognize as become the head of the corner; and they will take a place on earth as God's son, even His firstborn, at the head of all peoples of the earth. Nor can there be universal blessing for the earth until that day.

God is now calling out of the world to Christ in heaven. And the reason is plain. His Son, the Savior and Head, is there. Christ is the center of all God's dealings; and as Christ rejected on earth is exalted on high as the heavenly center, God is now forming a heavenly people, the body of that glorious Head. The Christian is therefore by calling a heavenly man (1 Cor. 15:48), and is unfaithful to the will of God and his relation to Christ, if he value and sink into an earthly man. But flesh likes to be important here below, to be busy in the world. Man counts it hard to forego ease and honor, wealth and power now. Yet according to the N. T. the pursuit of such objects is altogether foreign and opposed to Christianity. “God forbid (wrote the apostle) that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). How can a Christian, who appreciates Christ and the gospel—who enters into God's mind about him—seek to be on friendly terms with that world which cast out his Master, the Lord of all?

The only becoming path therefore for a Christian now is to walk consistently as one with Christ above. Now we know that He walked entirely apart from the world, and declared that we are not of it as He was not. And how did Christ appear to the world when here? Was He not despised and hated? Did He not prepare His disciples to expect the like? “If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19). A heavenly man must be content to be as His Master, persecuted for righteousness as well as for Christ's sake. Consequently this is grace, as the apostle Peter says, if one for conscience toward God endure griefs, suffering wrongfully. “If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is grace with God” (1 Peter 2:19, 20). When the time comes for the display of Christ's glory, then all that are His shall appear with Him in glory. Meanwhile, having died and risen with Christ, we are exhorted to seek and mind the things above where He sits, not the things on the earth; for our life is hid with Him in God.

Evidently all turns on the mystery of godliness, or the mystery of faith, as we read also. It is bound up with Him Who was manifested in flesh and received up in glory. The New Testament presents mystery from its first book to the last. But it is given to the believer to know these secrets; for all is now revealed. The believer is inexcusable for misunderstanding the word. The Lord's way of giving us to understand the truth is when the eye and the heart are fixed on Himself. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light.” The grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ gives light as

well as life; and as God has now revealed through the Spirit what of old was hidden, so the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

Of course we do not enter into all in a moment, but we do get the indispensable and all-important sum and substance even so by the faith of Christ. In receiving Him there is a divine capacity created in every believer; and when he submits to God's righteousness in Christ's redemption, the Spirit of God is given to him. I do not mean the new birth, but the gift of the Spirit. This gift is far more than being born anew. New birth or awakening is in order that one may have Christ's redemption, even the remission of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We are brought to God through Christ once suffering for sins, Just for unjust. When begotten by the word of truth, we look out of ourselves and find rest for our conscience in Christ's work on the cross; and thereon we receive the Holy Spirit. First we are born of water and the Spirit, as we read in John 3:5; and when we have heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; and not before (Eph. 1:13).

It is the more important to urge this now, because if we have the unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20), we cannot deny that grace has imparted to us spiritual power to understand the word. If the Holy Spirit given to us does not carry with it such power, what does? Do you think all the learning in the world could enable a soul to understand one truth of scripture? It never did and it never will. Learning of course has its use if you are not proud of it; and a chief use of it, I believe with John Berridge, is as a stone to throw at a dog. Thereby one may confound the mischievous pretensions of such as know not the truth. Truth the Holy Spirit alone can communicate in the written word. There we must take the place of children, nay, become fools, in order to become wise. A learned man naturally does not like to stoop so low, and therefore is slow to learn of God. Satisfied with his external lore and ignorant of every good giving and every perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights, he can only as a blind guide lead the blind into a ditch. Truth it is that stands forever, and this the Holy Ghost shows us in Christ through the word of God.

More particularly here is “the mystery of faith” “the mystery of godliness,” which the apostle brings before us. The foundation of it all is “He Who” was manifested in flesh. Before the Son of God was sent from heaven, born of woman, born under law, no such manifestation was possible. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an Only-begotten with a Father) full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He was thus also mediator unique of God and men, Christ Jesus a man, man as truly as any, but altogether different from any even in respect of the nature He derived from His mother. God prepared Him a body (Heb. 10:5). “The holy thing that shall be born shall be called Son of God.”

Adam's was not a holy nature, but innocent at best. Innocence is easily lost: the first sin destroys it; and so it was with Adam and Eve. Jehovah judged where ever sin showed—it was not allowed before Him. But Christ was the Holy One. Not only He did not sin, but in Him was no sin; He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners. He repelled all evil and was absolutely uncontaminated by sin. That was a state of humanity altogether peculiar and proper to the Son of God. All was perfection; but if anything here below specially marked our Lord, it was His obedience. “Lo! I am come to do Thy will, O God.” There was never a man but needed pardon before, never a man who, if God had been strict to mark iniquities, could have escaped judgment. He was woman's Seed come to be bruised indeed, but to bruise Satan and to save the believer.

And here the wondrous intervention on God's part came to light, “He Who was manifested in flesh.” And what was manifested? A divine person: and that divine person “the Son.” We have not to go up to heaven to find what God is, Who is best and only known aright by the manifestation in flesh of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

There are hasty souls who fancy that the manifestation in flesh only means that Christ was a man. But the true wonder is Who He was that became man. It would be devoid of force or even sense to speak of Moses, Elijah, or of Julius Caesar or any other man, as manifested in the flesh. For there was no other way for any mortal man to be manifested. But here it is not so, for the Son of God might have come as He pleased. Here is the marvelous fact that He came in flesh. He Who made all things, and without Whom was not anything made that has been made—He was manifested in flesh Who could command all glory. But the Creator God is the Redeemer God. And one of the most momentous objects of this Epistle is to identify the God Who created all things and is now the Preserver of all, with the Savior. God is the Savior God. And He deigned to be manifested in flesh. None other was He than the Son of God, but the Son of God “a man” in this world.

The next fact stated as to Him in the mystery of godliness is “justified in Spirit.” But when was that? In the Holy Ghost Christ walked and testified all through the days of His flesh. The very demons bore witness to Him with abject terror. But man reviled Him with impunity and shamelessly. When was He irrefutably justified? They called Him a winebibber, a Samaritan. They said, He had a demon. There was no end to the wickedness that was spoken of the Lord Jesus. How then did His justification come? When He was raised from the dead. This was the standing justification of Him Whom man crucified. If lawless hands slew the Lord of glory, God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death: such was His answer to man. And this seems to be what is referred to in the words, “justified in Spirit.” In the first Epistle to Peter He is said to be “quickened in Spirit,” being in contrast with “put to death in flesh” (ver. 18). The quickening in Spirit expresses the divine power in which He rose. This fell to the province of the apostle Peter; as the apostle Paul is the great witness in bringing out, not only life and resurrection but justification. No doubt justification has a different sense as applied to the Lord Jesus compared with any other person; for every other man is a sinner. Still there is a common point in all; and justification in every case means that the person is proved or pronounced righteous—here inherently so. Man had spoken contumeliously against Him, and none more so than the religious people of the day. The scribes, Pharisees, and the chief priests were educated enough, but the worst of the Lord s adversaries when He walked the earth. Surely that is a very instructive fact. Consequently it became God to mark His sense of what Christ was. And He was “justified in Spirit.” The same Spirit of God, Who had led “Jehovah's righteous Servant” in all His course of unswerving obedience and love during His life. now justified Him against the world that treated Him as the worst of malefactors. How true the prediction Christ cited from their law, “They hated Me without a cause.”

And what follows? What is the next part of the mystery of godliness? “He was seen of angels.” It is notable surely. No doubt angels saw Him throughout every step of His path here below. But on earth Christ was the light of men, not of angels. So the angels proclaimed at His birth: the good pleasure of God, His complacency, was in men, not in the celestial beings who are here spoken of. His Son became man, not an angel. Therefore are men, though not without redemption, associated with Christ, as angels are not, in those glorious counsels of God for gathering together all things heavenly and earthly under Christ's headship, and displaying the result before all the

universe.

He is “seen of angels” after He went to heaven. There is no doubt that angels ministered to Him first and last here below, as the heavenly host praised God at His birth. They are now sent forth to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1).

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 160

The Mystery of Godliness: Part 3

(Concluded).

BUT it is not the attendant angels who are spoken of here. Our Lord, after being justified in Spirit, is presented next where the angels are what we may call indigenous inhabitants, and where men have no natural place. Earth is given to the children of men, but heaven is filled with myriads of angels; there too is the risen Lord gone. He has passed out of this world and entered on a condition suited to heaven, where He is “seen of angels.” Men who had the far nearer interest no longer see Him, angels do. This was a fact outside the expectation of Israel as to the Messiah. They ought to have known that the Son of man would come with the clouds of heaven, and be invested with everlasting dominion over all peoples, nations, and languages. But there was no intimation that the Lord would be rejected by the Jew while the church was being formed in union with Him on earth. Besides, and in order to this, the Lord has a body now, just as much as when upon earth. Thus the resurrection and ascension are capital truths of Christianity.

Is there not anything going on meanwhile with regard to the world? There is a very admirable work of God. “Preached amongst Gentiles.” Never could be conceived a fact more repulsive to the Jews as they were. Even Peter was exceedingly astonished, although the Lord before He left the earth had prepared them all for it. The communications in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are plain enough to all now. Yet Peter did all he could to avoid going; and afterward behaved ill about it at Antioch. Here then we find that instead of the Lord Jesus, Jehovah of hosts, reigning in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before the ancients gloriously (which was what Isaiah and the other prophets taught to look for), He was preached amongst Gentiles. It was a new and unexpected work “till the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25), while blindness in part is happened to Israel (for there is ever a remnant). It is Christianity, flowing from Christ as now made known in the mystery of godliness, “preached amongst Gentiles.” Can anything be of deeper interest and moment to us who are not Jews but Gentiles? For God now makes such as we are His express object of appeal. The rejected but glorified Christ is now preached among Gentiles. How great is our debt to His grace revealed in the mystery of godliness! Nor have we heard in vain. We have received Christ and are already brought into relationship with God Himself. There is no other way.

Consequently the next statement is beautifully in place, as indeed all are. They are in regular sequence, so that you could not put one of them out of its place without damaging the order of the truth. Hence, after saying that He was preached amongst Gentiles, there follows, “believed on in the world.” Nor can any assertion be more accurate. It is not the reign of the Messiah in Palestine or “King over all the earth “; still less does it mean that there is going to be a reign of the gospel, though there is the gospel of the reign. The Lord will come to reign by-and-by in power and glory, as none can mistake when His day arrives. He is now occupied with His heavenly work. Soon He will ask and have the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. And He will inaugurate His kingdom by ruling them, rebellious as they are, with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is His kingdom over the earth; and that

is the truth, and a truth that the earthly indeed like not, because they prefer something pleasant for themselves, instead of suffering with Christ now and reigning with Him in that day. But the first duty of the Christian now is to follow Him as He walked, and not to be above his Master, but to be perfected as He.

Our prime business is unequivocally to accept His rejection here, the very reverse of seeking earthly ease or glory. The Corinthians saints got a severe rebuke from the apostle (1 Cor. 4), when that error began in their midst. “Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us.” They were taking their ease, reigning as kings without us, &c. “And I would that ye reigned, that we also might reign with you,” that is, at Christ's appearing. Instead of that, God set forth the apostles, not in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, but last of all, as they were first in spiritual power and authority, as. men doomed to death, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. Ponder vers. 10-13; see how in ch. 11. he exhorts the saints to be his imitators, even as he also was of Christ. Christendom alas! has followed the erring Corinthians, not the blessed apostle. Nor need any doubt that the Christian is strengthened so as to endure with joy the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake as also of the gospel. Read Col. 1.

Certainly in these sufferings the apostle rejoiced and set the pattern for all who would be faithful. Glory now to suffer with Christ. It is the snare of the enemy, that we should count or allow the world. We are set in express contrast with Gentiles who know not God and seek present honor; whereas our true object of hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus, for which we wait. Christ's work makes us meet for glory. The very gospel says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and, thy house.” And those who believe will in due time join the Lord on high, conformed to His image: not some choice saints, but every one of them. Beware of the newfangled idea of superior Christians, who alone are to be caught up. Such preachers always give themselves credit for that superiority. When the Lord comes, He will translate the entire church, His body. In His body there are differing members, some “more feeble” as the apostle says (1 Cor. 12), some “less honorable.” But the grace of God tempers 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. In the face of such a principle, how sad to indulge in reveries so fantastical! which leave room for personal vanity and slighting of one's betters! There is not the least room for doubt that “they that are Christ's” will be translated to meet the Lord at His coming. Such is the positive teaching in 1 Cor. 15:23, and such is the plain force of 1 Thess. 4:14, 16, 17. Nor does any other scripture qualify either. There is no ground for such a delusion in all the Bible.

Lastly comes the clause “received up into (rather, in) glory.” It marks Christ's permanent condition on high-received up in glory. There He abides: why is that last? It seems arranged in this order, to present a contrast between Christ and what “demons” and deceiving spirits were to do in latter times, as says the next chapter. Christ “received up in glory” puts shame on the efforts of men that give heed to evil spirits at work in the hypocrisy of legend-mongers that despise marriage, and cry up abstinence from meats which God created to be received with thankfulness by those that believe and know the truth.

You may ask for any other instance in the word of God of a special departure from order. Take the first chapter of the Revelation, vers. 4, 5. Every one knows that the usual order is, as we find in the

apostolic commission (Matt. 28:19), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But in the benediction or prayer of 2 Cor. 13:14 the apostle for good reason begins with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Rev. 1:4, 5, with equally good reason the order is reversed, and the Lord Jesus is given the last place. “John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from Him which is and which was and which is to come.” Next we have “and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne.” Lastly, we have “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” This again is clearly a departure from putting the Lord in the second place. But the reason is not far to seek. The Lord Jesus is presented in His earthly glories only; and so as to be followed immediately by a parenthetical strain of praise from the saints; and then by the testimony of His coming judgment of the earth. This would have been frustrated if “the seven Spirits” had occupied the third place. In every instance contextual grounds account for the special order.

So it is here. Christ “received up in glory” would historically have followed His being justified in Spirit; but had it been put in there, contrast would have failed with the power of Satan in helping on departure from the faith. For “believed on in the world” would then stand against that departure. But the true contrast being found in “received up in glory” explains the order required. In Him thus regarded is the delivering object. These seducing spirits and false-teaching demons energize men who are the instruments of leading away from the faith, fair spoken but false and hypocritical and undermining the truth. Religious lies and pious frauds are but the worse work of the enemy. In this case they deny the creation rights of God through the pretension of superior sanctity.

But Christ “received up in glory” refuted them. Those that gave heed to the evil spirits were misled through the hypocrisy of men speaking lies, branded in their own conscience, forbidding, &c. And this sense is right; because demons have not a conscience to be thus cauterized, whereas their lying agents have. Otherwise one must, if adopting the ordinary version identify the liars and the spirits, as is beyond doubt found elsewhere in the N. T. account of demoniacal possession.

How singular that the claim of holiness superior to that of the gospel should go with and depend upon despising the creatures of God, and therefore impeaching His glory as Creator and Sustainer of all! But so it was: the early germ of Gnosticism led later on to the bolder speculation of Manicheism, that is, the imaginative impiety of an evil God of creation and a good One of the N. T. Hence the dream of matter as essentially evil, of food (animal at least) as immoral, of marriage as degrading to the spiritual.

Hence the denial of all lawful use of the law and contempt of the O. T. and of the elders who obtained witness of pleasing God. “He Who was manifested in flesh received up in glory “dissipates the entire system as a lie of Satan. As there is but one God, so but one Mediator of God and men, a man Christ Jesus, yet never more manifestly God than when He deigned to become man to glorify God and save men. And He Who came down in love to a depth unfathomable as a ransom for all, is the same Who was justified in spirit by resurrection; He received up in glory, is as truly man as when He was born or when He died. Thus the Creator God is the Savior God, and the Man that suffered on the cross is the glorified Man on high. And the believer called to have part with Him now will he conformed to His image at His coming. To disdain what God sanctioned from the beginning, and what He gave for man's use since the deluge, is to prove oneself His enemy and Satan's slave; and all the worse, if one claim also a sanctity superior

to the gospel of Christ.

So it is with all schemes of higher life, superior sanctification, or perfection in the flesh. They are not of God but of the enemy, and offend against the gospel, and destroy real holiness. The fuller, the full, truth of God, now enjoyed in the church, is meant to deepen reverence for God's authority in the world as well as in the earthly relations of this life, which Satan seeks first to dissolve under the pretense of higher principles, in order later to overthrow Christ's person as well as the church, all real privilege, and all truth itself.

For, as this scripture remarkably illustrates, it is in Christ's person that the truth is centered; it is He that no less secures all godliness; not alone as come down in love, but as glorified in God's righteousness. It is the One Who counted it not robbery, no object to be seized, to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself and took on Himself the form of a bondman and was made in likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, yea death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him. Thus the personal glory of Christ, the Son of God, gave occasion to His moral glory when incarnate, going down to the uttermost in love, obedience, and suffering for sin to God's glory at all cost. Now He has heavenly and indeed universal glory conferred on Him by God as Man “received up in glory.” It is the exercise of a new righteousness, God's righteousness, as His answer to Christ's infinite merits; as it is also the ground of blessing and glory for all that believe on Him.

So in John 13:31 the Lord Himself says, when Judas went out to betray Him, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also shall glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.

And such is the scope of this wonderful summary, as we have already seen, in perfect accord with the other scriptures just referred to, each of which has its own special object and character in harmony with the design of the book in which it occurs. For such is the invariable stamp and proof of divine inspiration. Some have called it the apostle's creed; others have conjectured that he has here incorporated a formulary more or less generally so used. But such guesses are as unfounded as unnecessary. It is a requisite and essential part of this epistle to Timothy and of no other; it expresses the writer's special line of doctrine, and of no other apostle, though it also display the inspiring power of the Holy Spirit, as every and all scripture does.

W. K.

Chapter 161

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 1

EZRA, as priest, gave us under the Holy Spirit the sacred relations of those that came back from Babylon to Jerusalem. Nehemiah, as one who in his position felt no less for God and His people in their low estate, was inspired to set out their civil condition. It is the more interesting as following up the labors of Ezra after no long interval and while Ezra was still zealous in the good work, as we may see in chap. viii. Both books attest the righteous government of God, which subjected His people to Gentile rule; both bear witness to His faithful goodness toward the faithful, whatever the circumstances of external ruin. There was as yet no such body as the church, no such link mutually as members one of another. They were kinsmen according to the flesh; they were Israelites; yet some without doubt born of God, not of. Abraham's seed, but children, as the apostle distinguishes. And God has given us His word on their ways for our admonition, when we have to face a no less real ruin in Christendom, and need to test all we do or allow, as naming the Lord's name and bound to depart from unrighteousness. Faithful is the saying—For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we shall deny Him, His also will deny us; if we are faithless, He abideth faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.” Now it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace [or fortress], that Hanuni, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: yea, I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples: but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to cause my name to dwell there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Now I was cupbearer to the king.)” (vers. 1-11).

It was of God that Nehemiah felt so warmly the degradation of Jerusalem, as well as the affliction and reproach of the remnant there (vers. 2, 3). “And it came to pass, when I heard these words that I sat and wept, and mourned for days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of the heavens” &c. But he does not rise in his own prayer beyond Moses in his predictions; he does not plead the promises to the fathers; still less does he turn to the sovereign resource of the Messiah rejected but returning to raise all that fell in man's hands. But if looking for provisional mercy, he is careful in “confessing the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very perversely against thee” &c.

When God abandoned apostate Judah, as Israel before, to the Gentiles, and pronounced the sentence of Lo-ammi (not-my-people). He ceased to act as God of the earth, the Jehovah of His people; and as “God of the heavens” He granted for time world-empire to the four successive Gentile powers. See. Dan. 2.

Therefore does Nehemiah vindicate God's ways in scattering Israel abroad among the peoples, because of their persistent trespasses and departure from Him, while he calls to mind the pledge on their repentance to gather them back to Jerusalem. And in faith of His word and proved work for His people, He beseeches for mercy “this day” “in the sight of this man” (vers. 9-11). Such was the great king when Nehemiah prayed to God, whatever might be his respect when he served as cupbearer to the king.

Chapter 162

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 2

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 2

In an evil day especially, prayer and humiliation are called for and blest.

“And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, when wine was before him, that I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. And the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else than sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid; and I said unto the king, Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven; and I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it. And the king said unto me (the queen also sitting by him), For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may let me pass through till I come unto Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the castle which [appertaineth] to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me” (vers 1-8).

“Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letter. Now the king had sent with me captains of a force and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard [of it], it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put, into my heart to do for Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the dragon's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach” (vers. 9-18).

“And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands

for the good [work]. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised u s, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of the heavens, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem" (vers. 19, 20).

It was some four months that Nehemiah had borne the burden of sorrow for God and His people and the place where His name was once set, never to be abandoned, though the day of glorious resumption still waits. No passing emotion was it, but groaning in hope: how to help at such a strait he knew not; especially as Ezra, so honored twelve years before, seems to have been there, but powerless for this need and shame and grief. The hour of succor was at hand, through the intensity of his sorrow which God caused to reach the eye of his royal master, who inquired, learned the secret, and answered graciously.

The atmosphere of an imperial court—of a heathen court—had not withered the faith of Nehemiah, any more than his love for the despised remnant. Why Nehemiah had not gone up with Ezra we know no more, than why Ezra so acquiesced in what filled the courtier at Chusan with deep concern for Jerusalem and the wretched estate of those who had returned. But this is certain that, as grace wrought in Joshua and his brethren and Zerubbabel and his brethren, who at once set up the altar for burnt offerings, and rested not till in the face of all discouragement the house of God was built and dedicated; and as later Ezra the priest, the scribe, was strengthened to go up from Babylon to cheer as well as cleanse the returned remnant when sadly declining; so now an unexpected aid was vouchsafed in one who was neither prince of David's house, nor a member of Aaron's, but in a highly confidential post before the great King. His heart was not there but in "the city, the house of my fathers' sepulchers," as he touchingly calls Jerusalem (ver. 3). And how beautiful his inward prayer to the God of heaven after the king asked his request before he made it known! (vers. 4- 5). Nor was he let go empty-handed, but receives letters to the governors intermediate, and to the keeper of the royal park for timber, as well as captains and horsemen.

No doubt, it was a humbling state of things, when a Gentile power ruled, a chastisement extreme of Israel's iniquity. This it was becoming to feel, yet looking to God above, Who heard and inclined the king's heart, instead of indulging the rebellious pride we see in the Pharisees afterward.

We may note how much at first Nehemiah feels and acts alone. This was faith, not only when before the king, but even when he arrived at Jerusalem, and sought the welfare of the sons of Israel to the grief of their enemies (vers. 10-16). How often blessed movements begin with one man! His observations fully made, he speaks to his brethren accordingly, as well as of God's good hand upon him, and also the king's words (vers. 17, 18). And they were strengthened, spite of false friends—the worst foes, whose scorn, and evil imputation, Nehemiah answered by denying their title in Jerusalem (vers. 19, 20). How often the same resource would have settled questions in Christendom, raised by men of genius, learning, or rank, who had no more part or lot in the matter than the early intruder on whom Peter pronounced!

Chapter 163

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 3

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 3

HERE we have a suggestive, refreshing, and instructive account of the work in detail, when God's servants arose to build the wall of Jerusalem.

“And Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; and sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Hammeah they sanctified it, unto the tower Hananel. And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

“And the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts thereof, and the bars thereof. And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

“And the old gate repaired Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the bolts thereof. And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, which appertained to the throne of the governor beyond the river. Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths. And next unto him repaired Hananiah of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem even unto the broad wall. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem. And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabneiah. Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired another portion, and the tower of the furnaces. And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

“The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the in habitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits of the wall unto the dung gate.

“And the dung gate repaired Malchijah the son of Rechab, the ruler of the district of Beth haccherem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, and the bolts thereof, and bars thereof.

“And the fountain gate repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of the district of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Shelah by the king's garden, even unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of half the district of Beth-zur unto the place over against the sepulchers of David, and unto the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty men. After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son Bani. Next unto him

repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of half the district of Keilah, for his district. After him repaired their brethren, Bavvai the son of Henadad, the ruler of half the district of Keilah. And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another portion, over against the going up to the armory at the turning [of the wall]. After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired another portion, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. After him repaired Meremoth the son of, Hakkoz another portion, from the door of the house" of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. After them repaired Benjamin and Hasshub over against their house. After them repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of. Ananiah beside his own house. After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another portion, from the house of Azariah unto the turning [of the wall], and unto the corner. Palal the son of Uzai repaired over against the turning [of the wall], and the tower that standeth out from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the prison. After him Bedaiah the son of Parosh repaired. (Now the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel, unto the place against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that standeth out.) After him the Tekoites repaired another portion, over against the great tower that standeth out, and unto the wall of Ophel.

"Above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his own house. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his own house. And after him repaired Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the east gate. After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiab, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another portion. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber. After him repaired Malchijah of the goldsmiths unto one house of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, over against the gate of Hammiphkad, and to the ascent of the corner. And between the ascent of the corner and the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants" (vers. 1-32).

The earliest to undertake the work were the first in dignity as became them, the high priest and his brethren. They did not plead their holy charge to absolve them from the new duty, but applied themselves without delay: characteristically is it added, twice that they "sanctified" their work! It was combat. The next in order are to be remarked, because they belonged to Jericho; yet did they devote themselves to the work of Jerusalem. Nothing beyond his building attaches to Zaccur that follows.

Much fuller is the account of the work done by the sons of Hassenaah (or Senaah) for the fish gate on the north; next to whom repaired Meremoth, who is the first to be noticed again (ver. 21) for repairing another piece from the door to the end of the high priest's house. Of Meshullam and Zadok no more is mentioned than their work respectively. But the Tekoites appear not only here but again in ver. 27; and their zeal is the more pleasant to observe, as their nobles have the bar sinister of not putting "their necks to the work of their Lord." Compare Eph. 6:9, Col. 4:1. We may note that Tekoah was a dozen miles from Jerusalem.

The old gate was a little below in the west; and there we have the joint repair of Jehoiada and another Meshullam, whose work is fully described. Next to them wrought not only two, Melatiah and Jadon, with their local titles away from Jerusalem, but the men of Gideon and of Mizpah, "to the throne of the governor (pacha) on this side the river." Next, we hear of Uzziel, and then Hananiah, respectively of the goldsmiths and of the perfumers or apothecaries, who wrought as far as the broad wall on the west. It is interesting to read next of Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler

of the half part of Jerusalem; whereas next was Jedaiah repairing over against his house. Then come Hattush, and next Malchijah and Hasshub repaired another piece and the tower of the furnaces. Last in this group repaired Shallum, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem he and his daughters, a new and marked feature.

The valley gate in the S.W. was repaired by Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah, which was a town of Judah, and thus away from Jerusalem. Their work is carefully defined.

The dung gate was on the S.E. and repaired by Malchijah, son of Rechab, chief of the district of Beth-haccherem, near Tekoah; and here again grace shone.

So the fountain gate, a little north of that on the east, was repaired by Shallun, son of Col-hozeh, chief of the district of Mizpah; which as it figured before in ver. 7 does here in ver. 15, and again in ver. 19, toward the wall. After him appears a Nehemiah, son of Azbuk, chief of half the district of Beth-zur in the south of Judah. Then we are told of Levite labors, Rehum; and of Hashabiah, chief of the half district of Keilah, and of Bavvai in a similar position. Next, repaired Ezer, son of Joshua, ruler of Mizpah, a second piece as already noticed. After him we have Baruch, son of Zabbai, named with marked honor for “earnestly” repairing a second piece, after whom follows the Meremoth of ver. 4 again found zealous. Then the priests are mentioned, the men of the plain (or circle of the Jordan). These are followed by the repairs of Benjamin and Hasshub of Azariah, of Binnui, of Palal, and of Pedaiah; then the Tekoites, repairing again, are referred to; and once more the priests above them, every one over against his own house. Then follow Zadok, Shemaiah, Hananiah; then Hanun described as a sixth son of Zalaph for a second piece. Where were the five? Did none come but this one to glorify God in this work? Next, in ver. 30, we hear of Meshullam again (see ver. 4) repairing over against his chamber; and Malchijah of the goldsmiths over against the gate Miphkad, as the goldsmiths generally and the dealers repaired round to the sheep gate, whence the building began.

It is the counterpart in the O.T to the early half of Rom. 16, and other scriptures of the New.

Chapter 164

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 4

Nehemiah 4

In this world there is no work of God, earthly or heavenly, which does not rouse the rancorous opposition of the enemy. So it was at this time. Satan was ready by suited instruments to thwart; and faith is needed to discern God's will and do it fearlessly. It may be a lowly work, but this only the more tests the heart, which would be naturally attached to a brilliant effort. Only a single eye values and proves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God; and only in Christ do we see it sought uniformly and accomplished in perfection.

“And it came to pass that, when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and had great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned? Now Tobijah the Ammonite [was] by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall. Hear, O our God, for we are despised; and turn back their reproach upon their own head, and give them up to spoiling in a land of captivity. And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked to anger before the builders. But we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half thereof: for the people had a heart to work” (vers. 1-6).

It is well to note that, while hatred of God and His will is at the bottom, mockery is a common means. Nor is any means more open to the shallow or more effective with the vulgar. And we can see in scripture as in experience that what is high and holy lies peculiarly open to burlesque or raillery, where some have such absence of conscience as to indulge in it, and others too little to resent the impropriety. Those who here sit in the seat of the scornful had already shown their hostility in chap. 2:10-19, and were as persevering in evil as Nehemiah in good. They were really afraid now, but sought to veil fear under ridicule and insolence, and Tobijah “the slave” exceeded Sanballat. But despise the “feeble” Jews or the work as they may, Nehemiah turns to God, with that call for present earthly judgment which was according to the law, though it would seem that the translations which supply “Thee” go beyond the inspired record. It was rather to provoke the builders. The work in fact was but stimulated.

“And it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobijah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, [and] that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; and they conspired all of them together to come [and] fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch over against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and [there is] much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass that, when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said so unto us ten times from all places whence they

returned to us, I set in the lower parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, [who is] great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to naught, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the captains [were] behind all the house of Judah. They that builded the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that loaded, [every one] with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and [so] builded. And he that sounded the trumpet [was] by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work [is] great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another: in what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God shall fight for us. So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labor in the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, every one went with his weapon to the water" [or, "had his weapon on his right side," as another reading gives] (vers. 7-23).

The zeal with which the building went on spite of mockery drew out the rage of those and other adversaries, who differing among themselves conspired to hinder all of them coming together by force. They were "very wroth" and hoped to land the Jews in confusion by the threat of fighting. But the faithful Jews prayed and set watch day and night.

Nor was this the only trial. "Judah said, The strength of the burden-bearers faileth, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build at the wall." How humiliating! What! Judah, "as a lion's whelp" and "as a lioness," in the prophetic eye of Jacob. Even so was the sad fact seen now. No flesh shall glory. Timid counsels may seem prudent; but faith abhors distrust of God, once His will is known. The adversaries profit by any heed to them. Alas! Jews were not ashamed to be in their secrets and to report their designs to the faithful persistently, diligent only to discourage if they could with their tales and fears. But quiet looking to God raises above all fear of man. Nevertheless Nehemiah made a disposition of the people to meet any hostile essays, with the charge not to fear the foe, but to remember the Lord, and to fight for their brethren and families.

The measures taken quite disconcerted their adversaries; and as God had defeated their counsel, so did the people return all to the wall, each to his work. Only they shared: one half wrought, the other guarded under arms; but the builders, each of them had his sword on, and so pursued his task, so that all might fight in case of need, besides the work. The trumpeter was by Nehemiah's side, and would give due warning.

We too in the evil day have to "stand" and to "withstand." And as we have a better Captain to look to, so have we One able to make the trumpet give no uncertain sound. But we need courage as well as dependence. Our sufficiency is of God; and He never fails.

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 5

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 5

But in face of this zeal, courage, and vigilance, there was sin and shame where it was least becoming. One can understand relaxation in captivity where no altar stood to the true and living God, and His people had no semblance of a position. It is affecting to see and experience the most grievous selfishness among those who boasted of a return to divine ground. This Nehemiah had now to face and meet as promptly in the unworthy leaders as he had taken efficacious measures against the adversaries.

“And there arose a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons and our daughters, [are] many: let us get corn, that we may eat and live. There were also that said, We are mortgaging our fields, and our vineyards, and our houses: let us get corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute [upon] our fields and our vineyards. Yet now our flesh [is] as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and [some] of our daughters are brought into bondage [already]: neither is it in our power [to help it]; for other men have our fields and our vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I held a great assembly against them” (vers. 1-7).

Usury was forbidden among the Israelites one with another, not as a thing in itself wrong, but as inconsistent with their exceptional standing and their relation as brethren after the flesh. They were at liberty to lend at interest to Gentiles, not to Jews; and if a Jew sold himself into servitude, at the seventh year he was set free, as land reverted to its true tenant at the jubilee. So did the law check and regulate a failing people on Jehovah's behalf. Alas! Self-governed the nobles and rulers in the land. And Nehemiah proved his moral courage as well as faith and love in detestation of their misconduct. He conferred not with flesh and blood. “I consulted with myself” is his remarkable language and made his remonstrance with themselves. He also set a great assembly against them.

“And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and would ye even sell your brethren, and should they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found never a word. Also I said, The thing that ye do [is] not good: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? And I likewise, my brethren and my servants, might lend them money and corn on usury. I pray you, let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them even this day their fields, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth [part] of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of

them; so will we do, even as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. Also I shook out my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not his promise; even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise" (vers. 8-13).

How solemn a reflection! The Jews in captivity put to shame the returned remnant in unselfish care for their brethren. No wonder that the statement of such a contrast silenced the guilty chiefs. Nehemiah could challenge investigation of himself and his servants; and this with such effect, that he called on them to cease ways so beneath Israel and to restore that very day what they had taken. The priests too were called to seal their promise with an oath taken by them; and Nehemiah imprecated God's judgment of delinquency, amidst the congregation's Amen and praise of Jehovah.

Indeed from Nehemiah's appointment as Pacha or governor, he and his brethren had not even eaten those twelve years the governor's bread. Far different had it been with his predecessors. How blessed where faith and love work thus to produce disinterestedness in matters of everyday life!

"Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that were before me were chargeable unto the people, and took of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people; but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall; neither bought we any land; and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. Moreover there were at my table of the Jews and the rulers an hundred and fifty men, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that were round about us. Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this I demanded not the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. Remember unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people" (vers. 14-19).

This practical grace rising above law sprang from the fear of God. It was not mere Jewish clannishness or patriotism. It was saintly, and it recalls a greater than he, who maintained the Lord's ordinance for those that preach the gospel, yet did not use this right himself in the full spirit of the gospel he preached. It is lovely where such fruits adorn a righteous and holy walk; best of all, when the good works done attest, not merely nor so much the benevolence of the doers, but their light, their witness of Christ, shining before men, who on seeing this glorify, not them, but their Father Who is in heaven. There is ample room for doing good unto all men, and especially to the household of faith in their special need on passing through a hostile world. But the great lack among Christians is in the exercise of practical faith which the eye of man cannot appreciate, and the danger is of slipping into mere benevolence, of which a natural man is capable and views it with applause.

Chapter 166

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 6

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 6

It is a signal mercy when internal reproach is taken away, and oppression is made ashamed by grace. But the adversary is none the less active, and tries new methods when the old fail. Force had not succeeded: might not fraud avail?

“And it came to pass, when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and unto the rest of our enemies, that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though even unto that time I had not set up the doors in the gates); that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of One. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? And they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith [it, that] thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou buildest the wall, and thou wouldest be their king, according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, O God, strengthen my hands” (vers. 1-9).

The first design was a professedly amicable interview; but the friendship of the enemy is no more to be trusted than his hostile plans are to be feared. Nehemiah was on his guard and entitled to plead the great work he was doing. Solicited four times, he gave the same wise and resolute answer. Then came Sanballat's servant with an open letter which insinuated ambition in rebellion against the then Gentile power; which drew out a plain indignant denial with a reproof of the falsehood. All tended simply to renewed prayer.

“And I went unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And I discerned, and lo, God had not sent him: but he pronounced this prophecy against me: and Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this cause was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets that would have put me in fear” (vers. 10-14).

The next efforts were from within, the aim of which was to draw Nehemiah into fear and making the house of God a material refuge. But here again the pious chief detected the profane and unbelieving snare. He would no more go into the temple to save his life than he would cause the work to cease to which he was devoted. The “prophecy” of Shemaiah had no more weight than “the prophetess Noadiah,” or “the rest of the prophets.” Fear is the chief weapon of false religion, whatever its pretensions. But a single eye sufficed to keep Nehemiah clear of their influence. How sad to hear that Shemaiah was in touch with Tobiah and Sanballat! Here again relief is found in prayer.

“So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, when all our enemies heard thereof, that all the heathen that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah to wife. Also they spoke of his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. [And] Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear” (vers. 15-19).

The work was brought to an end as happy for the returned Jews as mortifying to the ill-wishers of God and His people. “They perceived that this work was wrought of our God.” This was one side; on the other a brisk correspondence was kept up between nobles of Judah and Tobiah, bound with them by more than one family tie to their sin and shame, and playing a treacherous part through it. The courage of faith is invaluable personally and in God's work. To our faith we need to furnish virtue (or courage) also.

Chapter 167

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 7

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 7

There is a day to which the inspiring Spirit looked onward, when it will be Jehovah building the house—and Jehovah keeping the city in a truer, fuller, sense, then even Solomon knew. Very little in comparison was that which Nehemiah was enabled to do in his day. All had been wrong in Israel, all out of course for the remnant, the Gentile was in power, the returned remnant to Jerusalem in weakness. Still it is a great thing, and always acceptable to God, whatever the circumstances, to do His will unpretentiously, and to be guided in the doing of it by His word. In vain otherwise do the builders labor, in vain the watchmen wake. Nehemiah was given to see the wall reared and to set up the doors. Thereon the necessary officers were set to their work. Sound doctrine needs also a sound mind; and this was eminently true of him who came from the court of Persia to care for his brethren in Jerusalem.

“And it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem: for he [was] a faithful man, and feared God above many. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand on guard, let them shut the doors, and bar ye [them]: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. Now the city was wide and large: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded” (vers. 1-4).

It was indeed a state of ruin; but the return was of God, and despair would have been as unworthy as presumption. Nehemiah yields to neither, but acts in the lowly condition with all due vigilance, and confides in faithful men like-minded with himself who would naturally care for their state, few as they were feeble and tried. His work and Ezra's were far different from that of a Moses or a Joshua, a David or a Solomon; but the Holy Ghost was pleased to give them both an imperishable place for their faith and love. How encouraging to us in the present anomalous condition of God's assembly! May we realize its true state by faith and know how to walk and serve accordingly.

Next, as having to do with a people in the flesh, order called for a careful consideration of birth-ties. “And my God put into my heart to gather together the nobles and the rulers, and the people for registration by genealogy. And I found a genealogical register of them that came up at the first; and I found written therein: these [are] the sons of the province that went up out of the captivity of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away, and who came again to Jerusalem, and to Judah every one to his city; those who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nahum, Baanah” (vers. 5-7). Even here is to be noticed Nahamani in addition to the eleven named in Ezra 2, for the rest are the same persons, though some be given with variations. So it is

with those enumerated in the census after the twelve leaders. Substantially the lists agree. The gross amount in both is the same; yet the details singularly differ: how this is may not be so easy to decide. We know that numerals are peculiarly liable to corruption whether through the carelessness or temerity of copyists. For instance, in Ezra 2:5 the sons of Arab are 775, in Neh. 7:10 are 652; the sons of Pahath-moab and of Binuni are each 6 more in Nehemiah; the sons of Zattu 100 less; the sons of Bebai exceed by 5; and those of Azgad by 1100. And so one might point out variations throughout, as also in the singers, the sons of Asaph, and the porters, as well as a slight one in the number of the singing men and women. To set such frequent and marked difference down to clerical mistake is a hard saying, though Lord A. Hervey speaks of the ingenious corrections suggested with assurance. But it is another question to account for the varying statements satisfactorily; which must be left to those who, accepting the divine authority of scripture, have made this particular case a matter of conscientious and thorough research. The difference in the contributions also needs explanation, though this seems not so difficult. It is obvious that the totals of the servants, the houses, the males, and the ages, agree. How good it is for the heart to know that the living God takes a real interest not only in His people, but in all that is theirs! This at least is clear and simple, but of interest and moment to appropriate in practice.

Chapter 168

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 8

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 8

INTERESTING and consoling as the numbering of the people may be, in the new chapter we have far more. The sons of Israel were in their cities, few and feeble, yet in their right place after long sin and judgment but restoration in a measure. It was the seventh month, the pledge of which had been before blind or dim eyes for many years. Now there is a notable awakening for a little moment. “All the people gathered together as one man,” and their simple-hearted desire was to hear the word of God. It was not Ezra who spoke to them, but they to Ezra, “to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded Israel.” And very touching is the divine account of their zeal to understand as well as hear, and of their reverence no less than their falling under its rebuke. For they listened, not with attentive ears only, but with smitten conscience.

“And when the seventh month was come and the sons of Israel were in their cities, all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning unto midday, in the presence of the men and women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriab, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading. And Nehemiah, which was the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the Words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

“And on the second day were gathered together the heads of the fathers [houses] of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the law. And they found written in the law, how that Jehovah had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly according unto the ordinance” (vers. 1-18).

Here, in all the stronger a way because incidental, we have the inspired testimony to the Pentateuch, as not only Moses' work, but authoritatively Jehovah's. How sad that nominal Christians should presume to question that holy deposit! Alas! they are but joining their older rationalistic leaders, unbelieving Jews; who having rejected their own Christ, because He was infinitely better and higher than their degrading unbelief expected, vent their spleen in skeptical criticism of the O. T. and in hatred of the New. At the bottom of this incredulity, Jewish or Gentile (one cannot call it Christian), is that glorying in man, and his mind or his learning as the case may be, which characterizes those who have never judged themselves or known God in the light of the cross. To those who have, how precious is the written word, all of it, Old or New, because in one way or another it presents the unfailing resources of grace in the Second man when the first is found wholly wanting, especially in themselves; a bitter, but profitable lesson, filling even now with peace and joy in believing!

Again, we observe that the Rabbinism, which put a slur on women and children, till the Lord revindicated their place in spiritual things, did not yet prevail. For Ezra read in the law “in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand” (who might be quite young in years). As Ezra read on a raised platform, supported by elders on either hand, the people stood up at the opened book, and Ezra blessed Jehovah, and they with uplifted hands answered Amen, Amen, bowing in worship to the ground. It was a beautiful and affecting sight. And there was earnest service of priests and Levites to expound all that was heard, and “cause the people to understand the law.” It was no vain superstitious ceremony; but “they read in the law of God distinctly out of the book, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

But there was more, reserved for a somewhat higher intimation. “And Nehemiah, that is, the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy to Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law” (ver. 9).

It was no wonder, for God's word never spares evil; and they justly felt their sins. But we ought as His people to feel His grace to His own. There many fail, as the sons of Israel till they learned better that day. “There is a time to mourn, and a time to dance,” which was suited to that season.

“And he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy to our Lord; and be not grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, Be still, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them” (vers. 10-12).

Undoubtedly what is properly Christian has another and worthier character as reflecting Christ in the Spirit. But even the earthly people when right before Jehovah were far different from the legal gloom and narrowness and severity of Puritanism, which was a sad travesty of the gospel.

Such was the first day. We hear of no blowing of trumpets; but there was its spirit in their assembling thus to hear God's word after a long slumber. And on the second day the heads of houses gathered, if not all the people, the priests and the Levites, to Ezra, “even to give attention to the words of the law.” This has its weighty place. Those who are fit and zealous to teach need themselves to be more perfectly instructed. And they had their reward. For they found written in the law which Jehovah had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month, as well as practical directions on which they acted (vers. 15-17). But how solemn is the inspired comment! “Since the days of Joshua son of Nun till that day had not the sons of Israel done so.” Such facts as these are abused by skeptics to deny the writing of Moses and imagine another in Josiah's days when the original copy was found, or more boldly to conceive a still later date. The truth is, that the failure of Israel was painful and lamentable; as here we learn that the feast had never been duly celebrated from Joshua's day when first it could, till now in the days of revival after the return from Babylon.

Search and see that the lapse of the church has been sadder still from its far higher privileges. The last feast is the anticipated joy of glory. How is it kept in spirit by Christians? Alas! they have forgotten even Pentecost, which ought to be dear to them indeed. What has not passed out of mind as to its real import! But if the Galatian saints so soon slipped into a different gospel, which was not anothers, who can wonder at the sad change when all the apostles were gone?

Chapter 169

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 9

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 9

It was a great recovery from God's word, the celebration of the feast of tabernacles, after so long disuse; it presented, whether they apprehended it or not, the great ingathering after divine judgment whether in discernment or in vengeance (typified by the harvest and the vintage). They were probably as unintelligent about it as most Christians are now in the fog that prevails over Christendom. Even as to order there was lack and confusion still. Their assembling on the first day of the seventh month was quite in the spirit of that feast of trumpets, which is yet to summon the outcasts of Israel into the land when fulfilled in power. But it is remarkable that they seem to have slipped by the day of atonement on the tenth of the month, while they observed the feast of tabernacles with its eighth day. Had they been better instructed, they would have humbled themselves on that day of making reconciliation before the feast of joyful rest and universal blessing. It was thoroughly due to the Lord, and their souls felt the need, that they should afflict their souls before Him; but it was an unperceived incongruity to do so after that feast, instead of before it. Still it was done on the day after; and our gracious God was not unmindful, and here gives an affecting account of it.

“And on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel were assembled with fasting and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of Jehovah their God a fourth part of the day; and [another] fourth part they confessed, and worshipped Jehovah their God. Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, [and] Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto Jehovah their God. Then the Levites Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, [and] Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless Jehovah your God from everlasting to everlasting; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

“Thou [art] He, thou alone, Jehovah, who hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that [are] thereon, the seas and all that [is] in them, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou [art] Jehovah the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart, faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, and the Girgashite, even to give it unto his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou [art] righteous. And thou sawest the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea; and showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land; for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them; and didst get thee a name, as it is this day. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on

the dry [land]; and their pursuers thou didst cast into the depths, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover thou leddest them in a pillar of cloud by day; and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

“Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing: their clothes waxed not old, and their feet, swelled not. Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and peoples, which thou didst allot after their portions: so they possessed the land of Sihon, even the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou didst say to their fathers, that they should go in to possess [it]. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would. And they took fenced cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all good things, cisterns hewn out, vineyards, and olive-yards, and fruit trees in abundance. And they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their back, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them again unto thee, and they wrought great provocations.

“Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their adversaries, who distressed them; and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviors who saved them out of the hand of their adversaries. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them. Yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; and testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law. But they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments (which if a man do, he shall live in them), and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit through thy prophets; but would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless in thy manifold mercies thou didst not make a full end of them, nor forsake them; for thou [art] a gracious and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the travail seem little before thee, that path come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

“Howbeit thou [art] just in all that is come upon us; for thou hast dealt truly, but we have done wickedly. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we [are] servants this day; and [as for] the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we [are] servants in it. And it yieldeth

much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have power over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. And because of all this we make a sure [covenant], and write [it]; and our princes, our Levites, [and] our priests, are at the sealing" (vers. 1-38).

It will be noticed that they do not rise to the ground of promise, though recounting the covenant made with Abraham, but take their stand on the legal conditions of Sinai, as their fathers did before them. Not so the generation to come, who will have Messiah and the new covenant, when subjection to the Gentile power passes forever. As yet, all was but provisional; yet God is always God, and good to all who call upon Him.

Chapter 170

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 10

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 10

SEPARATION from all foreigners (9:2) is a root principle in the activity to which zeal for God led the remnant at this time. It was of all things essential to those who, not publicly owned of God, all the more owned their sins and the iniquities of their fathers to God: for what had so justly brought on them His sentence of Lo-ammi? What had, compared with it, made idolatry tolerable first, then plausible, at length desirable, till the true God was lost in the he of Satan? Marriage with heathen in private life led to alliance in public; and all evil soon followed in dishonor of God's law.

Here the chief men took the lead as became them; yet no small sign of their low estate was afforded by the Tirshatha signing first among the sealed. Then came faithful priests, followed by fewer Levites; and a fair quota of leading laymen. “And those that were sealed were Nehemiah the Tirshatha, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah; Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah; Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah; Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch; Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah; Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch; Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin; Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah; these were the priests. And the Levites namely, Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; and their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan; Mica, Rehob, Flashabiah; Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah; Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. The chiefs of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani; Bunni, Azgad, Bebai; Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin; Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur; Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai; Hariph, Anathoth, Nobai; Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir; Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua; Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah; Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub; Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek; Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah; and Ahaiah, Hanan, Anan; Malluch, Harim, Baanah.” We may observe from what follows that “the rest of the people” were not slack, not only the Jews proper but proselytes, “all they that had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands.” These become important henceforth, as we read also elsewhere (Esther 8:17) among the Gentiles. Separation to God is as lowly and powerful morally, as human or Pharisaic separateness is proud, narrow, and powerless. It is obedience, and nothing else more becomes the faithful. Its perfection we see in Christ, nor does anything give it more scope than Christianity, and it is only the more imperative in a day of departure and corruption. “And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim, and all they that had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one that had knowledge and understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of Jehovah our Lord, and his judgments, and his statutes; and that we would not give our daughters unto the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: and if the peoples of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy of them on the sabbath, or on a holy day: and that we would forego the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.” It will be noted that the Rabbinic contempt of “wives and daughters,”

had not yet raised its vain and wicked head. They joined no less than husbands and sons, “every one that had knowledge and understanding.” And it is beautiful to see how fidelity to God humbles the high and exalts the low: “they slave to their brethren, their nobles.” It is happy when God's will, not man's, welds all ranks together before Him Who is above all. Here it was as Jews to enter into a curse and into an oath to walk in His law. Alas! without the risen Christ, the object of faith, there was no power of the Spirit to work effectually; and there was soon a falling away.

The rest of the chapter shows how they applied the spirit of scripture to their then position. “And we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; for the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for the work of the house of our God.

“And we cast lots, the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: and to bring the first-fruits of our ground, and the first-fruits of all fruit of all manner of trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: and that we should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our heave offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, the wine and the oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites; for they, the Levites, take the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.

“And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levite shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the heave offering of the corn, of the wine, and of the oil, unto the chambers where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.”

“The house of our God” was precious even to those who knew the glory was no longer there. Such and more should be the name of Jesus, now that we are builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit—the Spirit of truth given to be with us forever.

Chapter 171

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 11

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 11

THE provisional state of things imposed on Israel during “the times of the Gentiles” appears here in another form. Jerusalem had no longer the powerful attraction even for the people of God which it once possessed. No longer shone the Shechinah over the mercy seat in the Holy of holies. There was no king reigning of David's house. The latter glory of Jehovah's house was not like the former. The city was sadly decayed, and slowly emerging from its heaps of burnt rubbish and scattered ruins. As gain lay at that time in agriculture, the country held out greater hopes of it. And the world, especially the strangers imported into the land, indulged in contempt and spite and ill report, since the public chastening of God fell upon the Jews in their subjection to the Gentiles.

Devotedness to God's will was the chief lack and test; and as there were those that answered His call, so many were sought to rouse others from their neglect. For faith would still esteem Jerusalem as “the holy city “; and was it not to His shame that His people, when allowed to return, should think of their own things before His?

“And the princes of the people dwelt in Jerusalem; and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine parts in the cities. And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem” (vers. 1, 2).

It was God's presence, so far as it was then vouchsafed, which gave its special blessedness to the city that He chose, mount Zion that He loved. That had they sinned away, but faith preserved its memory, and cherished the sure hope of its return, never more to depart.

This the Christian has in the promised presence of the Lord where “two or three” are gathered to His name. Where this is, He never fails, in this therefore contrasted with the sad gap in Israel's history; but where are saints thus gathered? Throughout Christendom the departure is as grievous as it is general. Not only do other names openly take His place; but doctrine and forms intrude into it, if not names; and most of all where historical continuity is men's confidence, seeing that God has solemnly warned that this would lapse into a powerless show wholly offensive to Him. If there be not spirit and truth, it is none of His to own, save in responsibility of profession to be judged in due time. They only please Him who cleave to Christ as their center of gathering. As the church so began, so alone is it perpetuated, the Holy Spirit being here to glorify Him. Thus are His members kept according to God and edified; for thus too is there room for the free action of every gift of Christ to the blessing of each and all.

“And these are the chiefs of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem; but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants. And in Jerusalem dwelt some of the sons of Judah, and of the sons of Benjamin. Of the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziali, the son of Zechariah, the

son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Pherez; and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of FIazaialr, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarih, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonites.

“All the sons of Pherez that dwelt in Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah. And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred and twenty eight. And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second over the city.

“Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin, Seraiah the son of Hilkiali, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God, and their brethren that did thy work of the house, eight hundred and twenty two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and his brethren, chiefs of fathers' houses, two hundred forty and two: and Amassai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer; and their brethren, mighty men of valor, an hundred and twenty eight: and their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of Haggedolim.

“And of the Levites Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God; and Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the chief to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shaminua, the son of Galai, the son of Jeduthun. All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four.

“Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talrnon, and their brethren that kept watch at the gates, were an hundred and seventy two” (vers. 3 -19).

Next follows the record of the rest. “And the residue of Israel, the priests, the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa were over the Nethinim. The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, for the business of the house of God. For there was a commandment from the king concerning them, and a settled provision for the singers, as every day required. And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

“And for the villages, with [or hamlets in] their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt in Kiriath-arba and the towns thereof, and in Dihon and the towns thereof, and in Jekabzeel and the villages thereof; and in Jeshua, and in Moladah, and Beth-pelet; and in Hazar-shual, and in Beersheba and the towns thereof; and in Ziklag, and in Meconah and in the towns thereof; and in En-rimmon, and in Zorah, and in Jarmuth; Zanoah, Adullam, and their hamlets, in Lazhish and the fields thereof, Azekah and the towns thereof. So they encamped from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnon). The children of Benjamin also dwelt from Geba onward, at Michmash and Aija, and at Bethel and the towns thereof, at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim; Hadid, Zehohn, Neballat, Lod, and One, the valley of craftsmen. And of the Levites, certain courses in Judah were

joined to Benjamin” (vers. '20-36). All things were to be done in decency and order; each was to do the work divinely appointed, and each had his due place.

It is not otherwise now, if we heed the word of the Lord. The scattered anomalous state of those that bear His name makes the difficulty great; but as the presence of the Holy Spirit cuts off all excuse for lack of power, so the written word abides the standard and touch-stone of obedience. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” It was the path of Christ, and it will be found and taken by him whose eye is single, for then the whole body is full of light.

Chapter 172

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 12:1-26

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Nehemiah 12:1-26.

HERE we have little to remark save that the Lord takes pleasure in recording even the names of His servants. The special object appears to connect the priests and Levites in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra at this point with those who at the first returned from the captivity, and with the intermediate generation. It is not only that He has been a dwelling place for His own in all generations, but He honors those that honor Him and records their names in His word now, as He will glorify their persons in the great day that hastens.

First then we begin with the earlier company.

“And these [are] the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra; Amariah, Malluch, Hattush; Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth; Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah; Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah; Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah; Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua” (vers. 1-7).

The reader must not confound the last two of ver. 1 with the inspired men of similar names, who were also priests, but at a different epoch; the one before, the other after the return. Those enumerated were contemporaries of Jeshua or Joshua the high priest of that day, which was weak indeed compared with the past, shorn of its ornaments as became a remnant of the people now Loammi, but under all that provisional condition about to behold at length the Man that is Jehovah's fellow, His shepherd, smitten, and the sheep scattered, whatever the hand that protected the little ones. (Zech. 13:7). Yet neither that glory nor the dark cloud that veiled it appears in the book, which opens out the intermediate services of the humble, devoted, courageous, Israelite who was too glad to leave a splendid court to serve his poor and little grateful brethren for His sake Who watched over them aggrieved, but ever compassionate and faithful.

Next we have the Levites of the same early period. It is of interest to note that “the thanksgiving” did not fail in that day of shame and small things, any more than the “wards” or “watches.” They were careful of order to God's glory.

“And the Levites Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. Also Bakbukiah and Unno, their brethren, were over against them in wards” (vers. 8, 9).

In verses 10, 11, we have the succession of high priests from Jeshua to Jaddua. Now the history of the book does not carry us later than the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and the high priesthood of faithless Eliashib and the unworthy son of Joiada his son. It is a brief record of humiliating ways to the last high priest of whom O. T. scripture takes any notice.

“And Jeshua begat Joiakim, and Joiakim begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua” (vers. 10, 11).

Then we have mention of the next generation, which accounts for “of” or “for” each of these persons, priests, chief fathers.

“And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' [houses]: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel” (vers. 12-21).

In due place follow the Levites, though first in a general way to the days of the latest high priest named (ver. 22), recorded (yen. 23) “in the book of the chronicles” until the days of the high priest before, Jonathan or Johanan. Then in vers. 24, 25, we have the specific services first of the chief Levites, next of door-keepers keeping the ward at the storehouses of the gates in the days of Joiakim, Jeshua's son, and in the days of Nehemiah and of Ezra. This gives the connection, if not the reason for the insertion of the paragraph here.

“The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded heads of fathers' houses: also the priests, in (or, to) the reign of Darius the Persian. The sons of Levi, heads of fathers' houses, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward against ward. Mattaniah, and Baksbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the storehouses of the gates. These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest the scribe” (vers. 22-26).

It is good to serve the Lord in the position He assigns each and for the end of attesting His glory; and it is full of cheer to know that He remembers each and would have all to forget not even the least one that serves Him.

Chapter 173

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 12:27-47

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 12:27-47.

FROM ver. 27 is recounted the dedication of the wall, with the thanksgivings of the remnant. It was all in keeping with the circumstances of God's people; yet what a contrast with the building of the altar on their return from Babylon in the seventh month, or the laying of the foundations of the temple in the second year under Zerubbabel and Joshua! Then too there was loud expression of joy on the people's part; but the chiefs, the ancient men who had seen the first house, wept no less loudly. Faith was feeble enough in both then; for how far were either from steadfast anticipation of His coming in the humiliation of grace, Who is to fill the house with glory! Now it was feebler still; for there was nothing but gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, cymbals, lutes and harps.

How different will all be when “a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall reign in judgment, and a man [not a wall] shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” The eyes that look in that day shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, whose stakes shall never be pulled up, nor any of its cords broken. And why but that there Jehovah is to be to His own glorious, in the place of rivers of broad stream; wherein shall go no galley with oars, nor shall gallant ship pass thereby? For Jehovah is their judge, Jehovah their law-giver, their king; He will save them. The afflicted city's stones shall be set in antimony, and its foundations with sapphires; its battlements will Jehovah make of rubies, its gates of carbuncles, and its borders of precious stones. Violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within the borders; but Jerusalem shall call its walls Salvation and its gates Praise; no more Forsaken or Desolate, but called Beulah and Hephzibah; for Jehovah delighteth in it, and its land shall be married. What a change from the day when a pious son of David numbered the houses, and broke them down to fortify the wall! Immanuel there in glorious power makes the difference, for He will tread down the enemy and give effect to all suited blessing. And of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

But as things were for the returned, they looked for the protection of a wall like the nations, and rejoiced over what their earnest and self-denying labor had reared, before envious adversaries, and in their midst false brethren truer to the Gentile than to Israel. And the inspired writer took his part in the celebration, and their heartfelt thanks the grace of God did not disdain, Who accepts according to what one has, not according as he has not. It was meet that they should be thankful, whatever they might lack.

“And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers, gathered themselves together, both out of the plain round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites; also from Beth-gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people, and the pates, and the wall.

“Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession; whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate. And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph; and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, and Judah, Hanani, with musical instruments of David the man of God; and Ezra the scribe was before them. And by the fountain gate, and straight before them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward. And the other company of them that gave thanks went to meet them, and I after them with the half of the people, upon the wall, above the tower of the furnaces, even unto the broad wall; and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the old gate, and by the fish gate, and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of Hammeah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the gate of the guard. So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I and the half of the rulers with me: and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar and, Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud with Jezrahiah their overseer. And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy; and the women also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

“And on that day were men appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the heave offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them, according to the fields of the cities, the portions appointed by the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that stood. And they kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, and so did the singers and the porters, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, as every day required: and they sanctified for the Levites; and the Levites sanctified for the sons of Aaron” (vers. 27-47).

The Levites and the priests were duly summoned and purified themselves; the princes, with the priests and the singers took their due place and part, dividing into two companies to complete the circuit, and meet with songs and great sacrifices at the house of God, and the joy of all with women and children heard afar off. As usual, the word of God was heeded all the more “according to the commandment of David and Solomon his son” (vers. 45, 46). The priests and the Levites were more assiduous in their functions to the joy of the people, and reaped proportionately from what was consecrated to the Levites, as the sons of Aaron did from the Levites' consecrations.

When joy fails, duties are neglected, and love grows cold.

Chapter 174

The Remnant in Jerusalem: Nehemiah 13

The Remnant in Jerusalem

Neh. 13

But joy can never, as man is, be the sole portion of God's people, even if they possess not the spirituality that is quick to judge self and discern shortcomings. To supply this wholesome check God does not fail to use His word. So it was in Jerusalem at this time.

“On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God forever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them howbeit our God turned the curse into a Blessing. And it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude” (vers 1-3).

This self-judgment is attributed to none in particular, but to the effect of the scriptures on the people generally. Yet evil as was the allowance of “the mixed multitude” and in direct opposition to the law, there was a more flagrant offense of older date than that corrected as we have seen, which nobody ventured to touch till a later visit of Nehemiah.

“And before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being allied unto Tobiah, had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meal offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the wine, and the oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the heave offerings for the priests. But in all this time I was not at Jerusalem; for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went unto the king, and after certain days asked leave of the king, and came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meal offerings and frankincense” (vers 4-9).

Here it was not the sin of the people, nor yet of a ruler only but of the anointed priest. And it was an open affront to the house of God, and contempt of the oblations and the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes, to say nothing of the wrongs done to the Levites and the priests, by the very one who had the oversight and yet became a kinsman of a known and active adversary of the people, Tobiah the Ammonite. How vain to hope for a right sense of separation to Jehovah, when he who represented Him officially in the holiest set the example of deliberate transgression so complete and defiant in the temple itself! But Nehemiah on his return dealt vigorously with the evil, not only casting out of the profaned chamber all the household stuff of Tobiah, but purifying it and restoring the holy vessels with the oblations and the frankincense.

That priestly corruption, as usually happens, led to other serious consequences. The Levites had not been given their portions and had neglected God's work for their own interests. For this Nehemiah censured the rulers and himself rectified the disorder. The effect was great and immediate on “all Judah.” And as stores now came in, he made storekeepers accordingly of priests, Levites, and people, thus binding all in an interest common to all before God.

“And I perceived that the portions of de Levites had not been given them; so that the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I will the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the wine and the oil unto he treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Henan the son of Zaccur the sea of Mattaniah. For they were counted faithful, and their business was to distribute unto their brethren. Remember me, O my God, concerning this and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the observances thereof” (10-14).

Another great and prevalent sin caught his vigilant eye, the sabbath profaned by sons of Judah.

“In those days saw I in Judah come treading winepresses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses therewith; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day, and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tire also therein, which brought in fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. I commanded that the. doors should be shut, and commanded that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I over the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember unto me, O my God, this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy” (vers. 15-22).

Need it be remarked how essential the sabbath was to Jehovah's glory and to His people? and all the more, because it depends on His will and word, apart from moral questions as in the rest of the “ten words.” “A sign between Him and the sons of Israel forever is” a sabbath of rest to Jehovah, so absolute that the doer of work therein was to be put to death. Christianity has brought in better and higher things, of which the first or resurrection day is the witness; but for the earth and God's earthly people the sabbath will be only the more honored in the future glories of the kingdom.

Here again Nehemiah wrought with holy energy, and in. every way set his face against sabbath profanation, with rulers and people, as well as with the foreign tempters.

The shameful defilement of the holy flesh by Gentile marriages he also dealt with most earnestly.

“In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, and he was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did strange women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to trespass against our God in marrying strange women? And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites” (vers. 25-29).

We do not see the grief as of Ezra in his chaps. 9. 10., but uncompromising zeal nevertheless in a way more natural to a Tirshatha (ver. 25). Nor could the highest religious position screen here; for as a grandson of the high priest was son-in-law of the notorious Sanballat the Horonite, Nehemiah chased him away, and here prayed that God might remember them, as polluters of the priesthood and of the covenant that attached to them and the Levites.

Finally, the purification from all foreigners was completed, and the charges appointed that priests and Levites should discharge each his service, with such dues as were needful.

“And I purged them from all strangers, and appointed wards for the priests and for the Levites, every one in his work; and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good” (vers. 30, 31).

Is it not blessed in a day of weakness and humiliation to behold a ruler thus content to serve, and effectively for God's people as his eye was single to God and His word? At such a time sentiment is powerless; and allowance of natural ties specially dangerous. Nehemiah learned and was faithful to what he knew from God. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Chapter 175

The Paralytic Healed

Matt. 9, Mark 2, Luke 5

THE new and precious feature which betrays itself at the point in this narrative of Matthew is the growing opposition and hatred of the religious leaders toward the Lord. It is not, as in chap. 8., a certain scribe ignorant of himself and self-confident who proposes to follow Him whithersoever He may go. In chap. 9. the scribes begin with saying within themselves, This man blasphemeth; and the Pharisees end with their own blasphemy—that it was in virtue of the prince of the demons He was casting out the demons. Through the darkening unbelief the Lord gives His blessed and blessing testimony.

The first incident recorded is the cure of the paralytic as He was speaking the word to a crowd at home in His own city—Capernaum. This malady aptly sets forth the effect of sin in destroying power; as leprosy in its unclean taint before God or man. The occasion was the house filled even beyond the door, as Mark tells us; which accounts for the difficulty the four bearers had of getting near. Eastern buildings, however, furnished easy access to the roof; and this they uncovered, and let down the sick man on his pallet through the tiles, as Luke tells us. The Lord saw their faith and says to the paralytic “son” (or “child” rather), “Thy sins be forgiven.”

It was indeed a startling word; and so it was meant to be. The Lord laid bare the root of the evil, and dealt with it at once fundamentally. He alone could thus speak. Not even an apostle approaches its force. It was proper to Him Who was alike Jehovah and Son of Man. The men learned in the law were shocked. They unbelievingly reasoned in their hearts to His dishonor; but He, the ordained Judge of quick and dead, read their hearts as He does, those of all, and answered their unuttered and evil reasoning by the question— “Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or, authority) on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the paralytic), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house.” And so the man did immediately before them all. And the crowds at least were filled with fear and said, We have seen strange things to-day.

Let me plead with you who have sins and cannot avoid foreboding of judgment. Why should not you take hold of such words of divine grace? They are for every soul of man that believes. They were not limited to that age or race or land. They are written in the imperishable word of God, for guilty men wherever they be who hear, that they may believe and be saved. Therefore did He come not yet to judge, but to say still, Thy sins are forgiven. Miracles may cease; but the love never fails which forgives sins to every needy sinner that believes. And if Jews reject, it but gives the opportunity to open the door freely to the Gentile, far and wide. Is God of Jews only? Is He not of Gentiles also? Yea, writes the inspired Hebrew of Hebrews, of Gentiles also. Fear not then, but believe.

“The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” This the scribes learned in the law did not believe; for they knew not Him, nor the God Who sent Him They would not have disputed that God

forgive sins. They rebelled against the Lord's exercise of any such authority. He claimed it as Son of man, exercised it on behalf of the paralytic, and gave Him immediate powers to rise take up his couch, and walk, before their eyes, as His disproof of their evil doubts, His witness outwardly of that precious boon. He had overcome Satan for this life and was dividing his spoils.

But more: Christ has accomplished redemption since. He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins. Risen from the dead, He has told us that all power (or authority) has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He has vanquished finally; He has borne God's judgment of sin on the cross; He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Is there not all the more urgent ground for you to believe, and all the deeper encouragement for you to confide? He has sent out His servants expressly into all the world, and told them to preach the gospel or glad tidings to the whole creation. But He solemnly warns that he that disbelieves shall be condemned (or damned).

Oh, deceive not your soul, nor slight the Savior Who is the Lord of glory. If He humbled Himself to become not only man but a sacrifice to God for sin, is there not the best of all grounds for you to bow, and bless and worship Him, even as the Father Who gave Him? And how many, once unbelievers, have become the most devoted of His servants like Saul of Tarsus, afterward the great apostle? Be not like the proud scribes or bitter Pharisees, who trusted themselves, rejected Him, and perished everlastingly.

Power to walk aright and glorify God is inseparable from knowing your sins forgiven. Till you believe the gospel, you are as powerless as the paralytic was on his couch. When you have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of your offenses, you can enjoy God's love in Christ, His counsels and His ways; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to walk worthily of Him, and of the calling wherewith you were called. Ability to walk as a Christian follows faith in Christ and His grace in forgiveness. They reverse God's way and Christ's word whose effort is so to walk as to be forgiven. It is all vain, because it is self and unbelief: a flame of their own kindling.

And this shall they have of God's hand: they shall lie down in sorrow.

See then that ye look to Him, Who, if He is exalted now, is still the Savior. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. If you believe not, you will assuredly be judged by Him and lost forever. So His word declares plainly.

Chapter 176

Peter's Mother-in-Law

WE have only to compare the first Gospel with the two which follow, in order to learn, not only how reliable in them all Scripture is, but the faithful persevering goodness of the Lord to Israel which was Matthew's task. It is Mark, who by his notes of time, “straightway” and others, gives us the surest clue to the historical order of events in His blessed service. With this we can compare the others, and may by grace gather why that order is left for other objects in the mind of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see that with Luke, who describes the Lord morally, there was no motive for departure from it; and so here Mark and he coalesce. But the dispensational design, which He used Matthew to make known, required the change to a much later occasion, and therefore a wholly different connection. Hence all can notice that here are no links of time in his account. Both the others bind their narrative of the miracle with the precious and notable facts of that day in the synagogue of Capernaum. Matthew, because of transplanting the case, says nothing of the kind.

“And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose and ministered unto them” (Matt. 8:14, 15).

If the Gentile centurion appealed in faith to that gracious power, which had only to speak the word and healing followed, the Lord in no way turned from Israel. His heart yearned over the favored but guilty people. And Peter's wife's mother laid down in fever gives us to see it clearly. Here He does enter the house, and touch her hand. Luke tells us that she was seized with a great fever (for the sickness differs much); and adds that they besought Him for her; as Mark, that they told Him of her anon or immediately. This was all seasonable on their part; but He was there ready to cure. So Mark lets us know that He took her by the hand and lifted her up. Nor was it only that the fever left her immediately, but that she was serving them (Mark and Luke) as well as Him (R. V. of Matthew).

Such is the Lord to any sinner's need now. His ear is open to every cry direct or indirect to Himself. He was then healing the sick. He is now delivering men for time and eternity. Why should not you, my reader, appeal for your guilty soul? Is not the soul more than food, as the body is more than clothing? He only is the Savior of both if you believe the gospel: of the soul now, of the body by-and-by. “Fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” “Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.” These words are faithful and true. Beware of unbelief; for now is the hour “when the dead shall bear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.” Life is in Him, and He gives it to all that believe. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment), but is passed from death into life” (John 5).

But you may plead that Peter's wife's mother had the apostle and more to speak for her to the Lord. This is true; but there is no appeal like the needy one's himself to the Savior. Search and see if He ever refused one. He declares in John 6 that “him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Oh, I beseech you, be not faithless but believing. To find Him you need not to ascend the

heights where He is, nor to descend where He descended. He is near to every One that calls on Him. Every secret of every heart is bare before His eyes. Doubt not then, but believe.

On the evening of the same day He cured Peter's mother-in-law, and so immediately that she was able to serve Him and His followers, He did yet more for others. “And when even was come, they brought unto Him many possessed with demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” (vers. 16, 17). (See Isa. 53:4).

The very aim of that prophetic oracle was to announce that, before He suffered atoningly (which follows in ver. 5-12), He entered into all that troubled His people even in their bodies, and as we see in the Gospels from Satan's more immediate power. And this He did not in power only but in the tenderest bearing of the burden on His spirit, while He took it away; as it is said elsewhere by the same prophet, “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Here then is more and most ample encouragement for you to bring your need to His feet. If you so come, He will never say you, Nay. Why is all this revealed, but that you may cast your soul on Him now? If you are a great sinner, be assured that He is a greater Savior.

Chapter 177

Power, Religion and Commerce: 1. How They Act Against God

In this world are three active and potent forces, each contributing to its pretensions as it now subsists, or will shortly expand, and embracing every motive or incentive to action, that has, since the fall, marked its course.

These three forces are Power, Religion, and Commerce. And because the whole world lies in the wicked one, power has begotten oppression, religion has developed into idolatry, and commerce is energized by covetousness. By power is meant the authority, however acquired, of man over man; and by religion, not God's revelation, but the outcome of man's nature, which is essentially religious. For, even if man is a infidel, he still bows to a superior, and pays homage to a being—real or imaginary—above himself. Even Antichrist, who exalts himself above all that is called God, will pay homage to the god of forces (Dan. 11:38, 39). It is commerce that now seems to have the sway of the world, not that the love of power is extinct, or commerce of recent development. There were merchant princes in Tire nearly fifteen centuries before Christ. But the spirit of traffic is now more widely spread, and other things are for the time yielding to it.

The first expression of power among men, after the deluge, was an attempt to be independent of God—to build a tower and make themselves a name, and a gathering point lest they should be scattered. And if they could have succeeded, their power would have been limitless. God Himself declared that now nothing would be restrained from them which they imagined to do. There was mercy mingled with judgment when men were scattered into different groups and tongues. Had they been permitted to remain with one language, the world would have been, if possible, even worse than it is; for man has given proof of what he could do. When God put power into his hand (as we see in Nebuchadnezzar), he used it to establish idolatry, and to burn out the confession of the true God. Although Babel was not ostensibly built to support idolatry, the spirit that prompted its building was the same as was soon seen in the universal spread of idolatry, viz., the exclusion of God. If violence and corruption filled the earth before the flood, idolatry overspread it immediately after.

It was a fallen world before man acquired power. Magisterial authority was given to Noah by God. But man soon found what a great auxiliary to power it was to have a center, and so the attempt at Babel; and when dominion was given to Nebuchadnezzar by God, he endeavored to consolidate his authority by establishing idolatry. (Indeed there is no force equal to the religious element in human nature to strengthen or overthrow any power on earth.) Egypt abounded in idols; but we do not read that the king enforced their worship with penalties if disobedient. But from Babylon the threat issued, that all who worshipped not the golden image set up should be cast into the furnace. Satan had no need to oppose the stupid idolatry of Egypt by idolatries elsewhere. But against the worship of God he stirs up Nebuchadnezzar, and afterward Darius the Mede.

It was the failure of Israel, and of the city of Jerusalem as the standing witness for God, that was the occasion of investing the Gentile with supreme authority: the wickedness of Israel was greater than that of the Gentiles, and Israel was given up to their hatred. The hatred was against the

testimony of God rather than against Jerusalem, and at last the Jew joins with the Gentile against it. The chief priests and Pilate, Jew and Gentile, are together in condemning the Lord. But while Jerusalem stood a witness to the government of God, it was the object of the enmity of the surrounding nations. But God was compelled (if we may so say) to judge it; otherwise He would have appeared indifferent to sin, and to His own truth and majesty. But though the nations be His instruments for chastising, yet are they punished for their own sin, and in proportion to their enmity to Israel.

But while all show enmity, some are more expressive of the spirit that now dominates the world—the spirit of Mammon. A special phase is commerce. Commerce is influenced by covetousness, and covetousness is idolatry. For the sake of Mammon war is decried. At the same time is it not worthy of the Christian's notice that war is cultivated as a science, and standing armies are maintained in Christendom where the gospel of peace is professed? What a proof of the rule and power of the prince of this world! The crust of peace spread over the civilized world is very thin. Underneath are armed millions and new warlike inventions. Nations are saying Peace, peace, and yet preparing for war, and rumors and signs of it are not wanting. How blessed that amid all the commotions and strifes of this world, believers can look beyond and say, “we, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved!” But, whatever the dominating spirit, all men who have not the truth are hoping and seeking to maintain the present system of the world. And they dream that they will perpetuate it, and they will continue to dream, until the judgment of God awakens them. Then in their alarm they will call on the mountains and rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

But let us see how these forces are represented in Scripture, and what places or cities are used as illustrative of the world's sin and judgment. And there in the forefront of all we find Babel with its tower and defiance of God. It was the first place after the flood where the exercise of the world's power brought down judgment from God. Though all joined to build the tower, yet the race of Ham, in the person of Nimrod, was the first to acquire power, which is continued in different characters throughout the old history of the world—through Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and, we may add, the seven-hilled city Rome. This also will be the last force in exercise when Gog and Magog are led against God after the millennium. It would seem that the power of the world had been restrained by God till Israel had falsified His testimony to it. Then, as we may see in Babylon, power was joined to idolatry, and the saints were subjected to persecution. Tire is presented where the world's religion succumbs apparently to commerce, as the love of gain becomes paramount. But if the phases of wickedness in Babylon and Tire be different, they are both in opposition to God. Egypt early rose to prominence but did not enforce idolatry as did Babylon; though the Lord declares that He will judge the idols of Egypt. And in the plagues of Egypt the Lord's judgment was as much upon their gods as upon the people themselves.

But, as we have seen, the first place was Babel; and there was a willful ignoring of the power and judgment of God. The height of the tower was to reach heaven, as if man could make a refuge for himself should any succeeding deluge overtake him. This same defiance of God was brought out in Egypt too; for it was Egypt's king that said, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him”? He learned who He was at the Red Sea—then too late: and when Egypt lost her place as a leading power in the world, it passed to Assyria, and Nineveh became next prominent, and the object of the Lord's judgment (see Nahum). Assyria, which was noted from the beginning, has its name

carried on to the end, and given to the last earthly power in opposition to God. So that the power of the world, seen at the first in Babel and Nimrod, and for a time diverted to Egypt that the purpose of God in and for Israel might be accomplished, is found again at the close wielded by the Assyrian. But all through it is antagonism to God; and as His purpose for the earth was wrapped up in Israel, it is against them that the hatred of Satan is chiefly directed. He knew that the truth and testimony for God was somehow connected with Israel, and that the Bruiser of his head must come through them. He well understood the import of the sentence in Eden. He instigated Pharaoh to command that all the male children should be cast into the river. It was he who led Amalek and the inhabitants of Canaan to dispute Israel's passage into the land. He stirred up all evil amongst themselves, as well as their enemies against them. And when he found the line narrowed to David and his house, he roused Saul to destroy him. Failing in this he apparently succeeds in destroying the kingdom, and the king of Assyria carries ten tribes into captivity. To David's house only two tribes remain, which could not be a true picture of God's kingdom. But these also he seeks to destroy, or expatriate. For the purpose of God in David's house was in some measure seen by Satan, although Israel was blind.

Thus Nimrod, Pharaoh, Saul, Sennacherib, and the future Beast are all found arrayed against God. The same unseen foe guides them all in the same opposition. And when he leads the Assyrian in his last phase before the millennium, a greater destruction awaits him than befell Pharaoh at the Red Sea, or Sennacherib's army when destroyed by the angel of the Lord. And even after he has been bound for a thousand years, and then loosed for a brief space, he gathers again Gog and Magog to the battle, “and they” in the vision (Rev. 20:9) “went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them.” All the unconverted whose number is as the sand of the sea are led against the saints then on the earth. This is his last effort—the immediate prelude to their eternal blessedness.

Yet not Satan's efforts, but Israel's sin seems to delay the fulfillment of God's purpose (Psa. 11).

Nevertheless, God overrules all to subserve His counsels, and in due time will establish His decree. Meanwhile Satan, as it were, takes advantage of Israel's sin to include the whole world in idolatry. And the religious nature of fallen man affords a force when supported by authority which is almost irresistible. It would be quite so only for the grace of God overcoming nature.

It may be that men clothed with power wishing to consolidate their authority by religion used symbols of Godhead to aid the people in general. But men had sufficient evidence of the Godhead in the things that are seen. They did not wish to retain the remembrance of God (Rom. 1:20). Therefore it was easy for Satan to convert the symbol into an idol; and to it the idolaters bowed. When Joseph is carried into Egypt, we find idolatry systematized, having its high priest (Potipherah), in a man of note. Not that this is its first appearance. it was in Laban's family; nor does Jacob appear to have been shocked when Laban accused him of stealing his gods (Gen. 31). And the ancestors of Abraham served other gods (Josh. 24). Idolatry seems to have spread rapidly. Yet years must have elapsed before Egypt, and the idolatry which marked it, could have attained to the position she had among the nations; for she had traffic with other countries, and even slave-markets. But in the midst of all her prosperity she sunk in the depths of a debasing idolatry. How the great foe must have derided the wisdom of the Egpytian to see it accompanied

with such folly!

To be continued, (D. V.)

Chapter 178

Power, Religion and Commerce: 2. How They Act Against God

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Two of the places which mark the career of power are also representatives of the world's idolatry, viz., Egypt and Babylon. The former shows its folly and debasement: the latter its enmity. For in Babylon the persecuting power is developed, and is first noticed in scripture as such. The Israelite in Egypt beyond doubt was persecuted by the idolatrous king, and this may have been part of the cry which God heard (Ex. 13:9). But Babylon enforced idolatry by law; hence persecution. This gives to that city an awful pre-eminence in sin, so that its very name is given to the worst iniquity that ever defiled the world.

In Babylon the world's religion and power are combined against the confession of God; and Satan appears to rely for success in the terrors of a fiery furnace, besides making idolatry attractive with the world's music (the music continues to this day, if the furnace be gone). When the Gentile king set up his idol at Babylon, the world's religion was supreme. Doubtless he thought to strengthen the bonds between the various parts of his many-tongued and discordant empire. And he was wise in his generation.

But Satan's aim was not merely to bind the empire into one homogeneous whole, but to unite all in idolatry, and persecution of those who confessed God. And though the fiery furnace became a scene and triumph for the witnesses of God, yet he so far succeeded that the worshippers of the image afterward drank wine in praise of their false gods from the vessels taken out of the temple of the Lord. Nor is that the sum of the iniquity of the guilty city: for the Mede dares to take the place of God and forbids worship to any but himself. Idolatry, sacrilege, and pride are united in Babylon. But neither had the den of lions greater terror for the witnesses for the truth than had the fiery furnace in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. If in his day idolatry was rampant, it is pride that is prominent in the degree of Darius. This may not be so degrading as worshipping an image, but it is equally iniquitous. Darius may have been persuaded unthinkingly to make his decree; but there were Satan's cunning, and device behind it. The embodiment of all the sin and evil in the world is found in Babylon, and it leads on to the end: the deification of man as developed in Darius is of the world, or of Christendom as part of and supported by the world. When the name of Christ is altogether rejected, the climax of this deification will appear in Antichrist. Great Babylon follows in the wake of the first Babylon, and enforces its idolatries by the same means. There is this difference between them: in the first the secular power seems paramount; in the second it will be the religious corruption and persecution.

The deification of man appears to have begun with Nimrod. He was a mighty hunter—a giant among men. He went to Assyria and built Nineveh, and several other cities. The modern Arabs ascribe all the ancient great works to him, and suppose him to have been worshipped at Babylon after death by the name of Bel. The exaltation of human nature has ever been a part of the world's religion. Paganism had its gods among the heavenly orbs, powers of nature, &c., and soon learned to put men among them—its heroes became deities. And Christendom follows in its track,

and has its heroes (according to man's estimate and heroism) and in a sense deifies them. The worship of idols, of images, may have sunk into deserved contempt (though still bowed down to in the dark places of the earth)—men attributing to their intellect the light shed by the Bible. But the exaltation of man goes on now, and if altars are not erected, monuments are, and names of a past age are dug up to satisfy man's craving for hero-worship, all paving the way for the advent of him who will sit in the temple of God and say that he is God.

We find three pictures of the world's religion in the three kings of Babylon which Scripture presents: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. The first is pagan and persecuting. The second mingles the vessels of the Lord's house with his idolatrous orgies; as now the fables of paganism are mixed with some of the truths of Christianity, thus producing the amalgam which makes Christendom. The third is blasphemous; it does not yet fully appear, but will be in full bloom when Antichrist claims also to be true God.

Satan could not burn out the truth, so he mixes fable with it, and here he has a measure of success so far as public profession goes. Christendom presents Belshazzar's feast on a large scale. For as he caused the vessels of the temple to be mingled with the vessels of his gods, so the old leaders in Christendom mixed revealed truth with fable on the one hand, and on the other persecution. For persecution did not vanish when the world became nominally Christian. Rather it became more bitter than its pagan ancestor, the Pharisees and Sadducees were like the Ritualists and Rationalists of the present. Superstition and infidelity mark both the ancient and the modern, they make void the word of God by their tradition and the commandments of men.

But the last or the Darius-phase of man's pride and unbelief is yet to come, though the seed is being scattered now, and the soil is well adapted to receive it. A man will take the place of God and say, “I am God and not a man.” But this the worst form of human wickedness will not be till after the church of God is gone, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, yea, even after the false antichristian church. Great Babylon is destroyed as it will be by the beast and the ten kings (Rev. 17). At this present time it is not the Nebuchadnezzar phase of gross idolatry which may yet cover Christendom; nor the Darius phase which is atheistic, though that too is spreading; but the Belshazzar phase where the truths of Christianity are mixed up with, and made to convey, the traditions of men. This is a transition from idolatry to atheism, from the worship of idols to the denial of God. This is the religious aspect of the world, although another force seems to have equal, if not greater, sway in this our time. Power was not sufficient for Satan's purpose, he brought in idolatry. But this too was not enough. For man's religion works on his fears; never on his love, and so he engages man in commerce. And all his hopes and fears, and all the love and hatred which engross his heart and fill it with care, are governed by the spirit of mammon.

Commerce which is presented in Tire exercises a deeper and more engrossing influence than the abominations of idolatry, and may be as much opposed to truth in spirit. For he who directs the world's power and its religion also guides its traffic. The world and all its affairs are yet a little longer under Satan's control (within certain limits) though men will not believe it. But God has fixed a time which the prince of this world cannot pass. Commerce may not be iniquitous in itself (though it opens a wide door for the indulgence of unrighteous ways, and needs more grace to resist than the open sins of the world), and the arch-foe may have brought it in, not so much to excite or qualify the covetousness of man, as in opposition to God who had pronounced a curse

on the earth. Satan tries if possible to make it a pleasant abode, notwithstanding its sin and rebellion—a pleasant place at least for some, even if others find more sorrow and toil. Ambition and hatred may be actively stirred by power and religion, but the secret and sometimes unsuspected covetousness of the heart is nourished by traffic. Commerce in its aspect now is the innate covetousness of the heart of man systematized with the science of buying in the cheapest, and selling in the dearest markets. The maxim that guided traffickers in Solomon's day is still the rule in the commercial world. “It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth” (Prov. 20:14). Riches are the great object of man's pursuit, and all his energies are employed for their attainment—not thinking of his irreparable loss even if he gained the whole world.

Tire gathered wealth. Her merchants were princes and kings; they were enriched by her merchandise. She does not show that bitter hatred that we see in others. Still she rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem and imagined that her own riches would be increased by it (Ezek. 32:2). Was Jerusalem a commercial city? Certainly Solomon raised it to such a height of splendor that silver was accounted as nothing. Solomon traded with Hiram, king of Tire, and had many ships with Tyrian sailors. He traded with Egypt also (1 Kings 9). It may be that Tire was envious of the wealth of Jerusalem under Solomon, and would emulate her in riches; and hence the joy of Tire at her fall. We know that Hiram was not pleased with the cities that Solomon gave him in reward for his services. But however the form of Tire's sin may differ from that of Egypt and Babylon, they unite in hatred to the city and the testimony of God, and in arrogance.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 179

Power, Religion and Commerce: 3. How They Act Against God

WHEN Jerusalem fell, the testimony to God's government was extinguished, and the prince of this world thought to put Babylon at the head of the religious system to take the place, as it were, of Jerusalem. Thus Babylon is first in the iniquity of the world, and in pride and persecution in its representative. Hence Jehovah says in the burden of Babylon (Isa. 13), “I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity, and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and the haughtiness of the terrible.” But enmity is shown by Tire as by other Gentiles, and she rejoiced when Jerusalem fell. Her immense traffic may have increased her enmity. Many, perhaps, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem sought refuge in the city of Tire. But hope of gain caused Tire to forget the brotherly covenant, and the fugitives were given up to the cruel Edomite. Tire remembered not the brotherly covenant. This is the charge of the prophet against her (Amos 1:9). David and Hiram, king of Tire, made a covenant; and it was confirmed by Solomon, whom Hiram called “my brother” (see 2 Sam. 5 and 1 Kings 5-9). The opposition that Tire manifested has been perpetuated in modern times. The commerce so famous in that city has spread its wing over the cities of our day, which, following in the steps of Tire, await with the same unrighteousness the same doom. The present age may not show the same arrogancy that the prince of Tire and the king of Babylon showed, but the world's commerce in the hands of Satan leads to it. The spirit of Mammon rules the age, and under its influence the truth is perverted, and becomes the profession of covetous men, supposing that gain is godliness. From such we turn away. We look to the testimony of our Lord, and find that the cares and riches of this world, which commerce increases, are weeds which choke the good seed.

Power, religion, and commerce are controlled by the prince and god of this world, and all will be found against the testimony of God. The evil of the old Babylon is intensified in great Babylon; and this last, besides inheriting all the wickedness of the past —what an inheritance!—adds yet to it that she covers all with the name of Christianity. Even now idolatry and persecution, as far as Christendom extends, have their source in the seven-billed city; and the system of which that city is the center is extending its influence and ramifications over all. In the cup of the scarlet woman is found the power that began at Babel, the idolatry of Egypt, the persecution of Babylon, and the merchandise of Tire. The pride that prompted Pharaoh to say at the beginning “Who is Jehovah"? leads man at the end to say, “I am God.” It began in independence and defiance of God, and ends in blasphemy and worse.

The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel; and this commencement of man's power is marked by God's judgment (judgment being met in grace, but not removed at Pentecost). We next see the power of the world in Egypt, and there it becomes oppression (its natural effect in man's hand) and accompanied with degrading idolatry. But as the civilized world emerged from the slough of image-worship, it was caught in the net of traffic, and it became conscious of the riches that would accumulate by commerce. Tire (envious at first, afterward the rival, of Jerusalem) is used by Satan to show the glory and riches of the world, and thus becomes an instrument against God. By means of commerce Satan tries to make the curse ineffective. Thorns and thistles the

earth was to bring forth, and man to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. Satan would obviate that sentence by bringing together the different products of the earth, filling the eye and mind with them; and would seek to hide the thorns by spreading a carpet of Tyrian merchandise over them. It is only carrying out the same plan that he began among the antediluvians when he taught them to handle the harp and pipe, with other things the world calls useful. So Tire has a prominence which her merchandise might not otherwise have had. Not that in itself it was sin; for we read that her merchandise in the coming day is to be used for the Lord (Isa. 23:17, 18). Nor was her hatred of Jerusalem greater than that of Edom or of any of the Gentile cities; but the principle of her opposition was more subtle, and had a stronger hold on the covetous proclivities of fallen nature.

These places are selected by the Holy Spirit as showing prominently the condition and sin of the world, and by whom led (see Ezek: 30.-32.). In the judgment, which is special to the countries and places named in Jer. 25, the whole world and its leader is included. There is a judgment common to all, “the wine cup of His fury.” All are found together, the sources of all nationalities, in short, the whole earth; the kings in this scripture are the representatives of the different places. But Egypt, Babylon, and Tire have each a prominent place in iniquity. Idolatry and commerce, though their path may be different, have each the same end, viz., blasphemy; and this is the climax of all sin, and may be the reason why the Holy Ghost had selected these places as the representatives of the great sin of the world—its enmity and defiance of God. Not that they are worse than others; for in Jerusalem itself was worse sin to be found than in the world beside: the name of God was blasphemed through its idolatry worse than Egypt's. And the truth of God afterward given for man's salvation is perverted, by what bears the same name as the persecutor of old, to found and support the most horrible system of iniquity that the arch-foe could invent. And to show the connection of this system with idolatry and persecution, it retains the same name; and we find the source of Tire's wealth to be the same as of Egypt's and Babylon's idolatry.

Tire, the prince of Tire, and the king of Tire, in Ezekiel's prophecy are distinct. The city is judged in common with other cities. But the prince and the king have each a lamentation apart from the city. So has the king of Babylon, so also has Pharaoh king of Egypt. In each the direct energy of Satan is seen, but in Egypt and Babylon Satan is not so distinguished from human agents as in Tire. The language of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar show the same power over them as was over the prince of Tire; and they are not merely the representatives of their countries as the kings in Jer. 25, but exhibit the complete control Satan had over the world. How true that it lay in him! The word to the prince of Tire is what he has become in his pride after he is prince; to the king, what he was before he is king—before iniquity was found in him. The prince's wisdom exceeded Daniel's; there was no secret hid from him. Who was Daniel? Chief of the wise men in Babylon. “No secret” is evidently an allusion to his revealing the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. The prince of Tire, inspired by Satan, equaled and surpassed (in the world's estimation) Daniel in wisdom. Here is another mark of the power of the prince of this world, who would not only have Tire to rival Jerusalem in wealth, but would also raise up a man to outrival Daniel; that he might persuade men that true wisdom was not the gift of God. By his wisdom the prince gained riches, and increased the wealth of Tire; but because of it he set his heart as the heart of God. This is the charge against him— “Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God.” “Wilt thou yet say before Him that slayeth thee, I

am God”? Although a prince, he was only a man; and the “terrible of the nations"—the Chaldeans—would be the executors of God's wrath.

To be continued, (D. V.)

Power, Religion and Commerce: 4. How They Act Against God

4

In the lamentation of the king we have not the display of riches, but their source, or the means by which they were acquired. The king seals up the sum: all angelic, all created, glory was in him; and he is called the covering cherub, the anointed cherub, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, and God set (created) him so. “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth, and have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee.” Fullness of wisdom in the king, delegated wisdom in the prince. The lamentation for the king contains a description of Satan before he fell. And the power and wisdom which he retained after his fall are used against God and His truth, and to this end work in the prince of Tire to accumulate riches so that this earth may not appear smitten with a curse. Satan is really the king, and the source of the wisdom and riches of Tire. The prince is the human agent for the king to show his power, who, from his titles here, may have been the highest among the angels, before iniquity was found in him.

In like manner the king of Babylon is but Satan's instrument, only the hualan agent is not so distinguished from the source of his power as in Tire. In the judgment on Babylon we have not the destruction between the city and the judgment on its king: “the golden city is ceased “; and the king who said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” yet to be “brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” He is also called Lucifer—(daystar) or son of the morning. And when he is laid low, the earth is at rest. Does not this look onward to millennial rest when Satan will be bound for a thousand years? (Isa. 14:4-20.)

The king of Babylon and the prince of Tire use similar language. The king of Babylon said, “I will be like the Most High,” and the prince of Tire said, “I am God.” But why the distinction between the king and the prince in the judgment on Tire? and blending Satan with his human agent in the judgment on Babylon? Perhaps because idolatry and persecution which were developed at Babylon are more Satanic, and the human instrument more completely in his hand. Perhaps also another reason is that the riches of Tire will one day be used for the Lord, whereas the judgment on idolatrous Babylon is that it will never be restored.

The words addressed to the king of Tire are inapplicable to a mere man, however clothed he might be with power. Some of the qualities here enumerated may be said of Adam; but there is a glory here which cannot all apply to Adam innocent. The king was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; and the gems, which adorned the high priest's breastplate and which men prize, are used figuratively to express his covering. He walked in the midst of the stones of fire; he had been on the mountain of God. But his heart was corrupted on account of his beauty: iniquity was found in him, and he was cast to the ground. This is not oriental exaggeration, but the Holy Spirit describing by means of human things and words the past glories and magnificence of him that now seeks to use his wisdom and power in leading the world against Him Who created it. But he was perfect

once. He was adorned with every precious gem; as the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God is, in figure, similarly adorned. So, neither could Satan's primeval beauty, as beyond earthly conception, be described but by joining together incongruous imagery borrowed from the earth; though only a shadowy sense of glory may rest on the mind from his walking in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thus we see Satan using all the forces of this world—its rule and order, its religion and its commerce—to blind the eyes of the lost to its ruin. Only the grace that came by Jesus Christ can open the eyes of the blind. Infidelity and the absorbing power of Mammon are leading men on to destruction. But the worst form of idolatry is yet to be developed. The world is preparing for the man of sin. By means of commerce evil spreads, and the great manipulator of this world's forces brings all together and mixes or crystallizes them in the golden cup of great Babylon.

But while Satan is heading all up that may conjointly oppose the manifestation of the Son, is there to be no divine testimony to the truth? was the prince and god of this world to have his Babel, his Egypt and Assyria, his Babylon and his Tire in time past, and no place or city to be for God? Nay, not so. God had His city, His Jerusalem, which, though now under judgment for her sins, will rise again when all that expresses the power and malice of Satan will be judged and no more seen. From the root of Jesse comes forth a Branch Who vindicates the righteousness and judgment of God—the faithful and true Witness, for Whose sake God retains and watches over Jerusalem, and will yet make her the witness of His truth and glory.

But before the earth rejoices in that bright day, a fearful manifestation of the pride and opposition of man will be seen; and God will send a strong delusion on the inhabitants of the earth which will bind them as with fetters—a judgment on the earth before the eternal judgment. All that springs from the world as a system is in opposition to God. Power (which was given of God) was strengthened by idolatry, and idolatry enforced by power. But the clay mixes not with the iron. Democracy and all the evil passions of men are rising: rule, and order, and men are like a troubled sea; and the rulers, fearing what may be, and hoping to stave it off, bow to them. Power is spreading among the masses, and all are becoming not less antagonistic, but more indifferent, to the truth. This, in its turn opens the door for infidelity; and then is the last phase of man—worship of man as God—the end of that pride and independence first seen at Babel.

Meanwhile to draw away man's attention from eternal things, the open instrument is commerce, and the lust of gain dominates the vast majority; and the denial of God, in various ways, like a black cloud, is settling down thick and fast on Christendom.

Yet, is there no testimony at this present time, in the increasing darkness? Yes, God has a city, a city which has the foundations. The past Jerusalem had not. Abraham saw one which had. Believers know Him Who is the foundation, and they are the living stones, and the city is from above, called the holy city, the new Jerusalem. There are faithful now, as there were righteous in the times of the prophets. The testimony is not without witnesses, feeble though they are. But he that overcomes shall be clothed in white raiment, and reign with Christ. R. B.

(Concluded).

Chapter 181

The Precious Blood

THERE is wide scope in the Lord's words to His disciples concerning the cup, as recorded by the Spirit in the first Gospel. On the solemn night of His betrayal, “He took the cup” (having previously handed to the disciples the bread), “and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many, for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27, 28). The contrast is immense between the new covenant, of which the precious blood is the basis, and the covenant made by Jehovah with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. At Sinai, God proposed to His people His law—His requirement from man in the flesh—setting forth blessing as the result of obedience, and condemnation and death as the sure results of failure and sin. And that covenant was not dedicated without blood. “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you” (Heb. 9:19, 20; Ex. 24). The blood thus sprinkled was the sign of death, the consequence of disobedience and sin. We know how this ended with regard to that people—in disaster and ruin. God had scarcely inscribed the law when the first commandment was broken in the camp by the making of the golden calf. All was thus over; and had God kept Israel to the strict terms of their engagement, He would have destroyed them in a moment.

But there was intercession: Moses went up into the mount and pleaded their cause with Jehovah, asking rather to be himself blotted out of the book which He had written (Ex. 32:32). Jehovah beard His servant, and declared Himself to be “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” &c.; and on that ground Israel was governmentally spared, and brought into the land.

And what were they doing when Christ was here? Glorying in the law, making broad their phylacteries, &c., scrupulous as to ritual; yet about to fill their cup of iniquity to the brim, by the betrayal and murder of Himself—their Messiah. All was thus over as regards the first covenant: man had proved himself hopelessly bad and corrupt, a transgressor from the first giving of the law, now an enemy. How seek further for goodness in the first man? It was not to be found, though God had borne patiently and long. How precious then to hear the Lord speaking of the new covenant, and of His own blood as the basis of it! Jeremiah of old spoke of a new covenant to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah in the latter days—different from the covenant which God made with their fathers when He took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. Jehovah would put His laws within their hearts and write them in their minds, remembering their sins and iniquities no more (Jer. 31).

This is grace—sovereign grace; the righteous ground is the precious blood. How wondrously therefore has God acted! The precious blood, once shed by guilty Israel, and which they desired to be on them and their children, is the righteous basis of all blessing for that law-breaking people in another day. Anticipatively we who compose the church enjoy the blessings, while having no direct

connection with the covenants, which belong to Israel as the apostle speaks in Rom. 9:4. All that they will enjoy by-and-by we enjoy now; and, of course, much more besides. Was not the blood of Christ “shed for many”? We do well to note this language, occurring as it does in the Gospel of Matthew. In the Luke account we have the words “shed for you “: language preciously personal to all at the table, on that solemn night; but in the first Gospel the expression is more general, and intentionally so,” shed for many.” Now Matthew, as is generally known, presents the Lord as the Messiah of Israel; but His rejection by that people opens the door for blessing to those outside the Jewish circle. Similar language is found in Heb. 9:28: “so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Do not we count among the “many”? Israel's unbelief has not stemmed the tide of divine grace, but has been the occasion, in the wisdom of God, of diverting it (though only for a while) from themselves and causing it to overflow all barriers, so that it may reach outside ones such as we.

Therefore “remission of sins” is our happy portion, the purchase of that blood, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. There is all the difference, as far as the soul's enjoyment goes, between “prætermission” and “remission.” The former is the word used by the Spirit (though not so rendered in the A. V.) in Rom. 3:25), and relates to the sins that are past; i.e., those committed before the sacrifice of Christ was accomplished.

These were forgiven, not on the ground of the blood of bulls and goats—though the offering of these was the occasion when forgiveness was pronounced—but on the ground of the incomparable sacrifice of Christ which was ever before the mind of God. God has now been proved righteous in all His dealings with His saints of old. But “prætermission” imparted not that lasting peace which the Christian enjoys; a purged conscience was a blessing unknown. But all is now ours, in virtue of the shed blood of Christ; our sins are remitted, we have a purged conscience, and walk in the enjoyment of cloudless peace. W. W. F.

Chapter 182

Proofs of the Resurrection - 1

NOT one of the four Evangelists attempts to give a complete history of the resurrection of our Lord. Yet each one of them furnishes us with many proofs of the accomplishment of the glorious fact.

When we bring all these proofs together, at the same time carefully distinguishing between each, the result is surprising; their number is so great, and the testimony of each so powerful, clear, and decisive.

The chief priests, the Pharisees, and Pilate were all confederate in their mutual desire if possible to prevent the fulfillment of His words, “After three days I will rise again.” They had a watch, and made the sepulcher as sure as they could.

THE FIRST ANGELIC TESTIMONY

to the glorious fact of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:5-7) was given by that angel who “came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.”

His appearance terrorizes the soldiers, but his words reassure those believing women, to whom he says, “Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.” Our object being to distinguish between each distinct proof, we now draw special attention to the word of invitation to the women, who are as yet outside the sepulcher, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

THE SECOND ANGELIC TESTIMONY

is noticed by Mark (chap. 16:5-7) who, speaking of the women, says, “And entering into the sepulcher (so that they were now within it), they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.”

The testimony of him that sat upon the stone without, and of him that was seen by the women within, the sepulcher is strikingly similar in language; but whereas the first invited the women to “come” and “see,” the second points out the actual spot, saying, “Behold the place where they laid Him.” And that this angel gave His testimony while they were within the sepulcher is rendered all the more evident by Mark telling us that “they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher.”

At the mouth of these two angelic witnesses has the fact of the resurrection been clearly established; but those devoted women are slow of heart to believe. “They trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.” Their utter failure in their not having at once accepted the truth, as to a glorious fact clearly attested by two divinely appointed and fully competent witnesses, is, in itself, a sufficiently clear explanation as to why

THE THIRD ANGELIC TESTIMONY

takes the form of earnest expostulation and implied rebuke (Luke 24:4-7).

The sepulcher being still the spot of special attraction, and “nigh at hand,” the women appear to have been constantly either going to it or returning again from it into the city.

Luke makes no allusion whatever to the soldiers, nor to the angel sitting without upon the stone. We however gather that of those women who had already entered the sepulcher and fled out of it, trembling, and saying nothing of what they had already been told by angels, certain of them have entered it a second time “much perplexed,” and “behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.”

Not only do these two angels give very distinctive testimony to that which had been before given by the angel who sat on the stone without, and by him who sat within the sepulcher at the first, but the very character of the important announcement made by them totally differs from all that had preceded it.

“Why seek ye the living among the dead?” To have answered this so very searching question without admitting previous failure on their part was an impossibility. With very strong emphasis those words are now repeated, “He is not here, but is risen.” This done, these two angels instantly recall to the recollection of those devoted women certain words of our Lord, spoken unto them while He was yet in Galilee— “The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” Real progress is now made, for the women “remembered His words, and returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.”

The effect of the women's testimony upon “the rest” is graphically described by the two who went that same day to Emmaus. They narrate in sorrow of heart before the then unknown Stranger the important fact that “certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not.”

The visit of Peter and John to the sepulcher, subsequent to the report being brought to themselves and others by the women, is rendered all the more remarkable by the comparison of it with that which both preceded and succeeded it. We read of no angels there seen by them, nor of any voices heard; what they saw was an empty sepulcher, and the linen clothes lying in the order befitting the stupendous event that had transpired before their own entrance. For themselves apparently satisfied with this negative proof of the resurrection, they return to their own home.

THE FOURTH ANGELIC TESTIMONY.

Mary now stands all alone and without the sepulcher, weeping (John 20:11-13). Why none of the other women are now with her, scripture does not explain: possibly they were busily occupied in preparing for themselves and others their early morning meal. But however others may be occupied, meanwhile Mary Magdalene can only remain there. Not intelligently, but none the less experimentally her soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Her heart and her flesh cry out, for Him, and until she can find Jesus her Lord in it, the whole world is to her only a dry and weary land, yielding no refreshment whatever. “And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the

sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?”

How remarkable that the very strong and even startling emphasis, with which the former testimonies of angels were given in the hearing of the women, now gives place to a gentle yet earnest expostulation, expressed in language of melting tenderness! For of all those who had before listened to those so very strongly emphasized statements from the lips of angels, or to their faithful repetition by the women who had heard them, Mary alone now stands at the sepulcher.

The question asked of her by the angels gives her suited opportunity of clearly expressing her own heart's earnest longings. She replies, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” The vision before her eyes is in itself glorious, for they are angels whom she now beholds! Her privileges are indeed very great, for she is holding converse with celestial beings! But gazing upon and conversing with these cannot satisfy her longing soul—cannot fill her hungry soul with fatness. Even they by their presence and by their words cannot compensate her for the loss of Him.

From that vision of actively interested angels she turns herself back. Where, oh, where can she find Him?

She supposes that He Who now stands before her is the gardener, a man of humble birth and occupation. But her realized loss of her Lord outweighs every other consideration; and to him she makes her earnest appeal that he will tell her what the angels have not told her. “Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 183

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Revelation 22

We find a great difference between this chapter and the chapter preceding it, and all the rest of the book which presents but scenes of judgment throughout. Before is woe, woe, woe, and the white throne set for eternal judgment. But in these closing chapters there is no question of judgment at all, only a sphere of bliss wherein God is dwelling. All is blessing and glory, though not the name of Father. God and the Lamb is the light of the holy city; no temple is wanted there: it would hide His glory. The Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are thereof the temple. Everything is in connection with blessing, save the profane, the idolatrous, and the lie. The figures are drawn from all parts of scripture to describe the full blessings there. There we have the place of the church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, coming down as a city out of heaven from God. How opposite to judgment! The glory of God fills it all: He dwells where the bride the Lamb's wife is. See its entire distinctness of character as the place where all blessings are gathered in, to show the church in contrast with judgment. There no evil shall enter in; there the water of life proceeds out of God's throne; there the tree of life, its leaves healing for the nations on earth, if the fruits are for those on high.

The Lamb is He Whom we have known; and He is for us the lamp of it, lighting up the whole place with His glory. Every month is continual enjoyment of the full ripened fruit of grace. It is not as on earth the judging of man's work, but the perfecting of God's—the rest of God: so satisfying to Himself that He can dwell there. All is there that His heart could wish to bring out and secure a blessing and glory. Now He says, “I have made you as happy as I would have you.” God rests where His rest can never be spoiled. Paradise was a rest on earth, but not a safe one, for it hung on man's responsibility who failed forthwith. God brings us to the knowledge of this, now that our rest is to be on high—our relationship with God. Down here is our pilgrimage, discipline, and warfare; but our hearts should be filled with His love. We may rest with God in Spirit. Resting on God's own work is the beginning of activity in the service of God. Our hopes and expectations are founded on the knowledge of what we are brought into in Christ. We can look to the coming of the Lord Jesus without fear.

Turning to Rev. 1:5, 6, we find the condition of individual souls, just as much settled before all the judgments as at the end. In speaking to the Seven Churches, remark the place given to saints in view of all these judgments. Again, in chapter 4. when God's judicial throne is set, the elders or glorified saints are seated on thrones. They are associate with Him in knowing what God will then do. They have nothing to do with being judged. They are at rest personally, whilst providential judgment will proceed solemnly. But they are all activity whet, worship goes on. Even on earth they can sing as saints in their exalted place with the ascription, “Unto Him that loveth us and washed us” &c, This peacefulness in the presence of judgment shows how absolute the peace of the saints is. Now this is our place as to judgment. Do you believe and enjoy it as from God through Christ our Lord?

See the same in the last chapter. The moment He says, “I am the root and offspring of David, the bright [and] morning star,” the bride says, “Come.” Why so? Because she is the bride, and not

afraid of the Bridegroom. How could it be so, if she expected to be judged? Instead of joy there would be terror. Here is entirely another thing. The bride has no notion of judgment as to herself; she is on the ground of looking for her Bridegroom, as washed and reconciled. How can a sinner stand on that ground? None can expect a person to wish for Christ's coming, if afraid of being judged.

Conscience and heart must be at peace first. “You hath He reconciled” (Col. 1.): this is what your soul wants before it. In the first part, whenever “Behold, I come” is presented, it is in the way of warning; but this is not the case with the close. The instant Christ is named, there is no hindrance; and the affections say “Come.” Conscience has nothing at all to object; the worshippers are purged. The heart longs then for the presence of the One so well known, Who set us free and loves us. How can an unbeliever be in such a state? Without a hindrance to the Lord's coming? Impossible. It is entirely a new relationship to the faithful. All things are new, old things passed away. Hesitation is out of place. The word of God and the work of the Savior know no such thing as half-judgment and half-grace. God may be at first plowing up the heart; yet it is in grace, not judgment. He is not going to receive us into His arms with a mixture of grace and of judgment. He may employ the law to break a man all to pieces; but the end of the Lord, first or last, is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

In the unconverted heart there is deadly indifference to God, which in His presence turns to hatred, an indifference to grace, awful to think of in man worshipping God! How like Cain of old! Yet how many are laboring to get through the world without God, and worshipping God once a week Driven out of Paradise, man yet pretends to worship God. Cain just proved his heart to be as hard as the nether millstone: a driven-out sinner bringing the fruits of his own hands before God! Abel was very different. He sacrificed a lamb in faith. Death came in between his sins and God; blood was sprinkled. When Cain was not accepted, his countenance falls; hatred breaks out. It is what we see continually in the world. Then Cain goes out of God's presence to make himself happy without God, establishes his family, and builds a city. Harp and pipe, artificers in brass and iron, come in due time.

An awakened soul has a consciousness that there is a person Who loves and is to be loved. The thought of the father's home was in the prodigal's heart: if he could get there, what happiness! If he cannot take his rags into that house, he can and does get into the father's arms, and what follows? The best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf. Christ comes as “The Faithful Witness “; does He come to impute sin to me? No! but as the faithful witness of what God is for the sinner. He comes because He is the expression of God's salvation in grace. The grace in God's heart brought Him down.

In the case of the poor woman taken in adultery, does He say, sin is no matter? His enemies then as now were charging on grace the allowance of sin. But no! Christ applies God's light to all; and they cannot stand it. This is what God does.

He is not mingling grace and law. What did the accusers do? They took care of their own character; and everyone went out. If the eye of God rests on any set of sinners, they would all flee from it. And where did her accusers go? They retired, and lost grace and truth in Christ. But Jesus was not going to condemn them either. Grace can meet any and every sin. He, Jesus Christ the Righteous, is the faithful witness that grace is greater than sin.

Take again the case of the poor woman, who washed His feet with her tears. How He takes her part! She understands Who had come into the house. Simon gave Him no water, no kiss, and no oil. Man may murmur as he will and judge: in a sense God does not mind. Christ turns and says, Thy sins are forgiven. This poor sinner learned through the Faithful Witness what God was for her. Cleansing depends on the value of the blood that is shed.

The Christian was dead with Christ to sin: it is all gone before God. And where is my life? In Christ. He is my life, this blessed One, the Son of God Who came down and now sits at His right hand. He has given me an entirely new place and life. Further, He has made me a king and a priest. Why? Because He is both Himself, He has associated me with Himself and comes to take us to be with Himself. He became a man to die for my sins; that, returning a man into glory, He might take us there in spirit even now with Himself. We know Him in heaven as a Savior; and so He will come to change our bodies (Phil. 3.). In the midst of the throne is the Lamb slain for us. Why did He give “Himself” for us? This is a large word. He gave His blood, His life, but, more still, “Himself". What has He kept back? Nothing. I am precious to Him, and this not measured by myself, but precious because of the love of His heart to me. His love is measured by what He is in Himself. I can trust His love because it is divine. Its spring, power, and extent are in the heart of Christ Himself. Everywhere else to speak of self is to blast all thoughts of anything fit for God. But Christ changes all—He so precious, so dear to His heart, as those He gave Himself for. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. If my heart was always and entirely filled with Christ, it would be entirely filled with perfection. His love makes His happiness to be in having us with Himself, as ours is in being with Him. This being so, how can I fear His coming?

The character of “the Morning Star” is for the church. When He comes in judgment, it will be “the sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4.). Everybody sees the sun; but only those watching for it discern the morning star. But He thinks, and would have us think, of others that are perishing. “Let him that is athirst come.” Before He comes, there are poor sinners not reconciled to God, and we know that He gives the water of life. We have got living water, not glory yet, but living water. And we can welcome not only the thirsty soul, but any, “whosoever will,” to our Savior. If you are thirsty, if you are willing, come and drink. I have got the blessing itself, because I have Christ. How He wants to bless poor sinners! As a believer, I am His; but I can turn round from my own joy to the careless world, saying, If you are thirsty, if you are willing, come. It is the personal enjoyment of him who is in Christ, that one can say to a thirsty soul, “Come” (not to me, or the church, but) to Christ. I have got life's water in Him, and can tell where the love is to be found, how the sinner is accepted, living waters from Him flowing freely. The blood of Christ gives the title to every poor sinner to come to God. Alas! rather would the poor world worship like Cain, than know the blessedness of that grace, which bids “whosoever will” to come.

O beloved, what more awful thing in Christendom or the world than an un-reconciled person contented to go on as he is in the presence of the cross of Christ?

J. N. D.

Chapter 185

The Revelation As God Gave It: 1

DR. JOSEPH HALL, bishop successively of Exeter and Norwich in the 17th century, was pious, learned, and able. It may be well therefore to examine with care how such a man could write on the last book of the N. T. so as even to entitle his essay “The Revelation Unrevealed” (Works, Pratt's ed., x. 79-127). No doubt some in his day as in others taught unadvisedly, as in the “Five Lights at Walton,” and “Zion's Joy in her King;” but he was not entitled to speak slightingly of Joseph Mede, John Archer, Thomas Brightman, or J. H. Alsted, who, notwithstanding many a mistake, were more enlightened in the prophetic word than himself. Let us then turn the wandering of so good a man to account by tracing if we can its source.

The first four sections are an effort to show that the Thousand Years' Reign in Rev. 20., till fulfilled, must be a riddle as insoluble as the number and name of the Beast in chap. 13. How unfounded is this appears from the latter scripture alone where the Beast's number is treated in the prophecy itself as quite exceptional. The very opening of the book disproves the assumption that prophecies need fulfillment to render them intelligible. It is an unbelieving denial of the value of prophecy; for thus they can only be understood when they are accomplished. All O.T. faith hung on unfulfilled prophecy. Thus expressly Noah condemned the antediluvian world; and Abraham enjoyed in peace what even Lot knew before fulfillment took place.

It was on the contrary, as Isaiah tells us (chaps. 41. 42. 44—48.), the privilege of God's people to know both the former things, and new things to come, in contrast with the blinded heathen. So Dan. 9 understood precisely from Jeremiah's prophecy. Even the Jewish chief priests and scribes were not so dark when Jesus was born in Bethlehem; better far, Simeon, Anna, and others were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Indeed, before the Messiah presented Himself, the people were in expectation to which prophecy gave birth, and all were reasoning inwardly, as Luke says, whether haply John were He. The time, said our Lord, is fulfilled, when He began His public ministry. Prophecy had long proclaimed the place, the time, the characteristic marks, the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.

It is a false and unworthy maxim that prophecies in general, especially before they are fulfilled, are no other than riddles. For this puts the world and the church on the same ground of darkness and unbelief. The Lord on the contrary treats it as the privilege. His disciples to know as friends what the slave vows not, even all things which He heard from His father; and the Spirit, when come, was to report to them the things to come. So the apostle Paul communicates to comparatively young believers is Thessalonica the correction of their mistake as to the dead saints, and convicts as error the alarm e there were infusing into the living saints (1 Thess. 4., 2 Thess. 2.). Again the Apostle Peter appeals to the faithful as knowing beforehand what God had revealed, even to the eternal things, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3.). As if to cut off anticipatively the bishop's discouragement, the Holy Spirit pronounce, in the first and the last chapters of that deepest of all prophecies, a special blessing on reading, hearing, and keeping the things written in it: a nugatory thing, if they consist of no other than riddles for men to guess at.

The truth is that the same Spirit Who alone enables us to understand the rest of scripture gives intelligent in the prophecies. Past, present, and future, are alike open to Him Who, as only He has told us of be first things when man did not exist to see or ear, so He has spoken up to the last, and especially of His own glory yet to have its triumphant and blissful display in the universe. What more worthy of God, what more cheering and elevating to His children! The consequence for the bishop and all of his way of thinking is a barren blank, instead of the bright anticipation of the fair and fruitful scene the Lord will establish according to the word for His own great Name. The unbelief of a believer has of course its limits; but it is a darkening principle just so far as it works; and this is as plain in the case before us as anywhere else.

Section 5 is a summary of Archer's view, which is wrong and defective in important respects. In the first place the bishop undertakes to show the universal error which runs through his whole writing; secondly, the chief paradoxes involved; thirdly, its consequents improbable; and, lastly, such fair, safe orthodox constructions, as may be warrantably admitted of that dark passage of Scripture, the misprision [i. e. misapprehension] whereof is guilty of this controversy" (section 6).

Let us only now notice briefly section 7, in which the literal construction put on the prophecies is regarded as the great strain of error. Two passages are cited as instances, Zech. 2:12, 10 [a singular mode of citing], and Isa. 65:9, 10. Instead of seeing a future condition of glory for Judah and Jerusalem on earth, the bishop contends for no more than the past Babylonish restoration, and under that figure the comfortable condition of the church under the gospel.

Now is either of these a tolerable interpretation of either scripture? How does the context decide? "For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand over them, and they shall be a spoil to those that served them; and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah. And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And Jehovah shall inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and shall yet choose Jerusalem again" &c. It must be remembered that the main body which returned from captivity had gone up long before under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Is it credible that Zechariah's prediction was fulfilled in the little company that accompanied Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes? Certainly neither answers to the prophecy. They were both after the captivity, an earnest only of what is promised. But here it is to be "after the glory." So, in Psa. 102:16, His appearing in His glory goes with His building up Zion; and thus it is, as the verse preceding says, that the nations shall fear His name and all the kings of the earth His glory. It would be the grossest exaggeration to pretend that anything like the psalm or the prophecy was fulfilled in the returned remnant.

Are these words accomplished in the church? Why, the essence of our calling is in contrast with it all. For us Christ is received up in glory. Here He was rejected even to the death of the cross, and is now glorified on high. Our life is hid with Christ in God; and when He shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory. Meanwhile the fidelity of the Christian and of the church is in sharing His rejection on earth with Him. The worldly-minded were the first we read of who ignored and forsook this true place here below, to which we are called in contrast with Israel

of old and by-and-by. “Already are ye filled, already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us; yea and I would that ye did reign that we also might reign with you.” It was a mistaking of and a departure from Christ's mind. “For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and to men” (1 Cor. 4.). But the place promised to Israel is power over the nations which spoiled them. In this way, as in others, will Jehovah prove how dear they are to Him in the day when He shakes His hand over the Gentiles. Never since the Babylonish captivity has this been true either of the Jews or of their Gentile masters; but it will assuredly be when their heart turns to Him Whom they slew. Then shall Zion sing, and Jehovah dwell in their midst, and many nations join themselves to Jehovah; but in Zion will be His earthly seat and center, when He is risen out of His holy habitation, and all flesh must hush before Jehovah.

Again, how baseless is the traditional prejudice as to Isa. 65:9, 10! No Christian doubts, that the Jews' rejection of their Messiah (as in Isa. 49-53.) has brought a fresh scattering on themselves, in addition to the penalty of their old idolatry. On that, during the fall of the disobedient and gainsaying people, God is found of the Gentiles who sought Him not, according to Isa. 65:1, 2. But as plain as is Jehovah's judgment of the wicked among Israel in vers. 3-7, so is His mercy to an elect remnant of that people in the verses that follow; and both in a day of executed judgments, which usher in a season of blessedness for the earth and all creatures on it, in a way beyond all example since sin entered the world. Hence we hear of the new heavens and a new earth—at least in an incipient sense, the pledge of the absolute truth which follows the judgment of the dead (Rev. 21). But what has all this to do with the comfortable condition of the church under the gospel, any more than with the returned remnant in Ezra's day or any other's of old? Jehovah coming in fire, and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire, is as different as can be from the Holy Spirit coming in power from on high, and tongues parting asunder as of fire sitting upon each. So differs the future gathering of all nations and tongues to see His glory, from the work of grace in now gathering out of them a people for His name wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all.

To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 186

The Revelation As God Gave It: 2

Before examining the alleged paradoxes and improbable consequents of taking the millennial reign literally, and putting to the test Bishop H.'s “fair, safe, and orthodox constructions,” let us take a general survey of scriptural truth.

Besides life and incorruption brought to light through the gospel, two great subjects are prominent in the written word, the kingdom of God, and the church of God: the latter, which, established in N. T. times, closes (as far as itself is concerned) all distinction of Jews and Gentiles, and hence gives a mysterious form to the kingdom (Matt. 13.) when concurrent with it; and the former, which was the central fact of the Old T., as it will be displayed in power and glory, after the Lord's appearing to judge the living and dead (2 Tim. 4:1).

Theology has confounded these two totally different matters to the incalculable injury of revealed truth; and so hindered both the Lord's glory and the blessing of souls. Hence the importance of bringing to a clear issue a question of the greatest gravity for all that hold the doctrine of Christ, maintain the foundations intact, and desire sure growth in the truth. The author put to the test is inferior to none in godliness, acquirements, and general reliability; and if he acquiesced in prevalent views, it was with singular freedom from personal fads.

There is another truth overlooked in its capital importance, the real root of all failure in spiritual intelligence. Neither Israel nor even the church is the prime object of God, but His glory in Christ. Every Christian ought to feel this when presented seriously to him; but in practice, nay in doctrine also, it is apt to be obscured and forgotten to the mind's inevitable darkening. Yet what can be more certain? All His counsels, all His ways, center in Christ, as He alone is personally and absolutely worthy, the One in Whom His soul delighted, Who emptied and humbled Himself to the uttermost to glorify Him in a world of evil, in order that He might righteously and in love give effect to His grace and display His glory, even before the eternal rest, when nothing but good abides, and all evil is done away in solemn endless judgment, and God is all in all.

Christ, then, the Son, the Word made flesh, is the One Who alone explains all revelation, as He alone is the accomplisher and accomplishment of all divine purpose, in Whom His nature and character, His gracious designs, and His righteous ways, find their moral justification in His sight and their manifest glorification before the universe. Incarnation gives us His person glorifying His Father obediently in the midst of the old creation. His infinite work on the cross was the basis of redemption; His resurrection and ascension were God's placing Him at His right hand, as head of the new creation. But as yet the new creation applies solely here below to those that are in Christ, who have also the Holy Spirit given them, seal of their acceptance and earnest of the coming inheritance; for we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. But as He is head of the body, the church, even so are we His members, baptized by One Spirit into one body, God's habitation also by the Spirit. And this is what God is doing while Christ is glorified on high-calling out and gathering together His sons and heirs, who therefore await Christ's coming as their heavenly hope, and who love His appearing which will put down every evil and establish God's kingdom

indisputably in power and glory to the joy of all the earth.

Even this implies Christ's various glory; and the Christian who can see no more in the written word than the church's blessedness in Him falls into an error akin to the Israelite who left room only for Jehovah's association with the chosen nation. The effect of the error is even worse for the Christian than the Jew. For the latter (however inexcusable in his unbelief of Jesus) is quite right in looking for the restoration of the people, Judah and Ephraim no longer alienated but united in their land, under Messiah's reign and the new covenant; and a kingdom therefore, not figurative but proper though spiritual also and everlasting while the earth endures. Then too the Gentiles, however blessed, are subordinate and willingly own the first dominion given by Jehovah to the daughter of Zion; and all the earth sings praises to Him that judges the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. The Christian who tortures the prophets by hearing only of a spiritual Israel, and makes Zion and Jerusalem, Judah and Ephraim, to be nothing but the church, loses the sense of his own distinctively heavenly privileges as made known in the N. T., and defrauds the nation of their grand and peculiar hopes, in the incomparable mercy of God (faithful in spite of their unfaithfulness), but ere long to be the blessed and beloved of Jehovah at the feet of their once crucified but then adored Messiah, never more to be rooted out of the land.

Does this seem marvelous in men's eyes? The real marvel is that any who heed the word of God can be ignorant of it. Isaiah, to take the first in order and the richest of all the O.T prophets, overflows with this hope for Israel from his earliest chapter to his latest. So chap. 1., after laying bare the sins of the people and their reduction to a little remnant, declares that Jehovah will deal with His adversaries, purge away the dross of His people, and restore their judges as at the first and their counselors as at the beginning. Has this ever been verified for the returned remnant? As none can say so with truth, it is equally clear that it is wholly distinct from the blessings of the church or the gospel, which were not introduced as Israel's will be by a downpour of judgments.

Isa. 2 is just as clear for Israel by-and-by, as distinct from what the bishop calls “the evangelical church.” For us Christ is the heavenly center, and the gospel goes forth to all nations. Is it only Popery that falsely claims an earthly center for all the nations to flow to its spurious Zion, whence goes forth the canon-law, not the gospel? But whether it be Protestant confusion or Papal pretension, the word of the Lord in Matt. 24. is the disproof of both; inasmuch as He sets the world's state till He come again in evident contrast with the prophet's picture of universal peace after His world-kingdom is come, as predicted in Rev. 11:15, 17, and elsewhere.

Equally plain is Isa. 4. that the Lord will not wash away the filth of Zion or the blood of Jerusalem, save “by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning,” in contradistinction from the grace of God which has now appeared presenting salvation to all, founded on the characteristically different starting point of Christ bearing the divine judgment of sin on the cross, not the day of Jehovah in the valley of decision for all the nations, Then and thus only will deliverance come for the ancient people of God, as indeed for all nations and the earth. The gospel and the church are alike based on the atoning death of Christ, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven, whence He sent forth not judgments but the Spirit of grace, as both gospel and church are its fruit and witness. The contrast is no less certain than momentous; and the confusion of theology most mischievous.

Thus might we pass through the fertile field of prophecy, with no other result than the fuller confirmation of the all-important distinction already traced. For scripture is harmonious and cannot

be broken. Ascertain the mind of God in a single authority of His word, and all else must surely be consistent and will corroborate it; as on the other hand, when an error is assumed, every witness cited will be found to expose it, as we have seen in the bishop's misuse of Zech. 2. and Isa. 65. Nor this only; for the positive truth shines out, that the displayed kingdom of Jehovah is the main testimony on which the O. T. prophets converge; and all tell more or less of the stupendous judgments which usher it in, when Israel shall take them captive whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors (Isa. 14.). “And it shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah will punish the hosts of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. And they shall be brought together, an assemblage of prisoners for the pit, and shall be shut up in prison, and after many days shall they be visited. And the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients [shall be] glory (24).” This (and it is but a sample, however brilliant, of those living oracles) speaks of a state of things different wholly from either the post-exilic Jews, or “the evangelical church.” Further, it is not at all what scripture shows of the church glorified in heaven, any more than on earth sharing Christ's rejection and suffering. It is precisely and exclusively, what the prophet professes it to be, the Jewish people no longer a prey to evil and enemies, but brought, through terrific judgments on the wicked among themselves and all nations, to trust in Jehovah forever, and to acknowledge Him Whom they erst despised as their king coming with power and glory in Jehovah's name, the Righteous Servant in Whose hand Jehovah's pleasure shall prosper.

The apostle in Rom. 11. particularly warns believers now against that very snare into which theology has fallen. “Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then God's goodness and severity: toward them that fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in [his] goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off... For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that obdurateness in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins” (vers. 20-27). Can any language be plainer or more solemn for all who refuse the siren voice of tradition and cleave only to God's word? Can any saint venture to say that the Gentile profession continued in God's goodness, more than the Jewish or natural branches of the olive tree? What mean Popery, superstition, infidelity, worldliness of every kind, within Christendom? and even believers playing fast and loose with these horrible evils, as if the ever present Holy Ghost tolerated them? Yet the inevitable sentence is, “Thou also shalt be cut off": no promise of restoration, but the positive assurance of excision. The judgment of Christendom is sure, and the moral signs of its approach manifest. It is a fond “conceit” that its end on earth will be spiritual beauty and glory, enlargement universally, or the overthrow of its enemies. Babylon will be judged finally and unsparingly; Jerusalem will be restored to such blessing and glory as it never had under David or Solomon, to such as only the One greater than either can and will effect. Of this glorious consummation the prophets sing in full chorus.

Ours is quite another destiny. The body of Christ on earth, as united to our Head in heaven, we shall be His bride, the heavenly Eve of the Last Adam. King is His relation to Israel, as He will be of all the nations. Never is He so spoken of in relation to the Christian or the church: we are one with Him, and shall reign with Him. Hence He is said to be given as Head to the church over all

things. The traditional confusion, of which this pious bishop was the exponent, as many others are to-day, loses sight of our peculiar relationship, its present privileges and future hopes; as it denies to Israel its distinctive and pledged promises, is a deep wound to God's predictions, and descends for the church from heaven to earth. And what havoc and perversion for God's word, Old and New!

Chapter 187

The Revelation As God Gave It: 3

UNDOUBTEDLY there are moral principles which always apply, whatever be the difference of dispensation, as truth and righteousness, love and obedience. At no time can there be license to indulge in lust, dishonesty, lying, or violence. Nor can there ever be indifference to the true God or His revealed will without sin. But as promise formed the soul and enlightened the path of the patriarchs, so the law bound Israel in due time; and now the gospel and the church are characteristic of those called of God since the appearing of Christ. The reception of the Lord into heavenly glory and the consequent mission of the Holy Spirit give rise to a new state of things distinct from all that has ever been and from what is to follow our Lord's return, when seasons of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. For this is He fore-appointed, though heaven must receive Him till times of restitution of all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began. Pentecost, in some respects more wonderful, could not accomplish those seasons and times; for as its peculiar blessing is while Christ is received on high, so they can only be when He comes and takes the earth in hand according to prophecy. The work now proceeding is as unprecedented as the revelation of its special truth; so the apostle Paul insists often and expressly. “According to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and through prophetic scriptures (according to the commandment of the eternal God) is made known unto all the nations for obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25, 26). “God's wisdom in a mystery, that which hath been hidden, which God ordained before the ages to our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). “The mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; [to wit] that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:4-6). “The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations; but now hath it been manifested to his saints” (Col. 1:26).

All this goes far beyond the predictions of the O. T., though these leave room for and justify Jehovah's hiding His face from Israel, and calling in of Gentiles meanwhile. But the N. T. furnishes the “prophetic writings” referred to, and the apostle treats it as his stewardship to let us know the new glory of Christ as Head over all the universe, and the church (wherein Jewish and Gentile conditions are alike blotted out) united to Him as His body, the Holy Spirit being the earnest of that universal inheritance. God did not reveal this unearthly glory of Christ on high while He was held out as the hope of Israel to reign in Zion; still less did He reveal that new body the church wherein He breaks down all distinctions, while He was in the O.T insisting on the great superiority of Israel over all other nations. The cross canceled all such differences. Both Jew and Gentile were alike enemies of the Lord, in Whose death of shame but of infinite efficacy the middle wall of partition was taken down; and He risen and ascended becomes the Head of the church wherein both, if believers, are alike members, His body while on earth but for the heavens. Through Him we both have the access by one Spirit unto the Father, as both are also builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit. In heaven and for heaven earthly distinctions are null.

It is quite otherwise when the Lord assumes and enforces His earthly rights, as He will when He appears in glory. Then must be got ready to receive Him the earthly people, as well as the nations. But revelation is explicit that this will not be without the execution of appalling judgments, of which the O. T. prophets are not more full than the great prophecy of the N. T. Both give unmistakable testimony that divine judgments on the guilty earth (as the Revelation adds a guiltier Christendom) precede the incoming of His manifested kingdom. People may not understand details; symbols are not to be read offhand; and above all the confusion of what God is doing now with “the age” and “the world to come,” as we hear in Hebrews, makes it impossible, so long as this exists, to be clear as to either things present or things future. For grace is now reigning through righteousness; whereas righteousness will then reign over the earth, as it has never done, before the eternal state when, all evil removed by judgment, righteousness shall dwell in holiness, peace, and love, inviolable in the heavens and on the earth throughout the day that has no end.

Our Lord Himself in His use of the prophets gives us striking help for their right application. Thus when, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He reads from Isaiah our chap. 61:1, 2, He closed the roll in the middle of a sentence after the words “to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” For this He was come, not to consume the wicked, but to save sinners. When He appears again, “the day of vengeance of our God” must take its course, in order to establish His kingdom here below, in total contrast with the grace of the gospel and the mission of the church as now.

So the Spirit of God through Matthew and John cites Zech. 9:9, omitting all that bears on His judicial dominion of the future, and bearing witness only to His lowly presentation of Himself as the true Messiah. And the reader may find illustrations of the principle elsewhere.

In the Epistles the same thing occurs. Thus in Rom. 3, the apostle quotes from Psa. 53 and Isa. 59, in order to prove that the Jews are condemned by their own inspired oracles as utterly as they condemned the heathen. There the apostle stops, and meets their demonstrated ruin by proclaiming propitiation through faith in the blood of Jesus for both Jew and Gentile. It is the gospel now. But the prophet, like the psalmist, goes on to His return and the display of His kingdom and the restoration of Israel. Both are true; yet they are not the same, but wholly different states: one following the grace of the first advent; the other awaiting the judgment of the quick when the Lord returns to reign over Israel and the earth. Those who confuse things so different have only to blame themselves and their guides, if they lose a great deal of both and see nothing as clearly as they might but for the oversight that misleads them. In that day no corrupters, no false teachers or prophets, nor antichrists, can be—not even a crooked or perverse generation, nor any likeness to the days of Noah or those of Lot, though at the end Satan is let loose to sift all whose obedience was feigned, not being born of God.

What can be plainer than that the Lord contemplates but a “little flock” now, whilst the prophet speaks of Israel as a whole righteous in that day, and all nations as blessed? And no wonder; when they all flow to the common center where the mountain of Jehovah's house is established, to be taught of His ways and to walk in His paths. But never will this be, till there be a day of Jehovah of hosts on all that is proud, haughty, and lifted up; never, till the idols pass away to the moles and to the bats; never, till from before His terror and from the glory of His majesty man is brought low, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day (Isa. 2). For then, and not before shall the Branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land be excellent and comely for those that

are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem (Isa. 4). It is holiness universally there, and universally in profession at least among all the nations. How different from the gospel a witness only unto all, and an eclectic gathering of saints for heavenly glory, while evil men and impostors wax worse and worse from apostolic days, holding a form of godliness but denying its power, till the apostasy and the man of sin bring down overwhelming judgment inflicted by the personal appearing of the Lord Jesus!

Again, the Lord warned the disciples, while having peace in Him, of tribulation as their portion in the world (John 16); and so the apostles among the Gentiles (Acts 14). In the days of the kingdom on the contrary shall the righteous flourish, instead of suffering persecution, and abundance of peace be till the moon be no more. How could it be otherwise when the Lord shall sit on His own throne (Rev. 3:21), and have dominion not only in Zion but also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth, when all kings fall down before Him, all nations serve Him (Psa. 72)?

Nor is it only that the bulk of N. T. exhortation to the saints and a vast deal of the O.T. will then cease to apply, because of so great a change as the overthrow of Satan, when Christ takes the reins as Messiah and Son of Man in power and glory over the earth, but the principle of dealing is wholly opposed. Now for instance, while the kingdom is a mystery, the Lord forbids His servants to root out the tares sown by the enemy among the wheat. Grace reigns here also, and the righteous suffer, and the wicked speak and act proudly. But in the end of the age (harvest time), all is to be reversed: the reaping angels shall at His word gather Out of His kingdom all offenses or pitfalls, and those that practice lawlessness for judgment. Then will the magnificent promises of blessing and glory be fulfilled on the earth, as the glorious purpose of God for the heavens also, when Christ is manifest as the Head over all things to the church His body, alike the King and the Priest, the true Melchizedek, as He is in His person also the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

Thus the question is, not whether the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah's glory (which all believers, intelligently or not, do indeed expect longingly), but how such a blessed consummation is to be achieved. The prediction in substance occurs in Num. 14:21, Isa. 11:9, and Hab. 2:14; and in all it is associated with the execution of divine judgments, in no case (as has been hastily and erroneously assumed) by the preaching of the gospel, the action of the church, or the dealings of providence ordinary or extraordinary. It is an honor reserved for the Lord Jesus; and He alone is worthy. No one doubts that the Holy Spirit will he afresh poured out, the latter rain, for the blessing of that day. But as it is certain that favor shown to the wicked, as now in the gospel, will not teach him righteousness as it does us that believe (Titus 2:11, 12), so we are assured by the prophet (Isa. 26:9, 10) that, when Jehovah's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. And as the Son is now revealed full of grace and truth, as every Christian owns in Jesus our Lord; so hath the Father given Him all judgment, whether over quick or dead, that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The believer needs no such action (for we already honor the Son in the higher and deeper way of faith), and so has eternal life in Him, and comes not into judgment, having passed out of death into life already. But His judgment awaits not only all the dead destined to that final judgment, but those living when He introduces His world-kingdom.

And this falls in perfectly with a scripture already cited from a crowd of others (Acts 3), which is conclusive that God will send Jesus from heaven, where He now is (white the gospel and the church are in operation here below), to bring in seasons of refreshing and times of restoring all things according to the prophets.

Here again we may exult as believers in the expectation which scripture forms, so essentially superior to human tradition. Those who have embraced the latter prophesy smooth things for the church and look for the reign of the gospel; and the earth's blessedness as the fruit of their own more and more triumphant labors, &c. We believe the solemn warnings of the N. T. as well as the O. T. prophets—, and testify that scripture gives no warrant for any such self-exalting hopes from church, or gospel, or providence, for the world. Scripture on the contrary sets forth from the early days ruin and departure, which even apostolic energy only stayed in measure; and it uniformly and clearly and unmistakably assures that, whatever grace may effect by the word and Spirit, for the blessing of souls called to heaven, the mystery of lawlessness (which already wrought from apostolic days of Christianity) will ripen and rise into the open rebellion or the lawless one, only to he destroyed by the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Thus we look for Christ, not only as our heavenly hope but for the adequate execution of judgment on evil and the wicked, and as the revealed introduction of the earth's predicted blessing in power, when the church is glorified on high and Israel, repentant and believing, shall lead all the nations in the praise of their Lord and their God, oven Jehovah Jesus.

Chapter 188

The Revelation As God Gave It: 4

It is evident then that the grand defect of theology, and even for pious souls otherwise sound in the faith, is the failure to see the purpose of God for His glory in Christ: a purpose for administration of the fullness of the times. And this is, as the apostle explains, to head or sum up the universe in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him in Whom we also were given inheritance, being fore-ordained according to purpose of Him that works the whole according to the counsel of His will.

The epoch is not in the present, any more than in the past; nor is it the unchanging eternity, when Christ will have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. Its essential character is Christ administering the universe as the glorified Man, and the church glorified with Him and sharing that vast inheritance, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The eternal state neither admits of “administration,” such as is here shown to be God's purpose; nor does it consist with “the fullness of the seasons,” which will then have passed away instead of being in accomplishment. Eternity is not the kingdom in which the risen Man must reign, till He shall have put all the enemies under His feet, death as last enemy being brought to naught. In eternity the Son, instead of being thus displayed at the head of all and bringing to naught all rule and all authority and power, shall Himself be in subjection to the Father that subjected all things to Him.

On the other hand that administration is in no sense going on now, though Christ personally is both risen and exalted as head over all things to the church which is His body. By His death there is, as all must admit (John 11:52), a gathering together into one of the children of God that were scattered abroad; a baptizing, as Paul adds, into one body, in the power of one Spirit, of all believers whether Jews or Greeks. For they are His co-heirs; and when He shall be manifested, then shall they also be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3:4). Meanwhile we suffer with Him (a state but like His on earth, wholly opposed to that coming administration), that we may be also glorified together. Faithful is the saying; for if we died with Him, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together. But our present state is in contrast with our hope, yet is there fellowship with Christ in both.

Grace is now gathering into union with the Head the members of His body; and the Holy Spirit is in our hearts earnest of the future inheritance, as well as unction and seal. But as the members are not yet complete, so Christ is still on the Father's throne. When the administration of the fullness of the seasons is come, He will not only receive His own throne, but give us to sit with Him there. Then it will be God not taking out of mankind a people for His name, a work distinctively of the elect, but gathering “all things” under Christ's headship. The things in heaven and the things on earth are in no way gathered together or summed up in Him now: this is the expression of God's purpose to put the universe under Christ as head over all, which only gross ignorance can confound with His headship of His body. It is the inheritance of Him Who is Heir of all things, as Heb. 1 says, and Reconciler of all things whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens, as says Col. 1. But this very passage distinguishes our reconciliation (who once were

alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works) as already effected, from that which awaits all the creation.

So does Rom. 8 show that we have now the Spirit of adoption (ver. 15), not only that we may cry Abba, Father, but while we groan, ourselves delivered (ver. 2), our bodies not yet, any more than creation around, as we await adoption, the redemption of our body (ver. 23). For the coming glory is to be revealed to usward in that day. And the revelation of the sons of God, which hinges on that of Christ, is the signal for the deliverance of creation itself also from the bondage of corruption (vers. 18-21).

No doubt the truth has suffered from its professing friends who have entered feebly, faultily, or at least imperfectly, into this immense and glorious purpose of God, and dwelt most if not altogether on its least and lowest part, the happy and holy change that awaits the earth, when Christ and the glorified reign over it. They have exposed their testimony to the taunts of those that object to the view of the glorified Christ coming personally and administering “a monarchical state of a kingdom here on earth” visibly in power and glory. To this Bishop Hall, as the first paradox § 8, opposes the words, My kingdom is not of this world (John 18). But it is written again (Rev. 11:15), “The kingdom of the world is become [that] of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” This certainly is not the present state of things, nor is it eternity, but the kingdom which He is to receive from Him Who is God and Father, and will deliver up to Him at the end for that unchanging and everlasting state. It is not the supremacy of God; nor yet a question of His peace ruling or arbitrating in the heart; any more than of His headship of the church. It is, what even the penitent robber anticipated, Christ coming in His kingdom, when the glorified shall reign with Him, and His enemies, according to the parable, be slain before Him. This is the coming of His world-kingdom, which theology ignores, and its votaries think “very strange news.” If Fathers and Doctors of Christendom dropt it (some few in the third century, most since then), none ought to be surprised who remembers the apostolic warnings. The apostles themselves bear clear and ample testimony to Christ's coming and kingdom; as did the holy prophets since the world began. But how could even saints testify to a truth which condemned their abandonment of suffering with Christ and seeking to rule the world, which really means the world ruling them? Such a revolution the fourth century saw an accomplished fact; as the worldliness of previous centuries, even before the apostles passed away, paved the way for it.

What can be plainer than Peter's own words in that very context of Acts 3, the use of which so astonished the good prelate “Repent ye therefore,” he preached to the Jews, “and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins; so that seasons of refreshing may come from the Lord's presence, and He may send Jesus Christ that hath been fore-appointed for you, Whom heaven must receive till times of restoration of all things, whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began” (vers. 19-21). How evident that the repentance of the Jew, in the mind of the inspired apostle, must precede the mission of the Lord from heaven to introduce times of universal restoration, according to the prophets! These times coalesce with the administration of which we have heard in Eph. 1; only, as is Paul's wont, in a still grander and more comprehensive form. And how absurd to confound this period of universal blessedness for heaven and earth with “the end,” when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom! It is neither more nor less than Christendom's unbelief as to the kingdom spoken of here and elsewhere. These Doctors do not know that the saints shall judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2); still less that we shall judge angels (ver. 3). They do not really believe

in Christ's administering the universe at a period which is after the gospel and the church as now on earth, and before the eternal state, when there shall be no such thing as the world-kingdom of Christ, still less Israel, the nations, or kings.

Hence the importance of understanding Rev. 21:1-8, the fullest description of the eternal state in the scriptures; with which may be compared 1 Cor. 15:24 and 28, and 2 Peter 3:12. Nothing temporal is found in any of these passages. What has led many into error, and some of them able men and believers, is that they regarded Rev. 21:9-27, 22:1-5, as continuing to tell us of eternity. But it is demonstrable that this is not so. In fact the first eight verses of chap. 21. alone give that information, as the sequel of the successive events in Rev. 19; 20 Whereas in Rev. 21:9, &c., we are taken back by a marked break in the vision, when one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came and talked with John for an important retrospective purpose here, as was done before in Rev. 17:1, et seqq. In the latter case it was Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot; in the former, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. They have the analogy of most striking contrasts: the corrupt and corrupting city Babylon; and the holy city new Jerusalem. And, as I am here alleging, they both go back to describe objects of the deepest moment, which had been noticed historically before now but called for a full description later, that we might know their true character, and their relationships: the one to “the beast” and the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her; the other to the Lamb, and the kings of the earth who bring their glory unto it, as the nations do when they walk by her light which excludes all uncleanness, and lying, and abomination.

No wonder that the power of the Pentecostal Spirit only led the apostle to yearn for that blessed time, which is altogether distinct from the present one of the Savior's absence, as well as from the eternal state when His administration closes and God is all in all. It is high time that these things should no longer be strange news to Christian ears. Our Lord affirmed to Pilate that His kingdom is not of (bc) this world as its source. He receives it from God, and such is its character as no other is, all the rest being merely providential after He ceased to rule in Israel or Judah. Christ's kingdom is of Him immediately; and accordingly, as all may see, He assuredly did not deny in John 18 what He asked of the Father in John 17:22, 23, “that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them (i.e. the saints composing the church), even as Thou lovedst Me.” It is in vain to argue that this will be in the gospel day of believing as in ver. 21. It is on the contrary a day of knowing, when the glory, of which the Lord speaks in those two verses, is revealed with its overwhelming proofs. Thus all hangs together, whether John 17; 18, Rev. 11, or 21. It is the administration of the fullness of the seasons, also times of restoration, the universal testimony of the O.T. prophets, on which John impresses the final seal of the N. T.

It is indeed a feigned gloss of men that a single one of these scriptures speaks of Christ's judgment of the dead before the great white throne, which is represented there as taking place more than a thousand years after He comes in His kingdom. Never does God's word say or imply that Christ comes for that final judgment. It speaks generally of His judging living and dead (2 Tim. 4:1), of His being ready to judge both (1 Peter 4:5), and of the season being come when the seventh trumpet is blown (Rev. 11:18); but when details are given, the dead are shown to be judged only at “the end” when He delivers up His millennial kingdom, not when He receives it as He does to establish and administer it over the earth, and the universe indeed, when He comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The scene of the great white throne and the

judgment of the dead is long after His coming, and coincidently with it the fleeing away from His face of the earth and the heaven. Hence for this judgment His coming is out of the question: there is no earth at that solemn moment for Him to come to. The dead stand before the throne to be judged severally according to their works; but it is not His coming here, but their going before His throne, when the earth and the heaven flee which now are, and no place is found for them. This therefore is in no true sense His coming, any more than is a saint's departure at any time to be with Christ; though both are so called in that imaginary view which has no being but in theological tradition. Yet we are assured that this Jesus that was received up into heaven shall so come in the manner in which He was beheld going into heaven. Hence the Revelation puts the Lord's issuing for the judgment of the quick in chap. 19:11 et seqq.; then His reign of peace for a thousand years and of the glorified with Him over the earth in chap. 20.; and (after a brief manifestation of man deceived once more and for the last time by Satan, which is not without special and profound moral value) the judgment of the dead when the heavens and earth that are now are dissolved (2 Peter 3, Rev. 20), followed by the new heaven and new earth for eternity (Rev. 21:1-8). It is well that pious men do not attempt a formal confutation of all this; for God's word is too strong alike for their light touches or their heaviest threats.

The Revelation As God Gave It: 5

THE second paradox is a mistake. The future kingdom of Christ does not exclude kings as scripture shows.

The third is due to confusion on all sides from lack of subjection to the truth that the believer does not come into judgment, i.e., the eternal judgment at the end. There accordingly in Rev. 20:11-15, we find none but the dead; and these dead, as the context proves, are exclusively the wicked. The blessed and holy had been raised long before. Even in O. T. times this truth ought to have been and was known. See Psa. 143:2: “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” If even a saint, God's servant, came into His judgment, he could not be cleared: it would annul the force of judgment or deny the manifold faults of a saint. God will do neither. His judgment will take full effect on all that enter there. How then are any saved? “By grace have ye been saved through faith,” because Christ bore their judgment, which therefore they shall not enter. If they did, they could not be justified; whereas they are already in this life justified by faith. All teaching is false which supposes that “both saints and sinners shall be judged.” Our Lord Himself in John 5 expressly lays down on the contrary that the believer, the saint, does not come into judgment, but has even now eternal life, which is incompatible with it, and has passed from death into life. Such is the way of divine grace with all believers. They already honor God's Son by believing God's testimony to Him. Those who now dishonor His word and His Son by their unbelief cannot escape the judgment by-and-by and must honor the Son of man Who judges them. For in this capacity it will be. They disputed His divine glory. They denied His Sonship in the supreme sense. They despised or derided eternal life, His giving it or their need of it. As they dishonored Him now, in contrast with all who bowed to His name in faith, He will raise and judge them at the end. For all must honor the Son. Happy they that do so by now believing in Him, receiving life, and doing the good that follows that divine nature; most miserable those that reject God's word and Son, and so have not life but only worthless ways, and therefore must be judged and thus honor Him perforce in that day.

It is true however that Matt. 25:31-46 describes a scene wholly distinct from the close of Rev. 20. For what can differ more than the time, and the persons concerned? In that Gospel it is expressly the Son of man when He shall come in His glory to the earth whence He went to heaven. Rev. 20 on the contrary is when His coming cannot be, because heaven and earth are fled and passed as they now are. And those gathered before Him in the Gospel are all the nations, the quick and none but the quick; and not all of them, for the Jews are shown already dealt with in Matt. 24:1-31, with the comparisons to 41; after which the judgment of Christendom in the three great intervening parables of the household servants, the ten virgins, and the servants trading with the Lord's goods, down to chap. 25:30. It is therefore strictly the King's dealing with all the living nations or the Gentiles of that day, according to the way they treated His brethren who will preach to them the gospel of the kingdom before He comes and takes the throne of His glory over the earth. The sheep are the believing Gentiles in that day who did good to the preachers; as the goats are the Gentiles then who were utterly careless or cruel to His brethren through unbelief of the coming

King. In Rev. 20:11 to the end, it is expressly the dead who are judged for their works, with not one living man among them.

Accordingly scripture never speaks of “a general judgment,” and still less of an indiscriminate resurrection. 2 Cor. 5:10 does speak of manifestation before Christ's Bema (judgment-seat) for all without exception; but in no way is it insinuated that it will be at one time, still less all together. Hence the care of the Holy Spirit to say that we, the whole of us, are to be manifested. So saints will be every one before Him, and their fidelity or failure owned. We shall know as we are known. A great loss it would be, if there were no such manifestation for them; and position in the kingdom will be ruled accordingly. But it is not “judgment,” for into this no believer comes, as the Lord declares and other scriptures confirm, if this were needed, which God forbid. But for the wicked, it will be judgment when they are manifested in their season before Him; for they have nothing but bad works without the Savior and without life. And therefore we hear of a resurrection of judgment: two resurrections, not merely distinct, but in the strongest possible contrast of character. How profound the error that ignores their opposition and lumps them in one!

The fourth paradox rightly objects to a threefold coming of Christ. Scripture speaks of but two: the first, as to which all Christians agree; the second, when He comes in His kingdom, having received the saints to Himself as His prefatory act, that they may reign with Him. The notion that He will come to judge all at the end is a mere blunder of humanized theology, refuted by scripture. He will assuredly judge the dead at the end, the righteous having long previously been changed to reign with Him and judge the world in a kingly but glorious way, as well as evermore reigning in life by Him, when the kingdom is given up. But the dead stand before the throne, wherever it be, for their judgment, and therefore go to Him for this, instead of His coming when heaven and earth are no more, which scripture does not say but excludes. There is no double resurrection therefore, as in the fifth paradox, but a6 the apostle testified, and even orthodox Jews allowed, a resurrection of dead persons, both of just and unjust. These, we have seen from scripture are contrasted not more in time than in character. Judgment is given to the risen saints; the raised Unjust are to be judged by the Lord Jesus. Nor is there the least ground for limiting the first resurrection to martyrs. Such martyrs as might have been thought too late are raised to join the mass of saints already raised at Christ's coming, so that all may share the reign for the thousand years.

Scripture gives no countenance to the sixth paradox of a threefold ascension to heaven.

Chapter 190

The Revelation As God Gave It: 6

The next half dozen of the Bishop's paradoxes need not detain us long, though like their predecessors they have often done duty for many who since his day to our own have opposed the premillennial advent of Christ.

Of these the first (or seventh in the entire series) is his objection to the restoration of Israel, i.e., of the ten lost tribes. Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:8, he cites as the apostle's interpretation, delivering us all from slavery to syllables. Jerusalem is built up, said the witty prelate, not in the soil of Jebus, but in the hearts of believers. The answer is simple, clear, and sure. Impossible that the inspired apostle could contradict himself. The Bishop cites Rom. 2 and 9. in opposition to Rom. 11:25, 26; which last beyond legitimate dispute declares that “all Israel shall be saved, after the fullness (or complement) of the Gentiles (now being called by the gospel) is come in.” To overlook the marked distinction, to identify the Gentiles now with all Israel then, is to ignore scripture, and contradict the same apostle. Rom. 2 simply insists on the worthlessness of bare name and form, and the value of reality: true now, as well as in that day. Mere fleshly descent from Israel is unavailing. Therefore are unbelievers of Israel rejected now, as by-and -by they shall perish judicially when the Deliverer turns away ungodliness from Jacob.

His eighth paradox is that the saints when glorified should, as he calls it, meddle with earthly affairs. 1 Cor. 6: 2, 3, anticipates and rebukes this unbelief. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life”? Our Lord had already taught so in Matt. 19:28; and so we read in Rev. 2:26, 27 (to say nothing of Rev. 20:4-6, however mutually consistent and confirmatory); as Dan. 7:18, 27, and Zech. 14 had taught or implied long before. “Meddling” is an unsaintly thought and word; but when a saint slips into unbelief, irreverence follows. It will be a worthy exercise of love and glory which we shall share, and the Bishop too, with Christ the Lord.

His ninth is the living saints mortal and yet sinless. But why should it seem incredible that grace is thus to keep the living saints in a day conditioned by Satan bound, the Spirit poured out on all flesh, and the Lord Jesus reigning in power and glory? Instead of doubts, cavils, or fancies, it were better to weigh such scriptures as Isa. 60, 61, 62, and especially 65. where one at a hundred years is but an infant of days, and only dies then under an inflicted curse. This is not heaven surely, but the earth under the Lord's reign as never yet it has been. It is amazing that any believer should fall short of so blessed an outlook. Let the reader compare Isa. 11:12, 13; 14:1; 19:24, 25; 27:12, 13; Jer. 17; 18 30:3-9; 31:1-9, 31-40; 33:14-26. For Ezekiel chaps. 35., 36. may suffice. The Minor Prophets are plain enough.

The tenth is the fullness of temporal blessing for the thousand years of Christ's reign. Here again it is the unbelief of the plain testimony rendered by the prophets as a whole, on the assumption that we are the people, and that God has no different scheme than the gospel, unless it be its eternal results in heavenly glory. What can be a more overwhelming refutation than the apostle Peter's

discourse in Acts 3:19-21? It is the more impressive as so soon following the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit to us who wait for Christ and heavenly glory. But he presents also Christ sent from heaven on Israel's repentance to bring in the fullness of blessing on earth according to prophecy; which no Christian ought to deny or despise. Christ is the center of all blessing.

His eleventh is that after all this reign men should be suffered to grow up and defy their governors. Such is the solemn issue of human weakness and of Satan's deceitful power for all not born of God, even after seeing glory for a thousand years (Rev. 20:7-9). It is a lesson lost for all who explain away these words. Unbelief in Christ's millennial kingdom leaves a gap irreparable, and in various respects of great moment for God's glory, no matter how orthodox we be otherwise.

The twelfth is the paradox of judgment then, especially when the angel before this swore that “time” should be no more. Zeal to censure here betrays gross ignorance; for Rev. 10:6, means not the end of time, but “no more delay or lapse of time.” The mystery of God was to be finished when the seventh trumpet should sound and usher in judgment on both quick and dead. This leaves ample room for the thousand years' reign and more. The worthy Bishop did not understand the passage. There is no paradox.

His last is a supposed determination of a double hell and its place. We only know what God reveals of hell any more than of heaven. But it is undeniable, that, as in the Gospels Hades and Gehenna are not confounded, so in Revelation “the pit” or “abyss” is distinguished from “the lake of fire,” which is final, and out of which none emerges. It is therefore seen contrasted with the new heaven and the new earth, the solemn background of the everlasting state (Rev. 21:1-8) which admits of no more change.

The Revelation As God Gave It: 7

SECTION 9. need not detain us long; the strange and improbable consequents do not follow nor can be proved from scripture.

There seems some mistake as to Dr. Twiss' correspondence with Mr. Mede; for though the Works of the latter (fol. 4th ed. 1677) contain fifteen letters of the Oxford divine, not one “complete argument,” instead of twelve, have I seen against the literal millennial reign, but the utmost respect and value for the views of his Cambridge Mentor. Even had it been a fact, the question is, What saith the Scripture?

The first of Bishop Hall's “absurd” consequents is, “Thy kingdom come.” And he is right that it is the Father's kingdom, but wrong in overlooking the very next petition. For the Father's will can only be done on earth as in heaven by the. Son of man coming in His kingdom and putting down the power of evil. Hence they are duly connected, and await all things in heaven and all things on earth put under Christ, when we too share His exaltation over both as joint-heirs in glory (Eph. 1:10, 11).

Secondly, what is there strange to one who believes the scriptures, that on earth men not born again should at length break out in rebellion when Satan is let loose at the end of that glorious age? It is a fresh trial, and even the sight of glory will no more convert souls then, than the Divine Presence and its solemn judgments did the unreconciled Israelites in the 40 years of the wilderness. Men might have thought otherwise. Scripture is clear.

Thirdly, the Bishop finds it hard to believe that, after His present work in the church is completed, the Lord should come to set up His kingdom, and take heavenly and earthly administration in the way of displayed power. But this is what scripture abundantly testifies, as we have already shown. Taking His leave, he., may be left to Mr. Archer or others who add to scripture. The glorified are to reign with Christ.

Fourthly, it is a “misbecoming” consequent that a commixture of earth and heaven, risen and natural, &c., ensues. The error is in making Christ's public kingdom, either all earthly, or all heavenly, or a jumble of the two. His kingdom will have both heavenly and earthly things, but each in its own suited sphere. The glorified shall shine in the heavenly places; Israel and the nations be blessed on earth. Compare Matt. 13:41 and 43. The reign of the glorified is over, not on,” the earth. The A. and R. versions of Rev. 5:10 convey a regrettable mistake in this respect.

Fifthly, Luke 18:8 presents no difficulty to those who believe in the rapture of the saints before the day of the Lord falls on a guilty world.

Sixthly, it is strange lack of intelligence to oppose Matt. 19:28 to Matt. 20:26, the former future, the latter present. This is a real “consequent” of denying the millennial reign.

Seventhly, for the disembodied saints to leave their bliss for that reign seems to the Bishop a “main and choking objection.” What! To be raised from the dead and come with Christ to share His

reign over the world and indeed all creation? Is this “an apparent” disadvantage? The earth, small as it is in comparison of many an orb on high, has been the favored theater for manifesting God and His ways. Here man fell through Satan's wiles. Here Israel was called but departed from Jehovah. Here the Gentiles have turned world-power against God. Here the Second man glorified God and defeated the enemy. Here the Holy Spirit makes the church God's habitation, alas! now become as a great house with vessels from which a faithful man is called to purge himself. But here clearly, on the earth and in view of it above, all that God has wrought is yet to triumph at Christ's coming and in His future kingdom: man, Israel, nations, the saints, the church one with Christ, in that day of glory. No truth that the good Bishop holds is tarnished or touched; but a vast deal must be added, if we receive all that the prophets, and especially the N. T., have revealed. The solutions of Mr. A. and others, or the rejoinders, we may dismiss; but the truth is plain which many miss.

Eighthly, the children of the saints are no difficulty for either heaven or earth, any more than now. Isa. 65 has expressly solved the earthly question: in heaven there can be no doubt.

Ninthly, there are outward ordinances on earth, as scripture shows, with the immense change of our reigning with Christ in visible power and glory, the Holy Spirit poured on all flesh, and Satan absolutely restrained during the thousand years.

Tenthly, heaven is not dispeopled because by Christ the universe is reconciled to Himself—all things (not all persons), whether things on the earth or things in the heaven. The glorified will ever be at home in heaven; but they share Christ's reign over the earth for the thousand years. There they suffered with Him, and over that earth they are glorified together. Their heavenly glory has no limit, no tern). Compare John 17:22, 23, and Rev. 21:24, 26.

The eleventh seems only the fourth in other words, and a total mistake of the future condition of the kingdom.

The twelfth is just confusion. Christ comes to raise the sleeping saints and change those alive, that God may bring them with Him for His day. Pious as well as able and learned, the Bishop was not at home with such scriptures as these.

It is agreed that those who with Archer appropriate the first resurrection to martyrs only are not well advised. 1 Cor. 15, 1 Thess. 4, Rev. 4; 5; 14, wholly subvert such a restriction. Indeed so does the first clause of Rev. 20:4; as well as Rev. 17:14; 19:14. The previous aggregate of the heavenly saints were those seen already risen and seated on thrones, before the resurrection of the two classes of Apocalyptic sufferers, who are in the subsequent clauses of the verse shown to rise now in order to join those before enthroned for the reign with Christ. They all compose the blessed and holy company of the first resurrection, in contrast with the wicked raised after that reign for judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Alsted's hypothesis is in this unfounded; quite as much is the Bishop's idea that the future kingdom of Christ depends on this single scripture, rich and plain as it is, which defines its length, as properly pertaining to the Revelation to communicate. The Gospels and the Epistles do not treat of times and seasons; the book of Revelation does.

Chapter 192

The Revelation As God Gave It: 8

It is satisfactory for one who dislikes opposing a good and able dignitary that “we are now fallen upon the last part of our task.” Yet is it sad to find that such a man labors, not to learn the divine intention in Rev. 20:4, but to show that we are not, by any necessity of the case, cast upon what he calls a Double Resurrection of the body, and such a millennial reign of the saints, as is contended for by many, to put the last phrase in a decorous form.

Now if the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” never had been sent and signified by God to His servant John, every Christian is responsible to believe in two resurrections (of course of the body), wholly different in object, character, and end, as well as in time, that of “the just” preceding the other of “the unjust.” How long the interval between them falls very naturally to the province of the great N. T. book of prophecy rather than to the Gospels or Epistles. So beyond doubt is the fact. The Gospel of Mark (chap. 12:25) gives us a note beyond the more general form of the Lord's answer to the Sadducees in Matt. 22, for the Lord is represented as saying, “when they shall rise from the dead.” This is more than a resurrection “of” dead persons; it is rising “from out of them” (■κ νεκρ■ν) So His own resurrection is described (chap. 9: 9, 10) which led to questioning among the disciples what it could mean; not merely rising again, but rising from among dead men, and therefore previously to the mass.

Still more fully does the truth, so unwelcome to theologians, come out in Luke 20:34-36, where our Lord contrasts the sons of this age with those accounted worthy to obtain that age (the future millennial age), and the resurrection “from” the dead. Just so in chap. 14:14, He had shown the true time of blessed recompence to be in the resurrection (not general, as men say, but) “of the just.” There is therefore and beyond controversy a Double Resurrection; the just being raised from among the dead, while the rest of the dead, the unjust, await a later action of the Lord. Those are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection; whereas these left for a later day are only raised for their doom.

It is however in the Gospel of John that the Lord opens this out, as bound up with His divine glory and His rights as Son of Man: exactly the place most appropriate. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment” (ch. 5., R. V.). What can be plainer, more blessed, or so solemn? The Gospel hour has been going on ever since Christ spoke, at least the hour of quickening souls that believe. By-and-by will come another hour, wherein He will raise the bodies of believers, of those “that have done good;” and before it closes, the bodies of evil-doers: two resurrections, so distinct, that He characterizes the first as of life, the second as of judgment, into which, He had already laid down, the believer comes not, as he has eternal life and has passed out of death into

life. They are thus in direct and exclusive contrast. Those having eternal life now by faith are quickened by Him, the Son of God; those who do not believe on God's Son cannot escape resurrection of judgment which He will execute as Son of Man. Thus does God secure His honor from every child of man. The believer bows before, and serves Him Who is God the Son, one with the Father, is quickened now, and awaits His coming to complete it in his body, a resurrection of life; the unbeliever rejects Him now and lives in evil, but must rise to be judged by the Son of man, and honor Him then and thus, to his own endless shame and perdition.

In John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, we have exclusively the resurrection of believers; and so in chap. 11:24-26. In the Acts of the Apostles Christ's resurrection is often urged. Again, we hear in chap. 17 of the resurrection “of” the dead also, and in chap. 24:15, of a resurrection of both just and unjust, but not a word implying both together, irreconcilable as it would be with what we have seen. In Rom. 8 a principle (and fact indeed) is laid down which absolutely severs the believer now from the unbeliever: position in Christ with possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and this in ver. 11 is applied to his resurrection, its complement. So 1 Cor. 15 develops the resurrection of believers only from that of Christ; and this with the deepest interest also in 2 Cor. 4, and 5., quite excluding unbelievers. This is not the aim in recalling the bewitched Galatians to the ground of grace, whence they had fallen into law and ritualism. In Ephesians the truth is carried yet higher in chap. 1., &c., and its result even now in chap. 2:5, 6; but their state did not call for any pressure of a truth so familiar to the saints.

In Phil. 3 we have important and unmistakable evidence in chap. 3:11, where the apostle employs a word only found there, as far as scripture is concerned, giving an eclectic force to this truth. He calls it “the out-resurrection from among dead persons,” to attain which he minded not difficulty, danger, suffering by the way—nay, courted what was fellowship with Christ practically. So, in vers. 20, 21, he represents our citizenship, or commonwealth, as subsisting in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory: language differentiating our resurrection from those who shall be raised for judgment. In Colossians we read of our death and resurrection with Christ, not of the future rising for saints or for sinners; but in 1 Thess. 4, we have this and more for the saints exclusively, as allusively in chap. 5:10. The Pastoral Epistles do not give direct occasion for statement of this truth, though of course fully implied; nor yet Hebrews, save for one (chap. 6:2) as part of “the elements,” and chap. 11:35 passingly for the other; nor do the so called Catholic Epistles, though clearly involved, and all in the truest mutual consistency. For the Christian association with Christ is the key. This is lost in the cold lifeless systematic divinity of Christendom, which hears not nor speaks but of a vague universal resurrection to judgment: in painful opposition to such a clear and vital scripture as John 5, quite as much as to the famous Apocalyptic text in question; and the former is so much the more serious, as the full gospel is thus lost, and the grand testimony also to Christ's honor, as His sure words prove.

How striking it is that the Bishop silently ignores, as do his followers to our day, the first and most widely as well as deeply interesting clause of Rev. 20:4! Not a word does he say on “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them” (as in A. and R. Vv.). But this betrays fundamental ignorance of the book as a whole, and leaves out the portion of both the Old. and the N. Test. saints during that glorious period, which is an object of moment to the Holy Spirit only second to that of our Lord Himself. They had been seen in heaven ever since chap. iv.

under the symbol of the glorified elders, afterward appearing as the bride of the Lamb, and as the guests at her marriage; next, as the hosts following the Divine Warrior out of heaven, now reigning as kings and priests with Him over the earth. Need one urge how irreparable such a gap is! The object which the inspired John saw next in the vision, was “the souls of those that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God.” But again another class is, as usual, confounded with the former, “and such as worshipped not the beast neither his image, and received not the mark upon their foreheads nor upon their hands.” These are in fact the two companies of holy sufferers who are found here below, while those of the incomparably higher class were already glorified above. One of these two is described as already slain under the seals (chap. 6:9, 10); and they are told to rest until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that were about to be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled. And so these last were, when the beast and the false prophet ruled, as chap. xiii. &c. show. Now all the Apocalyptic martyrs (for such they were exclusively) are raised from the dead to join the already glorified on their following the Lord out of heaven, in time to share the millennial reign with Christ. Otherwise it might have been thought that they had lost all part in that bright time of glory; for they only bear witness and suffer, after the Old. and N. Test. saints in general had been caught up to heaven; and they do not live to enjoy Christ's blessed reign as saints living on the earth, like those described in Rev. 7 and elsewhere.

Of all this the excellent Bishop Hall was as profoundly dark as are the saints generally speaking since his day and before it till now. The more pressing is the call of love to testify the truth with all plainness of speech. His efforts to get rid of the language in detail are pitiful. 1. It is not so many souls beheaded, but the souls of those that had been beheaded. 2. The prophetic past as equivalent to the future cannot apply to the beheaded; for they are shown at this epoch to live and reign after being thus put to death. 3. It is sorrowful to hear a godly man say that “the living and reigning with Christ is either in this life, or in heaven; present, or future; in grace or in glory; in way of government, or of blessed fruition.” It only proves his bewilderment. Anything was welcome, except the plain truth of the scripture. So with 4, “the thousand years, either punctually determinate, or indeterminate.” How evasive! 5. The First Resurrection, either of the soul or body, &c. “All these, then, well put together, cannot but afford us our choice of orthodox and probable interpretations without any violence offered to the sense” !! Yes, they offer it a death by poison. “Among the rest, I shall pitch upon these two, as the most clear and free from all just exception.” And then he offers, first, the semi-political position Christendom acquired, in the west at any rate, after Paganism was publicly disowned (as in the note cited from his Paraphrase); while the other alternative is endless glory for a wide extension of the martyr classes to admit any real Christian. And all this makeshift series of misinterpretations he caps with calling up “an odious Cerinthus or an exploded Papias” to cry down the dreaded testimony to a millennial reign when our Lord appears from heaven.

It is humbling to find in such speculations how far a mistake can lead one who truly feared the Lord, as he was also jealous for the authority of the revealed word in other cases where he held fast the truth. Such alas! are we all, when we forsake scripture for tradition.

Chapter 193

The Revelation As God Gave It: 9

It may sound wise for Christians to keep close to their old tenets; it is of faith to cleave only to what is revealed. Apostolic antiquity is alone reliable. What came in since is but human and erroneous, however ancient.

First, we are exhorted to fix not our belief upon any kingdom of Christ our Savior, but spiritual and heavenly. But this is to slight our Lord's own intimation that the kingdom of God has earthly things as well as heavenly; that the Father's will is to be done on earth even as in heaven; that there is to be the Son of, man's kingdom no less than the Father's; and that in the regeneration the apostles at least are to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. No Christian should question reigning in heaven; but to reign with Christ over the earth is without doubt scriptural truth, and so clearly that it is his shame who questions it or its importance. Nor is it true but deplorable ignorance and error, that “this reign is attributed to the souls, not to the bodies of the martyred saints “; for the vision itself declares, that after being put to death, “they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years “; and the comment is, “This is the first resurrection.” To compare it With the exhortation in Eph. 5:14 is a mere shift and wholly baseless. It is vain to imagine difficulties in face of our Lord's own words, to cite none of His apostles as could easily be done.

Secondly, we are not to think of any absolute freedom from sin &c., here below. Who contends for this? Isa. 65:17-25 is a glowing prophecy of the kingdom; yet the midst of it, ver. 20, is explicit that, even while Christ reigns over the earth and Satan is bound, sin may be, as it must entail death and curse. And in Psa. 18:43, 44, we read that when He is made Head of the nations, strangers may render no more than a feigned obedience; as in fact Rev. 20:7-9 shows hosts seduced and rebelling and destroyed when that reign is over. But during its continuance texts like John 16:33, Acts 14:22, do not apply; for He then reigns over the earth, Who heals all diseases as well as forgives all iniquities, no doubt establishing His throne in the heavens, but ruling over all in such sort as the world has never yet beheld.

Thirdly, to expect Christ's coming only for final judgment (i.e., the great white throne) is to ignore the blessed hope, and to sink into the fear (however real) of a guilty world. How unworthy of a Christian teacher! No believer questions our Lord's judging quick and dead; and every intelligent one sees His appearing and His kingdom bound together (2 Tim. 4:1), contrary to the bishop's scheme, at His presence with all His saints (1 Thess. 3:13), instead of an unseen glory in the heavens. When the final judgment takes place, heaven and earth are fled: so that it is no coming of His (for there is no earth anger to come to), but all the dead (not before raised) summoned before Him for judgment. The time of the restitution of all things at His coming from heaven has no real place in all this unbelieving and defective system.

Fourthly, not to put the judgment far from us, nor yet punctually to determine its time, is language that betrays the grossest confusion. The Thessalonians were alarmed by the false rumor that the day of the Lord was actually come—not impending, but present. This the apostle dispelled, but so as to recall to the constant waiting for Christ to take us on high; which is a quite different truth, not

judgment on the earth, but our proper hope of heaven with Him. The good bishop is painfully dark, confusing both with the judgment of the dead when the world is passed away.

It is not denied that Alphonsus, Conradus, Cotterius, &c., on one side, and on the other that Alstedius, Archer, &c., have erred in their speculations and computations. But no one hardly has been more thoroughly wrong than the grave, learned, and pious bishop under review, who counted himself modestly resting in revealed truths, while ignoring and denying in any true sense the world-kingdom of the Lord Christ (Rev. 11:15), and holding out an unscriptural jumble of what he calls “that awful and glorious coming of our Lord and Savior.” For himself it is right to cherish love and respect; but it seems a duty to prove how utterly baseless was his opposition to the truth, not only of Christ's coming to receive us to Himself for the Father's house, but of the kingdom of power and glory that follows, with the solemn judgment of the dead at the end. The error of a good and able man is apt to be all the more deplorable in its effects. The worth of his true testimony in other respects draws a crowd of admirers, many of them pious, into his wake, even when he has drifted into a stream of error; and error is always mischievous, because it deprives so far of God's truth and of Christ's glory.

Chapter 194

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 1

Romans 3:21-26

It is known very generally that a serious question has been raised on the righteousness of God, and that it has given occasion to keen controversy. Nor is it too much to say, that those who have betrayed their feeling most have little understood its bearings. Such, certainly, is the fact with those who have made themselves conspicuous by violent language on the point. Their discussions, or rather their denunciations, are the strongest possible evidence that, far from having settled the question aright, they do not even know what it is that has to be settled. On the other hand, there are many who reject false views, and yet would find themselves at a loss, were they asked to explain what “the righteousness of God” really means. They know what it does not mean better than what it does—better than what God intended us to gather from the phrase throughout His word. Souls in such a state experience considerable difficulty in expounding divine righteousness to others, and have little clearness and decision as to its positive proper character in their own minds.

As it is now proposed but briefly to enter on this large and weighty theme, it will be my business to begin at once in the simplest way, reviewing some (at least) of the chief scriptures, if not all those in the New Testament, which take it up. This only is to be premised, that it is from no indisposition to look at the Old Testament, if less be said here about it; for, in point of fact, singular as it may appear to some, it is clear beyond controversy that the view which prevails among many modern theologians is not found there. For instance, nothing can be plainer than the passages in Isaiah, where Jehovah speaks of His righteousness as being near to come, and of His salvation as that which was about to be established for His people. Who can say that there is any question there of the Lord's walk under law on earth? It is Jehovah, as such, Who alludes to His own moral consistency with Himself; it is Jehovah Who proclaims His own salvation. In short, Jehovah speaks of His righteousness and the blessing of His people—not of the ground, real or supposed, on which He displays His righteousness, and they are thus blessed.

Understand well: the question is not at all whether there be not the absolute need of a basis on which there should be a display of divine righteousness in favor of His people. All agree in this—all who love the truth. There is no debate among believers, that without Christ, and without a work on His part which vindicates God in showing His infinite mercy, there could be no such thing as the justification of the ungodly. Further, it is to me no question between inherent righteousness, on the one hand, and God's imputing righteousness, on the other. From man as he is, inherent righteousness is excluded. For a sinful man all turns on this, whether in very deed God does reckon righteousness to him on his faith without work; and scripture emphatically declares that He does. How He does, on what righteous ground it is, remains to be seen.

I will endeavor to make as little reference to passing controversies as is desirable. The word of God, which judges the question, must not be avoided for the simple reason that these controversies exist. The rather is it of importance that the children of God should know simply,

clearly, unhesitatingly, what His mind is, by virtue of which they may detect and refuse that injurious leaven of tradition, for which men so ardently contend.

It may be, perhaps, more satisfactory to begin with Rom. 3 rather than chap. i., because the one is as explicit as the other is brief and abstract. In Rom. 1:17 the Holy Ghost merely states the leading truth in the fewest possible words, as introductory to the subject. In chap. 3 He deals with it freely; not all at once, but laying down the grand foundation of God's righteousness. Inasmuch as this so far unfolds the subject, we do well to weigh the larger development of the Spirit of God, and to read the more concise statement in the light of that which is more completely opened. Error habitually takes advantage of an expression, which to some might seem obscure, to darken the clearer explanation by. It is our wisdom to accept all which the Spirit of God affords us. We have a right to assume, that the fullest statement of this or any other doctrine is the best help to the understanding of communications made in fewer words elsewhere.

Now, in the portion read, we have clearly the righteousness of God contrasted with law. He had said immediately before, that “what things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” The law, instead of justifying those that are under it, brings them in more guilty if possible. We can all understand it. Man being a sinner, the law, wherever it operates, cannot better his case; it does but prove his guilt; it can only pronounce upon it; for it measures each violation of God's commands. “The law is holy; and the commandment holy and just, and good.” It is impossible that a good law could save or acquit a bad man. The law of God, therefore, has for its effect in dealing with the evil to condemn them without hope to death. Not of course that this is all that God can do, but it is the only conceivable direct effect of God's law upon the guilty. A law which an evil man might escape could not be the law of God. It is to be regretted that a criminal should escape man's law: God's law he never can. The law therefore closes up in condemnation. The Jew had no difficulty at all about the Gentiles; for these worshipped idols, and wallowed in every kind of fleshly lust, caring little about conscience. Many enormities were lightly regarded. Fleshly uncleanness and drunkenness they connected with the very worship of their gods. On all this, accordingly, the Jew looked down with no small self-complacency.

But, argues the apostle, how is it with you? What does scripture say about yourself? What does your own law declare about your ways? God looked down from heaven, and says that “there is mine righteous, no, not one; none that doeth good, no, not one,” as it is summed up most emphatically. Now for the masterly proof (if I may use such a word about the apostle, remembering that the Holy Ghost employs that blessed man as the vessel of His reasoning): “What the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” Who can divert that solemn sentence of God to the Gentiles? You boast of your law: be it so. But “what the law saith, it speaketh to them who are under the law.” God, when He declares so strongly that “there is none that doeth good—none that is righteous, no, not one,” speaks not of Gentiles but Jews. Hence every mouth is stopped, and the whole world becomes guilty before God. For the Gentiles had been shown to be evidently guilty in chapter i.; the philosophers were proved to be no better in the beginning of chapter 2; and then the Jews, who had the law and dreamed of themselves as righteous, are brought in more guilty than any in the end of chapter 2 and in chapter 3. The very law of God it was, which manifested and proclaimed their exceeding iniquity in His sight. Thus every mouth is stopped.

But when man's mouth is closed in guilt, God can open His in grace; and so He does. He was entitled to require righteousness, though knowing perfectly there was no good in man, and so none to be got out. He had demonstrated that His law, instead of producing righteousness among the Jews, on the contrary only proved their evil more plainly, if there was a difference.

Now it becomes a question of another kind of righteousness altogether. Man is all wrong; there is no righteousness in him. This has been brought home already. The only righteousness possible is God's. What it fully means, what its basis is, and how it avails for the blessing of man, are other questions. But the first great truth asserted is, that (man as a whole, man in every grade and variety, being put down as destitute of righteousness according to God) it becomes a question of God showing His righteousness, if so it please Him. This He does, and most worthily of Himself.

But how is it done? If God were simply to act in His righteousness without Christ, what must be the effect on man? The whole race should be swept into hell. What does He then? He has acted in another way, and most righteously, that He may not consign the guiltiest to perdition. How can this be? Hearken then. There is no doubt man has deserved judgment. This has been proved unmistakably by the law in the favored people that were under it, as well in the Jews as in the lawless Gentiles. But now bursts forth the glorious truth" Righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ." As he says here, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (not the putting away or the pardon of sin; for the law never pretended to do either). "But now," says he, "God's righteousness" —mark the strength of the language— "without law," etc. That the Savior came down from heaven and accomplished the law is certainly a plain fact. But is this what the Holy Ghost here presents as God's righteousness? Where is there a word about Christ's keeping the law for us, in order that this should be accepted in lieu of man's failure? In truth, the Jews only are meant by "those under law," and in contrast with the Gentiles, who knew nothing of it.

But, waiving this at the present, surely here was the place to explain the importance of Christ's accomplishing pushing the law for man, had God's righteousness meant anything of the sort. How comes it that there is no trace of such a thought? Are we to believe the scriptures? Directly or indirectly shall we presume to mend them? Are we to supplement the written word, as if God did not know the truth better than we? Has it not come to a strange pass, that men now, instead of seeking to understand what Gods righteousness means, turn aside from the plain truth that the Holy Ghost is insisting on, and interpolate a doctrine not found here, and very hard to find anywhere else in the Bible? Indeed it is unknown and opposed to the word of God.

Here again let us understand each other. Do we deny for a moment the subjection of the Lord Jesus to the law of God? God forbid! He did fulfill the law, of course; He vindicated God in every possible way in the fulfillment of it. This is no matter of controversy for Christian men. He is no believer who supposes that Christ in any act of His life failed, that He did not entirely and blessedly accomplish the law of God (under which, as we are told, He was made), or that the result could be of small moment to God or man.

The question is, Has His accomplishment of the law of God the place which a certain school gives it? Is it God's righteousness as here taught of Him, or its revealed ground? Assuredly here we have the doctrine unfolded, and that for the permanent instruction of the Christian. It is the most elaborate statement of this truth that God's word contains. How comes so absolute a silence,

where, if true, we could not but look for a clear decisive introduction of Christ's fulfillment of the law in lieu of our breach of it? For it is a question not of pardon only but of justification. To foist something in looks like a fable. Does it not suggest the suspicion, to say the least, that man unwittingly erred and invented the opinion? There may have been sincerity of course; but God's word is requisite.

Do I deny that the ways, the walk, the life of Jesus, the magnifying of God in all His ways are anything to our account? Far from it! We have the Lord Jesus wholly, and not in part; and we have Him everywhere. I am not contending in the least against the precious truth that, Christ being our acceptance, we have Him as a whole. His Obedience was unbroken through His entire life; and its savor to God is part of the blessing that belongs to every child of God. I believe it, rejoice in it, thank God for it (I trust) continually. But the question is wholly different. God does use for His own glory and for our souls all that Jesus did and suffered.

The true inquiry is, What is the righteousness of God? It must be settled not by notions, feelings, fancies, traditions; not by what is preached or received, but by what is written—by the word of God. Are you afraid of this test? Do you shrink back from the word which searches out what you hold as to the righteousness of God? It is to be supposed you have reason to fear the scrutiny. When a man shrinks from the Bible, it is because the Bible condemns him. It does not support speculations which he is not yet prepared to abandon. Certainly you are not asked to abandon anything that is of God. By all means hold fast Christ in all His ways magnifying God, and the blessedness of this for our acceptance before God. Still the question recurs, What is God's righteousness? Is there a legal ground laid for justification, as some suppose?

Here is God's answer. “Now,” it is said,” God's righteousness without law.” No language can be more absolute and precise. What the Holy Ghost employs is an expression which puts the law entirely aside, as far as divine righteousness is concerned. He had been speaking about the law, and the law condemning men. He had shown that the law required righteousness but could not get it. This is another order of righteousness, not man's but God's, and that too absolutely exclusive of law in any shape. How suitable a time to say, had it been the good news of God, that Jesus came to obey the law for us, and that God substitutes this as His righteousness for every man to stand on! Why is it not said then? Because it is not the ground, or character, or nature, of the righteousness of God. His righteousness is wholly apart from law.

Chapter 195

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 2

Rom. 3:21-26.

Accordingly this is what is here said: “But now God's righteousness without law hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Observe the exceeding accuracy of the language. The law and the prophets did not manifest God's righteousness; yet the law, in various forms, bore witness to another kind of righteousness that was coming (the prophets bringing it out, if possible, still more clearly in respect of language). The one furnished types, the others assured that Jehovah's righteousness was near to come. But now the gospel tells us it is come. Divine righteousness is now a revealed fact. God's righteousness without law not only was witnessed by the law and the prophets, but is actually manifested as an accomplished standing fact. There is no veil now; there was once, but the death of Christ rent it from top to bottom. God's righteousness therefore is no longer a shadow of coming good, no longer a blessing locked up in promises or looming in a prediction, however truly the law and the prophets bore their witness all the way through, from the time that man broke down and his righteousness entirely failed. Now there is far more than a witness to it, even a permanent manifestation of it since the cross. Such is the present result of that great fact. Divine righteousness is not only being revealed (■πoκαλ■πτεται) in the gospel; it has been and is manifested (πεφαν■ρωται).

The matter is more fully explained as “God's righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ.” Here then was another place to have affirmed for our justification the value of what the Lord Jesus was doing when here below; but not one word is said about it. All that the passage really adds is the statement that God's righteousness (in contrast with man's, which should have been by his accomplishing the law) is “by faith of Jesus Christ.” Still one can understand the objection raised that this is not conclusive. Believing in Christ does not settle the point, they say; for all hold that it is by faith of Jesus Christ. But is it the value of what He was doing in His life, or is it the efficacy of His atonement—of His death? Is scripture silent? It is, on the contrary, explicit against mixing up the law. It is most express against turning away the eye of faith from Christ in His sacrificial death.

Thus at the very outset, if the object had been to withdraw attention, in the matter of righteousness, from the active life of Christ and to fix it by faith upon His blood, how could the task have been accomplished more effectually than in the passage? Is not this an extraordinary way of handling the truth, if the ground of God's righteousness were Christ's obedience to the law? If it be the all-important point in order to justifying, if it be the great indispensable preparation, and the solid ground on which a man is righteous before God, how comes it that scripture preserves such absolute and singular silence in the fullest passage where the Holy Ghost discusses the ground and means of justification before God?

It is not so that reasonable men would act. When we have to bring out a truth dear to us, and important for those to whom we are about to explain it, do we hide the most characteristic portion? do we omit the smallest reference to the very turning-point? Surely not. And does not God reveal His own truth infinitely better than we can explain it, or convey our own thoughts? Listen to the

man who holds the Puritan doctrine on the subject: does he conceal the distinctive feature? Does he keep back Christ's observance of the law for us? On the contrary it is the uppermost idea, and continually pressed in his discourses. It is the law kept by Christ, he tells you, which specially, yea alone, constitutes the righteousness of the believer before God. He does not deny that the blood of Christ is the means of the sinner's pardon: but then it will never do, he argues, to approach heaven with pardon merely; one must have righteousness also, and this for him is found in the legal obedience of Christ. Thus, if it is a question of justifying (and in general the popular theologian sharply distinguishes between the two things), his justification is made to depend on the fact that Christ kept the law for him, which he could not keep for himself—that Christ omitted no duty of his, and performed all perfectly in which he himself broke down.

But how comes it to pass that God does not put the matter thus? Because it is not the truth. Nothing simpler, if the truth lie elsewhere. It is the truth that man has failed in every way; it is the truth that Christ obeyed the law of God; it 'is not the truth that even His keeping of the law is the real source of God's righteousness, or the ground of our justification before God. Let me press this upon every candid mind among such as contend for this theory. Account for it if you can; account for it with the maintenance of the inspired character of God's word. How comes it, that the Holy Ghost, Who certainly understands justification in perfection, does not treat the subject as your system demands? Is it not, because He and you do not agree? How serious that believers should, on so fundamental a truth, differ from the mind of the Spirit, and that man should prefer his own thoughts, because they are the common quasi-evangelical tradition, a sort of “short cut” to understanding how a person is justified!

Now it is the invariable fact that, where we are subject to God in any truth, no matter what, His way is always the best, although it may not be the most obvious one, for bringing a soul into comfort and blessing to His own glory. Thus, in the present instance, the first thing that God proclaims when He is presenting His own righteousness is this: “By faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” “Unto all” is the direction which God's righteousness takes. It is not limited to a particular people, as the law was to the Jew. Divine righteousness goes out, as far as its tendency is concerned, to every one without exception. So the Lord Himself said, “Preach the gospel to every creature.” His message is just the manifestation of the righteousness of God. Accordingly it is here said to be “unto all.” But then every creature does not believe it. Consequently we have the other side of the truth, that God's righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ is only “upon all them that believe;” “for,” again, “there is no difference.” All sinned and do come short of the glory of God. Hence grace is the only hope: “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Thus, on the one hand, it is clear and certain that there is not a word about the keeping of the law; and, on the other, what the apostle does expatiate on is justification freely by God's grace (not law-keeping), and this through the redemption that is in Christ, not His legal observance. Hence it is said further, “Whom God set forth a propitiatory.”

Mark the place that God takes in all this. It is not that Christ put Himself forward, but God set Him forth. Why so? and what its importance? Because it is a question of the righteousness of God. There is no doubt that Christ was righteous, as no other ever was; yet Christ's righteousness is not the truth here affirmed, but God's. There is not the smallest doubt, as we all agree, that He fulfilled all righteousness; but is this to be a reason why any man should pervert scripture? Why are not the faithful content to take the word as God has written it; and if He speak of His righteousness,

why should they read it as the righteousness of Christ? Is it not to eke out a peculiar school of doctrine? What plainer than the truth, that God accounts us righteous by virtue of Christ's work? Can they not understand, that divine righteousness in so justifying us goes far beyond the righteousness of the law, be it done by whom it may?

It is not that scripture never speaks of the righteousness of Jesus. In 1 John 2 we read, that “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ [the] righteous.” It would be wrong to alter that scripture, and to understand the righteousness of God there. Equally unwarrantable is it to say, that we have the righteousness of Christ in Rom. 3. The advocacy of “Jesus Christ the righteous” is the important truth in 1 John 2, because it is a question of One that acts for me, that undertakes my cause, if alas! I break down as a follower and confessor of the Lord here below. Hence I want a living person, active in love for me, before the Father; and such a One grace has provided for the need, even “Jesus Christ the righteous.” “The righteousness of God” would not suffice for the case, or suit me in my failure; other truth is that which the soul then wants. “The righteousness of God” one must know in order to be on the ground, which in case of inconsistency, needs “Jesus Christ the righteous;” but the two truths, though connected, are perfectly distinct, and ought never to be confounded. Scripture does not sacrifice one to the other. In 1 John 2 we have Jesus Christ the righteous as our advocate with the Father—precious provision if any one sin; while in Rom. 3 it is the character and application of God's righteousness which is in question, as the starting-point of faith.

The more we weigh the passage, the clearer is its import. “Whom [Jesus] God hath set forth to be a propitiation,” [a propitiatory or mercy-seat, in fact the same word that is so translated in Heb. is.,] “through faith in his blood.” Can any proof more conclusive be conceived? How, if it be the truth, comes the absence of that which men now-a-days plead for? To what can one attribute the presence of that only which they would put in the shade? Certainly God's word is plain enough. Error in doctrine springs from the heart's natural opposition to the truth of God. Why should not believers accept what the word presents so plainly and definitely? Is it that it would shiver some favorite thoughts? Is it that it would open out new views of God and His ways? Why should an enlarging knowledge of His word be a matter of suspicion? Why should the thoughts of man be pleasanter to them than the precious truth of God? Let them answer it for themselves. Account for their liking or disliking as they may, this is what scripture says: “Whom [Christ] God set forth a propitiatory (or mercy-seat) through faith in his blood.” Indeed what God gives, what He could not do without, is precisely what man wants as a sinner. It is not well-doing, were it even the blessed Lord's, in place of our sins and guilt. The sinner wants a propitiatory, before God, and finds through faith there the blood of Jesus. As man, He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. He was subject to the law; He wrought miracles; He walked in grace. But if we were to be justified, our ruin demanded a deeper dealing, even redemption, redemption through His blood.

Such then, in part at least, is God's righteousness; and large and rich is the comfort of the truth. But the language is precise also. We have very distinct statements on the subject here. If God set forth Christ as a propitiatory by faith in His blood, it is “for showing forth his righteousness because of the pretermission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; for showing forth at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that is of faith in Jesus.” Thus was God declared to be righteous in His ways toward the Old Testament believers (ver. 25), as

well as at present (ver. 26). In the first case His righteousness was shown forth on account of the passing by the sins that had been before. He could not have justly remitted their sins, strictly speaking, for the atoning work was not yet done; but He did pretermit them, and this through His forbearance. In the second case He shows forth His righteousness in the present time, without question of forbearance, because now the work of atonement is done. For who speaks of the creditor's “forbearance” when the debt is paid in full? By the actual accomplishment of redemption, instead of barely passing the sins by, God is just, and justifies him that is [not of law-works, but] of faith in Jesus.

May I not ask any fair mind, Who is here meant? “That he might be just and the justifier,” &c.

That who might be just? Let us answer uprightly without reference to our previous thoughts, and before that word which will judge in the last day. “That he might be just.” Who is He? Is it Christ just? or is it not God just by virtue of Christ? There can be no doubt. He who understands the Bible could give but one answer. The assertion is of God, “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” “It is God that justifieth” (Rom. 8). Such is “the righteousness of God.” It is on the ground of Christ's work on the cross, or God could not be thus righteous in behalf of the sinner. Redemption is the righteous basis. The blood of Christ deserves at God's hands that the believer should be justified, and God Himself is just in so justifying him.

Astonishing fact and truth! His is a new righteousness altogether. It is not God righteous apart from the blood of Jesus; it is the righteousness of God apart from law. It is God Who thus set Christ forth, but not merely as a righteous man obeying Him in every thought, feeling, word, and way, manifesting perfect righteousness upon earth: even all this never made one sin of yours or mine a whit less in the sight of God. Our sins were as grievous after as they were before. One might almost venture to say that they pressed more heavily; for whatever we, might say for ourselves, and however God might look down in pity upon poor sinful men on the earth heaping up their sins before, how did those sins appear after Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, the righteous dependent Man, the obedient Servant, was here below? What was the effect of it? Light brought out the darkness of all others more conspicuously. It did not lighten their load; it rather displayed how deep, dark, indelible, were the stains of sin. Had God merely acted after this sort, would it not have been comparing men in their sins with the perfect Man without sin? How could He have such as companions of the Second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ? It could not be. This would have been very far from the righteousness of God. It might have been styled, if you please, the righteousness of Christ; but how could even this have availed to meet our desperate case? How could it have vindicated God as to sin? Christ was absolutely perfect; but death, His death, was needed for us, for “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” There was nothing to save us in the fact of His being the righteous Man that obeyed God all His life. There was nothing in this which could get rid of our sins, nothing which could give us a standing apart from sin in the presence of God.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 196

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 3

Rom. 3:21-26

HENCE came in another thing. God set Christ forth, it is said here, as a propitiatory. Christ became the true mercy-seat. God gave Him up as a sacrifice for sin, that through His body, offered once for all, every soul that believes on Him might be sanctified—nay, more than that— “by one offering perfected forever.” This is done in His death. He came to do, not merely the law, but the will of God, by the which will, the apostle carefully adds, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Here then we have the righteousness of God developed in the simplest and clearest way. It means that under the gospel God is just and justifies in virtue of Christ. He is just, because our sins have been met in the cross; sin has been judged of God. Christ has suffered and atoned for evil. More than that: the Lord Jesus has so magnified God, and so glorified His character, that there is a positive debt now on the other side. Instead of the obligation being, as it was, altogether on man's side, who was accumulating that which never could be paid for by him, God has now interposed, and, having been so magnified by the man Christ Jesus in His death, He is now positively just when He justifies the soul that believes in Jesus. It is consequently the righteousness of God; for God is thus approving Himself righteous to the claims of Christ. It is God now owning and discharging His debt to Christ. Christ had undertaken the cause for God, and also for man. Very God, still He became man; and it was in human nature, not before its assumption, that the wonderful work of atonement was done. The consequence is (although it was the proof of God's love that He gave His own Son, and gave His Son to become a man and die for men), that now the scale is turned. The debt of man to destroy him is not at all so great as that which Christ has paid to deliver him. Scripture makes it a matter of God righteously justifying him that believes, in virtue of what Christ once suffered for sins. Thus nothing can be clearer or fuller, nothing more blessed and precious, than the meaning of this fundamental truth. It is indeed a priceless treasure. What Christ did, as living here, is not the point; or surely where we have the great unfolding of divine righteousness was just the place to bring in what occupied Christ in His life on earth, if this were its ground.

But one may go farther: Show anywhere an unambiguous portion of the word of God, where His fulfilling of the law is treated as a part of the righteousness of God. You can produce none. One can point to those scriptures which you perhaps think about; but therein is no proof whatever. His obedience unto death is the turning-point. Why should one not be plain about that which is certain? Let others venture to say, if they will, what can be contradicted; it were well, in such a case, not to speak at all. There really is no scripture which makes what Christ was doing as under law—I will not say the exclusive ground, but—any ground whatever of God's righteousness. Why not produce one?

He who has been put forth as the most distinguished defender of the common view is compelled to own, that (in Rom. 3:25, 26) God's acting righteously through Christ yields the easier or better

sense. Though arguing expressly in defense of the ordinary scheme, he is too candid to gainsay the evident bearing of the context. There need be no secret as to his name: he is well-known—the late Bishop of Ossory. Yet is he forced, by the plain positive language of scripture, to admit that in these verses “His righteousness” most naturally means, not a something that Christ did by keeping the law, but what God can be and is by virtue of redemption. His justice now justifies the believer. This, as far as it goes, is true. Dr. O'Brien confesses that “his righteousness,” in this palmary passage of the epistle to the Romans, points to the quality of divine righteousness or Gods justice; and this, because of what follows— “that he might be just;” which of course means God being just, and not simply what the Lord Jesus was as made of a woman, made under law. But this great passage, if conceded, seems at once to decide the question. It is always a sign of weakness if men fly from the full and bright unfoldings of the truth in the word of God to supposed hints and obscure allusions. When the truth is out plainly, when this is desired and nothing else, you are not afraid to face the strongest assertions and the fullest communications of God's mind. When men overlook or evade the large yet distinct instructions of scripture, and hide behind some scrap wrested violently from its real connection, the presumption is that the truth is too strong for them, while they are not prepared to abandon their dogma.

For are we really to conceive that “the righteousness of God” means one thing in Rom. 3:25, 26, and another thing in Rom. 1:17, if not also in Rom. 3:21, 22? The notion is suicidal that “either gives a consistent interpretation of the passage.” Let us then observe the way in which God's righteousness first comes before us. The apostle says 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. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” Where is there any allusion to Christ's keeping the law of God? God has not here spoken of it: why insert it? Our business is not to put our notions into scripture, but to gather what God thence convoys to souls. We are taught here, that in the gospel His righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. The expression may be somewhat difficult; yet here as elsewhere there is no question whatever about law-keeping, but an implied contrast with legal requirement. The law demanded righteousness from man, but could get none. In the gospel God's righteousness is being revealed. What a change from the law, with its claim on man for a righteousness he had not God's righteousness, he says, is revealed in the gospel, because the gospel supposes the redemption is accomplished; it therefore speaks of sins borne and forgiven; in short, it makes known God justifying him that believes. It is therefore God's righteousness, not man's, being founded on Christ's expiation, “by faith in his blood.” Observe, it is the righteousness of God, Who justifies “him that believeth.” In virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus God is enabled justly, not only to pardon the believer, but to account him righteous in His own sight.

On what terms then does God reveal His righteousness in the gospel? It is revealed by (■κ) faith; that is, it is not by works of law, but by faith. There is not a trace here of Christ doing the works for us, as they say who plead the law. How easy to have told us so, had this been the meritorious title! It is said to be out of faith; and inasmuch as God's righteousness is revealed in this way, the blessing of His righteousness only comes to him who believes; that is, it is revealed “to” (etc) faith. Hence, as it is here expressed, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” It is “by faith” on God's part, and therefore it is “to faith” on man's. God excludes works of law for faith; and thus whoever has faith is the object for the righteousness of God. It addresses itself to all, without

exception, but it is actually on the believer.

Whoever believes in Jesus is justified by God; or, as it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, “All that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Why is there not a whisper about being justified by Christ keeping the law of Moses? Unless you can produce it from God's word, bear with me if I treat it as error. What is the value of a doctrine on so weighty a theme which does not come out of the Bible? It may be put forth piously: no doubt men mean to exalt the Savior by it; but, be assured, they have made a very great mistake in putting their hand to prop up the ark. Upon it God has sprinkled the blood of Christ; thereby, in virtue of that precious blood, He can be just in justifying him that believes. With this the teaching of Rom. 1:17 agrees. Clearly the meaning is, God righteous on the ground of faith, and consequently to faith. It is put in the most abstract form, because it is the expression of His terms as a principle, faith being demanded and faith receiving. This is supported by the prophet Habakkuk, who says, not that Christ kept the law for the unjust, but that “the just shall live by his faith.” Thus we see all thought of law-keeping for us by Christ is foreign to Rom. 1:17, as we have seen it to be unknown to Rom. 3:25, 26, and excluded by vers. 21, 28.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 197

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 4

Rom. 3:21-26.

BUT is there not another sense of the expression in Rom. 3:5? Unquestionably there “the righteousness of God” is employed with a different aim and connection. Even so it always leaves the same substantial sense of a quality of righteousness in Him, variously exercised of course. He may judge the world, as here; He may justify believers, as in verses 22-26; but it is in both cases His righteousness. Does not this commend itself to your conscience as being a truer, simpler, less forced explanation than the traditional interpolation of His law? It is assumed that God always justifies Himself. God is not responsible for man's evil; and the fact of man's unrighteousness being turned by Him to His own glory is no excuse for sins. It is the same fundamental truth, no matter how applied. If God displays His justice in judging the world, it is His righteousness, administered no doubt by Christ at His appearing. But this too has nothing to do with Christ's keeping the law. For what link has it with God's taking righteous vengeance on the guilty world? On the other hand, the sinner comes confessing his sins, fleeing for refuge to the blood of Christ, and God justifies him. He is righteous when He deals with impenitent unbelievers; He is equally righteous when He justifies the soul that repents and believes in Jesus. It is the righteousness of God in both cases. Thus there is the strongest confirmation of the truth, although the application be different. In either direction it is God righteous, and God displaying His righteousness. God's righteousness acts in view both of those who, in pride or indifference, despise Him, and are judged, and of those who, confessing their sins, betake themselves to the hiding-place of grace in Christ's blood and are saved. Everywhere God is just whether in judgment or in justification. He acts consistently with the relation in which He stands to both.

But does not such an expounding of divine righteousness in the gospel weaken the law? Assuredly it excludes boasting, since a man is thus justified by faith apart from works of law. It overthrows the distinctions of men; it bespeaks one God Who justifies Jews only by faith, and Gentiles too through their faith. It is instructive to observe that the apostle has to guard the true doctrine from this self-same charge: “Do we then make void the law through faith?” This he meets by an emphatic denial, as indeed the contrary is the fact: “we establish the law” or law as a principle. But how? Bring the law in as done by Christ for us, and it is difficult to see how the objection could have arisen. Paul could hardly have said absolutely that a man is justified by faith, apart from law-works; for according to this scheme the law-works were done all the same for the man, only by Another: a strange doctrine surely, for which one ought to have scripture before believing it! But the statement has a quite different sense, and intimates that faith, apart from works of law (let them be done by whom they may), is the true and only principle of our justification according to God's word. Yet by faith we establish law, instead of annulling it; for faith sees and rests on Jesus suffering unto death for sins under God's wrath, when sin was not only imputed to, but most really judged upon, Him on the cross. When, or where, had law so deep and divine a sanction? Never, we may answer, can there be elsewhere such a maintenance of its authority. Were we under the law for our walk, as is the Judaizing tradition of Christendom, we should make

it void, if we fell into the vain conceit that we could break it and yet escape its curse. Faith sees the law established solemnly in the death of Christ, Who bore its curse.

Next we come to a distinct step, which gives occasion to ask, whether justification be only by the blood of Christ. Is this the sole measure and character and fruit of God's righteousness?

The object is not at all to reduce the blessing to naked forgiveness of sins, essential and precious as this may be; it is in no way or degree to deny the value of the life of Christ to the believer. On the contrary, the ordinary scheme of justification deprives one of realizing the richest privilege God would have him know and enjoy. If this be so, how it illustrates that God's way is always the best! But what is it in this case? With singular inconsistency, the system allows that one cannot do without the blood of Christ. Every Christian must admit it. But then, say they, your need righteousness besides; and for this God needs Christ to obey the law for you. And what does scripture say? It gives the life of Christ, but life on the other side; not Christ keeping for me the law on the earth, but Christ risen. It is life in resurrection. In point of fact there is no such thing as identification with Christ as a living man here below; which is, without intending it, a virtual denial of Christianity. We are not Jews. Union is not with the blessed Lord as under the law, but with Him risen and exalted on high.

There is no doubt as to what is taught in scripture. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” it is said. In what position is this union? Scripture leaves no question whatever. Thus the apostle Paul says: “Though we have known Christ after the flesh” [that is what the traditional righteousness amounts to], yet now henceforth know we him no more.” Did the inspired writer put a slight upon the Lord here below? Did he in any way dishonor the perfect walk of Christ as a man under law on the earth? God forbid! The truth is, that there and thus He was known as Messiah. There I ought to have regarded Him as a Being, however gracious, yet above and entirely aloof from me. I might believe in and love Him, follow Him, confess Him, obey Him, if I had life in my soul; I might be the object of His love and His gracious care; but I could in no just sense have been said to be of His body, a member united to the Head; I could have possessed no such actual oneness with Him. Peter, and James, and John, would have been horrified at any one telling them they were one with their Master. United to Him! a member of His body! who ever heard of such a near relation to Him.

The fact is, the basis on which union with Christ exists, and goes on was not even laid then. How could any soul be one with the blessed Lord when his sins were unatoned for and unremoved? More than this, Christ was not then standing in that power of resurrection-life in which He could take the place of bringing them into His own relationship to His God and His Father, free from sin and law. Directly He died and was risen, the first day (I might almost say the very first act), when He comes into the midst of His disciples, He breathes upon them, and says, “Peace be unto you.” He gives them the fullest assurance that all which pertained to the old man was gone, with peace not for themselves only, but for others also. “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” said the quickening Spirit, as He breathed upon them. “Whosesoever sins ye remit,” &c. Not only were they quit of their own sins, but, in virtue of His large and blessed work, they stood and went forth witnesses, administratively, of the same to others.

The Lord Jesus Christ acted from the resurrection side of the cross; for the believers had Him breathing life “more abundantly” upon them (John 20). It was life in resurrection, life now entirely apart from and above the earth or Judaism, in short above everything connected with the world or

the law. Does this slight the law? Certainly not; but it exalts Christ, it asserts His supreme and incomparable worth. Do you mean to keep Christ under law after He rose from the dead? That is the question. If so, assuredly Scripture will not help you. It declares most plainly that now a new sight appeared. Not only was the rejected Messiah shedding His blood that God might righteously justify; but the character of the justification is according to the new place which Christ entered by resurrection. That is, it was not merely a justification in view of the old nature and all its effects and workings met by redemption, but an entirely new standing in which the believer is set by virtue of Christ's resurrection. This is begun to be treated in Rom. 4, being taken up in connection with the type of Abraham. In Rom. 3 God justifies by virtue of the blood of Jesus; in Rom. 4 God justifies by virtue of His resurrection, for He “was raised again for our justification.”

Such is the doctrine of scripture. Where is His obedience of the law in this? Here, if anywhere, one might expect it to be introduced, were the hypothesis only true and sound; for the point raised is not forgiveness barely but justification. It is presented in both its parts, exactly and fully in Rom. 3; 4. How comes it that there is not a word about Christ keeping the law for us? It is an unfortunate case, in sober truth, and piteously destitute, seeing that it has to go begging about the Bible, without getting even a single sure contribution in its favor. It there be, where is it? Not here; nay more, inconsistent with what is here. For “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Why not, if true, tell us to believe on Jesus doing the works of the law for us? Why not tell us God imputes righteousness, not “without works,” but by Christ's working for us? Were it thus, the promise would then be through the law, and not through the righteousness of faith, in contradiction to Rom. 4; whereas it really is of faith, that it might be according to grace and not law.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 198

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 5

WE go farther. Take up Rom. 6, 7. 8., and what do we find? That the Spirit, having laid down the precious basis of resurrection in Christ, reasons upon it, applies it to the meeting of various difficulties, shows the fullness of the blessing into which the believer is brought by it: a blessing not only above all nature in its character, but also flowing out absolutely and without restriction to souls, wherever they might be in this world, absolutely ignoring the shades of earthly distinction. That is, it altogether leaves behind the limits of the law, and contemplates man as such apart from all else. The moment you have the race before you, mankind as they are, you are outside the necessary boundaries of the law, which dealt with none directly but Jews. Hence we never hear the Gentiles spoken of in their guilt as “transgressors,” because they were not under the law as the Jews were. We read of “sinners of the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:15), because they were sinful men, of course, though not under the law (Rom. 2:14). On the other hand, when we have in view either Adam, who had a law (Rom. 5:14), or the Jews, who had the law (Hos. 6:7; Gal. 2:18), the word “transgressor” has its force and appropriateness, as we see in Scripture. And why? Because Israel, like Adam, were under the positive enactment of a known law, and were consequently if unfaithful more guilty than Gentiles. Hence both Jews and Greeks are said to be “all under sin” (Rom. 3:9), not exactly under transgression; and death is said to be the “wages” not merely of transgression but “of sin.”

But what are we to think of Rom. 5:19, so continually cited to prove Christ's fulfillment of the law as the ground of our justification? “As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Here the apostle is meeting the objection that the gospel of grace makes all turn on one man Christ Jesus, and on one accomplished righteousness. Hence he goes up to Adam. Could the Jew deny that this one man by his single act brought in sin and death? Why should not the grace of God reverse the tale? Was not the first man the type of the Second man, the last Adam? Thus, while the law is alluded to parenthetically, the whole scope of the argument necessarily mounts up before the law to Adam. It accordingly comprehends under the two heads their respective families, as involved in the ruin of the one and the redemption of the other. The express aim is to exclude the law, and to bring in, on the one hand, universal realities, on the other, special relations under Adam and Christ. “For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

Observe that we ought in verse 18 to have “by one offense,” as in the margin; such is the right version. It is “one offense” here, but “the offense of one” in verse 17. The two verses are entirely distinct. “Therefore as by one offense the tendency is] toward all men unto condemnation, even so by one righteousness [the tendency is] toward all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” As not a few rest confidently on the passage, I ask, How is it you overlook that here the Holy Ghost is arguing upon the headships of Adam and Christ—not upon the narrower issue of the law, but in pointed contrast with it? He is comparing, not Moses, but Adam and Christ. Now Adam

had nothing to do with the law of God given by Moses. If we think of the moral sum only of the second table, he would not even have understood it. How could he have been told to love his neighbor, for instance, in Paradise? Why, he might have looked over the world and would not have found a neighbor to love. Again, to take a particular command, where would have been the sense of telling an innocent man that he must not lust? “Lust!” he might have said, “I don't know what lust is.” He was a man made without a single failing; there was a total absence of evil, and therefore on this ground the propensities of the sinful heart which the law assumes did not even exist for Adam at first.

How then can men talk and reason as they do about Adam having the law? It is a mistake as to the fact, a moral contradiction as to principles, unscriptural and irrational. If they merely said that Adam had a law, it is admitted; but we must not confound a law with the law. Further, in Adam's case it was no question of doing the law to live, for he was sinless. Hence it was not such a trial as the law supposes. For the point in his case was not, “Do and live,” but rather “Do not, lest you die.” That is, it was in both its parts the exact opposite of the law, which supposes the state, and forbids the indulgence, of sin. Again the law supposes one not to have life, which it presents as the object to be gained. But this the sinner cannot do.

Hence the result, or at least the aim, of the law is to fix the consciousness in the heart of man, that as he does not, cannot, meet God's terms, he is a dead man in God's judgment. Now was this, in the least, the case with Adam unfallen? Unquestionably not. He was a living man; and it was not a question of doing to get life, but not doing what God forbade and Satan tempted him to do, in order that he might not die. Fallen, he brought in death to all his family, as Christ risen is life for His family. Therefore the apostle puts in contrast Christ and Adam, not Christ and Moses. Is not this the real point of contrast? Not Moses or the law (though both are incidentally glanced at), but Adam and Christ. However the case is really far stronger than this. The next verse does introduce the law, but it is as a distinct thing added to the foregoing and contradistinguished. One can have no hesitation therefore in concluding that the obedience of Christ here spoken of had nothing at all to do with the keeping of the law for us in any sense whatever. “Moreover” [or “now,” “but “], says he, “the law entered [by the by] that the offense might abound.” It is evident that the point insisted on is the value of tracing things to their sources. The law, which came in by Moses, and pressed man individually for what he was in himself, however important, was but incidental, and for special purposes.

Thus, in order to get an adequate view of the subject, we must go beyond Moses up to Adam and the beginning of this world's moral history. There man fell through disobedience. It was not a question of breaking the law; for of it he knew nothing. He violated the command which he was bound to obey. So here Jesus stands at the end of the ages. (Heb. 9) As Adam at the beginning, so Christ appeared at the consummation of the world; in the one case a disobedient man, and in the other the obedient One. The first exposes all to condemnation; the Second triumphs so as to open justifying to all. In effect the disobedience of the one constitutes his company sinners, as the obedience of the other constitutes His righteous. The one disobeyed and brought ruin on the mass of his dependents; the other obeyed, and the consequence is that the many dependent on Him are made righteous. Thus not an allusion is here made (ver. 19) to the keeping of the law. On the contrary (ver. 20) law entered by the way (not that the offense might be abolished, and that the ground of justification might be established), but quite simply and subordinately “that the offense

might abound.” Why are not men content with God's word and wisdom? “Where sin abounded, grace [not bare law-fulfilling] did much more abound; that as sin reigned in death [it is not a question of law broken or transgression merely], even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” How infinitely beyond law-keeping!

In scripture then nothing can be more certain than that God's righteousness in this connection means His justice in justifying by virtue of Christ. We have seen in Christ, as the ground of justification, first, blood to put away the guilt of the old man before God; and next, resurrection, the spring of a new, more abundant, and holy life, where no condemnation can be. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And what do men substitute for this? A mere patching up of the old man as living under the law. Are you prepared to follow them? Can you accept this traditional earthly scheme as Christianity? It is really no better than lowering Christ, and His work for our justification, to a making up of the flesh's deficiencies as responsible under the law. Is this true Christianity? You ought to know by experience the disastrous effects—uncertainty of soul, anxiety, doubt, fear, frequent if not habitual sense of bondage and condemnation before God, which is precisely and naturally the result for the conscientious mind. As long as the first covenant stood, it was the old man schooled and disciplined by the action of the law; and such was the external condition in which even the saints of God were held, whatever might be their faith and its fruits individually. (Gal. 4) “Through fear of death,” as we are told, “they were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb. 2) Alas, how very many are in this day of ours practically in the same condition! How many really abide as if they knew not whether the Holy Ghost were or not! as if they were not quite sure that Christ had died for them, or that He, risen from the dead, had procured them present and eternal nearness to God! Do you think this a calumny? The truth is, men are themselves too much under the darkening influence of the error to be competent judges. But even they ought not to be ignorant of the fact, that there are now in the world thousands and millions bearing the name of Christ who are still going on their legal round, just as if the glorious Deliverer had not yet come. How comes this to pass? Because they do not submit to nor understand the righteousness of God; because they pertinaciously cling to their bald thought of law-righteousness made up by Christ, which they have formed into a kind of party badge and banner under which to fight. In a measure God leaves even saints to taste the bitter fruit of their own folly. Hence it is that, though believers, they are kept from enjoyment of peace and joy in Christ.

Yet, where there is liveliness of faith and a hearty sense of the Savior's grace and glory, saints rise more or less above their false views. But the inevitable native effect of the doctrine, as far as it is carried out in, the soul, is to bring persons back into the condition in which saints were before Christ came to accomplish redemption. Beginning with Romanism, you will find that the language of such persons is founded on the Psalms misapplied, not on the truth and grace of God displayed in Christianity. And very naturally; for Popery (and not Popery alone) will tell you that Jerusalem and Zion are the church of God. Popery acts like Israel, commissioned to beat down the Canaanites &c. in the name of Jehovah “O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us! Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones” So now Popery is happy where it acquires power to renew the Inquisition, and punish recusants and heretics soundly. Such is the effect of grafting the law on their system. Would that it were confined to them only! Such flagrant error shows the issue, practically, of slipping outside the blessed region of life and light and liberty in resurrection, into

which Christ has brought the saint now by virtue of His own redemption. Thus one loses sight of the new standing of grace, and returns at best to what could not but be before the cross, instead of following on through the cross into the presence of Christ on high, made the righteousness of God in Him.

(To be continued, D.V.).

Chapter 199

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 6

AN expression in the beginning of Rom. 8 illustrates the immense importance of the resurrection-side of justification: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them” —for whom Christ died, is it? No. For whom Christ shed His blood? No; but “to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Redemption by His blood we have seen—not pardon only, as some too often say, but justification by the blood of Christ. It is the value Godward of Christ dying for us; but in that aspect there is no such thing as being “in Christ.” But here is another character of privilege, because our justification is not only by the blood but in the life of Christ risen from the dead. Accordingly not only has the believer Christ for him on the cross, but he is “in Christ.” What is the effect of this? “No condemnation.” To justify therefore is not, as some teach, “to declare judicially the innocence of the party justified.” For innocence, the condition of man unfallen, once lost, is gone forever. But God, as always, brings in something better. The gospel accordingly is no return by law to the first Adam condition, even if it were conceivable, but the gift of relationship by grace in the Second Man, founded on the judgment of sin (root and fruit) in the cross, and displayed in the resurrection, of the Lord Jesus.

Now let us just turn to the scene where this victory was achieved for us in the grace of God. There are those who will tell you that there is nothing beyond the precious blood of Christ. This I fully own, that for depth of vindicating God, for thorough clearing of our sins, and for intense manifestation of His love, such as never else was conceived of, nothing equals the cross and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you mean to affirm that there is no privilege founded upon His blood beyond pardon and cleansing—if you mean to deny that there is any new region of life and liberty for us to be ushered into, as God's sons, I cannot but infer that you labor under a profound mistake. It is to exalt, not to depreciate, His precious blood, if we follow Him into resurrection, and know ourselves one with Him glorified in heaven. Christ dead, risen, and ascended, alone gives us, through the Holy Ghost sent down, the true place of a Christian, and of the church. No doubt His blood is the foundation, but His life in resurrection is the new character in which the believer stands before God.

Behold here one blessed effect— “No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Why so? “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” It is not the blood of Christ, but the Spirit of life in Him after redemption was accomplished. The blood of Christ was the sacrificial basis on which the freedom is conferred; but He, risen from the dead, is the spring, pattern, and fullness of the freedom He confers. His blood cleanses from all sin. “This is he that came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.” But all this, indispensable as it may be, is not the same thing as the life of Christ risen. Upon the cross I see our divine Savior suffering for our sins; there too I see the heavens in darkness, and earth a scene of utter confusion and rebellion against Him; yea, not even God espousing His cause, but on the contrary forsaking Him—the true God, His own God,

abandoning Him, the Holy One, Whom He made sin for us. Does this give me my conscious peace, and joy, and liberty? Peace I never could have without it; but were there only the cross thus seen, how could we enjoy it? Absolutely needed not only for us, but to vindicate and glorify God, as the cross is, it seems plain that we ought to be in the darkness, the grief, and the shame of the cross, yea, that we ought to abide there still, if God had only thus dealt with His beloved Son. Why should we expect more? What right could we have to look beyond, were this all?

But if we behold the resurrection, what a new and pregnant fact! The same God Who smote Jesus raised Him; the same God Who then forsook Him now ranges Himself on His side, and, not satisfied with raising Him up from the grave, takes and sets Him “far above all principalities and powers” in the very highest place, “at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And what is all that, you ask, for you, me, and all who believe? Beloved friends, it is Christianity. It is not merely the cross, though the cross be the sole sufficient foundation; but you cannot separate Christianity from the person of Christ exalted on high consequent on redemption. That risen Second Man in the presence of God it is Who determines the acceptance of the believer now. The Lord Jesus is the object of the perfect favor of God; and His work has brought every Christian into the same place of favor and relationship. “You that were sometime alienated...yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.” Such is the cloudless grace in which all now stand who believe. There is no difference whatever as to the standing of the Christian. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” If there was no difference as to sin, there is none as to acceptance; for Christ is all and in all.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation,” &c. Thus the apostle in Rom. 8 triumphantly closes his comprehensive unfolding of justification. There is no weakening, modifying, or hesitation about the doctrine. Death and resurrection, or their results, remain, as ever, his theme—the security for the believer, no less than the ground and character of divine righteousness.

Thus in our baptism we owned ourselves dead with Christ, buried with Him unto death, that like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; we reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held. In the Lord's Supper it is His death we show forth till He come, not His living for us under law, which is nowhere said, but eating of His body broken for us, and drinking of His blood shed for us. So again, under the pain and pressure of our daily path, we have His intercession for us at God's right hand, His ever living on high to plead for us; nowhere a repairing of our faults in the flesh, as on earth and under law. There is no going back for comfort there; “for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” It is all in pointed contrast with an earthly legal state. For us it is the Son perfected for evermore. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Most sweet it is, that if any sin, “Jesus Christ the Righteous” is the advocate we

have with the Father; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 200

The Righteousness of God: What Is It? 7

THE evident scope then of the righteousness of God is, that He Himself is righteous in justifying the believer by virtue of Christ's work in all its extent and blessedness. It is a work first viewed in the efficacy of His blood-shedding upon earth, but alone fully displayed in His resurrection, that we might stand in Him, cleared from all charge, the old nature being thus judged before God, and a new life given according to the power and character and acceptance of Him risen from the grave. Legal obedience is essentially individual. The law is the measure of duty as in the flesh to God. Its righteousness therefore wholly differs from God's righteousness, not in degree or sphere only, but in source and kind. To the sinner the law was necessarily a ministry of death and condemnation; to our blessed Lord an occasion for manifesting His perfectness and having its own character retrieved.

But never did the law hold out such a prospective reward as quickening or justifying others. The idea is purely imaginative, and entirely false. Nor did Christ earn life by doing the law: such a thought denies the glory of His person. “In Him was life;” yea, He was “that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” Not as made of a woman, made under law, did He give life, but as the Son of God, quickening whom He would in His own sovereign title, and in communion with the Father. But the law knows nothing of the sort; it says, the man that does these things lives, and the man that does not dies. So Christ, speaking for it, says, not to sin-convicted souls but to the self-righteous young ruler, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” No dead ever passed into life by this road, but only by faith, only by hearing the voice of the Son of God. For eternal life is the free gift of God, and is never otherwise the portion of sinful man. It is false then, and ignorance of the gospel, to say that we enter into life by virtue of Christ's keeping the commandments; for life and incorruption are expressly declared to be brought to light by the gospel, not by the law. “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” But it could give neither. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

Hence, in scripture, legal righteousness is never treated as vicarious: if it be so, where? Not only is the language of the law intensely, exclusively personal, but the New Testament pointedly contrasts it with the language of faith in Rom. 10 “For they [the Jews], being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law [why not tell us of fulfilling it?] for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto

salvation.”

It is impossible to conceive words more directly fitted to shut out the thought of the same righteousness, only fulfilled by Christ for us. The point insisted on is, that there are two righteousnesses which speak two-wise: not a single righteousness of law, obligatory on us, and done by Christ; but one righteousness of law, and another of faith; one of doing to live, and the other of believing (not that the Lord Jesus kept the law for us, to justify us by filling up the deficiencies of the old man, but) that God raised Him from the dead. It is a question of salvation, which finds its answer only in the righteousness that is of faith.

Again, this difference is entirely confirmed by Phil. 3:9, where one's own righteousness is explained to be of law, in contradistinction to that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the ground of faith. And the reason is obvious. Legal righteousness is that which every one under law is bound to render to God; the righteousness which is God's, and of God on the ground of faith, is of pure grace, and as much higher and better as God is above man—yes, above what man ought to be; for this was human, that is divine righteousness. The law never called a righteous man, still less a divine person, to die for sinners; never claimed his resurrection, and still less to raise him again for their justification; never proposed to glorify in God Himself a suffering, crucified, but therein God-glorifying man, still less to give us the glory which the Father gave the Son. The law, in fine, sought righteousness from man, made God but the receiver and so far passive, man being contemplated as the active party. In the gospel, on the contrary, God has His due and better place as active in grace through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. It reveals His righteousness. It is δικαιοσ■νη Θεο■ and not only ■κ Θεο■ divine in nature and in source.

John 16:8-10 does not expressly mention “the righteousness of God,” but its close and evident connection with it is full of instruction and interest. “I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,” &c. It is a totally different process from that of Judaism. In the prophets' times the law was made to reprove the Jews of sin. And so at any time it may be the instrument to deal with the guilty, and convict them of sin. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” But now appears another power, mightier yet deeper withal, and not precept or principle only but a living divine person. Assuredly He is here, while Jesus is away, for glorifying Him, for teaching and comforting those who believe in Him; but the same Holy Ghost sent down from heaven affords the demonstration to the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment. Whether men like it or not, such is the effect of His presence and acts: let them beware of fighting against that word.

The Spirit then yields proof to the world of three things: “of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness” —is it because Christ came from Jehovah to fulfill the law for man? On the contrary it is “because I go to my Father; I of judgment, because the ruler of this world hath been judged,” that great fact that faith now knows, instead of only waiting for the public execution of it on a guilty world at Christ's appearing. How then can men continue to speculate? Why should believers persist in giving up that which Christ declares here? It is a mere delusion which the enemy encourages them in, because he knows that, in their zeal for putting believers under law, they are losing the full and fresh power of God's grace and truth as set forth in the death, resurrection, and

ascension of Christ. The object of the enemy is to make some fancy about Christ Himself a means to take people back to the state of things before redemption. Do you suppose Satan is become less keen-sighted? Do you imagine that he has lost his ancient subtlety? This is his aim—if he cannot keep people altogether away from Christ, as little of Christ as possible. Even scripture may be so misused as to help it on.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 201

The Righteousness of God: What is it? 8

(Concluded)

WHEN Christ was on the earth, redemption was not effected; God was still dealing with the world; man was not thoroughly condemned. The “strange doctrine” I am combating at once dishonors Christ's sufferings and consequent heavenly glory, puts God again behind a veil, deprives believers of the full liberty of redemption, resuscitates the flesh, and represents the world as a present possible scene of enjoyment. It is not the wrong of any one association in particular. Christ's law-keeping for us is quite as strongly held among rationalists as dissenters, and more among Calvinists than Arminians. This tenacity, in holding on to what they cannot prove from scripture, demonstrates how powerful is the spell of tradition, new or old, and how small is the place they practically give to the authority of God's word over their souls. Hence too unbridled license of tongue and pen to make up for scriptural evidence, and this in proportion to their own want of a spiritual mind and of enlarged acquaintance with the ways of God. The consequence is that the zeal which should be put forth in defense of God's blessed truth evaporates in ignorant and powerless efforts to pass off on others, as the light, those earth-born clouds by which their own souls have been kept in comparative darkness.

Let us look at another and serious application. How do we know that man is lost? By the word of God, no doubt; but it is the doctrine of the resurrection that shows the state in which every one lies who has not resurrection-life in Christ. Therefore it is that we find many a soul pretty much in the plight of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. They are waiting for the troubling of the waters, instead of enjoying the blessed fact and proof in their own souls, that He is come Who is life everlasting, and that He, dead and risen, gives life in deliverance from sin, law, world, and judgment. Without slighting any good man, and with some little knowledge of the best men's writings in most ages, one may say confidently that this legal theory is the millstone about the necks of most moderns.

For us Christ is dead and risen and gone on high, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is the righteousness therefore of which the Holy Ghost is convincing the world; not man's under law, but God's in grace. “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” Christ, rejected of men, is gone to the Father, and has done with the world, as such, for the present. The world will never see Christ again, till He comes in judgment of it. The Christian even now belongs to Christ in heaven, and will go shortly to meet Him in the air and to be with Him in the Father's house. He will also appear with Christ; and the world will behold Christ and the Christian in the same glory. The world will then see with shame and remorse what it was to despise Christ and those who are Christ's and bore the testimony of His name. What a changing of sides! Assuredly the joy and the grief in that day will be incalculable. All really turns on Christ and His word. Are you honoring Him, His word, and His work now? If so, blessed are you now, and how blessed then!

But observe here again how law-righteousness differs from that of God. Law promises earth and living long on it to those who keep it. Grace gives Christ to suffer for our sins, the Just for the unjust, raises Him for our justifying, glorifies Him in heaven, and makes us God's righteousness in Him there, with the sure hope that He will soon come to have us with Himself where He is. No doubt the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. But then with Christ we died to it, instead of being alive—not, as the English Bible makes it out, by the law being dead to us (Rom. 7:6), which would be to abrogate the law indeed, but by our being dead to it by the body of Christ. Thus, being in Christ, there is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Weigh the last verse of 2 Cor. 5: “He hath made to be sin for us Him Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Some find a little difficulty here, and this, because the “righteousness of God” is applied with a somewhat different shade of meaning. But can you bring in the fulfilling of the law? If there be a Scripture that more positively excludes it than another, it is this verse. It is not that God made Christ to keep the law for us, that we might thus have His performance of it imputed to us; but “He made Him to be sin for us.” What and when was this? Was it anything but the cross? It is evidently and exclusively that wondrous work. Thus it is another form in which the righteousness of God is presented. For here it is not put before us, so to speak, objectively; it is predicated of the saints. The righteousness of God is upon us in Rom. 3; here it is what we became in Christ. No matter, however, whether it comes before us in Scripture objectively or subjectively: it carries always the thought of what God to us is because of Christ and His cross. It is God justifying us righteously by virtue of Christ, without the remotest allusion to Christ's keeping the law for us. God made to be sin for us Christ “that knew no sin.” Christ had no sin within, neither had He done anything sinful. He did not even know sin. Yet “God made Him to be sin for us” upon the cross: it was atonement for us, “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The apostle connects all present relationship with Christ at the right hand of God; even as, from his conversion, we know he had to do with Christ in glory. It is the capital truth of all that part of the epistle. Compare 2 Cor. 3; 4 (and it is always of importance to get the context, for this does not deceive), where you will find that the point is Christ glorified as the object of the Christian's regard, in contrast with Moses veiled which was the distinctive sign for Israel. They could not even look upon Moses without a veil, which is the exact type to represent Judaism. With a veiled man they had to do then; whereas “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” (not Christ fulfilling the law for us upon earth) “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.”

In other words, Christ glorified in heaven is the proper object of the Christian's daily contemplation. He knows and delights in the walk of Christ, as he follows Him in spirit here below; he rests exclusively upon the blood of Christ, as that which purges his guilt; but the object of his soul, which transforms and acts upon him from day to day, is Christ beheld in glory. So, in 2 Cor. 4, it is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (as Paul saw Him literally in glory, we by faith), “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Again, chap. 5. confirms the same doctrine: “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” Here of course He is viewed, as not on earth, but in heaven. And so, at the close, we are told that “Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of

God in Him." On the other hand, in John 16 we saw the Spirit, sent down, convicting the world of righteousness, because Christ, rejected from earth, is accepted on high. There was no righteousness in the world: had there been a particle, they would have bowed down and worshipped the Son of God. But they cast Him out in unrighteousness: He goes to the Father; and the world sees Him no more: This is, in both its parts, righteousness. But it is not all; for God not only shows His righteousness by exalting the world-despised Jesus to His right hand, but He makes us His righteousness in Christ. What an incomparable blessing! We become "the righteousness of God in Him."

With another I would illustrate this truth by directing you to the analogous case of Jerusalem and Jehovah. (Compare Jer. 23:6, and 33:16.) In the former passage Jehovah is called "our righteousness." "This is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." In the latter passage, "This is [the name] wherewith she [Jerusalem] shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." Thus Jerusalem acquires by grace a standing in association with Him Who is the source of her justification. But even this is never said to be by law or law-fulfilling, be it by whom it may. Substitution is of the essence of the gospel; vicarious sacrifice was an unquestionable truth before the law, and during the law, as it is forever consecrated in Christ's one offering, which set aside the Levitical system. The obedience of One is that by which alone any can be justified; but it is His obedience all through: not the active, as men say, contrasted with the passive, but His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But where is He said to have obeyed the law for us? Where, that His life was vicarious? He suffered, was made a curse, was made sin, died for us—all most true—His substitution and satisfaction on the cross; which is enfeebled, not strengthened, by the unscriptural addition of His walk on earth, as if this also were substitutional.

So it is then with us as with the earthly city. "Jehovah our righteousness" is the name of the Lord in connection with Israel. Our association is with Christ in heaven. The Lord Jesus has been received up in glory; divine righteousness is shown in exalting Him risen on the throne. But if God displayed His righteousness in setting Christ there, He further exercises His righteousness in setting us in Him there. Such is the efficacy of His work as made sin for us. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who from God was made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Chapter 202

Letters on Certain Points in Romanism: I. Rule of Faith

Power in the church is neither more nor less than that of the Holy Ghost. There may be added at the beginning the apostles as constituted of the Lord Jesus and having directions from Him. But now this is simply the working of the Holy Ghost in the church. This may be in an individual according to measure of power given to him, or it may be in the body; but it will always recognize the Holy Ghost in the body and in all the members. This is most marked in the Epistles. They speak as to wise men, who have an unction from the Holy One. This is the whole matter: which once departed from, some mere arrangement takes its place, and the Holy Ghost is in principle—namely in faith—set aside, and weakness is soon apparent. The kingdom of God is in power; but this power is known only to faith.

As to “tradition,” no one who has read the Greek Testament can a moment doubt that the word in the N. T. means a doctrine delivered, not handed down; though this might sometimes be the character of what was delivered. “Form of teaching into which ye were instructed, lit. delivered” (■ ■ π τδ. of Rom. 6:17) makes this plain. So tradition in the popular sense is in contrast with scripture. But in the passage you refer to (2 Thess. 2:15), it is either the direct word of prophecy in the church there, or the apostle's epistle. No thing handed down in the church is secured by subsequent authority. The saints were to keep the doctrine they had been taught—the body of saints. Suppose I were to write to the body of saints in — to hold fast what they had been taught, whether viva voce, or what I had written to them by letter, what would this have to say to the authority of the church or tradition of a subsequent era? Yet this is exactly the case, save that that teaching was divine and inspired, and therefore the exhortation had its peculiar place and weight: “the instructions [traditions] which ye were taught, whether by word or by epistle of ours.” It clearly shows tradition just to be a doctrine delivered.

Nor do I see what the communication of what he had learned to faithful men (2 Tim. 2:2), so as to form teachers, has to do with tradition. Nobody, unless they deny ministry, could gainsay this; and as far, as a man could be trusted as receiving it from Paul, it would of course have weight; but that is just the question. It was not authority, but a means of communicating truth. The confounding these two things is generally the unperceived sophism of Milner's End of Controversy— “A rule of faith, he says, or means of communicating Christ's religion. It must be plain, etc. But these things are not the same. A mother does it to her babe, but she is not a rule of faith; she does it perhaps perfectly well, but this alters nothing. Now here the apostle is directing the means of communicating truth to others, of course as surely as he can, but not setting up either authority or a rule of faith. When I had a dozen young men reading with me at Lausanne, I was doing this according to my ability. Was I dreaming of setting up authority or a rule of faith in them? Certainly not. The written word is clearly such the moment we own it inspired.

The real question is, Is it (scripture) addressed to all saints as possessing the Spirit so as to use it? They are the church. Ministry may be a means of communicating, and a very precious one, as in Eph. 4; but ministers are never a rule nor an authority. A rule must be an existing quantum of

doctrine; but this no men are. This as an authority must be infallible, which none is but God. Infallible is more than perfectly right. I may say what is absolutely right, but I am not infallible. Whenever the apostles spoke by inspiration, they uttered in revelation what was absolutely right from God; but this did not make them infallible. God is so, because in His nature He never can say anything but what is right. When God spoke by them, as every true Christian believes he did, they were absolutely right; but God remained the alone Infallible, Who never could of Himself say anything wrong. This was not communicated to an apostle since; if he did not speak by inspiration, he was as another man—more experienced perhaps, but a man. Inspiration comes from the infallible One, but does not render the inspired one infallible, but only perfectly right and divine in what he utters as inspired.

Further, I believe God will secure by His power that the truth shall not be lost in the church to the end. It may be only in an upright godly few, as when almost all the professing church and Pope Liberius among them turned Arian. But this does not make ala church infallible; yet it does prove that God will keep His elect in vital essential truth to the end. But being kept is not authority. I am persuaded I shall be kept in the truth for the end—sure of it through grace; but this is not making me an infallible authority. It is just the opposite: I am subject to the truth. So the church, the elect saints, are subject to the truth always. They may have accompanying obscurities on many points; hut they will never deny saving truth to the church. Many foolish things may be brought in and added; but they will not deny saving truth.

This the Council of Trent, and hence the Roman Catholic body (I do not say every individual), have pretty much done. Hence the difference of the Establishment. The Prayer-book has added a mass of destructive, false, and superstitious errors; but the Articles in general, though obscurely, do not deny but proclaim saving truth. Hence of the Galatians Paul was afraid: they were on the point of denying really the saving truth, though recovered. The Colossians were introducing superstitions which led to this; but they were not met exactly in the same way, as they were not denying justification by faith, for example, as the Galatians were well nigh doing. But this is saving subjection to the truth, not authority; and it is the real point of difference.

They say, with a law we must have an interpreting judge. God says, with His word we must have saving faith mixed. The heart must bow to His word itself: another cannot do this. Nobody denies that one can help another according to the measure of the Spirit—that is, help spiritually the soul in reception. But this is not authority, it is ministry. The truth received has God's authority; and by receiving the truth we are subject to Him. The word of God can have no authority outside to apply it, nor power either, but God Himself. Its whole object is to bring the soul and conscience into direct and immediate relationship with Himself. Interposed authority as to conscience sets aside God. There cannot be a judge with God's word, because Christ is; there may be discipline, and, in this sense, judgment in which the whole assembly acts: but this is another question. The whole point is the authority of God's word itself on the conscience. And mark, because God has said it, discerning it such, we set to our seal that God is true—not that the church is. The church it is that believes His word; and thereby it is the church. So “ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The church does not judge about the word of God The word of God judges the church, first as sinners, then as saints. Whoever gets above this gets into sin—is not a doer of the law but a judge.

I do not enter here on the external part of the question—that the tradition, or even the authority, is not to be found, though de facto many things are surely believed. It is clear that the local priest is not that authority or rule, though he may be a means of communicating. It is quite clear that the ponderous tomes of the Councils are not a more clear or accessible or intelligible rule of faith than the living word. But the truth is, they are not agreed where it resides, in a Pope or a Council; and this is serious. It will be said, Certainly in both. But the Council of Constance deposed the Pope, and that of Basle set itself above the Pope and ended without him. Also, there were two; and neither was owned by the former. And yet more: Romanism cannot pronounce with unanimity which are the general Councils. There are (I trust my memory) nineteen; but they dispute as to the enumeration of them. What a difference from the pure word of God? [These letters were written in I846: two Councils having been held since.]

Chapter 203

Letters on Certain Points in Romanism: 2. Rule of Faith

It is very important to observe that Romanism does take infidel ground, and to press this on their consciences: I have often done so in Ireland. God is competent to make men responsible by speaking Himself—this is a most important proposition and this is the one thing they have to defend—by His own testimony, that is. In their arguments there is a grand π ρ■τον ψε■δος namely, that the means of communicating Christ's religion is the rule of faith. This is a fundamental fallacy in Milner's "End of Controversy." A mother, a child, may be the means of communicating Christ's religion; but they are not a rule of faith. These two things may be united [as in the scriptures], but they are in no way the same things. I suppose the book you have, however, is Wiseman's.

Now I would take the bull by the horns, and say that there is no living saving faith whatever, but that which is wrought by the operation of the word of God, received on His direct authority without any other warrant whatever. If it is received on the authority of the church, it is not believing GOD. The word of God proves itself to the conscience, and puts man by itself under the responsibility of it; because God cannot speak without man's being bound to hear and know Him, for none speaks like Him. He may in grace use proofs and confirmations and witnesses; but man is bound to hear Him. God will prove that in the day of judgment. Nay, the very heathen are without excuse on much lower ground.

The reason too is plain practically. The word of God judges and is not judged. Man is "convinced of all, he is judged of all;" and, the secrets of his heart being revealed, he falls down and confesses, that "God is in you of a truth." This is not authority; but it is the only saving thing. A man does not want authority to know that a two-edged sword is sharp. A faith founded on miracles, though God vouchsafed this confirmation, is no saving faith at all: Jesus did not commit Himself to it (John 2). He knew what was in man. But then in the corruption of the church and its prevalent power, it may be a reason why none but those who receive the love of the truth should ever escape. But this power of the word by the Spirit acting on, not judged by, man supposes the unbeliever: all else is no living faith at all. Whereas the church has the Spirit and the word; and the spiritual man judges all things.

Hence then I first take the ground that if the word of God be received on another's authority, it is the rejection of God's testimony. If I receive an account of another, because you put your name to it, it is because I do not believe the person who gives the account. God may providentially make it to be received where this genuine faith is not; but then it is not saving. To be saving it must be faith in God; and "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;" he who demands the church's authority to receive it has not.

God may have used all manner of means for preserving or even authenticating the testimony, and so He has in many, as we might expect. And I believe the scriptures were committed to the church to keep—not to authorize but, to keep; as I keep a document safe, but give it no authority: it has its own; but I keep it safe. Now God, I believe, providentially has done this. But then the Roman body

has decidedly failed in this; because, at the Council of Trent which is with them of divine authority, it has declared that to be scripture which declares itself not to be. That is, for example, the second book of Maccabees, which concludes by saying, If I have done well, it is as befits the subject; if ill, it is according to my ability. Now it is profane to suppose for an instant that this is the Holy Ghost's inditing. The Prologus Galeatus indeed of Jerome, generally prefixed to the Vulgo te, declares the Apocryphal books are not scripture. Many other passages from the Apocrypha could he adduced: such as that the offerings for the dead were for those dead in mortal sin; and that there are three contrary accounts of the death of Antiochus. But I prefer the fact, that one book of the Maccabees declares it is not scripture, as above.

Moreover, it is well known that Sixtus V., acting under the authority of the Council of Trent, promulgated as the only authentic word of God an edition of the Vulgate which was suppressed; and his successor Clement altered it in 2,000 places. Five copies only of the Sixtine are known to be in existence; and Clement's bears in appearance its name. Rome has been in no sense, what the church ought to be, a faithful keeper of the “oracles of God committed” to it.

But after all, clever as Doctor Wiseman is, it is a vicious circle he is in. He takes the scripture as an authentic book. This itself then he supposes may be done. But if authentic, in the first place it is inspired, as any one who reads it may see. That is, it gives us (to say the very least, for I think it goes farther) an authentic account of the actual authoritative teaching of Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude, and of the Lord Himself. If this be so, I have no need of the church to receive its doctrine as divine. The authentic record of Christ's words and the apostles' teaching gives me a divine instruction directly, which no reference to a derivative authority can set aside; because the body, which would set aside or call in question the authority of that from which it derives, is not derivative at all. If it be then authentic, I have the original divine instructions, which founded, formed, and guided the church itself at first, If it be not authentic, then to find that the church was founded proves nothing; for if not authentic, I do not know it is true. If I am to receive the church from scripture, I certainly can receive Christ's and the apostles' word directly.

But I may go farther. If it be not inspired as well as authentic, and if I do not know it to be so, I have no inspired warrant, that is, no divine warrant for hearing the church at all. So that, on this ground, you cannot set up the authority of the church without setting up previously the authority of scripture itself. The authenticity proves inspiration, or it gives no inspired authority for the church, and I hear in scripture all Christ's and the apostles' inspired words, as well as that as to the church. For if I receive something a person says and not the rest, I receive none of it on his authority.

But examining the point farther, I find the authority of this authentic book showing me plainly a church indeed established, that is, an assembly, but quite the contrary to the conclusion drawn from it. I find the test of being of God as to doctrine to be hearing the apostles themselves; “He that is of God heareth us.” Now I have their authentic words in this book; and I am not of God if I do not hear them themselves, as the guard against error. When I turn to hearing the church, I find not a word about doctrine at all, but a case of discipline (any rules of which, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, are not binding unless where received, though decreed by a Council, while they allege decrees on faith are: the discipline of the Council of Trent was not everywhere received). It is a question of wrong done, carried to two or three, and at last before the assembly; and if the wronging party will not mind the assembly, he is to be avoided by the offended one as a heathen.

Whereas I find the scriptures referred to as the security in perilous times, and the certainty of having received the doctrines from the apostles personally— “Knowing of whom.” I find the Lord (Whose words all of us would bow to as divine) preferring, as to the medium of communication, the written word: “If they believe not his writings, how shall they believe my words?” “They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them.”

Now if we separate the rule of faith from the means of communicating Christ's religion (which last all admit may be and is now fallible—consequently the individual priest), where is their accessible rule? Is it in the acts of nineteen Councils (and which are they? For you are aware that Romanists are not agreed which the nineteen are)—acts in Latin moreover, or in Greek? Where is this accessible rule of faith? And now, farther, Romanists are not agreed what the rule is. Ultramontanes hold the Pope infallible, Cismontanes hold he is not. Many, as the Councils of Constance and Basle, hold that they had authority to act independently of and superior to the Pope. At the time of the former there were two Popes. The Council deposed them and chose another (Martin V.) who dissolved the Council. Is the Council of Constance a general council? If so, it has given an authority in matters of faith quite different from the Papal advocates; and it acted on that and deposed the Popes. If it had not that authority, the whole succession of the popedom since is founded on a schismatical act. However this may be, the authority on matters of faith Romanists are not agreed on. Not only so, but their Councils have decreed things against the Pope's authority, and lie against theirs. The acts at Basle the Pope declared void after the departure of his legate, having transferred the Council elsewhere, though only a part left. But further, the Council of Chalcedon declared the equality of the Sees of Constantinople and Rome, which Pope Leo rejected.

Now if a Roman Catholic say, I am not learned enough for all this, then I reply, Where is the simplicity, the accessibleness, of their rule of faith? For this is it. If you say, But I trust my priest, then you are on confessedly fallible ground. I had much rather trust, with God's help by the Spirit, the writings of Paul and Peter and John, &c., addressed to all saints and expressly so addressed. How fallible the Romanist rule you may suppose, when I tell you that, in the four standard catechisms published by the authority of different Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, there are not the same lists of the seven deadly sins; but this is by the bye.

Is it not a fearfully upsetting thing that the moment I turn to the Bible—take the Roman translation—it sets aside all the cardinal points of Romanism, for instance the Mass? I read, there is no more oblation for sin. I am told by the highest authority of the Roman system, that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Take away this; and all Romanism falls. Again, there is one Mediator. Now Romanism makes many, and in fact more referred to than Christ. And it is in vain to say that it is only as praying. Their merits are positively acted on in the Missal, and the Virgin Mary is called upon to save us now and at the hour of death. Nay, so far is this carried that the Confiteor, on which absolution is received, leaves out Christ altogether.

The inadequacy of the scriptures to give unity is a mere claptrap. Has Rome produced it? Clearly not, unless by blood. Look at it from without. Authority, they say, was in the church from the beginning; if not, it is new and good for nothing. Well, did it preserve unity? Witness the Greeks, Nestorians, Jacobites; earlier the Novatian system, the Paulicians; later the Protestants. Half professing Christendom at this moment is outside their unity. But, their authority being alleged to

be the original effectual thing, it is clear that it has failed to preserve it. They tried by fire and blood when protestantism arose, but in half Europe in vain. Present facts then prove its inadequacy to this end. To say that it promotes unity among those subject to it is merely what the smallest sect in Christendom would say too. I remember a poor Romanist telling me nine-and-thirty religions rose out of the Bible. I told him I suppose his did, or it was good for nothing (which he admitted), and I told him then there were forty. And really the argument is worth no more. Nothing can produce true unity, but the teaching and power of the Spirit of God.

Chapter 204

Letters on Certain Points in Romanism: 3. Its Infidelity

IT is very important to observe that Romanism does take infidel ground, and to press this on their consciences: I have often done so in Ireland. God is competent to make men responsible by speaking Himself. This is a most important proposition; and this is the one thing they have to defend (by His own testimony, that is). In their arguments there is a grand primary lie, namely, that the means of communicating Christ's religion is the same thing as the rule of faith. This is a fundamental fallacy of Milner's “End of Controversy.” A mother, a child, may be the means of communicating Christ's religion; but they are not a rule of faith. These two things may be united, but they are in no way the same thing. (I suppose the book you have, however, is Wiseman's).

Now I would take the bull by the horns and say that there is no living saving faith whatever, but that which is wrought by the operation of the word of God, received on His direct authority, without any other warrant. If it be received on the authority of the church, it is not believing God. The word of God proves itself to the conscience, and puts man by itself under the responsibility of crediting it; because God cannot speak without man's being bound to know and hear Him, for none spake like Him. He may in grace use proofs and confirmations and witnesses; but man is bound to hear Him: God will prove this in the day of judgment. Nay, the very heathen are without excuse on much lower ground. The reason, too, is plain practically. The word of God judges, and is not judged: man “is convinced of all, he is judged of all “; and, the secrets of his heart being revealed, he falls down and confesses “that God is in you of a truth.” This is not authority, but it is the only saving thing. A man does not want authority to know that a two-edged sword is sharp. A faith founded on miracles, though God vouchsafed this confirmation, is no saving faith at all: Jesus did not commit Himself to it (John ii.). He knew what was in man. But then in the corruption of the church and its prevalent power, it may be a reason why none but those who receive the love of the truth should escape. For this power of the word by the Spirit, acting on man, not judged by him, supposes the unbeliever: all else is no living faith. But the church has the Spirit and the word, and the spiritual man judges all things.

Hence then I first take the ground, that the word of God received on His direct authority is a rejection of God's testimony. If I receive an account of another because you put your name to it, it is because I do not believe the person who gives the account. God may providentially make it to be received where this genuine saving faith is not; but then it is not saving. To be saving it must be believing God. “He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true “; he that demands the church's authority to receive it has not. God may have used all manner of means of preserving and even authenticating the testimony; and so He has in many as we might expect; and I believe the scriptures were committed to the church to keep—not to authorize but to keep; as I keep a document safe, I give it no authority: it has its own, but I keep it safe.

Now God, I believe, has providentially done this. But then the Roman body has decidedly failed in it; because at the Council of Trent, which is with them of divine authority, it has declared that to be scripture which declares itself not to be so. That is, for example, the second book of Maccabees,

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But when I examine the point farther, I find the authority of this authentic book showing one plainly a church indeed established, that is, an assembly; but quite the contrary to the conclusion drawn from it. I find the test of being of God as to doctrine to be hearing the apostles themselves: “he that is of God heareth us.” And I have their authentic words in this book. I am not of God if I do not hear them, themselves, as the guard against error. When I turn to hearing the church, I find not a word about doctrine at all, but a case of discipline (any rules of which, according to Romanist doctrine, are not binding unless where received, though decreed by a Council, though they allege decrees on faith are. The discipline of the Council of Trent was not everywhere received). It is a question of wrong done, carried to two or three, and at last before the assembly; and if the wronging party will not mind the whole body, he may be avoided by the offended one as a heathen. Whereas I find the scriptures referred to as the security in perilous times, and the certainty of having received the doctrine from the apostles personally, “knowing of whom.” I find the Lord, Whose words all of us would bow to as divine, yet preferring, as the medium of communication, the written word: “If they believe not his writings, how shall they believe My words?” “They have Moses and the prophets:

let them hear them."

Now if we separate the rule of faith from the means of communicating Christ's religion (which last all admit may he, and is now, fallible—consequently the individual priest), where is their accessible rule? Is it in the Acts of 19 [now 21] Councils? (And which are they? For you are aware that Romanists are not agreed which they are)—acts in Latin moreover, or in Greek? Where is this accessible rule of faith? And now further, Romanists are not agreed what the rule is. Ultramontanes hold the Pope infallible; Cismontanes hold he is not. Many, as the Councils of Constance and Basle hold that they had the authority to act independent of and superior to the Pope. At the time of the former there were two popes. The Council deposed them, and chose another, Martin V., who dissolved the Council. Is the Council of Constance a general Council? If so, it has given an authority in matters of faith quite different from the papal advocates; it acted on it too and deposed the popes; and yet if it had not this authority, the whole succession of the popedom is founded on a schismatical act. However that may be, the authority on matters of faith Romanists are not agreed on. Not only so, but these Councils have decreed things against the Pope's authority, and he against theirs. The Acts at Basle the Pope declared void after the departure of his legate, having transferred the Council elsewhere, though only a part left. So, further, the Council of Chalcedon declared the equality of the Sees of Constantinople and Rome: this Pope Leo rejected.

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But is there not a fearfully upsetting thing, that the moment I do turn to the Bible—take the Romanist translation—I find it sets aside the cardinal points of Romanism? For instance, the Mass: I read, there is no more oblation for sin. I am told by the highest authority of the Romish system, that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Yet take away this, and all Romanism falls Again, there is one Mediator. Now the Romish system makes many, and in fact more referred to than Christ is. And it is in vain to say that it is only as praying. Their merits are positively acted on in the Missal; and the Virgin Mary is called on to save us now and at the hour of death. Nay, so far is this carried, that the Confiteor, on which absolution is received, leaves out Christ altogether.

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say too. I remember a poor Romanist telling us nine-and-thirty religions arose out of the Bible. I told him, I suppose his did, or it was good for nothing; and thus there were forty. And really the argument is worth no more. Nothing can produce unity but the teaching and power of the Spirit of God.

Chapter 205

Letters on Certain Points in Romanism: 4. Transubstantiation

I HAVE generally found that, in sincere Roman Catholics where there was a value for Christ (though in some respects natural), transubstantiation remained the thought in their mind. It connects itself with a sensible apprehension of Him like a picture, and seems to be borne out by scripture—respects it, though not rightly dividing or understanding it.

Yet the scriptural reasons seem to me most strong and plain on the point, though a person may he a true saint and hold it, if the mass or sacrificial part is given up. This touches the knowledge by faith of the completeness of the one sacrifice and our known forgiveness by it.

There is no need of Syrian or Protestant commentators to know that words are used for designating things they represent. It is the universal language of man. I say of a portrait, That is my father; this is my uncle. No one doubts an instant what it means. “It is Jehovah's passover.” “I am the true vine.” “I am the door” is the converse. And it is as much and as surely said of “The Cup” as of the elements: “this cup is the new testament in my blood” —thereby demonstrating the mode of speaking. As soon as the sense attached by the church to it is got rid of, our ordinary use of language would not convey the Roman sense to the mind. It is really an imposed one.

Further, Paul positively calls it “bread” we break: why is this not literal? In what follows we have those figures, which no language can be spoken without— “the cup which we bless.” Was it the cup he blessed? Proper literality in the strict sense would make nonsense of all language—is not its known sense. I drink a glass of wine: who ever doubted what this meant It is not, as men speak, the literal sense to give the physical one. He drew a picture of vice in his sermon: who thinks he drew a picture? So, in a nearer case, a man brings his sin (chattath) to Jehovah. Christ was made sin. These bones are the whole house of Israel: does any one doubt what it means? There are many such in Ezekiel: only here we have no verb at all.

And now as to the scriptural meaning of the doctrine. First, if the Roman Catholic one were true, it would be a sacrament, not of redemption, but of non-redemption. That doctrine holds that the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord Jesus are all contained in each of the elements. But if the blood be thus united to the body, there is no redemption at all. It is the blood “shed” which is redemption; and therefore we are called to “drink” it as a separate thing. It is body given we are told of, and shed blood. If the blood be in the body, there is no redemption. Christ has not a life of blood now: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. If I take it shed, I own the great and blessed redemption. Take it otherwise than separate and shed, and it is a sign that there is none.

And this leads me farther. There is no such Christ in existence as that signified by the sacramental institution. There is a glorified Christ with a body in heaven, but this is a given body and shed blood. That is, it is a dead Christ we, in the power of resurrection, recognize and feed on—that by which we were brought in, that all-precious sacrifice. But there is no dead Christ now. There cannot be a given body and shed blood now. 'There is no such thing in existence, while faith knows all its value in the one blessed act of the cross. Hence also it cannot be literally, or rather

physically, true. “This is my body that is given;” but it was not given then, nor was the Lord dead. The living Christ did not hold actually and literally the dead Christ in His own hand. And this is absolutely necessary to the literal or rather (without meaning to offend the feelings of those who have learned to reverence it) the gross carnal sense. The given body and shed blood clearly represent a dead Christ. We know the unspeakable preciousness of that wondrous fact such as none is like. It is all our hope, the death of the Son of God. But there is no dead Christ in existence: hence it cannot be a physical reality. It is shed blood I need for my soul: where is that literally? And farther it was not literally true then. Christ was not given and His blood shed when He spoke to His beloved disciples.

Yet his feeding on death is the very thing that is precious. A Jew dared not: it was death to him. But, now Christ is dead, death is life and gain to us. Hence too we must “drink” His blood—that is, take it as shed out: “he that drinketh my blood.” The doctrine of concomitancy (that is, a whole Christ in such element) fails here; because the very point of power is “drinking” the blood, or receiving it as “shed,” taking it as such.

Hence while we see that the literal is only an imposed sense, contrary to the plain meaning of the words according to all habits of language, I find that it is on spiritual grounds, as to the eternal truth of Christ's doctrine and person, an impossible thing; that is, it contradicts the truth. There is no dead Christ now; but [in the Eucharist] it is clearly a dead Christ. And, further, it subverts the sense and spiritual power attached by Christ to it—His given body and shed blood, and makes it really, though unwittingly, a sacrament of non-redemption. Such is Satan's craft. Further, it cannot be literally true that Christ held Himself dead in His own hand; nor as the breaking [of the bread] really represents His suffering and death, did He in any sense do this indeed at any time, though after it He gave up His spirit to His Father.

Hence I lose all by this pseudo-literal sense; my soul wants, my soul enjoys, a suffering Christ, a dead victim. It is my salvation. I adore the grace in it; my soul feeds on it; I need it; I worship and joy in it, though humbled at what called for it; and my heart goes out to these sufferings and to Him Who endured them. But there is no such Christ now, no dead Christ to be literally true. If it is not a dead Christ, it is nothing at all to my faith. If it is a dead Christ, it is clearly not a literal one; for we all together, who love Him, rejoice in His exaltation.

The fact is that it is a very modern doctrine. It was never established till Innocent the Third's time in the Council of Lateran, and was written against by esteemed doctors just before. And while you find many magniloquent though unintelligent expressions in the Fathers, one of the earliest—if the Roman doctrine be maintained—is a heretic, Irenaeus. I remember that he says that after the ■π■κλησις two things were there, bread and Christ. I attach no importance to this as an authority. I think him wrong—imperfectly taught by the Holy Ghost in it. But it is a proof, not of truth—I never would use it as the smallest authority for it, but—that the Roman doctrine was not held by an early saint. Consubstantiation was more the common thought of doctors, I think, who took a real presence. To me one is as unsound as the other. It mistakes the real object of faith, a Christ dead and shed blood.

I do not add the common argument, “Whom the heavens must receive,” and therefore not here; nor the ubiquity of Christ's body being unsound as to its reality: you will be familiar with them. To a faithful soul, though these he true, the meaning of the Holy Ghost will have more power. I agree

with you as to “in remembrance of me."

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q.-Does the word of God really mean “eternal” or “everlasting” in Matt. 25:46? or only “age-lasting?” T. H. T,

A.-The word is used in Rom. 16:26 of God, in Heb. 9:14 of the Spirit, and in 1 John 1:2 of that life which Christ was and is. Are They merely age-lasting? In 2 Cor. 4:18 the same is contrasted with “temporal,” instead of being similar in force, as these false teachers aver. Nay, the verse itself refutes their desire; for even they own that the life of the saints is “everlasting,” and the same word in the same sentence is applied to the punishment of the wicked. Hebrew, Greek, English, or any other tongue, makes no difference. The N. T. differs from the Old in the utmost clearness as to this, now that Christ is come; as the O. T. had dwelt chiefly on the present government of God, while pointing here and there to the eternal things which are now unveiled under the gospel.

Q.-Does “the whole world” in Luke 2:1 include Russia, &c., or merely the Roman Empire?

A.-It is clear that a decree of Augustus or any other emperor could not run in its effect outside the empire. But it was the phrase of the day, as we see in Acts 24:5. To a Roman the orbs ruled the orbern terrarum. The world and the empire were the same; all without was of no account. But the apostles had a true and larger view, as we may see in Acts 17:31, Heb. 2:5, Rev. 3; 10, and elsewhere.

Q.-Gen. 49:10, compared with 2 Chron. 36:21, and Matt. 2:1, &c.; how would you deal with them?

A.-The “scepter” may be no more than the tribal symbol; and if this be the sense, Judah was thus kept till Shiloh, the Prince of Peace, came and was rejected, when in due time the place was lost, till He come again: then, and not before, the gathering or obedience of the peoples shall be unto Him. If it mean one entitled to royal sway in Zion, this is also true. So the line of David through Solomon went on to Jesus, as Matt. 1 shows; and in Him dead, risen, and glorified it abides, to be made good when God's time comes.

Q.-Parables of Matt. 13; what do they teach?

W. E.

A.-There is a complete circle of truth: seven, of which the first, though not a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, shows the Lord sowing the word, with the opposition of the devil, the flesh, and the world. The six after open its mysterious form while He, the King, is rejected and on high. Three were spoken outside to the multitude, three (with the Wheat-and-Tares interpreted) to the disciples within the house: the external and internal views of the kingdom. In the first the crop is spoiled by intermingling of tares, and no remedy till judgment at the Lord's appearing. In the second the little seed rises to a towering tree. In the third the leaven works, over a given space—creedism, not life.

But to the spiritual the Lord shows the treasure, and the field bought to have it; the one pearl of price, the union and beauty of His loved object for which He surrendered all His Jewish glory; and the final severance of the fish taken out of the sea of nations in the net, at the completion of the age.

Chapter 207

Scripture Queries and Answers: Matt. 24 and 25; John 19:14

Q.-Parables in Matt. 24 and 25: what do they teach? W.E.

A.-The successive parables of the Household Servants (faithful or evil), the Ten Virgins (wise or foolish), and the Talent-given Servants (good or wicked), are the portion of the Lord's great prophecy on Olivet, which sets forth Christendom, after the introductory part devoted to the Jews and the remnant in particular at the closing scenes (chap. 24:1-44), and before He winds up all with all the Gentiles (before His judgment seat as King in His glory) who will have been put to the test by His messengers preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the whole habitable earth, for a witness to all the nations before the end comes when He shall appear and sit on the throne of His glory. Accordingly, in the central parables, which treat of Christian profession, all Jewish allusion is dropped, which abounds in the opening portion.

Q.-Matt. 7:7, 8: what is the bearing of these verses? W.E.

A.-To encourage the disciples in dependence and prayer, with ever rising degrees of earnest importunity on our part, with every assurance of a gracious answer on our Father's. Even in human relationships the needy suppliant is not refused or mocked. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

Q.-John 19:14, compared with Mark 15:25?

A.-It would seem that the hours are regularly different in John, after the destruction of Jerusalem, from the Jews' familiar reckoning in Mark. If this be well founded, the different computation furnishes no real difficulty. Thus John would speak of the early morning; Mark of three hours after.

Chapter 208

Scripture Queries and Answers: Jacob Serving for Leah and Rachel; Psa. 22:21; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30

Q.-Is there typical meaning in Jacob's serving for Leah and Rachel, in Gen. 29? W. E.

A.-It appears that Rachel was the first beloved wife, but in fact the last actually to enjoy, and bear the fruits of, the relationship—Joseph rejected of his brethren and exalted in another sphere over Gentiles; and Benjamin, his mother's sorrow, but son of his father's right hand. Leah before this is the mother of many sons, as there are before Israel comes into full and happy view.

Q.-Psa. 22:21. What is the true rendering of this verse? J. N.

A.-I see no sufficient reason to question the common view. The R. V. is clearer than the A. V. The force of the verse lies in the unexpected turn. For “and from the horns of the r'eem” (wild oxen or buffaloes) the natural thought would have been “answer me.” But there can be no doubt that the only legitimate sense is, as is generally if not universally given, “thou hast answered,” or heard, “me.” It is impossible, without wresting the scriptural expression, to extract a future bearing. Parallelism is usual, but cannot override the plain language of inspiration; nor can a priori doctrine, which is sound only as far as it is subject to scripture. Nor is there more difficulty in understanding these words of our Lord than what He subsequently cited from Psa. 31:5. Is there not something to learn?

Q.-How is 2 Cor. 5:21 to be taken? W. E.

A.-In 1 Cor. 1:30 saints are said to be of God in Christ Jesus, Who was made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (for the body itself will be under the power of redemption at His coming). This is all of grace that no flesh may glory save in Him. But in the second Epistle the apostle goes farther and affirms that God made Christ Who knew no sin to be sin for us (i.e. dealt with as a sacrifice for it on our behalf) that we might be made or become His righteousness in Christ (i.e. blessed righteously according to His estimate of Christ's work and its answer in glory).

Q.-1 John 5:11? What is the force?

W. E.

A.-It seems impossible to make the truth plainer than the apostle was given to do. He is showing God's witness worthy of the greater heed, as in itself greater beyond comparison than any witness of men. And it is this, that God gave unto us, Christians, eternal life (not merely promises or a kingdom), and this life is in His Son. For He is that life, though of course far more, as being very God no less than the Father. But it is ours now, and it works in us all that is pleasing in His sight; though we have it in His Son, and all the more surely and incorruptibly ours because it is in Him. But it is equally true that we have life, as it is destructive error and unbelief to doubt or deny, to darken or defile, this grand truth of Christianity.

Q.-How is it that π■ς without the article in many cases like ■ξουσ■α, δικαιοσ■νη, κ.τ.λ means “all” and not “every”? QUERY.

A.-Because they express moral thoughts, grouping every case under the word; so that it is a question of our language not here admitting “every” but requiring “all” in idiomatic English. With article before or after, π■ς in English must be translated not “every” but “all.” So without it words expressive of moral ideas, as righteousness, joy, fear power, wisdom; but it really means every such case. So of the common “all flesh,” all the individuals without distinction. But ordinary appellatives come under the regular rule which is true of all languages.

Chapter 209

Scripture Queries and Answers: When Do O.T. Saints Rise?; Church Left Behind?; Psa. 69:4

Q.—When do the O.T saints rise? A.C.W.

A.— “They that are Christ's at His coming “: not the church only, but the O.T saints also, being Christ's (1 Cor. 15:23).

Q.—Are any of the church left behind to go through the final tribulation, or to miss the millennial reign in Christ? A. C. W.

A.—Not a single scripture intimates either. That which is written forms and strengthens the hope that every member of Christ's body will enjoy all so clearly and fully pledged in John 14, 17., and elsewhere. The bride of Christ is no mutilated body, as the error imagines. Again, those that go through the great tribulation are demonstrably (as in Rev. 7, 14. &c.) either Israelitish saints or Gentile ones, while the symbol of the glorified company is seen only on high. So far is it from being true that any real Christians miss the millennial reign with Christ, Rev. 20:4 is explicit that such of the Jewish or Gentile saints as follow after our translation to heaven, and are put to death under the earlier persecution of Rev. 6 &c., or under the Beast's violence later (Rev. 13 &c.), are to be raised from the dead and share that reign, though only called after the Lord comes and takes us to heaven. Those who survive are kept to form the nucleus of the Jews and Gentiles blessed on the earth under His reign.

Q.—Psa. 69:4 (5). What means “Then I restored what I took not away”? I. H.

A.-Our Lord pleads that He was not guilty of the wrong, but yet it was His to make good the right. His causeless enemies were innumerable; they were as strong as they were false; and where He was unrighteously charged, He walked in grace, seeking at all cost nothing but Jehovah's glory.

Chapter 210

Scripture Queries and Answers: Wine; 2 Cor. 5:10; Fallen from Grace; 1 Cor. 11:33

Q.-Wine, John 2 &c. Are there two kinds in scripture, one unfermented and legitimate, the other fermented and only evil? Enquirer.

A.-There is no ground whatever for such a distinction, which is due to teetotal imagination. Wine in its natural and proper sense means the fermented juice of the grape, though it may be applied figuratively to other liquor, or even more widely still. The Nazarite only abstained when under vow; the priest, when about to enter the sanctuary. It was offered to God: not a word of an unfermented liquid. Must was also drunk, which was not fermented. But the new or sweet wine of Acts 2:13 was intoxicating evidently. So wine is supposed throughout the scriptures, Old or New; and hence the warning against excess, never, save in special circumstances, against its use. The Lord made the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana, and made it “good wine,” and abundantly. Nor is the late Dean Alford unduly hard, when he says in his comment, “He pours out His bounty for all, and He vouchsafes His grace to each for guidance; and to endeavor to evade the work which He has appointed for each man—by refusing the bounty to save the trouble of seeking the grace—is an attempt which must ever end in degradation of the individual motives and in social demoralization, whatever present apparent effects may follow its first promulgation. One visible sign of this degradation, in its intellectual form, is the miserable attempt made by some of the advocates of this movement, to show that the wine here and in other places of scripture is unfermented wine, not possessing the power of intoxication” (The Greek. Test. 1. 701, fifth edition, 1863).

Q.-2 Cor. 5:10. Has this to do with “the great white throne” or is it to magnify God's grace? D. M.

A.-It is general, and applies to both. Hence the word is “We all,” we, the whole of us, a larger term than “we all” in 2 Cor. 3:18, which is restricted to the Christian community. Next, it is “shall appear” or rather “be manifested,” so as to embrace every one, believing or not, though of course as we know from other scriptures not at the same time, any more than for the same end. Were it “judged,” it would apply only to unbelievers and only to the great white throne: no believer, as our Lord declares in John 5:24, comes into “judgment,” which is in contrast with the eternal life that the faithful have now in the Son of God. Here again the language employed is expressly general. It is equally erroneous to limit the manifestation to believers or to unbelievers. Both in their season are to be manifested before the judgment-seat or Bema of our Lord; and all the deeds done by the body as an instrument will come out in result before Him. In the believer's case, how magnifying for God's grace! in the unbeliever's, how vindicating His judgment of evil! Even for the saints, what was worthless will bear its consequences, though by grace they are saved, as what was good will be rewarded. But hopeless at last will be seen the lot of the wicked when manifested there, all their works bad, and, above all, their rejection of Christ and the gospel.

Q.—What is meant by “Ye are fallen from grace” in Gal. 5:4? Does it mean gone into sin or become infidel? X.

A.-If the context were duly read, the answer would be apparent. The apostle is proving to the Galatian confessors their exceeding danger in mixing the law with the gospel: ceremonial or moral makes no real difference. We as Christians are under grace, not law. We are saved by the faith of Christ, not by deeds of law moral or ceremonial. Indeed the moral law must condemn the sinner, more than the ceremonial. For a Gentile to be circumcised is to abandon grace, to lose Christ, and to become debtor to do the whole law. Such “are fallen from grace.” It is to give up God's grace in Christ, now published in the gospel and for every Christian to enjoy.

Q.-1 Cor. 11:33. How does this apply in our day? M.

A.—It exhorts against selfish or unholy haste, it calls to mutual love and esteem, in coming together before the Lord.

Chapter 211

Scripture Queries and Answers: Coming for or with His Saints; Abram’s Age; Spirit Dwelling With You

Q.-1 Cor. 4:5. Does this verse refer to the Lord's coming for or with His saints? M.

A.-The Lord comes and receives the saints to Himself for the Father's house. As the last act before the marriage Supper (Rev. 19), the bride gets herself ready; which appears to point to that manifestation of the glorified before Christ's bema or judgment-seat, as the result of which each shall receive according to what he did by the body as an instrument. Then follows, after the bridal supper, the appearing before the world.

Q.-Gen. 11:26-32; 12:4. How was Abram but 75 when he left Haran? Terah lived to 205. If Abram was born when Terah was 70, would not this make Terah live 60 years after Abram went to Canaan? H.B.

A. -The difficulty is due to supposing that Terah's eldest son was Abram. Gen. 11:25, 27, does not give the order of birth, but names Abram first from his superior dignity, as is common in Biblical genealogy.

Acts 7:4 is express that Abram came into Canaan only after Terah's death, who was 205 years old. Deducting 75 years (Abram's age at that epoch) we have 130 as the years of Terah's life when Abram was born. Haran was really the eldest; Nahor, the second son of Terah, married Haran's daughter Milcah, his own niece; and Abram was youngest of the three. Lot was Haran's son, as Sarai (or Iscah) was his daughter. Thus Lot was Abram's brother-in-law, as he also is called his brother, and Abram called Sarai his sister. The great difference (60 years) between the eldest and the youngest sons of Terah (by two different mothers, as Abram intimates) made this possible and explains the matter.

It is plain therefore that Dean Alford was not only precipitate but predisposed to think Stephen in error, and the inspired word guilty of “demonstrable mistake.” Josephus and Philo were right and confirm the account in the Acts; and so was Usher.

The mistake arose from assuming that Gen. 11:26-27, meant the order of birth, and consequently that Abram was eldest. There is no ground to doubt that he was the youngest, but named first because of his honorable position. So was Shem in Gen. 5:32; 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10:1; yet x. 2, compared with ver. 21 plainly shows that Japheth was the eldest, Ham being probably the youngest (Gen. 9:24). The place of precedence is due in both Shem and Noah, not to birth but to the honor God set on them respectively. Haran then was the eldest son of Terah, and Abram born 60 years after. And with this agrees the fact that Sarah (or Iscah) Haran's daughter was but 10 years younger than Abram. Nor is there force in the objection that this makes Terah 130 years old when Abram was born; for Abram took Keturah after Sarah's death, when he was at least 137 years old and had six sons subsequently (Gen. 25:1, 2). It is Stephen in Acts 7 who enables us certainly to adjust what in the O. T. was not so clear. And so the early Jews saw, as may be

gathered from Philo (de Mig. Abr. 1. 463). Bengel made no mistake here. -

Q.-John 14:16-17. What is meant by the Spirit dwelling with you and to be in you? and how does it differ from the O.T. action?

A.-As we had the Father and the Son in the first half of the chapter, the Spirit, another Paraclete or Advocate, introduces the second half at this point, Who when given should remain with the disciples forever (unlike Christ Who was leaving them for heaven), or, as it is added later, He remaineth with you and shall be in you. It is a mistake as old as Euthymius Zigabenus to fancy here a distinction between the then time and after Pentecost. The true sense is that, when given as at Pentecost, His was a permanent stay with them; and not only so, but He would be in them in a way peculiar to Himself, and only known since redemption. No doubt, He had acted on souls and in saints at all times, as we see in the O. T. throughout. But now His presence personally and forever was the fruit of Christ's redemption and heavenly glory. The Father was revealed in the Son; the Son incarnate had done the will of God, consummating all sacrifice, and was received up as risen Man in glory; and the Holy Spirit, given and come forever, was the witness and power of all, both in the Christian and in the church; as we wait for the coming of the Lord to receive us to Himself and set us before the Father in His house, where Christ is now.

Chapter 212

Scripture Queries and Answers: 2 Sam. 5:8; Dan. 9:26-27; Heretic and Reject

Q.-2 Sam. 5:8: how do you explain?

C. S. H.

A.-The blind and the lame seem to have been set as a taunt to the anointed of Jehovah on the supposed impregnable fortress of Zion; and David felt it with all indignant ardor. They were the hated of his soul: Nevertheless Joab took the hill of Zion on David's behalf, the center of his kingdom, and the prize that secured his own place of command. All in man's hand fails. How blessedly does the Lord contrast with it, Who, when He cast out those that made Jehovah's house a den of thieves, received blind and lame that came to Him in the temple, and healed them.

Q.-Dan 9:26,27. Is Young's version correct, or that of the A. and R. Versions? The latter substantially agree; but Young changes the sense by confounding Christ with the one who confirms in ver. 27. Have the English translators forced the Hebrew? or is Young without warrant? I greatly desire information.

G. A. S.

N. J.,

U. S. A.

A.-There need be no hesitation in accepting the general sense of the A. V., modified by the Revisers. The article of reference is due to “sixty-two weeks,” after which Messiah was to be cut off and “have nothing,” as the Genevese E. V. had already rightly said. But the force of the next clause is utterly missed by Dr. R, Young. It really means, “And the people of the prince that shall come [in contrast with Messiah the Prince already come and cut off] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood [or overflow], and even to the end war-desolations determined. And he [the coming prince] shall confirm a covenant with the many [the apostate mass of the Jews] for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease; and because of sheltering [lit. wing of] abominations [or idols] a desolator [shall be], even until the consumption and 'that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate.” So in fact the Roman people (not yet their coming prince) did come, and destroy the city and the temple [or holy place], followed by a flood of desolations on the guilty people and on Jerusalem for ages. But the time hastens, when the thread must be resumed and the last or postponed week of the 70 be accomplished. Then the coming Roman prince; in his incipient form, shall confirm covenant with the ungodly majority of the Jews, “the many,” but break it by putting down their worship, and protecting idolatry and the Antichrist as we know from elsewhere. This will bring on the closing scenes of the Assyrian, or king of the north (Isa. 10; 28; 29; Dan. 11:40-45)7 “the desolator;” and the last word of predicted judgment will be accomplished on the desolate Jerusalem. The death of Messiah broke the chain; but that closing link has yet to be joined, and all

will be fulfilled in due season. The attempt to foist in the gospel is baseless. To translate the last verse, as Wintle does, following ancient versions, may be grammatically possible, but is unaccountably harsh, if not absurd: “Yet one week shall make a firm covenant, with many, and the midst of the week shall cause the sacrifice and the meat offering to cease” &c. With what propriety or even sense could “one week,” or its half, do these remarkable things? The coming Roman prince is to confirm “a” covenant with “the mass” of Jews for seven years; and then breaks it when half the time expires. How strange to attribute either to the Messiah! “The many” rejected Him and shall receive the Antichrist. “Many” and “the many” are by no means to be confused in Daniell any more than elsewhere. Translators (the Revisers among the rest) have not heeded the distinction, nor have Commentators generally. It is the few, or the remnant, who receive the Messiah in faith, and in due time (when their wicked brethren, “the many” meet their doom) become the “Israel” that “shall be saved.” This plainly and powerfully refutes the assumption that the last verse alludes to Christ's covenant. It is rather a covenant with death and hell; as Isa. 28:15 also lets us know. This will be for seven years, but broken.

Q.-Titus 3:10, 11, kindly explain, giving the significance of “heretic” and “reject.” Is there any reference to reception or to excommunication? W. D.

A.-” Heresy” is used by the apostle for a party of self-will, a faction which severs itself from the assembly. Such is the usage in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19: “I hear that there are schisms among you (i.e., divisions within), and I partly believe it. For there must also be heresies (i.e. external division or sects), that the approved may become manifest among you.” (See also Gal. 5:20 and 2 Peter 2:1). The precise meaning here comes out incontestably. Bad doctrine (the later ecclesiastical sense of “heresy”) does not of necessity lead its advocate to form a party without; but schismatic feeling directly tends to this. A split within ere long issues in a split without; whereas heterodoxy seeks shelter within in order to leaven the lump if possible. So in Titus 3 the apostle directs Titus to have done with a man stamped as heretical after a first and second admonition. He had gone outside and was forming a sect. It was no question therefore of putting him without; for he had gone out himself, and refused admonition, perhaps repeatedly. He condemned himself in despising and abandoning God's assembly. You cannot put away one who has already gone away, though it may be announced for the profit of all. The word translated “reject” is not to excommunicate, but altogether general, and capable of application to persons inside (as in 1 Tim. 5:11) no less than to the outside maker of a school or sect; also to fables and foolish questions wherever they might be (1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:23). From its primitive meaning of deprecating and making excuse, the word acquires the force of refusing, rejecting, or avoiding. In no case is it applied to putting out, which is the function of the assembly and expressed by a totally different word. Among the Jews “heresy” was used indifferently for the parties of Sadducees, Pharisees, and Nazarenes.

Chapter 213

Scripture Queries and Answers: Luke 16:9; John 15:2, 6; Acts 7:16

Q.-Luke 16:9. What does it mean?

G. de M.

A.-The sacrifice of the present in view of the heavenly future; which those make who believe. It is their character and conduct, not of course the hidden spring of faith which leads to such ways and sustains in them. The unjust steward freely gave away his master's goods to gain friends for another day. The Lord praises his wisdom (not of course his dishonesty), as an example to us, who are called by faith to regard the money, &c., men call ours as our Master's, and act as freely as people do with the goods of others, being their stewards now. When the Lord comes, we shall have our due, the glorious inheritance, and be received into everlasting habitations.

Q.-John 15:2, 6. What is the difference?

G. de M.

A.-The early verse sets forth the Father's removal in judgment of one not bearing fruit. In the later verse it is the utter ruin of fruitless professors. It is not in this case attributed to the Father's judging according to the work of each (1 Peter 1:17) but all is external and irreparable. The great white throne disposes of such finally, as men burn dry or rotten wood.

Q. Acts 7:16. You have recently shown

Dean Alford's error (borrowed from rationalists) as to ver. 4; but how is the apparent confusion of ver 16 to be cleared up? Yet one feels with Stier that it seems “almost infatuation” to accuse Stephen's wonderful exposition of Israel's history as a “demonstrable error,” where scripture so plainly distinguishes the grave of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from that of Joseph and the rest.

A. B.

A.-The true solution lies, not in Calvin's idea of “Abraham” as a wrong reading for “Jacob,” but in the elliptical compression with which Stephen, like other Jews, referred to the well-known facts. Abraham's grave was at Hebron, bought of Ephron the Hittite; Jacob bought ground at Sychem of the sons of Ramon. In the former notoriously were buried Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But as ancient scripture tells us that Joseph was laid in the second, so Stephen intimates here that his brethren were also. Josephus is opposed to Jewish tradition in fancying that they were buried in Hebron; and Jerome confirms Sychem as their grave, affirming that it was seen as a fact in his day for all twelve. The difficulty is due to bringing both together as Stephen did. Ignorance is rather with those who do not enter into his manner, and so are apt to impute their own blundering and irreverent haste to a discourse of the profoundest character with an astonishing mastery of principles as well as facts throughout scripture. Without speaking of the Holy Spirit (and this of course if admitted incalculably condemns such criticism), it is rash beyond measure to impute to such a man a mistake which a child might detect. The late Archdeacon Lee in his book on

Inspiration points out the same system of combining incidents; as, for instance, comparing ver. 7, with Gen. 15:13, 14, and Ex. 3:12; ver. 9; but especially ver. 43, with Amos 5:27, “Beyond Damascus” clearly referring to the Assyrian deportation of the ten tribes; whereas Stephen combines in his way that of the two tribes to Babylon. This the Dean might have as fairly assailed; but he contents himself with saying that “fulfillment of the prophecy would make it very natural to substitute that name which had become inseparably associated with the captivity.” This apology is as unworthy here as his attack there.

Chapter 214

Scripture Queries and Answers: Sanctification and Cleansing; Deuteronomy

Q.-Eph. 5:26: what is the nature of the sanctification and cleansing? J. D. (Moneymore).

A.—It is stated that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it. This He did in perfect love, though nothing was to be seen loveable but hateful and guilty.

Next, it was His for (not redemption only, but) an actual result agreeable to the divine nature; that He might sanctify it, or set it apart to God from all evil, having cleansed (or cleansing) it through the washing of water by (or in) the word. The entire work of sanctification, first and last, in principle and in practice, is here set forth luminously under the well-known figure of the washing of water, but carefully tying it to God's word, not to a sign or ordinance, whatever its place.

The blessed issue is, that He might present to Himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. The word employed is not “laver,” (which in fact never occurs in the N. T. but often of course in the Greek Version of the O.T.), but “hath water,” and hence “washing.” The absence of the Greek article with the qualifying term ■ν ■■ματι is strictly correct, though English like most other tongues cannot dispense with it, as thereby it makes the word to characterize the washing. Nor could any instrument but God's word applied by the Spirit effect that purifying process all through.

But it is Christ's love, which accomplishes now the sanctification of the church, as it was before that His love in which He gave Himself for it on the cross. And His love will complete the work when He presents the church all glorious at His coming, the heavenly bride of the Second man, the Last Adam. It is well to note that in this connection “the Lord” is quite out of place in the Received Text of ver. 29. It should be “Christ” as the best witnesses testify and the truth itself requires.

Q.-Deuteronomy, or Deuteronomy, which is correct? and what is the meaning of the word?

J. S. (Mount Auburn, Mass., U.S.A.)

A.-If intelligent usage be allowed to decide, the former is correct; and etymology also favors the word so formed from the Greek. It means a second edition or repetition of the law, being the title of the fifth book of Moses given by the Septuagint translators. The Jews as usual designate each book by the opening Hebrew words. It may be added that there is no real ground to doubt, save in the unbridled fancy of rationalists, that it was (save the last chapter or at least its last part) written, as it professes to be, by Moses. As to its scope and contents, Deuteronomy presents a practical direction in the spirit of prophecy for life in the land, given from the east of Jordan, and looking onward to the final restoration of Israel after captivity, “the secret things” of grace after total failure under law. The books of the law, as in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers were rather an abstract system of types, only in part reduced to practice, with the facts even selected as types also. Hence in Deuteronomy the typical institution has no practical character as compared with those

elsewhere. And, as has been remarked, it, is the book, and the only one, which our Lord quoted in reply to Satan's temptation. So also it is the book which the apostle applied. to the righteousness of faith in the gospel as contrasted with that of the law. All this, and a great deal more of spiritual interest, contribute to pour scorn on the scorners who vie with one another in striving to make it out a forgery or religious romance composed not earlier than in the days of Josiah. Inspiration accounts for its salient properties, as it does for each of the books that preceded, all written by Moses, but in a wisdom of the Spirit beyond his who was the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 215

Scripture Queries and Answers: Gentiles the Israel of God?; Reigning Over, Not on, the Earth

Q.-Gal. 6:16. Does this scripture give any sanction to the idea that we, believers from among the Gentiles, are now “the Israel of God”? What is the true force?

X.

A.-The verse plainly intimates two classes, the general one of the saints who walk as Christians by the rule of the new creation in Christ, and the specified one, not of Israel now no longer for the time God's people, but such of them as were true to the Christ they were baptized unto (where is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Him), who are therefore designated “the Israel of God.”

Q.-Rev. 5:10. It is alleged that the Sept. Psa. 46:8, and Matt. 6:10, render doubtful the view that the text in the Revelation means reigning over, rather than on, the earth. Is it really so?

S.

A.-The accusative is used for the object where activity was to be expressed. The propriety of this as to the nations is plain. The dative (among other senses) is employed for fixed relationship where it is not condition, occasion, or circumstance. The genitive expresses rather the simple fact. But there is another element in the text, which distinguishes it from Matt. 6:10, the usage of the preposition with verbs of governing; and the Septuagint abounds with proofs that, as ■ν is used for the locality where the king lived, ■π■ is for the sphere of his reign.

Chapter 216

Scripture Queries and Answers: Likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven; Names of the Twelve; Law Abrogated

Q.-What is intended by the different ways in which the likeness of the kingdom of the heavens is spoken of? Y.

A.-In Matt. 13:24; 18:2, it is “became like” or “was likened,” these being historical (as others are not) likenesses that the kingdom assumed through the rejection of the Lord and His going on high. The rest (Matt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 20:1) were merely likenesses of certain special features at particular seasons; as one case differs by a peculiar comparison with the future (Matt. 25:1).

Q.-Could we have a few words of explanation on the names and surnames of “The Twelve”?

ENQUIRER.

A.-Simon or Symeon (2 Peter 1:1) had the patronymic of Bar, that is, son of Jona or Jonas, (Matt. 16:17; John 20:15-17), and was given by the Lord the name of Kephas (Aramaic), or Petros (Greek)=Stone or Rockman (John 1:43, confirmed solemnly later in Matt. 16:18).

Andrew is a Greek name (as Philip also in another case) and seemingly answers to the Hebrew Adam. He was Simon's brother and the means of leading him, afterward far more famous than himself, to the Lord, as we read in John 1, before their public call (Matt. 4; Luke 5).

John, “the beloved disciple,” was in Hebrew Johanan, “the gift of Jehovah.”

James is our English form of Jacob, who, like John, was son of Zebedee or Zabdi. They were surnamed by our Lord (Mark 3:17) Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder.

Philip, of Bethsaida like the foregoing, answers in Greek to the Hebrew name Susi, father of Gaddi (Num. 13:11). It means “fond of horses.”

Bartholomew is the patronymic, meaning son of Tolmai; his personal name was Nathaniel (gift of God).

Thomas in Hebrew, like Didymus, means “a twin.”

Levi and Matthew were both Hebrew names of the same apostle who wrote the first Gospel.

Jacob son of Alphmus or Clopas (Chalpai) is the second apostolic James.

Jude or Judas, Lebbmus, and Thaddmus are the three names of the apostle who wrote the so called catholic Epistle (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18).

Simon was called Zelotes (Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13), answering to the Hebrew word translated “Cananean,” as it should be, not meaning either of Canaan or of Cana, but “zealot,” one of that well-known fierce party of Jews.

Judas finally seems designated “Iscariot,” meaning man of Kerioth in the south of Judea, alas! the traitor.

Q.-Is the law finally abrogated? Is it correct to say there is no further resumption? Turning to the notes on Heb. 7:18, 19; 8:7, 8, 13, I observe you distinctly affirm on viii. 13, “The cross annulled it, and Jerusalem was its grave.” Do you mean the whole law (ritual and moral) of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as also of the Psalms? If so, how does this acquiesce with Eccl. 3:14, “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever?” For the law was written by God (Ex. 24:12; 31:18). It might be said, God has the prerogative of so doing, being sovereign. But does this harmonize with His validly declared authority? If the whole law is finally abrogated, what will be the millennial rule? The Psalms, it appears, have not yet received their adequate fulfillment, nor the Prophets either. Thus Ezekiel declares for a modified ritual with an earthly priesthood and a suited temple in the future. Zechariah too informs us of the resumption, especially of the Feast of Tabernacles, which had been laid down in Lev. 23 Isaiah is generally clear that the law will be observed in that day, not only by the people of God in the land, but by the isles waiting for it, and all nations flocking up to the mountain of Jehovah's house in honor of it (chaps 2, and 42. Sm.).

On the other hand Jeremiah clearly speaks of a new covenant made with both houses of Israel in pointed contrast with the old Mosaic one (chap. 31:32). This I find so conflicting that I fail to understand how all agrees, yet I am sure that all is divinely true notwithstanding. And thus I fail to put intelligently together the Lord's priesthood, heavenly and according to the order of Melchizedek, with the sons of Zadok of Aaron's house who are to exercise their earthly functions that day. Ezek. 40:46; 44:15. If I regard the whole law as abrogated, what do these passages teach? If I hold it to be resumed as there and other scriptures imply, how am I to understand Jer. 31 and Heb. 7, 8.? Still I believe all those scriptures and await explanation. W. E.

A.-It greatly helps to see, first, that the heavenly state of things which Christ on high has set up and into which the Christian is introduced, (already in faith, by-and-by in person), calls for that immense and total change which the apostle announces in Heb. 7:12-19; secondly, that even for the earth and Israel in the millennial day the presence of the Messiah and the establishment of the new covenant (not as now with us in spirit only) with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah in all its literal force will bring in such a blessed revolution that the prophet justly contrasts it with the Mosaic condition. It will be Jehovah undertaking and thus sure blessing, instead of a test to prove man's weakness and ungodliness. But now, although we died to law even had we been of Benjamin or Judah in dying with Christ, we are entitled to use the law for the conviction of the ungodly who own its authority, as we read in 1 Tim. 1:8-10.

Chapter 217

Scripture Queries and Answers: 1 Corinthians 15:29

Q — (1) Cor. 15:29—Will you kindly explain? (2) Also, when do the O.T saints rise?

A. C. W.

A-(1) “Baptized for the dead” means, in my judgment, simply those that entered (“that are being baptized”) taking the place and filling up the ranks of the deceased saints. For grace in the face of all dangers keeps up God's standing army here below. It refers to ver. 18, as 30 to ver. 19 (20-28 being an evident parenthesis of great value and positive), which resume the apostle's interrupted argument. The resurrection is the key to suffering and deaf itself for Christ's name. Without such a hope it were folly to join such a devoted band; but with it, His name will never lack recruits in faith even for a death or life of suffering. To suppose (like Dean; Stanley and Alford) a superstition alluded to, and the apostle dealing gently with such folly as “survivors getting baptized on behalf of friends deceased without baptism,” seems as contrary to his character as in itself strange. In all probability what Bishop Hall calls “the usual but ungrounded practice” was a conceit grafted on this verse misunderstood. Again, Luther's idea of “over the dead”—i.e., over their graves, is another imaginary superstition, worthy of the middle ages. Nor is it a tolerable interpretation that the plural is used for the singular and refers to the Lord. Sir R. Ellys seems to have first suggested the true thought in his “Fortuita, Sacra” (1728), adopted and popularized by Doddridge in the “Family Expositor.”

(2) The O. T. saints as well as those dead of the New rise at Christ's coming (ver. 23) (the living being then changed, 51, 52). “They that are Christ's” is surely comprehensive enough to embrace both. Rev. 20:4 adds the rising of the Apocalyptic martyrs, too late for the rapture but just in time to he raised and reign with the previously risen saints, before the kingdom of Christ and of His saints over the earth begins. For in that verse we have, in the first class already seated on thrones, the saints of the Old and New Testament, whom the Lord translates to heaven at His coming (the twenty-four elders of Rev. 4. & 5.); then the souls of those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God (Rev. 6.); and lastly those who worshipped not the beast or his image (Rev. 13.): which two classes, having been killed, needed to live, in order to reign with Christ, like the enthroned ones. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"—(1 Cor. 6:2)—not the church merely, but “the saints.” The reason why these two classes of sufferers are carefully shown to have part in the First Resurrection is because Christ had come and received to Himself the first and general company. Otherwise, being slain afterward, they might seem to have been too late for that blessed part. Here they are assured of it.

Q.-A Christian writes from Guernsey as to Isa. 63:19 variously rendered, and asks D. Martin's authority for “long temps” in that verse; and the reason for “maison” instead of “moisson” in Isa. 8. last verse (or 9:2 or 3 as in others). So it is in Bagster's reprint of Martin's version.

A.-Our correspondent is correct; and Martin, though far closer than Ostervald, is wrong in the first text, and misrepresented as to the second in the London reprint, which seems an erratum. But the

former is quite mistranslated in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, and consequently in the R. C. versions such as that by le M. de Saci. As the A. V., the French Bible of Jean Diodati (Geneve, 1644) gives “jamais.” The first clause in the A. V. is unwarranted; it interpolates “all thine” and severs the connection. “We are from of old [looking back from the future tribulation before deliverance] over whom thou ruledst not, those not called by thy name.” Alexander comes to the result of the English Bible in supposing Israel to be contrasted with their adversaries— “We are of old: thou hast not ruled over them, thy name has not been called upon them.” Isaac Loeser represents the Jewish preference of “We are become as though we are those over whom thou hast never ruled, over whom thy name hath not been called;” rather paraphrastic but right substantially. Benisch gives more concisely, “We are like those over whom” &c.

Q.-Does scripture determine the serpent in Gen. 3?

A.-Surely Rev. 12:9, 20:1, with 2 Cor. 11:3, are ample to decide this question. Satan availed himself of that subtle animal, not yet reduced to its humiliating condition.

Q.-Why should it be “all the house of Israel” in Acts 2:36, as there is no article in the Greek? Does not πς οκος mean “every house”?

ENQUIRER.

A. -Without “of Israel” connected it would be “every house “; but with it the case is altered. “House of Israel” is in thought a compound term and is sufficiently defined without the article, like “all Jerusalem” which dispenses with it. So it is with “building” in Eph. 2:21, a composite whole in sense, which makes “every” improper and false. The Revisers seem to have been quite astray in all this, though right of course in Eph. 3:15, as “family” has no such reason to plead. “Each several building” is gravely false, at issue with the context even, as with all scripture, which insists on unity.

Scripture Queries and Answers: Job 22:30

Q.—What means Job 22:30? Or is it that the A. V. fails, as well as others? The connection too in ver. 29, is obscure as we read them. X.

A.—The translation correctly given serves to make all plain, as any one may find in a version which appeared long ago in the B. T. and reproduced by Morrish, the Publisher.

“When they are dejected, then shalt thou say, Lift up,

And He will save him of downcast eyes;

He will deliver him that is not guiltless,

And he is rescued by the cleanness of thy hands.”

This was unexpectedly illustrated before the book closed in the rescue, not of Eliphaz only but of the other two self-righteous friends, when Jehovah's anger was kindled against them and their unjust opinions, and Job prayed for them. “Island” or “house” (J. M. Good) ruins the sense of the sentence; for the word here is simply a negative particle, as taken in the Chaldee paraphrase, and approved by the ablest of late. I. Leeser's Version is even closer: “He will even deliver” &c., i.e. not the humble only, but the faulty.

Chapter 219

Scripture Queries and Answers: Sheep in Matthew 35:33

Q. Are “the sheep” in Matt. 25:33 the same as the Gentiles in Rev. 7:17. They are alike out of the nations, but which? Heathen or christened? How then 2 Thess. 2:10-12? G. R.

A. That they are the same objects of mercy in that day is confirmed by the remnant in Matt. 24:15-26, answering to Rev. 14:1-5, and His elect in Matt. 24:31, answering to Rev. 7:1-8. “All the nations” seem from the context to be outside Israel and Christendom (already judged in the previous parts of the Lord's prophecy on the mount). 2 Thess. 2 does not exclude a remnant that love the truth, even when all that reject it perish irremediably.

Chapter 220

Scripture Query and Answer: Genesis 46:26 and Acts 7:14

Q.-Gen. 46:26, with Acts 7:14: how to be explained? W. E.

A.-There is no question really of truth, but of object and mode of speech; for the original history speaks of 66 (ver. 26) and 70 (ver. 27). Even in ver. 26 the Hebrew strictly means “belong to,” rather than with “Jacob.” The 70 are his house, including more. The LXX, in their Greek version, which Stephen quotes, include five more though born in Egypt, according to the well understood usage of regarding parent and children as one.

Thoughts on Faith and Skepticism by Thomas

Andrews, F.R.S. London: James Nisbet R Co., 21, Berners Street. 1894.

This little volume devotes part i. to remarks on Christian faith, part ii. to observations on Hyper-Biblical criticism, part iii. to thoughts on modern skepticism, and part iv. to spiritualism and theosophy. There is an appendix also on atheistic teaching in French schools, on auricular confession in certain English schools, on the progress of Romanism and Ritualism in this country, and on the present attitude of the Romish body towards Protestants. May it be used of God to help unwary souls! The need is great and growing.

Chapter 221

Scripture Query and Answer: God As Father

Q.-In Luke 3:38 Adam is called son of God; in Gen. 6:2 his posterity are called the sons of God. Mal. 2:10, says, “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us”? Paul, in Eph. 4:6, says “there is one God and Father of all.” Is it therefore lawful to speak of the universal Fatherhood of God? J. H.

A.-Undoubtedly, as angels are called sons of God in Gen. 6 and Job, so also it is extended to the human race as distinguished from the beasts that perish. Indeed man distinctively was made in God's image, after His likeness, which is never said of angels. Hence in the third parable of Luke 15 the two are spoken of as sons naturally; and Paul, in preaching to the Athenians, adopts the sentiment that we are His offspring, even the heathen. With this agrees the statement in Eph. 4:6: “one God and Father of all.” So far Dr. Crawford was more scripturally correct than the late Dr. Candlish in their controversy. But this universal Fatherhood of God only makes man's wickedness and unbelief more inexcusable and ruinous. It has to do with nature only, which is now fallen and sinful, and proved to be God's enemy by rejecting His Son, sent to save. Salvation therefore is by grace, not nature, and through faith, not works of law or any other creature means. Salvation is in no other than Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son, and our Lord. Then only are we who believe His sons by grace.

Chapter 222

Scripture Query and Answer: Omission of Dan in Revelation 7

Q.—Why is Dan omitted in Rev. 7.

A.-Not because this tribe is not to have its share in the future partition and blessing; for Ezek. 48. enumerates it as the first and most northerly of all. A tradition among the fathers prevailed, founded on Gen. 49:17, that it was because antichrist was to spring from this tribe. It is certain that it was the first to sanction idolatry: an evil reprobated the more solemnly in the Revelation, because it will revive as the judgment of the quick draws near. It seems also omitted among the genealogies of the early chapters of 1 Chronicles.

Chapter 223

Scripture Sketches: 13. Andrew's Brother

THE first fish which Andrew took on his single line was his own brother Simon, whose conversion led to events which have largely influenced the whole world ever since. Of course, we know that, whilst by one large class of people Simon Peter is regarded as a demi-god, by another he is chiefly remembered for his numerous mistakes. But in some respects these mistakes were fortunate for us; they at least proved that he was no demi-god; and it is as possible to make too much of them as too little. It would be very foolish to ignore the ardent valor and devoted self-sacrifice of Peter's life because of his inconsistencies, however serious.

“Mistakes”! said a bank manager to us lately, “Why, we have a branch at W—, and they have never made a mistake there yet “... “But,” he continued meditatively, “we're going to close it. You see, they have never done a stroke of business.” And I think we may be sure that, if there are anywhere to be found those who have never made mistakes, then it is because they have never accomplished anything worth mentioning, and in that case their whole life is one vast mistake.

When Simon was brought to the Messiah, his new Master, considering it necessary to give him a surname, selected the last one probably that we should have thought of, Peter,' a stone; For He, Who sees the things that are not, could see that this man who was naturally impulsive, erratic, and inconsistent, would become by divine grace a solid and substantial rampart in the church against all kinds of evil and hostility. His high and burning devotion and love to his Master, carried him loyally through the most appalling difficulties and dangers, always inflexible and invincible, except on the one occasion when the man who could brave the most ghastly forms of death for his principles was frightened at the taunt of a servant girl. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Peter had not got his own example before his eyes to warn him; we have, and have no excuse. Yesterday's grace is not sufficient for today's trials and to-morrow's temptations. Yesterday Elijah stood calm and strong before raging multitudes on Carmel: to-day he flees for his life. And before a woman too, like Peter! But for all that we must not forget yesterday's services because of to-day's failures.

Certainly his Master did not. Though He knew all that was in man, and in this man too, failing and uncertain, He appointed him to the most honorable position in the Apostolate. He made him

“The pilot of the Galilean lake:

Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,

The golden opes, the iron shuts amain.”

The keys were committed to him, not to build the church with of course (churches cannot be built with keys), but to open the gates of the “kingdom of heaven;” which we see him doing in Acts 2. when he was the first to let in the Jews to the realm of salvation; and afterward in Acts 10. when he admitted the Gentiles.

This choosing of Peter to admit the Gentiles was very wise, because, of all the apostles, he was the most intensely national in his sympathies. Like most men of strong impulsive enthusiasm, he was apt to be bigoted at times; and we find that at a subsequent period he allowed his bigoted nationality to mislead him into a gross and serious inconsistency on this point. He refused companionship and fellowship to the Gentile Christians. This was distinctly a schismatic action, and, if sanctioned, would in its ultimate tendency have soon broken the church to pieces; but no one even seems to have dreamed of such severity of discipline as to propose Peter's excommunication. His fellow-apostle Paul “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Happily we are not dealt with according to the ultimate tendency of every offense that we commit, but for the action itself and the motive accompanying it. There is no record of Peter's having been subjected to any ecclesiastical discipline at all, not even the formal public rebuke; and the only reference made to the incident is a seemingly casual but divinely wise mention to the Galatians when they were in danger of traveling on the same lines.

Peter however took Paul's opposition in a very gracious spirit; and we must remember that he was the senior apostle and Paul the youngest. He writes afterward of his “beloved brother Paul” and of “the wisdom given unto him.” He speaks highly of his Epistles, though he admits there are some things in them hard to be understood. But it were foolish and criminal to reject them on that account. Those who do so, are “unlearned and unstable.” There is no exposition of technical things which does not present difficulties even to the adepts. And this is quite as true in science as religion. I remember that Mr. Darwin says in his preface to “The Origin of Species,” that he cannot understand parts of Professor Owen's writings, and draws consolation from the fact that there are others who cannot understand nor reconcile them either.

We can see how wisely the choice was made of a man for the active leader of aggressive Christianity. Those virtues, most needed for such an enterprise, Peter undoubtedly possessed to a very high degree—ardor, courage, and hope. His life and Epistles are throughout characterized by these qualities, especially hope. The German Weiss names him the “Apostle of Hope.” His faults are such as we find in men of like nature called to like service, the faults which come from zeal and excessive impetuosity. Luther, who was of a very similar nature and mission, had very similar failings, which “Protestants” are content to ignore, as “Catholics,” ignore Peter's. An aggressive leader is usually impetuous. Luther had little sympathy with the balanced sobriety of mind which Erasmus or Melancthon possessed. “I like not such brains which can dispute on both sides, and yet conclude nothing certain,” he says. Thus too the Swiss champion, Wer gar zu viel bedenkt, wird wenig leisten. Peter rushes into the holy sepulcher itself, whilst John stands reverently at the threshold.

Luther was hurried into many a mistake—and injustice. Erasmus, he says, holds “ungodly false doctrine.” Melancthon is a sheep. “The pope and his crew are like great thieves.” In the Swiss and Saxon controversy over the sacraments, he was obstinately wrong-headed and violent against the learned courteous Zuinglius. “Bullinger, you err,” he storms, “you know neither yourself, nor what you hold. I mark well your tricks and fallacies. Zuinglius and CEcolampadius likewise proceeded too far in this your ungodly meaning,” &c., &c. His Tischreden is often very inconsequent, and his interpretations of some passages of scripture quite grotesque; but shall we because of these things forget his wondrous services to God and man, his valor and his devotion, his masculine strength and woman-like tenderness? In later times he felt his need of patience. “I must have

patience with the pope; I must have patience with heretics and seducers; I must have patience with the roaring courtiers; I must have patience with my servants; I must have patience with Kate my wife." (I fancy that, if "my Lord Kate," as he used to call her, happened to read that part she would probably supply him with still further occasions for exercising his patience.)

Peter certainly closed his life in martyrdom and by crucifixion; but whether, as alleged, he was crucified at Rome with his head downwards, there is very little evidence. He was most probably never at Rome at all; and that story of his leaving the city at the approach of danger, and meeting his divine Master going toward it, to Whom he addressed the inquiry, Donrine, quo vadis? is neither true nor yet very well invented, albeit the words are written up on the Appian Way to this day.

Scripture Sketches: 14. John Mark

14.-JOHN MARK.

THERE was some controversy lately over a document purporting to be the “Gospel according to Peter.” I do not know of any tangible evidence whatever of its authenticity. The real Gospel of Peter is that which stands in our bibles entitled “Mark “: at least that view was generally accepted in the primitive church on the authority of such men as John the Presbyter (recorded by Papias), humus and others, who regarded the Gospel by Mark as having been dictated and accredited by Peter the apostle, which fact gave it its (external) claim to be regarded as inspired scripture. Apart from the historical evidences of this is the fact that where anything discreditable to Peter is referred to, as in the case of his denial of Christ, the particulars of his failures are given by Mark, with much detail and no excuse: but anything creditable to Peter is passed over, as for instance, in John it is said that Peter drew his sword in Gethsemane, in defense of his master and smote with it one of the attacking party. This (though perhaps little to the credit of Peter's discretion and spiritual perception) was certainly an evidence of courage and devotion in such a time of general dismay. Therefore in Mark where the event is recorded, Peter's name is not given; he simply says, “one of them that stood by"... I confess these “evidences” might be of little weight in regard to the generality of writers in an advertising age; but the apostles and primitive Christians were characterized by this kind of humility as to their own deeds no less than of gracious appreciation of the deeds of others. We have already noticed some instances of this, and such may be found throughout the New Testament.

Evidence which would be much too weak to establish a theory is often strong enough to support a conviction. Did not Democritus when he saw Protagoras binding up fagots (and “thrusting the small twigs inwards”) instantly judge him to be a scholar and philosopher? Could not the great Cuvier build up the whole form of an old-world animal from the mere sight of one of its teeth? Not to say but that the little Cuviers can build up a new-world cosmogony on even less evidence than that.

Here is another conviction of which there is even less proof, yet after holding it for many years, I find that others have also held it. It is that the young man who followed the Lord at a distance, on the night of His betrayal, was John Mark himself, The soldiers, seeing him, snatched at his linen cloth. the only garment he had on him. “He left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.” Only Mark records this, and I say that some think it was Mark himself who thus fled. But however that may be, I always think there is no other subordinate incident which gives such a graphic suggestion of the dismay and horror which fell upon the disciples of Christ on that terrible night.

The name Mark (Marcus) was merely a common Roman prænomen, like Caius or Publius; his Jewish name was John, and he was the nephew of Barnabas, and the son of that Mary at whose house the prayer-meetings were held—a house of such gracious Christian hospitality that it was thither Peter first turned his steps when escaped from prison. This seemed to promise well. “La pridestination de l'enfant,” says Lamartine, “c'est la maison oit it est MI..” Not quite so, perhaps,

but still we read, “Hezekiah...his mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord “; “Amaziah the son of Joash...his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem, and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” Of a truth John Mark started from a good home. He was converted through Peter who seemed to enjoy a special welcome in the house. I wonder who that damsel Rhoda was who could not open the gate for gladness when she heard Peter's voice without, possibly Mark's sister: and at the very outset of his Christian course, Barnabas and Paul took him with them on their missionary travels. He was Barnabas's relation and his cousin, the bishop, thought himself justified in bestowing his patronage on such a promising young “curate.” Thus early did nepotism enter the church: simony had already knocked at the door by the hand of Simon Magus, but had not yet been admitted.

This piece of patronage was not eminently successful. The “living” was poor; the income extremely precarious; probably they received more blows than shekels at any time. The two older men were more seasoned, and did not much mind; but the youth was discouraged. He anticipated the advice of the old French diplomatist who broke his own injunction against the use of “superlatives” that he might enforce this axiom, “Surtout, pas trop de zele.” John Mark had as yet only that light idea of the responsibility of Christian service which unfortunately is so common: he thought he could take up and put down God's work as he liked, and he left the two leaders to go on with the work by themselves whilst he went off home again.

Then we lose sight of him for six or seven years, which for all we know may have been so much lost time: and after that he becomes the passive cause of an exceedingly unfortunate dispute. Paul and Barnabas—Paul is now taking the lead—arrange a further mission and Barnabas “determines” to take his nephew again with them, whilst Paul “thought not good” to take one who had already deserted his post. This gave rise to “so sharp” “a contention” that the two veterans separate; and Paul goes on with his purposed work, whilst Barnabas takes Mark and goes to Cyprus (his home); and again years elapse before we hear anything further of him.

Here again, Mark was seriously to blame, for if he had said that he would not go under any circumstances when he saw the chief apostle objected to taking him, and saw that the matter caused strife, Barnabas could not have prolonged the dispute. However much we may be consoled by the thought that good was brought out of the evil, the quarrel between the two leaders remains an immense calamity.

Most of us would perhaps have thought it best to leave Mark alone after that; and it comes as quite a surprise that we subsequently find him doing important work in the assemblies, favorably mentioned in some scattered texts, and finally charged with the high honor of writing one of the four Gospels. Not only does Peter (who was his god-father, if I may use that term) take him in hand with that affectionate care which we should expect from one of his nature, but Paul, who had such a disparaging judgment of him in former times, is able to recognize and acknowledge the value of Mark's subsequent services. He mentions him as being one of his five fellow-workers, who were “a comfort to him “ in Rome about A.D. 64, and two years subsequently, in his last letter to Timothy, he tells him to “Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to one for the ministry.”

This is truly a most delightful verse: the strong-souled, magnanimous apostle accepting and requesting the services of this one whom he had formerly condemned, and going out of his way to

acknowledge and praise him, lest anything which he had then said, and said justly, should attach a stigma to one who had now become a devoted and honorable fellow-servant. And on the other hand we see that Mark is so far from remembering Paul's hard words with any resentment, that he counts it a favor to minister to him and with him. And above all we see that ours is not a hard Master. He doth not cast off forever. If we, like Mark, have failed and failed grievously in the past, there may yet be opportunity in the present and future for us, like him, to hope, to dare, to accomplish great services, and to “Let the dead past bury its dead.”

Chapter 225

Scripture Sketches: 15. Religio Medici

THE Gospel of Luke and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, are unique in this—that they are books of important historical events, in many of which the writer took part; yet the writer never once alludes to himself as having done or witnessed anything whatever—does not even mention his own name or existence; and the only way in which he allows us to hear of his presence is where he changes the pronoun occasionally from “they” to “we." This is a kind of modesty altogether unexampled in literature, and indeed is only to be accounted for on the ground of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Of course, when we admit a writing to be inspired, we cannot very well either praise or blame the human writer for the nature of it. He is merely an instrument in the hand of the divine Author, Who is absolutely responsible. Yet it is very beautiful to see with what delicacy and propriety the inspired scriptures have been written by their human authors. Each has his different style too: that of Luke is admired by scholars for its “classic and flexible Greek.”

One sign of the essential brutality of the Roman rule was the low place they assigned to those who sought to cure, in contrast with the high honors paid to those whose mission was to slay. With the Greeks it was not so, but with all the western nations to the present time we observe the same principle. Earldoms, Dukedoms, Blenheims, Apsley Houses, and thousands on thousands a year are heaped upon successful naval and military men; whilst Harveys, Hunters, Simpsons, and Jenners, who have done more to alleviate human suffering than even those have done to inflict it, dieunnobled—sometimes in poverty and obscurity. But this anomaly was very much greater in ancient Rome, where anyone above the plebeians considered it beneath his dignity to be a physician and consequently had one of his slaves, often a Greek or Egyptian, trained to doctoring, and would sometimes set him free if his treatment were successful.

This however could not have been very often, except by accident, if we may judge by the prescriptions which have come down to us. Even in comparatively recent times (I quote a distinguished physician), “sick people were made to swallow burnt toads, and powdered earth-worms, and the expressed juice of wood-lice.” We read in history that, when Charles II. was dying, they dosed him with “a loathsome volatile salt extracted from human skulls. Hot irons were applied to his head. Fourteen doctors tortured him for some hours like an Indian at a stake.” Such considerations as these help us to understand the otherwise surprising fact that when Paul, speaking in the period of the iron Roman rule, mentions that Luke was a physician, “the beloved physician” scholars instantly surmise that he may have been a freed slave. Though he belonged to an honorable profession, it was then by no means an honored one. And here again, we find the dignity of Christianity which ignores and rises far above local prejudices, narrow caste-hatreds, and class antipathies. Matthew is a tax collector; Zenas a lawyer; Luke a physician; Philemon a “capitalist,” and Onesimus a slave.

Luke had been with the disciples from the very first, an eye-witness and minister of the Word; and he wrote two long important canonical scriptures. Yet had it not been that the apostle Paul in his

Epistles makes honorable and affectionate mention of his services, we should not have known of his existence: so completely had he kept his own name and personality out of the record of a long series of the most important events in the world's history, in the whole of which events he had been more or less personally concerned. Let us consider this fact for a moment. Competent judges have said that the finest biography in the world was Boswell's Life of Johnson, and that it was so chiefly because the writer had so completely merged his own individuality in that of the sage whom he was so faithfully portraying that he never places himself but always his leader in a favorable light, and only makes himself a foil to reveal the wisdom and capacity of the subject of his biography. Boswell often stands in so humiliating an aspect that his son was ashamed of the book and would have prevented its being reprinted had he been able. Yet it is certain that Boswell had no thought that he had made any ridiculous appearance in the pages where his vanity urged him to obtrude himself so frequently.

Now contrast this with a memoir like that of Luke's Gospel and Acts, where the writer never suggests his own existence at all, except where he changes the pronoun. But contrast Luke's record especially with the records of writers belonging to his own time. Take for instance Josephus, who commences his Jewish histories by telling us what a highly respectable family he himself came from, and how exceedingly clever and good-looking he was when he was a boy. It is an essential of Paley's great argument on the evidences of Christianity that the first disciples were not fanatical men nor enthusiasts. And certainly their writings stand out as the most sober and modestly constructed that are in the world.

But the fact of chief interest concerning Luke is contained in the last letter which Paul wrote just before being put to death. He had written to the Colossians a short time previously an epistle in which he incidentally mentions that he is in prison at Rome and that “Luke, the beloved physician,” Demas, Aristarchus, and one or two others were with him. “These only are my fellow-workers, unto the kingdom of God,” he says, “which have been a comfort unto me.” These circumstances were terribly low for them, to be in the center of civilization after thirty years of incessant labors and sufferings to promulgate Christianity. But after a time even these last few fellow-workers were scattered. Some had been called away by duty or by death, and others like Demas had fallen away from the truth. The assemblies which still existed were getting either lukewarm like the Laodiceans, or legal and contentious like the Galatians, where they spent their time adjusting, in the method of angry theologians the respective rights of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Everything was discouraging to the last degree. It is nothing to be in a small minority at the beginning of a testimony: for every true principle “begins in a minority of one,” and carries with it hope, which is the birth-right of youth. But when a testimony has been proclaimed and in a measure accepted; next neglected, discredited, and deserted by its own advocates; then all is discouragement, dragged down by disappointment which is the weary burden of age.

In that day of disastrous failure, and horrible despondency, Luke in his quiet and modest obscurity, “true as the dial to the sun, although it be not shined upon,” still faithfully kept his ground, like that nameless sentinel of Pompeii who refused to leave his post when the ruins of his city were falling around him. Paul writes in his last lines, “only Luke is with me.” And these are indeed affecting words, bringing before our minds the two old scholars, in the center of the vast world-empire standing alone for the testimony of God and truth, with their bodies battered and withered by sufferings and labors, and their souls filled with the love of Christ.

We read of one who when the whole creation is collapsing shall lift up his head, and “the darkening universe defy to quench his immortality, or shake his trust in God.” After Varro's disastrous defeat, the Roman senate showed the mettle of their stern and resolute spirit, by voting to him (though he was their political enemy) their thanks, “because he had not despaired of the commonwealth.” And now there was one standing amongst them, whose nature they might have appreciated, had he not been too obscure for them to have known. Though we can think indeed of no defiant attitude in connection with Luke, we can see him there to the very last in his quiet, patient, dogged fidelity, “too kind for bitter word to grieve, too firm for clamor to dismay “—going on, as the French General Foy's men went to their great defeat, “with little hope, but with no fear.”

Scripture Sketches: 16. The Cloak That I Left at Troas

16.- THE CLOAK THAT I LEFT AT TROAS."

Some years ago a notable opponent, who wrote a book in which he described the progress of his apostacy from Christianity, made mention of some conversation which he had had with one (well known to many who read this) whom he called the "Irish Clergyman." The opponent was saying that he considered that parts of the New Testament were certainly merely of local and temporary meaning, and wished to know what we should have lost, for instance, if we had not got the verse where Paul says, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, especially the parchments." He states that the "Irish Clergyman" instantly replied that he himself would have lost much, for it was only that verse which kept him from destroying his little library. To those who knew something of the Irish Clergyman's "little library" in later years—how many languages and subjects it embraced—the incident was not without interest.

The verse has always had a fascination for me, but (as I have never felt tempted to destroy books) it is the first part of it which has been of especial attraction. I speak soberly when I say that I have thought many thousands of times of that old cloak at Troas, and always my mind returns to it with a renewed sympathy as it hangs there, an object infinitely pathetic. No doubt it was dingy and shabby enough, but the warp and the woof of it are interwoven with truth and love; and it is embroidered with a fringe of celestial light.

For it brings before us in a vivid way the personality of the old infirm man, wasting in the foul Roman dungeon, and now nearing the time of his death by execution. He is a man of the most refined and sensitive nature, yet he has been hounded and battered from one end of the civilized world to the other. Habitually uncomplaining, he had some years ago, on one occasion, boasted with a sublime satire of his own sufferings, when he had seen amongst the Corinthians the sybarite and dilettante nature of the poor pleasure-loving creatures that were usurping authority amongst them, and disparaging his influence. Against these choppers of logic, who demanded the credentials of his apostleship, he gives only the kind of answer that Amynias gave to the lawyers at Athens. He draws aside for a moment his old cloak, and shows a body all scarred and mutilated with wounds received in the van of the battle, whilst the Sybarites were fretting over the crumpled rose-leaves which occasionally disturbed their repose. The signs of his being approved as a minister of God! Ah, yes, he will give them— "labors... stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides..." But there! no doubt these Greek school-theologians, logomachists and dilettantists, found such arguments irritating and irrelevant, They would have preferred to dispute with the negative dialectic of Zeno or the interrogative system of Socrates, or anything—anything

whatever, except the flesh and blood, the sufferings and sacrifices, of the old man who passionately swept their sophistries aside and appealed to their hearts.

But the old man was a scholar himself too; he had long ago been trained by the learned, accomplished, broad-minded Gamaliel, who was as much in advance of his contemporaries in enlightenment and toleration as Milton and Locke were of theirs. For a man trained thus books are almost a necessity of life—food he can do without, but books, ah!" some little luxury there." Some of us can, perhaps, feel a keen sympathy with the old scholar's love of his books, and interest in the fact that he sends for them all the way from Rome to Troas, when he knew he had only a few weeks to live.

Then again the mind turns to the cloak, which he had left with them in the keeping of Carpus. All the winter he has to be without it, shut up in the Tullianum—a damp underground cellar, into which he has been lowered through a hole in the ceiling like a sack of coals. Occasionally he is let out in custodiamilitaris chained to a Roman soldier, for he must do something to earn money to fee his jailors and pay for his board and lodging. They couldn't be expected to keep him for nothing! That was the system general in former times in prisons: it continued in this country until John Howard's time.

It was under such circumstances as these, when he is in such infirmity and poverty, that he has to send a thousand miles for his old cloak, that one of the most beautiful and touching events occurs. A young slave named Onesimus had robbed his master, a Christian named Philemon of Colosse, and had run away to Rome where he had met the aged apostle. Paul, with the keen instinct of a veteran evangelist, had marked him for a servant for his own Master. As a result of their intercourse, the young man is converted and, becoming devotedly attached to his instructor, wishes to remain with him and work for him. But the apostle's sense of honor is too high to admit of this. The young slave, he says, must return to his original owner. To smooth the way, however, he will give him a letter to the master who is well known to himself, and is, in fact, one of his own converts. And as to the defalcations, why the letter would contain these words, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth aught, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it." This is what he writes, and engages himself to do for a young man-servant, who was, till lately, quite a stranger to him; this, at a time when he is too poor to buy a new cloak to protect his aged and infirm body from the penetrating vapors that arise from the marshy ground of the malarial Campagna.

Above all, consider the uncomplaining tone of these last letters. (As to the verse concerning Alexander the coppersmith, it should apparently read as a prophecy, not as a curse— "The Lord will judge... ", not "The Lord judge!" It is in the future, not the optative;. With the calm and serene strength of a Christian and a philosopher, he speaks of his approaching death without a trace of any resentment against the unjust judges who had condemned him. He would like to see his beloved books if possible for a time before he dies, and the cloak would be a protection from the bitter cold; for there is not a trace in him of that ascetic feeling of the Flagellants and hermits who voluntarily put themselves to suffering for suffering's sake. The old man's mind is too sound for any such ideas. For the rest, however, if suffering comes, he has learned "how divine a thing it is to suffer and be strong." "A Gallityeri, Signora, never complains," said the Italian to his tormentors. "Learn" said the noblest and most afflicted of the German princes to his son, "learn to suffer

without complaining.”

Scripture Sketches: 17. Caleb

IF ever a hopeful disposition were needed, it was when Israel fell into wailings of despair on hearing from the spies such an “evil report” of the dangers before them in Canaan, of the gigantic sons of Anak, and the cities walled up to heaven. But two or three men were undismayed. Caleb strode forward, for “he had another spirit in him,” and had “wholly followed the Lord;” and he vehemently urged an immediate advance. “Let us go up at once and possess it,” he said, “for we are well able to overcome it.” Had the people taken his advice instead of trying to stone him, they would not have had to wander in the wilderness for forty years and leave their carcasses there in the end.

Caleb was distinguished by a high, intrepid courage, which, like that of the great Macedonian, desired an empire of wars and difficulties for its sphere. When such a man is consecrated to the service of God, what can he not do? We then lose sight of the mere vulgar successes of earthly conquerors, and survey, in a far higher realm, conflicts more daring and victories infinitely more enduring. Horatius on the Tiber Bridge, defying the sixty thousand Tuscans, shows not a more audacious valor than that shown in the attempt to capture for God the millions of China by the missionary Morrison, or Japan by Xavier, or the Eskimos by Stachs, or the “inarticulate” Terra del Fuegians, in their dense and dreadful abasement, by Gardiner. Such victories may perhaps still be achieved by men, who, like Caleb, “wholly follow the Lord,” and who have the impetuous courage of faith and hope.

Whilst, as a warrior, he bore a great resemblance to men like Clive, who with the three thousand, dashes against seventy thousand at Plassey, or Cortes wrecking his ships and marching against a whole nation with a handful of men; he bears most resemblance to Alexander the Great, who continually did such feats as these, but who, above all other men of his time, showed that temper of sanguine and princely generosity which is so often allied to a high and dashing valor. “What will you have left for yourself,” said Perdiccas to him, “if you give everything away thus?” “Hope,” he replied, and, with such as he, hope is more than all beside.

The pessimism of unbelief is one of the deadliest of evils. If it were not for the Calebs who keep up faith and courage in spite of a whole nation's wailing and despairing, what enterprise would ever have been undertaken? In this way the early missionaries, midst universal discouragement, prepared their ventures to attack the citadels of evil: and we have seen with what marvelous result, when even men who reject Christianity, acknowledge with admiration, as Dr. Darwin did, the effects of the holy lives and teachings of the soldiers of the cross on people of the very lowest types. But those who supposed that the day for discouraging such work was past have of late been roughly undeceived, when we have a “Parliament of religions” convened to assist a played-out Christianity, and when in a concourse of ecclesiastical dignitaries it is announced that Christianity in Africa is a failure, and that Mohammedanism is better adapted to raise men in the low condition of the negroes! Mohammedanism, that debases and enslaves its womankind, that says the sword is the key of heaven, that sets the poor negro tribes slaughtering one another in

order to carry off the survivors in chain-gangs for slaves! What would Vanderkemp, Moffatt, and Livingstone have thought of that? What would the missionary Shaw's wife have said? When they used to tell her how dangerous and far beneath any hope of Christian influence the Kaffirs were, she replied, “If these people are so bad as to be guilty of such atrocities, there is all the more need that we should go forward and teach them better.”

It is fit that such discouraging statements should be accompanied by calculations as to how much money it costs for each conversion. Go to, now; let us see then what it does cost to convert a soul! But set down first the labors, sufferings, tears and blood of the great Protomartyr and His disciples; and when that is done, let whoever has a heart capable of it, add on the sordid shillings and pence. Let him next bring the factors to a common denominator—if he can.

When the poor pilgrim got in the Slough of Despond, says the Dreamer, there came one to him who showed him certain stones on which to step, by which he was kept from sinking, and safely reached

the solid ground. The Dreamer's sole and sufficient comment on this graphic figure is contained in the two words in the margin, “The promises.” This was the reason that he did not sink into the mire of unbelief like the others. He rested on God's promises. Five and forty years after Caleb had been promised the personal possession of Kirjath-Arba, he lodged his claim for it, and got it—giants, walls, and all.

A man like this will retain his youthful heart and sanguine energy to the last—unless it is broken down by some crushing disaster (which a more phlegmatic nature would perhaps better endure). When he is eighty-five years old, he asks to be given the work of capturing the most difficult fortress in the country, which he straightway storms with his usual dashing prowess, scaling the heaven-high walls, and overthrowing the giant sons of Anak. When too old, twenty years later, to lead an assault himself, he throws his heart into the fray, as Douglas threw the Bruce's heart amongst the Moors: he promises to give his daughter to the man who will capture Kirjath-sepber. In his later years we can detect a suggestion of that garrulity which we are so ready to excuse, and even to encourage, in a veteran with such a record, reminding us of old Nestor in the Iliad. His last recorded action is one of characteristic generosity. Achsah asked him for watersprings, and he instantly gave her the upper springs and the nether springs, twice as much as she desired.

Scripture Sketches: 18. Othniel

THERE are three phases of public spirit. That, firstly, which is like some of the Swiss toybarometers—the little man comes out boldly in fine weather and retires carefully in foul. These fair-weather friends are to be welcomed but not trusted. Then, there are those who are never heard of at all but when there is trouble, at which times they will appear, like the “Mother Carey's chickens” flapping round the heads of the wearied and embarrassed sailors, and greatly enjoying the commotion. But there are also those noble and devoted spirits that prefer to be unnoticed so long as there is calm and prosperity, yet who are ever ready in the crucial hour of danger to come forward to labor, endure, or die for the common weal. When a great storm bursts on the coast, we presently see a few stalwart men, with rough stern faces, strong frames, and stout hearts, hastening out into the blinding tempest to rescue the doomed crew of some wreck. We wonder who they are and whence they came. To-morrow we shall look for them in vain. They will have returned quietly to their fishing nets, with that same quality of magnanimous serenity with which Cincinnatus returned to his plow, or Hampden to his estate, or Washington to his farm.

To this last class belonged Othniel, of whom we read but very little, yet that little conveys suggestions of one of the finest characters which the world has known, one who combined (with military ability and heroism of the highest order) the wisdom and capacity of the most competent statesmanship—a union of qualities so rare that history contains very few (perhaps not a dozen) parallels. Like some men of this type, Othniel is obscure and unknown until some great national emergency arises or some exceptionally arduous public service has to be attempted. Then in a few words we are told that he does the work; the brief, absolute manner of the narration conveying the idea that he has gone forward quietly and accomplished all that was required by a few swift strong blows, and then retired silently to his ordinary daily duties as though nothing particular had occurred. In this way, when the capture of Kirjath-Sepher proves too difficult for anyone else, Othniel storms and carries it; and later on when Israel is crushed by the foreign yoke of Chusan-rishathaim, God's Holy Spirit arouses this puissant warrior again to come forth and, with a mighty overthrow, to cast off His people's bonds. Then comes a most significant statement. Othniel is appointed a judge of Israel, and during his rule, “the land had rest—forty years.”

Happy is the country that has no “history “that is, in the vulgar sense of the word, a record of wars, treaties, and conflicting dynasties. Happy is the country when a ruler's long reign can be written in two or three clauses thus: An arduous and heroic enterprise; a mighty and effectual salvation; a wise and tranquil reign. The curse of an earthly deliverer usually is that, when he has saved his nation, and finds himself with a great military force in his power, his ardor of battle and lust of conquest is so great that he then goes about carrying fire and sword into other nations; he likes a spirited foreign policy, until either he inflicts every horror of war wherever his foot treads, or else the people in a frenzy of hatred and despair combine to cast him off the face of the earth. They hurl him at last from Moscow to St. Helena. But Othniel had evidently no more lust of conquest than a Hampden or a Washington. To one like this, “the next dreadful thing to a battle lost is a battle won.” He now shows himself as wise and strong to govern his own people and keep them in

peaceful development, as he has already been to conquer their oppressors.

Through the stern and somber records of these events there twice passes an interlude of idyllic brightness. Caleb had given his daughter as bride to Othniel, on his capturing Kirjath-Sepher, and he had given her a field, which however lacked water-springs in order to make it properly fruitful. We have then a sunlit vision of the bride alighting from her beast, approaching the old warrior, and presenting her request with all filial reverence and confidence; and we see the war-scarred face of the veteran softened into a loving complacency, as he replies that she shall have springs in abundance, the upper springs and the lower ones too. From the position and repetition of this apparently slight episode, I consider it to be typically designed, thus: Othniel, (“Lion of God,” of Judah, Christ the Deliverer) captures Kirjath-Sepher “the city of the book,” and wins Achsah, the Bride, who receives from the Father those hidden spiritual blessings, both heavenly and earthly, Upper and Nether, without which all providential gifts are barren and worthless.

Scripture Sketches: 19. Ehud

WHEN Israel had been eighteen years oppressed under the tyranny of Eglon, king of Moab, God raised them up a deliverer from the tribe of Benjamin—a strong, brave, capable man, whose work however is discredited by the unscrupulous way in which he did it. This was Ehud, the left-handed chief, who was (lit.) “shut—maimed—of his right hand.” Having only one serviceable arm, he had the choice before him of sitting down and mourning for the other, as many would do, or of making the best use he could of the one remaining. He chose the latter alternative and delivered God's nation.

If the deliverance wrought by the Judges be typical of the work of Christ for His people, the seven prominent Judges whose lives are given in detail would represent so many distinct aspects of that work. Thus Othniel is seen in relationship with the bride, Gideon with the overthrow of idolatry, whilst Ehud represents the conquest of a malignant power by one who was wounded and weakened. There is a very distinct line of thought, most pathetic and affecting thought, relating to our salvation by a wounded Savior, beginning with the very first promise where God had said that the woman's Seed should bruise the Serpent's head, but should itself be bruised in the heel; that is, the part which comes in direct contact with the earth—the humanity of our Lord. “He was wounded for our transgressions.” After His resurrection He shows the marks of His wounds to His disciples. The prophet Zechariah says, “One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” His conflict had a terrible reality. It was in no sense of a nature perfunctory or sinecure. The Emperor Commodus used to fight in the arena against a man armed only with a leaden sword, whom he of course easily and invariably conquered; but the wounds of Christ show that the weapons which assailed Him were real and fearful. And these wounds are the signs of the true Christ.

In delivering Israel, Ehud was doing God's work and receiving His approval; but we are not to suppose in such cases, that everything which is done, especially as to the manner of its doing, was divinely sanctioned or approved. Thus the manner of his approach to Eglon was characterized by extreme treachery, though it was certain that if Ehud, being divinely empowered for the work, had taken an open course, the result would have been equally successful and his success untarnished. On the other hand it would be absurd for us to judge a man of such times and circumstances by the standard of the nineteenth century! nay, the light of Christianity. The great matter is that he did his work; if not in the best way—somehow: are his critics doing theirs?

He approaches the king with a present, having under his clothing a dagger, long and keen as that which Harmodius concealed with myrtle when he slew the Athenian tyrant. The fat sensual monarch is in a good humor, and invites him into the “summer parlor.” “I have a secret errand for thee, O king,” says Ehud. The king, doubtless, thinks to hear of fresh ways to plunder and oppress the Israelites: an obsequious parasite of their own nation is just the person to tell him, so he sends the servants and courtiers out. Imprudent to be sure; but what can an unarmed—and one-armed—man do to him?—and the man looks so innocent! The king wants to hear now what it

is. The left-hand man is certainly very gauche—or is it sinister? He is stooping, groping under his clothes. The king rises, alarmed. “A message from God to thee”! says the Benjamite, and, with the dagger in his left hand, smites him an awful blow, like the kick of a horse, driving the blade, nearly two feet long, right into the fat king's body and out at the back so that the haft goes in after the blade. Well, there is nothing like being thorough after all. Then the Benjamite walks out unconcernedly, locking the door after him. Once outside the palace, he hastens to the mountain of Ephraim, and blows such a r■veil on his war trumpet as awakens Israel from their troubled nightmare, and puts ten thousand Moabites to sleep forever.

And the courtiers are outside the “summer parlor” waiting—waiting—fearing to disturb their monarch, wondering at his long silence; whilst the gross body of their lord inside lies sprawled in the coagulating blood, announcing from the mute ghastly lips of its dreadful wound that—sooner or later, in time or in eternity—the enemies of God and His people shall grovel helpless in the dust.

The doctrine of the Survival of the Fittest has little thought of hope or comfort for any of those whose fangs are not strong, whose claws are not sharp, whose faculties are not entire, and whose hearts are not pitiless. Even Professor Huxley lately admits that in itself it is not sufficient to produce the highest forms of human character, and Mr. Wallace, Darwin's twin—discoverer (of Lamarck's obsolete theory) never considered that it was sufficient to produce human character at all. Is He the God of the Fit only? is He not also the God of the Unfit? Is not His strength made perfect in weakness? His greatest victories accomplished in defeat? Many of the most glorious and enduring achievements have been done by the Unfit whom He has fitted. To all those who are conscious of being maimed and limited in function or faculty of body or mind, the words of that great leader of men, who bore about in his body the “stigmas” of Christ, come as an inspiration and a hope— “when I am weak, then am I strong.” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” The maimed Ehud struck such a blow with his left hand that it still reverberates through history, what time he laid prostrate the colossal iniquity of Moab.

Chapter 230

Scripture Sketches: 20. Joseph of Nazareth

WHEN Verelst painted a portrait of King James, he surrounded the likeness with so many flowers in prominent positions that the beholders often mistook the picture for a mere floral study. Obviously there should be some sense of proportion and relative prominence in all pictures. Perhaps it would be better if there had, never been any attempt to represent pictorially the most sacred themes and persons at all, but there can be no doubt that if the attempt be made the most important figure should be given the most prominent place. And this is usually done by accomplished artists. In the great painting, for instance, of “Christ leaving the Pretorium” there is every form of sorrow and passion depicted, yet the central Figure, white-robed, thorn-crowned, divine in suffering and silent dignity, at once absorbs the chief—almost the whole—attention. Still every part of the picture is thronged with figures that are perfect in artistic beauty and interest. Amongst these is a group of the Virgin Mother and some of the disciples that—as has been said—would immortalize itself as a separate painting.

It is in this way that the New Testament has been written. The wisdom, with which all the groups and individuals have been subordinated so as to raise into prominence the Central Figure, is an incidental evidence of the unity and inspiration of the Book, for it would need the credulity of a learned skeptic to believe that a company of unlearned artisans and fishermen had of themselves the exquisite skill to design and indite so marvelous a memoir of their Leader, and thus to present to the world as perfect a portrait of Him as it lay in the power of language to produce.

When, however, we come to look at the subordinate figures in the memoir, we find that often a group of characters is depicted with the same superhuman skill, a few incidental lines, delicately or powerfully graphic, disclosing to us every feature of each till we get to know them as intimate acquaintances. Amongst the first of these groups we naturally see Joseph and Mary.

They were of royal lineage—a lineage so ancient and resplendent with the glories of ancestral prophets, bards, sages, monarchs, and warriors that in comparison with it the most antique family-tree of our times is a mere record of parvenus; yet we find them acting in the circumstances of humble peasants with a patient simplicity, that is the best sign of the highest natural dignity. It is only the true noble-man and noble-woman that can afford to come down in this way. Paul “learned” it— “how to be abased,” without loss of self-respect or true dignity. Dr. Smiles tells us of the descendant of an ancient earldom who was recently earning his living as a bricklayer's laborer. The bricklayers would call to him, “Earl of Crawford, bring another hod of lime.” There was far more dignity in his carrying that lime up the ladder for his living than there would have been in clinging to the skirts of his wealthy relatives, petitioning parliament, and wailing in the newspapers. Plato said that Aristippus was the only man he knew who could wear velvet or rags with equal grace. This dignity in abasement is a goodly sight, unless indeed it be in any way an affectation, as in the case of that one concerning whom Socrates said, “one can see his pride through the holes in his coat.”

“Canst thou not remember Quintius, Fabricius, Curius, Regulus? For I esteem those names of men so poor, Who could do mighty things and could contemn riches, though offered from the hand of kings.” That the family of Nazareth was poor is evident from their purification offering: they brought the two young pigeons which were appointed as the sacrifice for such as were “not able” to bring a lamb. Yet nothing abject in their honest and decent poverty: Joseph was “the carpenter “; there was a still cheaper sacrifice that they might have availed themselves of which was appointed for those in extreme poverty (even for a sin-offering)—a handful of flour. They did not offer this, and we may be sure that it was not lack of will that hindered them from offering the lamb, for they went five miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to dedicate the Babe, and they came all the way from Nazareth every year to the passover.

When at first it was thought that a great sin had been committed, Joseph (because he was a man of honorable principles, as the scripture explains) determined to dissociate himself from it at all cost to his personal feelings; yet privily, to avoid the infliction of unnecessary pain and scandal on one whom he loved; but when God reveals to him the truth, he acts in direct and implicit obedience, purity, and simplicity. Again when he is warned of danger to the holy Child, he directly takes the Child and mother to Egypt and shelters and protects them through the long, dangerous journeys subordinating all his own interests to their care and safety. It was a manly and honorable charge to protect a woman and child—quite as truly so, when it involved great and unceasing danger, as to lead in the van of an army, though it may receive neither notice nor applause. An upright, devout, gracious, simple laboring man, with royal blood in his veins and royal faith in his heart, Joseph was, by divine grace, in every way qualified for such an important trust. Again, we cannot help thinking of that illustrious chief whose integrity was so great that the people of the hostile countries through which his army passed would bring their goods to him to protect them from the marauding of their own soldiers; and who when his Queen gave him the Kohinoor diamond to get polished, never once let it go out of his sight, but would sit an hour every day whilst the jeweler worked at it, and then wrap it up in his silk handkerchief to take it home. The heart of his Sovereign could safely trust him. From various passages it is concluded that Joseph had died before our Lord's public ministry commenced.

Chapter 231

Scripture Sketches: 21. Shamgar

THE Philistines had a way of disarming their conquered foes and cutting off all their supplies of weapons which was peculiar and effective. In Saul's time, when they once got the upper hand, they did not allow the Israelites to have a blacksmith in all their country, lest they should have the means of making swords; the conquered had to go to the conqueror's smithies if they wanted an ax or a coulter ground. This was not at all a bad policy for a conqueror to adopt, and not more cruel than was customary in those times; but it was highly inconvenient to Shamgar, who wanted to deliver his people from their bondage. In his day there was not so much as a single spear or shield amongst forty thousand Israelites. Shamgar had only an ox-goad himself. With this, however, he rose, slew six hundred Philistine warriors, and emancipated the people of God: perhaps as remarkable a feat in its way as when the one-eyed Ziska and his thirty thousand farm-laborers rose up from that vast celebration of the Lord's supper on the hills near Prague, and, armed only with scythes and flails, defeated two hundred thousand of the bravest and best armed troops in Europe. This event forms a suitable pendant to the story of Ehud. Ehud had done great work with crippled faculties; Shamgar does great work with a poor instrument.

When Christian was in the Palace Beautiful, we are told, the three maidens took him into a mansion in which he saw, amongst other relics, Shamgar's ox-goad. Happily the Dreamer had too sound a mind to give the relics themselves more than a passing mention; and perhaps it is as well that nobody else ever saw them. For there is such an inveterate tendency to worship the mere instrument that the whole significance of the event is distorted; and, instead of our learning from it the wholesome stimulating lesson of how great things may be done with small means and giving God the glory, we assume that there is something to be venerated in the instrument itself and burn incense to it, as the Israelites did to the brazen serpent until Hezekiah wisely dashed it to pieces and derisively called it “Nehushtan” —a bit of brass. Thus we perversely attribute all the credit of the work to the ox-goad, instead of to the strong arm and stout heart behind it and to God overhead; as the Rabbis say that the rod of Moses was a magic wand brought by Adam out of Eden and inherited through Seth, &c., &c. Any puerile story will do so long as it takes the glory from God and gives it to the instrument.

Mighty works have been often accomplished by the faith and energy of those who have possessed only small and apparently inadequate or contemptible means. If we take this lesson to heart, we shall not sit down waiting for swords or scepters before we commence to work; we shall hear the voice of God saying to us, What is that in thine hand? A stick? Moses broke the power of Egypt with such a one. What has not David or the woman of Thebez accomplished with a stone? or Gideon with candles and pitchers? or Samson (and perhaps many another) with the jawbone of an ass? I have no doubt that if men could get hold of the stick, stone, and so forth, they would preserve and adore them like the blood of St. Januarius or the shinbone of some other defunct old saint; and we may therefore be grateful that they are not extant. I am sufficiently iconoclastic in such matters to be glad to see them destroyed, and “Nehushtan” pronounced by Hezekiah's contemptuous voice over every mere instrument that we are disposed to burn incense to. “This

holy candle," said the monk, "has not been extinguished for five hundred years." "Then it is time it was"! said the American tourist as he blew it out. Although it was not courteous to blow out the poor monk's treasured candle, and the action is not cited as an example, yet it requires a very abnormal condition of mind to be able to regret that the wretched rush-light, which gave so much occasion of labor and lying to grown people, was at last extinguished.

It is no particular credit to do great things with appropriate means; but it is creditable and glorious when great achievements are wrought by those who have only poor and unworthy instrumentalities to work with. It is just here that the true genius manifests itself. The bad workman lays the blame of failure on his tools. The able workman can produce the most exquisite results with almost any tools, though none knows the value of a fine tool so well as he does; none treats it so carefully, keeps it so long, fondles it so affectionately. He can make a cross-grained piece of wood into a beautiful ornament and turn every knot in it to some special advantage. When even Da Vinci could do nothing with that awkward piece of stone, Michael Angelo took it and sculptured such a David out of it as had never till then been seen.

Above all this is one of the noblest attributes of the Most High. He takes up "the devil's castaways," and, when His work is finished in them, they are taken to Paradise; or He uses men of like passions to ourselves, feeble and frail, to do work on the earth that holy angels and flaming seraphs might be proud to be used in. He creates a world by a word and regenerates it by "the foolishness of preaching." With a small brown seed He can make a forest; with a few coral polypi He raises a barrier of rocks a thousand miles long in the Pacific, or with the little encrinites paves the vast basin of the Atlantic. Yea, the ocean itself He constructs from drops of water, the mountains from grains of dust, the whole universe from microscopic atoms, spores, and cells.

And this is what I found written on Shamgar's ox-goad: a common bit of stick enough it was too, with nothing but a rough iron spike at the end of it.

Scripture Sketches: 22. Deborah

THE sins of Israel had brought them once more into the bondage of the Canaanites, who treated them with exceptional severity—contrasted with the comparatively mild and wise rule of their previous conquerors, the Philistines. The highways, Deborah says, were deserted: the inhabitants cowered and slunk through the by-ways to hide themselves from the brutal Sisera and his troops, who seem from Judg. 5:30, &c., to have been of the type of “Kirke's lambs” or the infamous Merode's brigade of the original “marauders.” In this extremity God raised up Deborah as a prophetess who, assisted by Barak, a cool, steady, able soldier, took up His people's cause.

When a woman becomes prominent in public affairs our sense of “the proprieties” is apt to be shocked. We do not greatly admire “the longhaired men and the short-haired women.” The phrase is Dr. Holmes' (and a very good one), but the idea is as old at least as the Epistle to the Corinthians. The excellent lady whose voice is so weighty in “society” informs her friends that she never could do such a thing (which is, indeed, true), and that this woman is “simply seeking notoriety” (which is often very untrue); for women like Deborah are mostly forced—called by God or by urgent providential circumstances—into the position which they take, and are often glad to retire from it when their work is done. There was no man in France that could do what Joan of Arc did to regain the independence of that country; and when her mission was accomplished, she apparently wished to retire into privacy: that an exacting popularity prevented her, and a cruel bigotry destroyed her, was not her fault. It was when there was no one else to lead the ancient Britons that Queen Boadicea led them against their Roman oppressors. Of course that is not always the case. But if there be times such as those we are considering of national convulsion and universal crisis, we must not be surprised to see strange and abnormal things occur. God will in providence or in grace take up whatsoever instrument He chooses—the younger son Jacob instead of Esau, the wife Priscilla instead of Aquila—and in this His sovereign power is made known. We are reminded that none of us have any claim to the posts of honor in His service; and we do well when we abstain from in any way discouraging, but, on the contrary, recognize, countenance, and so far as we consistently can, assist those, whosoever they may be, whom He raises to any important work.

Deborah had that insight in selecting men for important posts which characterized the English Elizabeth so highly. She sends for Barak, a brave, able, prudent chief who was precisely the man for an emergency. It is true that he had not much faith, but his lack of faith was compensated (so far as that is possible) by increase of caution: for though these two qualities may very well exist together, yet if a man have little faith, he urgently needs much caution. Thus when Deborah, in a characteristically vigorous and peremptory way, requires him to lead the army against Sisera, he says that he will go if she go with him—not unless. He does not mind imperiling his life at her proposal, but she must come too and commit herself to the enterprise. She replies that she will go, but that he will lose the chief honor by making such a request. Very good. That consideration would not weigh much with a man like Barak: so far from feeling any jealousy, he voluntarily joins in Deborah's eulogy of Jael when the battle is over. Sometimes a man gets the more honor by

surrendering the glory of an achievement to another, as Outram did, when in a chivalrous courtesy he surrendered the command of the army of relief to Havelock and served as a volunteer under him at Lucknow.

Barak leads forth the gallant men of the north country—men of Zebulon, “expert in war, which could keep rank, not of a double heart;” and of Naphtali, of the hind's feet and “goodly words.” The Canaanitish host is enormous, nine hundred war-chariots in front, Sisera, cruel as the Austrian Wallenstein, in the van; but, as Alaric said to the Romans, “The thicker the grass, the easier it is mown.” God was not “on the side of the big battalions” that day. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera. The hosts join battle. The 'phalanx of iron chariots is broken by the valiant warriors of Zebulon and Naphtali. Sisera leaps down and flies. The Canaanites are mightily overthrown. “The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river of Kishon...!”

We should not expect to find the more delicate feminine instincts developed much in Deborah's position and circumstances. The times called for the more masculine ones; and whether possessed by a man or a woman, they were equally valuable to the nation. In some few women of this type, however, the softer and gentler features of character were highly developed—as in her of Orleans. In Elizabeth there seem to have been none at all. In Deborah the sense of them was present, but peculiarly inverted by the horrible circumstances through which the nation had been passing, if we may judge from Judg. 5:8.

Scripture Sketches: 23. Deborah's Song

THE splendid triumphal song of Deborah “stirs the blood like the sound of a trumpet.” In the vehemence, and high ardent fire of its enthusiasm, it is entirely characteristic of the woman. It has all the martial clank of, Anne Askew's “Like as an armied knight.” But none of the forgiving Christian spirit which characterizes the closing lines of the modern martyr's poem is to be found in Deborah's—quite the reverse. All the fierce wrath of the Marseillaise and the Ca ira pales before it. How she extols Zebulon and Naphtali and the princes and tribes who came to the struggle! With what a scathing and withering satire does she depict the ever vacillating Reuben sitting on the fence with his “heart-searchings” by the “watercourses!” Then with what a solemn and awful denunciation does she rise and curse Meroz: “Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of Jehovah—to the help of “Jehovah against the mighty”!

This is very important: Meroz had done nothing, and yet they were bitterly cursed. They are cursed because they had done nothing; nothing while their brethren were grappling in death-struggle on the high places of the field to save the testimony of God from destruction. She will not curse Reuben, for he does take some concern in the conflict; he had his “heart-searchings “; and, doubtless, only that it always took him so long to come to a conclusion, he would have been in the battle; for his sympathies were usually in the right direction, and he was no coward. (But that was always the way with poor Reuben; just when he made his mind up what to do, and got down from the fence to start, he would meet the other people coming back from the fight; and then they would have the ill-breeding to laugh at him—it was really very annoying!)

But Meroz was in the center of the seat of a war which was being waged on behalf of God's work, and in which its own existence was involved. There was some palliation of the inaction of Gilead and others—though they are rebuked—for they were not locally implicated; but none whatever for Meroz which was in the thick of the responsibility, yet with a base and selfish cowardice left the labor and the danger to others, whilst content to benefit by the results. Meroz was as much worse than Reuben as the callous Pilate was worse than the timid Nicodemus.

People who take this neutral attitude in a great crisis get a reputation with shallow-minded persons for sagacity and impartiality; but Solon knew them: he ordered them to be put to death. And Deborah, who knew them through and through—that their sagacity is cowardice and their impartiality is heartless indifference—curses them with the fierce and scornful hatred that such a nature as hers feels toward all that is vile and despicable.

It is not intended to suggest that Christians must take sides in every controversy which arises. Ninety-nine out of every hundred disputes are best left alone, when they will quietly die out. But in a case like this, where the issue is directly between God and Satan, between Christ and Belial, if they hold aloof from identifying themselves with the right cause—whether actively or passively, prominently or subordinately—they adopt the course of Meroz. If, for instance, we live in a time when all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are being assailed, those who stand indifferently by are traitors to their Lord.

The difficulties which are so often found in regard to Deborah's song disappear when we observe that the inspired author expressly states that it is Deborah's song— “then sang Deborah” —and gives no hint that the song itself was inspired, though of course the record of it is. Those who believe in the verbal and literal inspiration of Scripture, whilst believing that the whole book is authentic and inspired by God, yet recognize that many of the persons whose words are there (divinely) recorded were untruthful speakers, and of course what they said was often false and in no way sanctioned by the Holy Ghost who recorded their utterances. Or they may have been good men who said things, wise or unwise, to which however we must be careful not to give the same place of authority as we give to the inspired Scripture in which it is contained. This is no “new” doctrine. It is what, I suppose, all hold who keep the “orthodox” views of inspiration, but who have sufficient thought to remember that when we have, for instance, Judas Iscariot or Satan speaking, we are not to take what they say as inspired, though the record of the fact that they thus spoke is inspired.

All this would seem obvious enough, yet it seems necessary to argue it; for advantage is given to opponents continually by its being loosely said that the Scripture says this or that, when really it only says that such a person said it. How often do we hear people assert that the Bible says, “Stolen waters are sweet,” when the fact is that so far from that, the Scripture says that a wicked woman said it! Mr. Jay preached from Job 2:4, “All that a man hath will he give for his life.” When the sermon was printed, by a mistake of one letter, the word “life” was changed to “wife.” Jay wrote in the margin that that depended upon circumstances. It however depends no more upon circumstances than the original statement does; for it was the devil who was speaking, and this was one of those half-truths which are worse than whole lies. Millions of men have refused to give up their principles to save their lives; and Job, himself, proved the falsity of so cynical a statement.

But Deborah was a prophetess: would not then whatever is recorded of her sayings be inspired? Not necessarily: Moses was a prophet; yet we are told when he said, “Hear now, ye rebels,” that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Paul was a prophet, yet he had to recall his language when he learned that it was the High priest whom he was speaking to. We have generally some indication when the servants of God claimed to speak by inspiration; and there is no such indication in regard to Judg. 5. The Holy Ghost records that Deborah and Barak sang these things, but in no way puts sanction on all that they say—such as the very natural, but somewhat savage, way in which they eulogize all the details of Jael's heroic treachery, and rejoice over the anticipated horror of Sisera's mother, watching for his home coming whilst he was lying dead in Jael's tent with a tent pin nailing his head to the floor.

Jael did a great service to Israel no doubt—the precise reverse of Meroz, for she was not locally implicated. But if her action is praised, this does not necessarily imply that the manner of carrying out that action is approved. It was wholly treacherous, and the excuses of those who say that any deception is fair in war do not apply; for Jael's people were not at war with Sisera—unless she identified herself with Israel. Had she taken a more straightforward course with faith in God, she would have been equally successful. She took her own course, however, and rid the earth of as great a monster as Charlotte Corday did. When King George praised and welcomed Warren Hastings for his great success in India, nobody ever accused him of approving of all Hastings' actions, such as his prompting As-ul-Dowlah to rob his own mother; nor when the English parliament passed a resolution of eulogy on Clive for his meritorious services in the east, did

anyone suggest that it put its sanction on his forgery of Watson's name to the treaty with Omichund. This principle may be applied in a dangerous way, I am aware; but it is none the less true and important in understanding such passages as that which has been before us.

Chapter 234

Scripture Sketches: 24. Joash of Abiezer

IF we could only make up our minds to follow the opinions of those around us in regard to matters of religion, what trouble it would prevent, to be sure! But then it might in possible cases lead us, as it led Joash, into building an altar to Baal, and worshipping a god with an ass' head and a fiend's heart. That would be hardly a safe principle then. Let us try again:

Suppose the governmental ruler of the country—king, kaiser, president or parliament—would appoint a national religion and all submit, how much inconvenience that would save! If all would only submit, there would be no schisms, no contentions nor persecutions, no stakes nor racks nor torture-boots, nor other appliances of that sort, with which men have sought to modify the religious convictions of their neighbors. We should not require these Wycliffes and Luthers either. We could even—in a way—get on without such men as Paul and his coadjutors.

Yet somehow when this method has been tried, it has not turned out to be such a complete success as might have been expected. Some rulers take to promulgating such very peculiar doctrines—Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Fettichism even—and sometimes a new ruler, by “divine right” or “infallible,” comes forth and upsets all that his divine right and infallible predecessor taught, without even giving us the little time to turn round that decency requires to prevent an appearance of inconsistency. Sometimes even the same ruler will change about in such a most inconvenient and embarrassing way that one can hardly keep pace with him; and that for reasons, too, which do not always seem adequate to the ordinary mind. John III of Sweden would change his religion when he wanted a new wife; Henry VIII. of England when he wanted to get rid of an old one. Even Henry of Navarre would travel from Geneva to Rome in his creeds when he thought public policy required it. To be sure, if one be not particular, such difficulties are not insurmountable. Fuller says that when the notable Symon Symonds was “first a papist [under Henry VIM], then a protestant [under Edward VI.], then a papist again [in Mary's reign], then a protestant again [in Elizabeth's]—when he was taunted with lack of principle, he replied that it was not so; for he always kept to his principle, which was to retain his own position secure and undisturbed.

Joash evidently reasoned in this way. He had, as was customary in his time and neighborhood, an altar to Baal on his estate. It was fashionable and general, and saved him from being the object of invidious comparisons on the part of his neighbors; but there is nothing to show that he had the slightest belief in Baal or any other god. He was a latitudinarian, and, being surrounded by bigots, he for the sake of ease fell in with their methods. Why should he trouble himself and subject himself to persecutions simply to protest against a false system that may after all have some elements of truth in it? He would be only one against the multitude.

His son Gideon also was only one; but he broke down the idolatrous altar and destroyed the whole system one night in a most effective way; and when the people saw the ruins next day, there was considerable excitement. All the bigots were there with that deliberate and deadly animosity which still characterizes their descendants. They said to Joash, “Bring out thy son that he may die “; and

they meant it too. But the old man seems to have loved his son passing well, and moreover found him very useful about the farm, so that he views matters in a different light, though doubtless extremely annoyed about the altar, or rather the commotion which has been caused. He replies with cynical bluntness to the effect that, if his son had done Baal any injury and if Baal be a god, let him avenge it himself. He, Joash, would not; and if any of them touched his son, it would be the worse for them. “Let Baal plead for himself,” he roughly concludes. He was evidently a man of such position and with such assistance at his command as to be able to overawe the bigots; and the affair passed off for the time. It was probably from this passage that the story of the boy Abram's smashing his father's idols found its way into the Talmud, for some of the circumstances are very similar.

The Latitudinarian is very “good natured” and honest (negatively); he is a much more agreeable neighbor than the bigot at any time. Occasionally he is a Nothingarian and does not profess to care anything for or against any phase of religion, like Gallio or Meroz; and occasionally he is an Everythingarian—generally an Arian of some sort, whether avowed or not, in these times; and then he can see so much to be said for all sides of a question, that like Chunder Sen he can construct a brand new religion from selected parts of all the others; or still more probably, like Reuben he will sit on the fence with” heartsearching” introspection, and leave the others to do the fighting. Why should he fight? He sees with calm and comprehensive sight that Black is not all Black, nor White so very White. Thus he sits impartially until the contending parties decide which theory is by survival the fittest for popular acceptance, when he gets down quietly and joins the victorious party; but he maintains his reputation for sagacity and impartiality by representing their opponents' side of the contention in the role of a “candid friend.” He has often a large and capacious intellect and makes an excellent judge to sum up the evidence pro and con, like Francis Bacon: but a bribe or a threat may lead him, as it led Bacon, to pervert judgment. He is not deliberately wicked, for he neither hates nor loves any one strongly enough for that; yet his selfishness and weakness may wreck the best cause and betray his dearest friend, as Bacon's led Essex to the scaffold. He lacks one thing needful; he is heartless, and consequently weak of purpose and afraid to be in a minority: like those lukewarm Laodiceans who, because they were neither cold nor hot, were cast out of the mouth of One Who had stood alone thorn-crowned and ridiculed against the whole world.

Scripture Sketches: 25. Gideon

No one who saw the young man at Ophrah, at work for his father, threshing wheat behind the winepress to bide it from the marauding Midianites, would think that he was “a mighty man of valor"; and was to be a great leader of insurgents—a revolutionist as thorough and vigorous as Judas Maccabees, as brave and able as Cromwell, as calm and magnanimous as Washington. He was to become an iconoclast:

All grim, and soiled, and brown with tan,

I saw a Strong One in his wrath,

Smiting the godless shrines of man

Along his path!

Spare,' Art implores, You holy pile,

That grand, old, time—wot n turret spare! '

Meek Reverence, kneeling in the aisle,

Cried out, Forbear'.!

“ Gray-bearded Use, who, deaf and blind,

Groped for his old-accustomed stone,

Leaned on his staff and wept to find

His seat o'erthrown.

"'Young Romance raised his dreamy eyes

O’erhung with ply locks of gold;

Why smite,' he asked in sad surprise,

The fair—the old?'

.” Yet louder rang the Strong One's stroke,

Yet nearer flashed his ax's gleam” —

The popular idea of the iconoclast is often strangely incorrect—that he is a fierce, impetuous being life Jehu, who delights in pulling down, slaying; and. destroying. The greatest of them have been the very reverse of all this. Moses had to be forced into his work. Paul, sought “to turn the world upside down” by the Most peaceable means available. Erasmus they still accuse of timidity. That other great iconoclast of Holland, who broke the Spanish power, Was worn out with checking the excesses of his own followers. Cromwell and Hampden tried to get out of England and were

already embarked: so far was their idea from heading any insurrection till forced into doing so. All true reformers have a large sense of the evils which failure will bring on their already afflicted people, and that even the road to success will for a time but increase their sufferings. And this sensibility is quite unsuspected by Meek Reverence, Gray-bearded Use, Young Romance and other anti-reformers, who consider that they know Gideon through and through, and that he is nothing but a sordid agitator, having no motive but to get possession and influence for himself at the cost of the poor people whom he is leading to destruction.

Gideon had nothing of that kind of courage which Aristotle contemned, such as is based upon ignorance of the danger in front. This is not the courage of wise men who estimate the danger, but the recklessness or “fools” who “rush in where angels fear to tread.” Such may do the work of iconoclasts, but not that of reformers. A quiet and modest disposition was perhaps Gideon's distinguishing feature; so that when the angel appears to him and calls him “a mighty man of valor,” he replies with surprise, “I am the least in my father's house.” When, after he had gained a conquest that might have inflated a Caesar or Hannibal, the Ephraimites think themselves aggrieved, he gives an answer of grace and courtesy that turned away their wrath. “Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim [i.e., their capture of the princes Oreb and Zeeb] better than the vintage of Abiezer? What have I done now in comparison of you”? When the Israelites, with that tendency to make fools of themselves which nations that have been brought through a great deliverance frequently display, entreat him to be their king, he declines. Even when Zebah and Zalthunna tell him that they had just killed his own brothers, and in his wrath he had told his youthful son to slay them, on their appeal that he would spare them that indignity and kill them himself, he complies with their request: rather a grim courtesy, it is true; but it must be recollected that he would have saved their lives had they not slain his brothers (whom they described as splendid and majestic-looking men like Gideon himself). The two captive kings' recognize the unreasonableness of their expecting to live, and he recognizes their claim to the death of brave foemen. We must allow for the times.

He is cautious to the verge of timidity until God has given him the three signs to confirm his faith; but, once assured that God is with them, he does not hesitate. “Erst witgen, dann waaen” only a comma between, to take breath. He is swift, strong and thorough in action; he breaks down the altars of Baal, defeats and scatters the countless hosts of the Midianites with great slaughter, follows them to Jordan “faint yet pursuing,” and captures and slays their rulers. The army he had collected is reduced from 32,000 to 300 men. It must have been deeply discouraging to see 22,000 of them walk off in avowed hopelessness and fear; but even the bulk of the 10,000 remaining, who must have been thorough heroes to have stood their ground in such general desertion, had to be set aside by a test which disclosed from amongst them 300 men too proud and too brave to lose their habitual self-command even at a time of such excitement and danger. These men stood erect and temperately allayed their fierce thirst by lapping a little water front their hands, whilst the others threw themselves down and with excusable abandonment plunged their faces into the stream. With those 300 valiant and devoted men Gideon did a more extraordinary work even than Leonidas with 300 at Thermopylae. But the victory itself is of course no especial credit to Gideon: it is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes. The strategy, however, of the sudden crashing of the breaking pitchers, the sudden blaze of 300 lights, and the sudden blare of 300 trumpets was Gideon's devising; and very astute and well-designed it was.

With all his caution and courtesy, he could be very fierce sometimes; he slew the half-hearted temporizers of Penuel, and “taught” those of Succoth by flogging their bare backs with brambles; a system of tuition of considerable mnemonic value, at any rate. It was like that blaze of fury from the calm Washington when he flung the inkstand at the officer who told him he was afraid to cross the river, crying, “Begone, and send me a man"!

The matter concerning the earrings was, however, a mistake, and a serious one on Gideon's part. The fact is that the paradox of La Rochefoucauld is true, “Il faut de plus grandes vertus pour soutenir la bonne fortune que la mauvaise,” though we all think there would be an exception in our case and we would at least like to test it by having a little more prosperity and a little less adversity to sustain. Gideon took the trinkets with no sordid or ambitious purpose, but with a kind of parochial patriotism to make an ephod for his native Ophrah: with as innocent a purpose, no doubt, as when Helena commenced collecting relics for the church, and with the same unfortunate result. But during his long rule as chief magistrate he brought no dishonor on his name that disqualified him from having a place amongst the Legion of Honor in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He proved too that he had great constructive ability. He was not merely an iconoclast:

“I looked: aside the dust cloud rolled,

The Waster seemed the Builder too;

Up-springing from the ruined Old

I saw the New.”

J. C. B.

Scripture Sketches: 26. Simeon of the Temple

We sometimes hear commercial men boasting that they have done good business on a “falling market:” anyone can do well on a rising market, but it needs much more capacity and acumen to prosper when prices are adverse. In like manner some say that they have made fortunes out of bad accounts; that is, with persons no one else would trust; but by nursing them and exercising patience, vigilance, and dexterity, they have made these bad accounts profitable. It is well with us when we can do this kind of thing in a higher sense—bring profit to the soul and glory to God out of declining times and decaying faiths.

It was in such a period that Simeon lived. We find him shining in the night of the Jewish age like Cogia Hassan's diamond in the dark room, or perhaps more like the humble glow-worm as the night shadows fall. There are some things which are most in season when they are out of season. It is when the other birds have flown southwards that we most appreciate the robin's cheerful notes over the winter's snow: it is when the convolvulus has closed its petals in the evening gloom and the sunflower droops its head that the nictanthes yields its most fragrant odor. Notwithstanding the prevailing cold-heartedness and wickedness, Simeon continued “a just man, and devout, and waited for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” There were evidently a few others of this spirit the aged Anna was amongst them—too few, feeble, and poor to form a sect, whom God maintained for a witness even then in Israel awaiting the advent of His Son. Their testimony was ultimately vindicated and their hopes fulfilled, though perhaps few of them lived to see even the dawn of that fulfillment, and none of them its noontide: but doubtless they were regarded as the merest visionaries and fanatics by the few persons who took any notice of them at all. They were hardly worth the trouble of persecuting; a little cheap contempt is usually thought sufficient for such people.

Yet this is the way in which not only the Christ comes into the world, but also the way in which every great movement for the welfare of the race is ushered into the world. Those who attend and support it are persecuted, for they are considered dangerous to the existing order and vested interests; but those who precede and foretell its advent are usually only ridiculed. In both cases the friends of Truth are considered the enemies of mankind and fair game for Bigotry to attack; but until Truth is visibly present, its advocates are not generally worth the trouble of persecuting. In both cases the servants of the Truth are looked on as the scum of the earth, whilst they are in reality the salt of the earth; they are spoken of as the “offscouring of all things,” but they are the efflorescence of the age. “Then to side with truth is noble when we share her wretched crust, Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just.”

In this way have come about most of those movements which have benefited the human race and delivered men in spite of themselves from the bondage of Ignorance, Superstition, and Tyranny. The Hebrews of old, by whom came to the world the testimony of the true God, were counted as a set of wretched slaves. The founders of Christianity were a few peasants and fishermen, “not many, [the Countess of Huntingdon was not the only one, however, who thanked God for the letter

M in that word], not Many rich, not Many noble." The emancipators of Holland were called the "beggars;" and for many years the cry of vivent les gueux excited derision, before the time at length arrived when it fired men's blood with thoughts of liberty and righteousness. In course of time though, the beggars' doctrines spread and become popular; and then their persecutors quietly adopt them and advance them as their own new-born fledgling truths. The course of things drags onward: "Where to-day the martyr stands, On the morrow crouches Judas, with the silver in his hands!"

If these considerations be correct, there is something heroic in standing thus on Truth's side before "'tis prosperous to be just;" and in general it requires strength of purpose and courage to maintain so invidious a position, especially when others are falling away. But somehow, in regard to such as Simeon and Anna, we do not think in this way. Their characters do not impress us with the sense of heroism at all, but merely with the sense of simplicity and obedience. They were indeed in a heroic position; but probably neither themselves nor anyone else ever thought so. We are told that he was led by the Holy Ghost, and he submitted to that leading implicitly as a horse to the bridle; so, though his life had all the effect of heroism, his only thoughts were doubtless of devotion and obedience to God. And thus, though he may not even have been of any particular strength of character in himself at all, he was able to cling to the principles of truth and the divine word, in the presence and frown of the falsehood, organized, enthroned, almost omnipotent that menaced them.

The Holy Ghost is typified in both Testaments by the wind; and amongst the numerous effects of the wind, nothing is more strange than the way in which it transforms weak and fragile things into missiles of immense power. I have sometimes seen photographs of straws and feathers, deeply imbedded into hard wood by the power of the wind during a tropical tornado. It seems physically impossible for a straw to be driven into oak like a nail; but the wind does it and nothing else can. Nor can any other power than the Holy Ghost make men and women of common-place character and attainments to become instruments of irresistible strength. Ziesberger the missionary used to say that he was naturally "as timid as a dove;" yet he passed his life continuously in the most appalling dangers.

It is well when we see a man getting old like Simeon without losing the brightness and strength of hope, and to see one so filled with satisfaction when his arms clasp the Infant promise of the coming Salvation as to feel that he has nothing further to live for: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.... for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation!" He must needs prophesy too when he holds the Holy Babe in his arms—for who can hold Christ to his bosom and not prophesy? And he speaks of strange events to come; that this Child, Who was to be the coronal glory of Israel, should be the Great Light to illumine the darkness of the Gentile world. And the old man, whose outward eyes are dim, can see down through the veil of future time sorrow, and disaster. Aye, and here, where we would least expect it, he turns his compassionate gaze on the gentle and patient mother, saying, "'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also!"

Chapter 237

The Seal of God's Foundation

2 Tim. 2:19

GOD'S servant is called to strive diligently to present himself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line (as a mere man can never do) the word of truth. And this the more, because profane babblings prevail and must be shunned, as they surely advance to greater impiety and will not scruple to overthrow the surest truth and brightest hope. But His firm foundation stands, having this seal, “The Lord knoweth those that are His, and, Let every one that nameth the Lord's name stand off from un-righteousness.” He in sovereign goodness and faithfulness knows His own and fails not: such is His side of the medal. Let every professor of His name withdraw from iniquity: such is our inalienable responsibility. Certainly this ought not to fail in those born of God, and redeemed by Christ, to who'll God gave a Spirit not of cowardice, but of power and love and sobriety of mind.

The Holy Ghost discerned and announced then, even in apostolic days, the dismal change from early separateness to God in faith, love, and purity. Those bearing the Lord's name could be compared before Paul departed to a great house with its vessels, not only of gold and silver, but also wooden and earthen, and some to honor, as others to dishonor. The consequence of a phase so opposed to God's pleasure and Nature is the appeal to individual “If a man therefore purge himself from these (i.e., the vessels unto dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use,' prepared unto every good work.” In earlier days, when a person within became “wicked,” the word of God was, as it still is, Purge out the old leaven; put away the wicked man from among yourselves. Now that vessels to dishonor are tolerated within, he that hears God's word and is by grace resolved to do his will must purge himself from among them.

Originally the Christian came out from among the idolatrous Gentiles (or the Christ-rejecting Jews), and was separate to the Lord with all that were His (2 Cor. 6.) The same principle applies when this new disgrace befell His name—vessels to dishonor bearing it without shame on their part, or conscience on the part of the rest to put them away. It is not a question of leaving the house, even when become so great and mixed, but of leaving the unmistakable evil. If one cannot purge it out, one may and ought to purge oneself out: for how cease to do evil, unless one remove oneself from acquiescence in it? God is not pleased, nor mocked with words belied by facts. Am I not bound to cease from an evil communion, aggravated by a merely verbal protest which proves my conscience bad? Am I to walk with those manifestly evil men that bear the Lord's name? Refusal or even powerlessness to judge evil is faithlessness to the Lord, and the mother of all corruption. The call is the reverse of leaving the professing church; it is correcting in oneself all complicity with what the Lord hates. One cannot leave the house, whatever its state, without abandoning the Lord's name. But if I bear that name with conscience toward God, I am bound solemnly to clear myself from unrighteousness. Separation from, or avoidance of, a sect is a Christian duty, instead of quitting the church or even Christendom so-called. On the contrary he who refuses to be of a sect, or to go along with corruption on the plea of unity, is alone walking in

the house agreeably to its Master.

Chapter 238

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony – 1

"Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone [or Peter]" (John 1:42.)

THE gift of life—in effect, "partaking of the divine nature" —is the beginning of blessing for one who is dead in trespasses and sins, and is the common blessing of all who believe on the Son of God (John 3:36). We may be in different degrees of advance in it, but we are one in the possession of it; and there is a moral necessity that this should be a primal blessing. Without life there could be no enjoyment of the kindness and love of God in the gift of His Son, and of communion with them: no love for Christ or obedience to Him, and no affection for each other: our Christianity would be mere formalism. It is true that, while we are here, Satan, by stimulating the flesh, works to prevent the expansion of life in us. Hence, that the path of life is through tribulation is a truth that was constantly insisted on at the beginning. That it is not so now is to our loss. Still, where there is life, the chastening hand of God goes on with the lesson (Heb. 12).

Are we not conscious, however, that this truth, so contrary to nature (Job 19:21), is carried more effectually home to our hearts by a history, like that of David or of Peter, than by the simple declaration of it? The blessing of having inspired biography is seen in this, that we have living men in the hands of the Living God, Who "searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts "; so that we get, if needed, the workings within them as well as that which comes out; and there is no coloring: all is divinely and infallibly perfect. In no other biography can this be. The mind that records the incidents of a life knows but little of their source, and invariably tinges them with its own thoughts and feelings. Inspired biography also is given to man not for his blessing only, but for God's glory; and this calls for becoming reverence in studying it, and forbids all self-confidence in dealing with it. Let the student in reading it never forget the Author.

If this be true of inspired biography generally, it is so in a very especial way in that of Peter. What more accelerated the ruin of the church than reasonings on the answer of the Lord to him on his confession (Matt. 16:18, 19)? And how has the tendency to dwell on his failures to live out that confession obscured the personal greatness to which the hand of the Lord raised him! It is surely not to interest the mind or gratify curiosity that we see him rebuked, humbled, disgraced, brokenhearted, withstood to the face and blamed. There must be some spiritual truths that concern us, some principles of eternal moment which the Spirit would teach us; and infinite wisdom has chosen this way of revealing them. We must read all with faith—faith that acknowledges the need on our part of the truth to be found in it, and that counts on God to enable us to profit by that truth.

It is readily admitted that we shall not find much of doctrine in biography; but scripture is profitable not for doctrine only, but for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Do we not need faithful dealing as to conduct, as well as knowledge of doctrine? Have we not consciences? We have, of course, sound doctrine in Peter's writings; but they are intensely practical. They grapple with us as to "what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation, and

godliness;" and we are conscious that he realized what he wrote, that there is no mere "trafficking in unfelt truth," that his whole heart and soul were engaged in all that he was inspired to write.

And who so able to strengthen his brethren as one who had experimentally proved his need of divine strength, and, when he wrote his Epistles, was a blessed example of the sufficiency of it? Now, in the simplest language he makes known to us the power that can keep us, the mighty power of God through faith, so that all adverse powers and adverse circumstances, however great and many, may be regarded by us without amazement or timidity. If there are some saints who have fallen on easy times, there are still many in the flock of God who are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; and who of us can say, We need him not? Every recorded incident of his life gives weight to his writings, and the study of his writings gives an interest to his life.

As Simon Bar-jona, a man among men, his character would be in many respects attractive. He valued their good opinion, and men are pleased with this. Outspoken and impulsive, of an ardent temperament, and at times very impetuous, we are startled by the contradictions of his course. Uncalculating as he was as to the results of his conduct, the flesh in him was not imperious and cruel, as in Saul of Tarsus; yet when conscience awoke, there was no difference: they alike judged themselves as sinners, though Saul might add— "of whom I am chief."

In John 1:42 we have the interesting record of the beginning of that work in his soul which, being carried on in patient grace, eventually made him the honored servant and martyr of the Lord Jesus Christ his Savior. The gracious reception which the Lord had granted to Andrew, and the blessing which he had received, constrained him to do the work of an evangelist before he was chosen as an apostle. Simon was his own brother; and he sought him first, and succeeded in leading him to Jesus, Who said to him— "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas." These words so closely personal, telling him how his present condition and future history were perfectly known, Simon received in silence; but when next he saw the Lord, he was obedient to His every word (Luke 5)

From earliest times minds have been exercised as to what is implied in the name Cephas, as thus bestowed on Simon. From his own writings and conduct there would appear to be nothing to favor the exalted claims to official importance that have been made for him because of it. On more than one occasion we read of the apostles reasoning among themselves as to which of them should be accounted the greatest; but there is not a hint that Peter claimed to be this, or that the question was ever settled in his favor. In his writings, all that have obtained like precious faith with him are addressed as "living stones;" and as to office in the church he pointedly describes himself as a "fellow elder" with other elders (1 Peter 5:1, R. V.). The truth would appear to be, notwithstanding all that has been written about it, that the change from Simon Bar-jona to Cephas—a change of nature answering to the change of name being implied thereby—was unspeakably more precious to him than from the position of a fisherman to that of an apostle. It carried with it moral qualities; it implied the partaking, by grace, of life of which he writes so fully in 1 Peter 1:23 to ii. 5; and it is clear from the case of Judas Iscariot that apostleship does not necessarily do this: but we need not further anticipate thoughts on Matt. 16.

One thing however it is important to observe. When God gives names to men, His power makes good what His grace bestows, as when Be changed the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. So when Jesus, Who is God blessed forever, ordained the twelve, and sent them forth

to preach, He gave to Simon the name Peter—a stone—and to James and John the name Boanerges the sons of thunder. Of the ministry of James we have no record. That it was in power, we may infer from Herod seeking to ingratiate himself with the Jews by killing him. Of Simon, whose weakness even to denying his Lord is narrated in every Gospel, we know that, by grace, he became His boldest and most uncompromising witness, establishing and strengthening his brethren also, to set their faces as a flint in following Christ, their blessed example. To John, a quiet and retiring man, was given a testimony of extraordinary power, suited “for the last time “: the grandest and most sublime unfolding of the glory of the Son of God by one who had seen it, and knew that “his witness was true.” And this was accompanied by authoritative and awe-inspiring vindication—as became a “son of thunder” —of the sacredness of His Person against every attempt of deceivers to profane it.

Chapter 239

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony – 2

2—HIS LIFE AND TESTIMONY.

“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

(Luke 5:8).

THAT in the sight of God everyone is as his spirit is (not to the exclusion of overt acts) is a truth which the word of God will not suffer to be passed over or set in the background. “God is the God of the spirits of all flesh.” “He formeth the spirit of man within him.", “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes: but the Lord weigheth the spirits.” “The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins” (i.e. the thoughts, the will, and the affections and emotions), and, when earthly life is closed, the spirit returneth to God Who gave it. This, and much more, we have in the O.T. In the New, our Lord's description of the state of the rich man after death in Luke 16 can leave no question to one not hardened against the truth, that it is vain to try to draw off the eye of the spirit from its true condition before God by surrounding it with the things and circumstances of this world. At death they are left, and can be no longer a shield, and man then is as his spirit is; for the Lord said, “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” The past was remembered; all in which he had lived and found his pleasure was left forever; and the judgment of that past was yet to come.

In life, the spirit of the man which is in him knoweth the things of the man, and he alone of men knoweth them (1 Cor. 2:11). As Elihu said, “There is a spirit in man: and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” And there is not only this knowledge in the individual spirit of the man, but there is conscience— “his thoughts meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.” Thoughtful men therefore shrink from the spirit, charged with all this knowledge, being brought defenseless into the presence of God. As Dr. Johnson said, “I have made no approaches to a state which can look on death as not terrible." What a bright contrast to this is Peter's testimony. The calmness with which he speaks of his approaching martyrdom, a cruel one, is much to be noted. It was but the putting off his tabernacle (2 Peter 1). This was not making light of death. If any man ever experienced the power of death as wielded by the devil, the terror that he can bring by it, and his own abject weakness in the presence of it, it was Peter. But when he wrote his Epistles, Christ had, by death, brought to naught him who had the power of death, and taken away its sting. But we are anticipating. It would be well to follow the narrative of his life, remarking this only, that it has pleased God to single him out to make known His ways of grace in souls. The other apostles had each a history; but we have more of his innermost exercises and experiences than of any of them.

It is not too much to assume that he was on a level, religiously, with the mass of the Jews of his time. This we may infer from the need of the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven, and from his words to Cornelius (Acts 10). How morally low that level was he exposes in a remarkable passage in his first Epistle. Writing to those who by birth were Jews ("of the dispersion” chap. 1:1) he says: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and

gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." He says nothing of open wickedness, for all might have been respectable, as became a religious people proud of their descent and privileges; yet how great, how costly the ransom! The prophet had long before said to their fathers, in the words of Jehovah: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." The Lord Jesus applied these words to those in Israel in Simon's time whose worship was "vain;" and was he an exception? The divine order of the congregation and assembly in Israel presented in types God's provision for drawing near to them, and thus, while a means of blessing for them, was a witness against the rites and ceremonies of idolatry, which Paul energetically denounced as "vain" (Acts 14:15, R. V.). Peter uses the same word in describing the manner of life of the Jews. It was as "vain" as that of the worshippers of Jupiter and Mercury: their hearts, even in their outward approaches to God, were at as great a distance from him.

But what a measure of the evil of man's heart is this! There are degrees of moral turpitude, but heart distance from God cannot be in degree. It is alike in the most amiable and refined, as in the most shamefully wicked; and if persisted in, notwithstanding all God's dealings, must end in eternal separation from Him. The congregation of formalists, however pious their utterances, is a "congregation of the dead;" and the solemn confession "at last" of such will be— "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly" (Prov. 5:14).

Such then was Simon before his brother brought him to Jesus. In his conduct at the Lake of Gennesaret we may trace a change of no small significance. He was weary after a whole night of toil; yet he willingly put himself and his ship at the Lord's service, desirous, doubtless, not only that the people should hear the word of God, but that he and his partners should hear it also. All this was beautiful in its season. A personal sense of the grace of Christ has attracted his soul; still the question of conscience was as yet not raised, much less settled; and, until the soul is brought into the presence of God, it never is. There may be true-hearted service and happy association with others in it, a real wish for the people to have the gospel, and some self-sacrifice for this end. But for the conscience, the soul must be alone with God; for conscience is individual, it has no partner. It is well to notice also, that it was not in service that Simon got this question of conscience raised and settled. The preaching was over. Will he—contrary to all experience and reason—be obedient to the word of the Lord, simply and only because it is His word— "Launch out now into the deep, and let down your nets for a draft?" A merely rational consideration of the circumstances would lead to hesitation; but, by grace, there was none. "Master," he said, "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." At once the miracle which followed was used to make manifest in Whose presence he was, and "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." To a natural man there must be something inexplicable in this. There is no cry for mercy; but the claims of the holiness of God are vindicated at all cost. How could it be associated with such evil as he now saw in himself? Yet he drew nearer to Jesus than ever he had done before! Truly "He was called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins;" but was Simon one of His people? Israel had long since forfeited this relationship. "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God," was the sentence pronounced by Jehovah (Hos. 1:9); and Simon took no such ground. Vile, impure, polluted in the springs of his being—a sinful man—he owned in his own case the righteousness of the sentence "lo-ammi."

That sentence the Lord in “His abundant mercy” at once reversed in the assuring words: “Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men,” i.e. be fully associated with Him in His service of love.

How pointless much of Peter's testimony becomes (as 1 Peter 2:9-11) when these truths are disregarded! The great beauty of this application of Hos. 2:14-23 to those of Israel who had like faith with him (yet the marked contrast in their earthly position—not “sown in the earth,” but “strangers and pilgrims” in it) is not perceived. Undoubtedly believing Gentiles share in this grace (Hos. 1:10 and Rom. 9:26); but it is a question whether a Gentile can so fully enter it as a Jew.

Repudiated Israel shall yet find in Jehovah a HUSBAND, for “He will betroth her to Himself forever” (Hos. 2:19); and to Peter, with those to whom he wrote, it was given to anticipate this in their own experience. “And he forsook all and followed Jesus:” as Paul says, “espoused to one husband.” There were failures, we know; but from this time he was a separated man to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to grow in the knowledge of Him—knowledge which dawned on his soul in the ship at His knees, and found sweet expression in his last written words— “To Him be glory both now, and to the day of eternity” (2 Peter 3:18). This was his object in life and death. Is it ours?

Chapter 240

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony – 3

"Fear not." – Luke 5:10

THE blessing of God on Andrew's faithful testimony— "We have found the Messiah" —led Simon to Jesus, and we may readily believe that at that time a work of grace was begun in him. At Gennesaret, as we have remarked, there was a further dealing of the Lord with him. This poor Galilean fisherman was to learn from the beginning the personal interest which the Messiah took in him, an interest that never wearied, and the blessed character of which, and its results, are disclosed for our profit in his writings. Throughout his course, in all his temptations, trials, weaknesses and failures, he proved the sufficiency of Him to Whom his brother had led him. He found the difficulties of a true Christian life insurmountable but for His unchanging faithful care, and he sums up in a sentence (the last from his inspired pen) his desires for us: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It is not enough that we should be "established in the present truth." To escape the many and various entanglements of the world we must be diligent in cultivating a personal acquaintance with Christ, and see to it that by "adding to faith, virtue" &c. (2 Peter 1) our knowledge of Him is not barren or unfruitful. "Diligence" is, with Peter, a favorite word— "earnestness;" and if we trace this in his style, we see it in himself. He wrote experimentally, and while he does not question the faith of those whom he addresses ("they have obtained like precious faith with him)," or cast a doubt on their love for Christ ("Whom not having seen ye love)," he yet warned them, as beloved ones, to "beware lest being led away by the error of the wicked they should fall from their own steadfastness." Christ must be sanctified as LORD in their hearts (1 Peter 3:15, R.V). They must give to Him the supreme place there, for it is in the heart the conflict will go on to the end. Whoever has possession of that has the whole moral being. A like tone of "earnestness" pervades both Epistles, as it characterized his life to its close (see 2 Peter 1:12, 13-15); a solemn testimony against the indifference, and love of ease of some.

Few, perhaps, have experienced greater difficulties, from within as well as from without, than Simon Peter. By nature of an easy and accommodating disposition, when grace wrought in him he took things very seriously, though it cost him not a little. His inconsistencies are a witness to this, and his grief over them yet more so.

At the very beginning of his spiritual life he had a severe but very needful experience. He was happily serving the Messiah and obeying His word when he was terribly cast down by the discovery of his own sinfulness. All appeared to be over when he had scarcely begun. Not that his service and obedience were not precious in the eyes of the Lord; but they were not to be a cover for his condition as a sinner, nor to be a balm for a wounded conscience, nor to give rest when the spirit was afflicted and broken because of sin. How many there may be, even now—who are happily serving the Lord as he—exposed to the same danger of appropriating to themselves, in a way favorable to self-complacency, the work of grace wrought of God in them! and, even more than this, are led to believe that it affords them a ground of confidence in view of the judgment of the great day. In this they greatly err, as Simon's case in the ship at Gennesaret might show them.

He lost all peace in a moment. In the wisdom of God, inward quickening brings exercise, especially of conscience. The work of Christ for the sinner will alone give peace: or, as with Simon, His word based on the work.

There is a danger on the other hand, and it is a more perilous one, of slighting altogether the necessity of a direct work in the soul if any are to be saved. “Numbers are acted upon by rousing appeals to the affections, and taught that there is nothing in their nature to prevent their reception, there and then, of the truth that saves. They are taught that they need no new power, no further operation to enable them to believe.” But scripture must be contradicted by all who affirm that the sinner is not dead in his sins as well as guilty of them, and, that to live to God he must be “begotten of God according to His abundant mercy “; “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” What is this, but a new operation, of which Peter could write as one who had experienced it (1 Peter 1:3-23)? Of course to a mind not subject to the word this truth is attended with difficulty. Are sinners, then, to say they have no responsibility, for what can they do if they are dead in trespasses and sins? Their first responsibility is not to deny what the word of God plainly declares concerning them. If they will own that they can do nothing, there will be no pretension; and they will find in genuine confession of their helplessness the abundant mercy of God and His sufficiency. Two short sentences as to this are well worthy of quotation. “Realities find their answer in God “; “Things as they are, seen and acknowledged, is a primary element in our individual dealings with God.” Peter knew and confessed that the faith he had, he “obtained,” and so with those to whom he wrote (2 Peter 1:1). He was singularly happy in the human instrumentality used of God in his conversion.

The one great truth which filled Andrew's soul was, that Jesus was the Messiah, and in a plain and artless way he set this truth before his brother. In his own case, John the Baptist pointed him to Jesus— “the Lamb of God.” It was a Person that was then preached to him, whatever he may have heard from John before. And it was a Person he spake of, and a Person to whom he brought Simon; and it was as brought to the adorable Person—Jesus—that Simon learned his need of Him, and that an indissoluble link was formed in his soul with Him. This is not the time to open up this line of truth; but who will deny that that which preeminently characterized gospel preaching at first was, that it was the gospel of Christ? A Concordance will show how often it is thus called. We little know how much we lose when our Christianity is little more than a system of doctrines, however pure and perfect. We need, oh! how deeply, the work of Christ too, all He has done, all He is doing, all He will do for us; but beyond this, we need Himself, His adorable Person, to dwell in our hearts by faith: Himself, the sovereign gift of God, Whose infinite worth He alone can know; Himself, in whom every moral excellence was displayed in a world where there was none; Himself, as One Whose perfect walk when here we should closely study, that we may follow Him in every step; One Who is the test of all real truth, of, all sound doctrine, whether it be concerning God or man, sin or righteousness, this world or heaven, life or death, time or eternity; One

“In Whom, most perfectly expressed,

The Father's self doth shine:

Fullness of Godhead, too,

the Blest, Eternally divine.”

This adorable Person must be received for salvation; but it was for Simon to learn, at the outset, that a work immeasurably greater than that of subduing his naturally hostile will, and of opening his heart to receive Christ, was necessary, if he were to be saved. Others with him were awed by the miraculous draft of fishes; but he was more than awed, he was prostrate in humiliation and grief. For one just drawn, by grace, to Jesus, it was a great and bitter cry— “Depart from me, O Lord.” But how could the Lord, consistently with His glory, abide the presence of such a man as he? Simon had no answer to this. If the Lord had been silent to him, he would, indeed, become like to them that go down to the pit, to them who say “Depart from us” for a very different cause (Job 21:14). But the Lord was not silent; He never is to such as Simon. “Fear not,” were words of authority and power which only He could speak Who, on the cross, would put away to the last spot the deep stain of sin that made the sinner unfit for His holy presence. Simon believed Him, and all was peace. Would that every Christian had this deep concern for the glory of the Lord Jesus. Simon had his moments of forgetfulness and failure, but few have wept more bitterly than he because of them.

Chapter 241

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony – 4

“Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee” (Matt. 16)

IT may at first sight seem a small thing for Simon to submit, in his own ship, to have his course and work directed by Jesus, and that in a matter in which he might reasonably claim to have had considerable experience. In letting down his nets for a draft, he set aside all confidence in his own judgment and that of the fishermen with him. Granted, that it was no great matter; the smaller the occasion, the more manifest the principle. Happy the believer who can take his stand from the first on this high round of the ladder of faith, and conduct his business, not as a man of the world, but by the word of the Lord. It will keep him out of much more. Of course, such a believer in Jesus for everything, small or great, cannot pledge others to this practical, every-day, obedience of faith: Simon did not. He simply said— “I will let down the nets,” whether his partners would join him in it, or not. There was no looking to them, or waiting for them. His faith was personal. He knew the mind of Christ and obeyed, looking to Him alone for the blessing of obedience. It was a very real beginning. From that time his path was clear. He had Christ to follow and around him precious souls to win.

There was a long interval between this, his first act of obedience to his Lord and. Savior, and his last; and much happened in the interval that showed he was a man of like passions with us, a man tempted as we are, and with the same evil tendencies of the flesh; but the grace that enabled him to say at first— “Master, at Thy word I will let down the nets” —gave him strength to say at last— “Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.” In his old age, he was called to stretch forth his hands, and another must gird him and carry him whither he would not, even the executioner to a violent and cruel death. Again, it was the mind of Christ, and he obeyed: a touching and noble close. The life and testimony of such a man is worthy of serious consideration in these days of moral laxity. It strengthens us in self-renunciation and in striving against sin, recalling to our hearts the constraining power of the love of Christ that overcomes even the love of life.

And sin was to him a grievous thing. His testimony against it in his second Epistle is, with the exception of that of Jude, the most powerful in the word of God. It is an appalling account of the ruin it has brought already on angels and men. What will their final doom be? And his own judgment of it in himself was unsparing. There is a depth of feeling against it in his cry— “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” —which only He could fathom to Whom it was addressed; and Simon was prepared by grace to receive with unquestioning faith the answer of the Lord to his cry. Happy, if rare, posture of soul, when His word, and His alone, decides the momentous question as to its state for eternity! We say—if rare because souls, now, in like spiritual condition, are, for the most part dealt with by men, it may be sincere, God-fearing men, but men who are not free from their own thoughts, and who, however earnest and devoted, are a hindrance to the anxious one getting the mind of Christ. When Simon's eyes were really opened Godward, he was blind to everything of man, and sought to see only as Christ gave him to see.

Now, as Lord of all, Jesus preached peace before He made it through the blood of His cross. In the case of the man “sick of the palsy” in Matt. 9— “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” In that of the woman (Luke 7), “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” To Zaccheus in (Luke 19), “This day is salvation come to this house. And to the robber (Luke 22), “Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Jesus' word, before the cross, gave immediate joy to the contrite ones. And it is very clearly taught in these and other instances that, while salvation is one, and the joy of it common to all who receive it, yet, as ministered by the Lord, the enjoyment of it is various. Individuality is preserved, while with it there is the heartiest sympathy and communion, each with the joy of others. Thus, with Peter, the word of Christ had cast out fear; to the man, it gave good cheer; to the woman, peace; to Zacchaeus, salvation; to the robber, the assurance of heaven that day with Christ.

Yet beautiful and blessed as was the preaching of peace to sinners before the cross, the sufferings and death of Christ, as the alone ground of it give to it unspeakably greater value. This Peter, at first, not only did not understand, but, yielding to nature, refused. In reply to the touching words of Christ, 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,” he said, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” And it is the more remarkable that he should say this so soon after he had received, by revelation of the Father, a new knowledge of the person of Jesus (Matt. 16:13-22). Various were the opinions of men as to Him, but Peter confessed Him openly to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This divinely imparted knowledge of the person of Christ was much more than relief of conscience, yet both failed to keep Peter from falling a victim to self. The mention of the cross detected his weakness. His thoughts and feelings were no higher or more true than those of unregenerate men. Shame on us, Christians, when this is the case with us!

All the disciples, with the exception of Mary of Bethany, appear to have been more or less ignorant that the path of Jesus, the Messiah, should be through death to His glories. The prophets had prophesied of this, as Peter says (1 Peter 1:10, 12); but until the Lord in resurrection opened their understanding to understand the scriptures, they were foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. They looked for His redeeming Israel by power, as He assuredly will one day, but not for His first giving His life as the ransom. Ignorance, however, is one thing; it is quite another for Simon presumptuously to counsel the Lord as to His path—to bid Him spare Himself, avoid the cross, be indifferent to the will and glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, and set aside the whole purpose and end of His coming into the world. At that moment Peter, who began so well, was led by Satanic guile—the only wisdom that unregenerate men are capable of—and became an adversary of His Lord. There was nothing of God in his thoughts or words. Though deeply taught, neither his peace of conscience nor his knowledge availed him at this moment to adopt simply the mind of Christ. The severe rebuke the Lord administered is recorded, because it was not for him only, but for many after him— “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

And are we in danger of being beguiled by this serpent—wisdom, so congenial to the natural mind, we who have so much more spiritually than Peter then had? The conviction presses on us—that we are. The preaching that gives life and peace and resurrection blessings, but ignores or conceals death with Christ, “death,” as Peter says, “unto sins and life unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24), approaches dangerously near to his thoughts. It hides the cross, saves self from bearing it,

and makes a true following of Christ most unimportant. Has not the cross of Christ a voice to us as well as for us? Did not the Lord immediately after rebuking Peter say, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me”? If self be not denied, we fall into the error of Balsam, who preached the perfect standing of Israel, but corrupted their state. Let us carefully, earnestly, distinguish them; but perish the doctrine that would divorce them! Paul wept over those who in their walk were enemies of the cross of Christ, and indulged self. He, we fear, would have many to weep over now. If self, by grace, he not denied, it conquers. In the most deeply taught, it will still come before Christ; and no rebuke is too severe for that. His woundings are better than the world's kisses: so may we hear His rebuke. Peter, after it, was taken by Jesus up the holy mount (Matt. 17).

Chapter 242

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony - 5

“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

THE poverty of Simon Peter's thoughts of Jesus, whom he sincerely confessed as Lord, and had forsaken all to follow, came out again and again at first, for he was not a silent man. He was slow to distrust his own thoughts, and instead of learning even ventured to teach, as if the Christ, the Son of the living God, must be beholden to him for guidance. In nothing is human folly more painfully conspicuous than in the effort to bring mere mental power to bear on the things of God, and on the person, work, and word of Christ; while, in the case of a true disciple, in nothing is the supremacy of Christ in patient goodness and grace more displayed than in His way of dealing with this presumption. If the disciple will not be at His feet, like Mary, hearing His word, He will meet, as He did with Peter, his presumption and insubjection by bending down in unspeakable grace to his feet, to cleanse them by a renewed application of His word, “by the washing of water by the word.” No action since the cross is more wonderful than that which is presented symbolically in John 13, though it would appear that Peter did not then understand it, for he was more presumptuous than ever after it (John 13:37). He must learn to what the cross applied (Gal. 2:15-21), before his knowledge of Christ could enable him to strengthen his brethren.

The sophistry by which Satan seeks to corrupt the thoughts of Christians (see 2 Cor. 11:3), by mingling his own with those which God has given in His word, is, by the self-confident, little suspected. It is too subtle for them to unravel. It doubtless seemed to Peter compassionate to say, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this (the cross) shall not be unto thee “; but it was the thought of the serpent concealed under a guise of would—be pious sentiment. Its true source was from beneath, and so the Lord in faithfulness dealt with it. It is not the unrighteous man only that has to “forsake his thoughts.” A Christian's thoughts, if not brought to the text of the word, however masked under a show of piety, will prove a fulcrum for Satan's lever. The best have had a fall through this.

In a most important sense Peter's “conversion,” according to the divine fullness of the word, was not accomplished quickly. The words, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,” appear to point to a deeper subjective work in him than was accomplished at the time when they were spoken. He was a changed man; but the flesh in him was not changed, and he had not learned as yet to put no confidence in it, or, as he afterward expressed it, how its desires “war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). In this sense his “conversion” was slow, though in a very blessed sense he was converted in the ship on the lake of Gennesaret. The light which then reached his conscience was the light of God, and the love which attracted his heart was the love of God, both manifested in Jesus Christ his Lord. There was thus no presence he loved so well as the presence of Him Who had spoken peace to his troubled soul. Still, if he could “catch men” (that is, do evangelistic work), he was not at once competent to strengthen his brethren. Nay, even at Antioch he wavered in this as has been noticed (Gal. 2:11-13). All believers are converted, and God can use them in blessing to the unsaved because of His sovereign grace. He will at all times meet the felt need of Himself in any soul, and that by all manner of instruments; but to strengthen them, when saved, to

a true practical confession, is another thing. This, Peter was not all at once fitted to do.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was, in this respect, very different. The glory of the light from heaven made him blind to everything which he had hitherto seen and valued. The physical fact was a significant illustration of the true state of his soul (Acts 9; 22; 26). He had been, before this, confident that he was a guide to the blind, a light of them which were in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes. Now, for three days without food, everything in which he had moved and had his being was before his soul and found to be worthless, absolute darkness, without one ray of comfort for him. Satan's wiles, in masking the deadly character of all he so highly valued and trusted in, deceived him no longer. The wise man became a fool, the religious man was no better than a blasphemer, the Hebrew of the Hebrews and the Pharisee—the son of a Pharisee, the chief of sinners. Then it pleased God, to whom he turned in this darkness ("Behold, he prayeth" Acts 9), to reveal His Son in him; and the strongholds were pulled down, the reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God were cast down, and every thought was brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. His life, his light, his all, henceforth was Christ. Once he appeared to waver, and from the kindness of human motives permitted himself to be led by men, sincere, God-fearing men, but men who had not the mind of Christ as to the thing concerning which they gave him counsel (Acts 21).

This worked, as it was sure to do, disastrously. Paul did not strengthen them. He was taken, confined in the castle and lost to them. In touching grace the Lord stood by him in his innermost solitude and comforted him (chap. 23:11); and, though for years a prisoner, he greatly strengthened his brethren. His richest Epistles were written with a chain upon him, a memento perhaps of the past, but not one that brought a shade of sorrow: all had worked for good. The Lord was the same, and still was by him, unfolding all His treasures of wisdom and knowledge, delivering him from every evil work, and preserving him to His heavenly kingdom.

Here then we have a precious instance of a “converted” man, able to strengthen his brethren, not a quickened man only. In this sense of the word, we venture to say, that Peter's “conversion” was slow, for there were for a time such palpable inconsistencies in his course that must have tended to weaken rather than establish his fellow-disciples. The beauty of his confession in John 6 (“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life”) is remarkably striking; for the words in that chapter conveyed the clearest reference to the cross; they established fully the necessity and efficacy of His death, and that Peter must receive Him thus; yet after this he said openly to the Lord, “That be far from thee.” The truth is, although the doctrine was clearly presented, it was not apprehended until the resurrection and the coming of the promised Comforter, the Holy Ghost. Then he could strengthen his brethren. Before the cross he might, as following afar off, screw up courage enough to go into the palace of the high priest; but the “I” of those beautiful words, “I will lay down my life for thy sake,” saved its life by denying his Lord. That “I” —the “old man” —never does “know the man,” and only confesses Him when it costs nothing.

Still the strong affection of Peter for the Lord—work of omnipotent grace—is beautifully evidenced in Matt. 14. He there anticipated a walk that could only be accomplished by a strength outside and apart from himself, a path that would prove his destruction if Christ did not sustain him every moment (vers. 28-31). He longed to be near Him, and to walk as He walked. Jesus was walking upon the sea, and Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”

Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter left the help of the ship to walk upon the waters to come to Him. Was there a trace of the old self-confident “I” in this? or was it not a shining out from all previous clouds and mists of that new and incorruptible I, born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”? When had such an opportunity of strengthening his brethren been given, or such a path attempted before? Who, of all the disciples, had ever manifested such a singleness of eye, looking beyond everything seen and every one loved, absorbed with desire to be with the Lord? That Peter, ofttimes so unready to receive the riches of His grace and truth under the most favorable circumstances, should walk on the waves to reach Him, is a real and precious encouragement to weak believers to set aside everything of nature to be in His blessed presence. But Peter was going before his faith. The difficulties, and not the Lord, came before him, the strength of the wind and the peril of the waters; and he began to sink. Alas this would not strengthen his brethren. His cry of distress— “Lord, save me” —was a proof that all dependence on himself was a hopeless ground of confidence, but at the same time discovered where strength could be found.

The grace of the Lord was sufficient. His strength was made perfect in weakness. He immediately stretched forth His hand and took hold of him, and Peter walked on the waters with his Lord, a happier when a more humble man. It is to be remarked, that this is not the only instance in which Peter got his wish, though not his way.

Chapter 243

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony - 6

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16; 17).

THAT Satan debased the mind of Eve in order to corrupt her whole moral being and bring in death will not be questioned by any who receive implicitly the inspired narrative of the fall. The evil work was the outcome of a mind alienated from God. She was deceived before she was defiled. “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” This was the truth, if not the whole truth; for the alienated mind is the ready instrument of the serpent for spreading his poison, and Eve was the first of many who, under the guidance of that master mind, use their natural endowments in his service. “She gave to her husband, and he did eat.” One may imagine how sweetly and plausibly she did it; for Adam, though not deceived, hearkened to her voice and fell. It is a sad and solemn opening of the history of man, the first picture in that long drawn scene in which we have been, and are, actors, and in which superior intelligence is no protection from moral ruin.

To this degradation of the understanding the scriptures bear the clearest testimony. It is true that the mind of man is a marvelous creation. That he by it is capable of subduing the earth and of making it, and what is in it and connected with it, subservient to his wants. “He can cut out rivers among the rocks and his eyes see every precious thing. He can bind the floods from overflowing, and the thing that is hid he can bring forth to light” (Job 28); but he has lost the knowledge of God by sin, and all desire for that knowledge. “There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God.” The guilt is not in the capacity, but in the will. “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” The Gentiles “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” The prophets declare of Israel, “There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” “For my people are foolish, they have not known me.” And, even in the church, Paul testifies in his day there were some who had no knowledge of God. We may even go farther, and, seeing the difference between Abraham and Jacob, both men of faith, learn that there are grades in the divine life. Abraham, by walking in the obedience of faith, had the name of the Lord revealed to him from the beginning of his course; Jacob, by failure in his conduct, only at the close, (Gen. 17:1; 35:11). Is not this true of Christians?

Matt. 16 opens with this subject—the debasement of the mind. The professed guides in Israel, the Pharisees and Sadducees, asked of Jesus a sign from heaven, as though He had given them none. His answer made evident the worthless workings of their mind. “O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not (or rather—ye cannot) discern the signs of the times?” Even the disciples were slow to understand the Lord, for they were of little faith, and it is by faith only that any can reach His thoughts. But passing on from these, the ignorance of men—i.e., of men generally—is now made manifest. “Jesus asked his disciples, Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” Whatever difference there might be in their mental powers, they were alike incompetent to reach the truth of His person. They could discuss it, as the natural mind has from that day to this, and so we read “Some said that he was John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others,

Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” They differed in their opinions, but were alike wrong. “Flesh and blood” could thus avail nothing. It was powerless to open up the truth that could meet its hopeless state. Sin has unmanned man. “Evil is in him, inherent in his very nature, his faculties and instincts. It is in that ineradicable pride which separates him from God, invites him to vanity and ostentation, to all which can nourish his self-love: in that practical negation of God whose place he desires to usurp; in that idolatry which has for its end the deification of himself, and his errors, his passions and his vices."

Simon Peter, in the sovereign grace of God, had escaped from this darkness into which Satan had plunged the race, and none more deeply than the Jews, outwardly the nearest to God, and possessing the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. When “the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem were seeking refuge in lies, and hiding them under falsehood,” he and others of Galilee left all to follow Jesus, knowing little of the grandeur of the step, the vastness of its results, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that were in store for them. That they had been drawn out of the mass of the nation was the gracious work of the Father; for no one cometh to the Son, except the Father Who hath sent Him draw him. John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael, and others were not led by opinions, mere notions of their own which they might change or give up, as some in Jerusalem unto whom Jesus would not commit Himself (John 2:23, 24); they were plants which His heavenly Father had planted (Matt. 15) to root in Him, and to find in Him not only all that their needy souls required, but to have dispensed to them by the Father the unsearchable riches of His Christ; here in measure and still to be more and more unfolded throughout the ages to come. How little we realize of the Father's love in the first drawings of our souls to His beloved Son, and in every bit of truth concerning Him which we afterward receive! How He alone, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, can strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge (Eph. 3)!

It is no doubt a gradual process, but as the Father testifies of Him we see how a soul, like Peter, is strengthened to take deeper root in Him, and to make a truer confession of Him. When Jesus said, “But whom say ye that I am? he answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Blessed, indeed, to have the mind and thought of the Father as to Jesus, and to know the Father in knowing Him.

What blessing can be compared with it in time or in eternity? Happy Simon Peter! so the Lord testified; though an unlettered and ignorant man, as the heads of his nation judged him to be (Acts 4:13). Ponder, yea deeply ponder, the unhesitating, clear, full, precious testimony he rendered to his Lord when challenged. He speaks with absolute certainty; not as one who has to veil his imperfect knowledge under obscure terms, or to make abortive efforts to explain. It is too important a question, when the Lord puts it, for one of His own, however “ignorant and unlearned,” to hesitate about. Let unconverted men debate and reason, the Father reveals, and that to babes.

At such a time as this, the warning written by the late Mr. Bellett may be useful— “Let not this evangelistic age, dear sister, give you the work of Christ alone. It tends that way. Without His work all would be nothing. But let not doctrinal acquaintance with His work turn from personal

acquaintance with Himself...Faith sits and sings

"'All human beauties, all divine.

In my Beloved meet and shine.'"

Again (from J. N. D.), "It is the joy an blessedness of the saint who has eyes to see, that He (Jesus) was down here a man amongst men but it is GOD whom we see there. I find both, and if I lose either, I lose everything."

Deeply interesting and suggestive also is the fact, that we get not a word about the church until the truth of the person of Christ is revealed by the Father, and then the Son names it at once (Matt. 16:18). It is His own church, and it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive of love so intense in devotedness, so tender in sympathy, so costly in sacrifice, so lofty in purpose, as His love for the church. If we would have the comfort of this really and abidingly in our hearts, we must surely know, not the love only but, with reverence let us say it, the Lover.

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

Blessed, then, is every one to whom the Father hath revealed HIM.

Chapter 244

Thoughts on Simon Peter: His Life and Testimony - 7

“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18, R.V.).

THE first testimony used of God in blessing to Simon was exceedingly simple. The preacher gave what he had, what God had made his own; he did not attempt anything beyond his measure of faith” We have found the Messiah.” This is strikingly characteristic of the testimony of all in John 1, and such testimony be it little or much is always precious, stamped as it is with divine certainty. It certainly went no farther than Jewish expectation—Messiah, the object of prophecy; Messiah on earth, a sure foundation for faith in Israel's worst condition (Isa. 28:16), but not Messiah fully revealed in the intrinsic glory of His Person. It was this full revelation that, by the express teaching of the Father, was to be the sure foundation of Christian blessing as distinct from Judaism. Peter's faith and confession must be ours if we are to enter into God's present truth, and know the present truth, and learn the present work of Christ, the building of His church— “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Immediately on this unique confession further truth was given. Jesus answered— “I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter (Petros, a stone); and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

The Person of the Christ, the security of His church! What exalted revelations to an unlettered man, who had so recently confessed himself a sinful one! Can we wonder at the certainty with which he presents these truths in his Epistles? He does not rise to the higher things found in the writings of Paul; but, for the suffering and the weak in the church, where is there any testimony more calculated to strengthen with strength in the soul than his? The heart needs it more than ever; for the gates of Hades, unless by faith seen to be overcome, are mighty with all the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Many a trembling saint has found it so when nearing the grave, for in present ministry little is done for delivering souls from bondage through fear of death, for clearing the perception of the life given them as beyond the enemy's power by the resurrection of Christ from the dead and for enabling them to know, enjoy, and confess their risen and heavenly standing in Christ. Heaven is doubtless extolled in sermons and hymns; but for many it is in the distant future when everything here fails. Jews, as it were, now seeking earthly things, and Christians hereafter, they have but little “to counteract the strong currents of their natural delight and desires.”

But for the Jews, even the godly, let it be remembered, the gates of Hades were not overthrown; none could anticipate the Christian “desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” There is a touching pathos in the lamentation of Hezekiah when commanded to set his house in order, for he shall die and not live— “I said, in the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave...I said, I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world...From day even to night thou wilt make an end of me” (Isa. 28:10, 11). Yea, from the fall in Eden until the risen Christ began to build His church, who among men was not exposed to bondage through the fear of death? (See Psa. 6:5; 88:10-12;

115:17). How intense was the grief, how great the despondencies, almost amounting to despair, of the disciples during the time the Lord lay in the grave! Thomas was the most outspoken, but not even John knew the scripture that He must rise again from the dead. And, when the women, who were early at the sepulcher and found not His body, came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive, their words seemed to the rest as idle tales (mockery). Indeed, so real was the power of death over their spirits, that when “the Lord Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you, they were terrified and affrighted, supposing they beheld a spirit"—that the pains of death still held Him (Luke 24).

Surely the gates of Hades are mighty, a terrible reality; and their total overthrow by the resurrection of Christ is a glorious fact for faith, setting the soul at liberty from all fear of them. Satan has no longer the power of death; he never could go beyond it. God alone can do that—can quicken the dead.

Let us observe then Peter's doctrine. He takes up the words of Isa. 40 “All flesh is as grass.” Man must wither—is soon cut down; notwithstanding all the gracious dealings of God with him, he has never profited by them. What can he plead then, in arrest of judgment after such a verdict? “There is a time to die.” But he has the word of God (the only thing in the world from God which liveth and abideth forever), and in the gospel it is preached to men. Souls are thus drawn to Christ, to Christ victorious over the gates of Hades; and being thus drawn, are partakers, by grace, of life in Him in which Satan has nothing. Hence Peter speaks of all believers as “living stones,” equal with himself; and as builders, even as he, on and by “THE LIVING STONE,” beyond the gates of Hades (1 Peter 1:23; 2:5). Life, then, is his theme—life in a world of death, yet beyond all that death can do—life with its holy peace and undying hope. He does not go on to Paul's truth of Christ and the church, His body, and His bride, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but is full of that hope of resurrection beyond all fear of the gates of Hades that enabled him, and would enable us, to follow in the steps of Christ even to martyrdom. He, who in the high priest's palace cowered before a servant maid, when partaking, as “a living stone,” of the power of Christ that had overthrown all the power of the enemy, was one of the first to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). That name had been revealed to him by the Father; and to uphold the dignity of it against all adversaries, he was willing to die. Is this less incumbent on us, if “living stones”? Surely not.

As viewed by Peter, then, the church is a spiritual building, concerning which the natural man can know nothing; for neither the Spirit nor the things of the Spirit can he recognize (1 Corinthians 14). It is builded by Christ Himself of those who are saved by faith, through grace, by like precious faith with Peter. It is set up outside Judaism and the world, and is the object of the hatred of both.

Christ, “the living Stone,” being its foundation, “disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious,” they share in His preciousness before God, and in His rejection by men. It is true that the public body, known as the church, has in order to escape suffering, yielded to Judaism and the world; yet there are those who have desired humbly and patiently to follow the steps of Christ Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” However, weak and feeble, they rejoice that they are not separate stones in their individuality. Neither are they as stones arranged, according to the mind of man, in companies, like heaps large

or small, and often mingled with the unsaved: but are component and integral parts of a habitation of God through the Spirit, for the will and worship of God—His assembly, beautiful in His sight as the work of His Son, however scorned in the sight of men. It is the remark of another and worthy of repetition— “A tache of gold, or a loop of a curtain in the tabernacle, formed an integral part of the tabernacle of God, and was looked upon and judged as such, not according to its own individual worth.” It was the presence of God in the tabernacle that gave value to every part of it, however minute. So is it with those who are truly gathered to the name of Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 18:20). W. B.

Chapter 245

Letters on Singing: 1. Introductory

MY DEAR

In singing, as indeed in all things, it behooves the Christian to seek the enlightenment of the Spirit and the teaching of the word. The two things will be possessed together; for both the Spirit and the word are alike “truth” (1 John 5:6; John 17:17). And it follows therefore that there can be no inconsistency, much less contradiction, between the two. The illumination of the Spirit guards against false interpretation; while the word itself is a safeguard against any pretended revelation of the Spirit.

Herein is the twofold security given us to prevent our lapse into error. Similar counsel did Jehovah give to the distracted remnant in Isa. 8:20. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” And on this principle did the Berean disciples act when they searched the scriptures to see where the things testified by the Holy Ghost through the apostles were so or not (Acts 17:11).

And this diligent study of the Scriptures in dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit is the more necessary in consequence of the position of freedom into which believers are now brought. The law was an age of tutelage in contrast with the day of grace which is characterized by sonship. The epistle to the Galatians insists on this distinction with great force. The difference between the Jew and the Christian is by no means nominal. It is the difference between bondage and liberty, between slaves and sons. Now to those in the former state of comparative weakness and incapacity God vouchsafed the fullest and most minute directions, descending to the commonest matters of daily life. Not alone was their mode of approach before God regulated, but even as to food and raiment they received careful instruction from God Himself.

But in the New Testament we find the reverse of this. In the epistles, “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not” are conspicuously absent. In the place of a list of clean and unclean meats, we find a general principle laid down which the believer is to apply to each case as it arises. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Because the Christian has the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) and has received “not the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7), he is called to judge by the word whether such and such a thing is for the glory of God or not, and to act accordingly.

Hence the care with which the Scripture should be searched and self-judgment exercised lest flesh instead of spirit should judge in the things of God.

Now in the light of these foregoing considerations permit me to direct your attention to the passages of the New Testament which relate to the subject in hand. From what has been said it will be no embarrassment to you to find that the references to singing are few and brief. Neither will the scarcity and the brevity of the passages furnish any argument for the unimportance of the subject; since even such important matters as baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, &c., are not brought forward to any degree of length or frequency. The truth is that in agreement with New

Testament practice a few pregnant sentences are given which shed abundant light on every phase of the subject as it presents itself.

The passage in 1 Cor. 14:15, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” lays down simple but fundamental principles which are of all-importance in considering the question of singing. From the context it is apparent that this text, while it has a bearing upon the singing of the Christian under any circumstances, is introduced especially in connection with assembly singing.

For in the fourteenth chapter the apostle shows the principles which regulate the operations of the Spirit in the exercise of gift in the assembly. In a previous chapter (xii.) it is made clear that the Holy Ghost is the only source of power in the assembly. The gifts are under the Lord's direction by the Spirit. The Head of the church above bestows the gifts (Eph. 4); the Holy Ghost below makes use of them as He wills. “To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit. . . But all these worketh the one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:8-11). So that saints are dependent upon the Spirit for power that the gifts may be put into practical and efficient use.

Now in the, chapter before us the manner or occasion of the exercise of these gifts is set forth. There is a right time for all things; and there is a proper way in which everything should be done. And certainly spiritual gifts should be exercised in due season and in a suitable manner. On this head therefore the apostle instructs the saints.

It appears there were those at Corinth who had received the gift of tongues. They were enabled in the power of the Spirit to speak in unknown languages. And such persons were responsible to use this gift at the suitable time. But we find they took advantage of the gathering together of the saints to display their marvelous gifts with not a little vanity as we may suppose. Now this was wrong. It was plain that utterances in a foreign tongue could not benefit the assembly unless they were interpreted. Besides, tongues were “for a sign, not to them that believe, but to those that believe not” (1 Cor. 14:22). So that it was altogether improper to use this gift in the assembly unless it was interpreted (1 Cor. 14:27). In other words, if the Spirit made use of the gift of tongues, He would immediately utilize the gift of interpretation; since the profit of the saints as a whole is a cardinal principle which ever governs the ministrations of the Spirit.

This truth lying on the face of the whole chapter is of primary importance. It is manifest that the mere possession of a gift affords no sufficient reason in itself for its indiscriminate exercise. And the rule is that all things should be done unto edifying, otherwise confusion results, which is not of God (1 Cor. 14:33).

For it must be borne in mind that the Spirit works in conjunction with the understanding—that is, with the understanding of (1) the one who speaks and (2) those who hear. And it is the latter consideration that affords such guidance for the exercise of spiritual gifts in the assembly. The Spirit would lead to the blessing not of a single individual only but of each individual. This principle the apostle lays down to show that prophesying is more appropriate in the assembly than speaking in tongues. For “he that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church” (1 Cor. 14:41).

Here then is a plain and simple rule which has its application to the practical use of the gifts of the Spirit. Every operation of the Spirit of God in the assembly aims at the edification of the saints in their corporate capacity, and this must be the criterion of every word spoken in the assembly; as it is said, “Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Cor. 14:12).

The apostle did not deny that tongues were a gift of the Spirit; but he would not allow that the Spirit prompted their use in meetings of the saints. Tongues were given as a testimony to unbelievers, and could not build up the assembly in the faith for the simple reason that they did not reach the understanding. Supposing a person prayed in an unknown tongue, it is clear there could be no fellowship. He might be praying with his spirit (the new nature), but his understanding was unfruitful (1 Cor. 14:14), and therefore his prayer was not in accord with the mind of the Spirit. For himself the apostle says, “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding Also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.” And so it is with blessing, giving of thanks, and teaching (vers. 16-49).

Every operation then should be capable of being understood and such that the simplest saint might be able to say Amen. In short, fellowship between the one who speaks and those who listen is the rule enforced.

Now from this cursory examination of the early verses of chap. 14 it appears, that singing is one of the instances adduced by the apostle along with praying and blessing to show that the intelligent co-operation of the saints marks the true working of the Spirit of God in the assembly. Singing in this corporate way is the expression of the hearts of all to God as one. Without a spiritual nature the saints cannot sing to God at all. Without spiritual understanding they cannot sing in communion with one another. Let us therefore when gathered together sing with both the spirit and the understanding also.

In a future letter, if God permit, it may be further considered how the above truths apply in a practical way in the assembly, to which the preceding remarks may serve as an introduction.

Faithfully yours in Christ Jesus,

YOD.

Chapter 246

Letters on Singing: 2. Singing with the Spirit and With the Understanding

MY DEAR—,

In my last letter I pointed out that, according to 1 Cor. 14:15, singing in the assembly should be with both the spirit and understanding. And as this direction embodies the principle enforced throughout that chapter, it may be helpful to consider the injunction rather more narrowly.

A careful survey of the context of 1 Cor. 14:15 will indicate, I think, that “spirit” in this portion refers rather to the new nature— “that which is born of the Spirit” (John 3:6)—than to the Holy Spirit Himself. In 1 Cor. 12, where the origin and energy of the gifts in the assembly are treated of, the Holy Ghost is fitly presented as the sovereign mover of all. But here we have the responsibility of the one possessing the gift; and hence the capacity with which he is endowed is brought into prominence, that capacity which enables him to participate in spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:12). Thus one speaking in a tongue may speak mysteries “in (the) spirit” ver. 2. We may pray, sing, and bless “in (the) spirit” (vers. 15, 16). But that the Holy Ghost is not thereby meant is clear from ver. 32. “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” It could not be said the Holy Ghost was subject to a prophet. But it was necessary to remind those accustomed to the frenzied extravagances of Delphi that prophecy was not an uncontrollable impulse apart from the responsibility of the one prophesying; on the contrary, the prophet's spirit was subject to him, and he was therefore responsible to act in an orderly manner to the edification and comfort of the assembly.

It is not intended in any wise to weaken, much less ignore, the equally important fact that the Holy Spirit, the divine Paraclete, supplies the power for all assembly action. This is, indeed, first of all stated to the Corinthians in chap. xii., as has before been noted. But it is plain they had allowed themselves to be carried away with excitement, and had been indulging in the unbridled and indiscriminate exercise of their gifts. Hence the apostle enforces their individual responsibility. Antinomianism in spiritual things is as reprehensible as antinomianism in moral things. It is true I am saved by grace alone; but that affords no reason why I should not keep my body under. It is also true that the Holy Spirit is the sole effectual power for worship and ministry in the assembly; but that gives no ground why I should not judge every action undertaken there by the word of God.

Now nothing has a more sobering effect than the sense of having to do with God. It is of itself a sufficient check upon the vagaries of human will and sentiment. And it is taken for granted that this was understood by the assembly at Corinth. The apostle supposes that the spirit was in exercise, in speaking mysteries, praying, singing, giving thanks and prophesying. And if so, God would be before the soul. For the spirit given to the believer at his new creation enables him by the Holy Ghost to have communion with the Father and the Son, even as the spirit of life from Jehovah at the beginning constituted man not only an intelligent being, but responsible withal in his soul to his Maker (Gen. 2:7).

Singing, therefore, which is the subject of this letter more particularly, should be of necessity “in the spirit.” It is certain that only spiritual praise is acceptable to God. Such a thought is truly a solemn warning against everything fleshly, but it need not engender bondage. For the Spirit within us is a well of water springing up. Its tendency is Godward. Nevertheless it is useless to deny the danger that singing may without watchfulness degenerate into mere vocal exercise apart from the heart and spirit, (I do not say accompanying, but) prompting and directing. Against this error we do well to take heed.

But in the assembly singing is not simply a personal exercise between the soul of the individual and God. It is that and something more; for there is no such thing as isolation in assembly worship. Collective praise is not composed of a hundred songs sung by a hundred people at the same time; but one song sung by a hundred saints with one accord expressing to the Lord the one thing on the hearts and minds of all.

It is in this connection that the function of the renewed understanding (mind) as spoken of in our chapter is necessary. It is possible to address the Lord in praise or prayer without using the voice, even as Hannah spake in her heart to the Lord (1 Sam. 1). But clearly there can be no fellowship until there is audible expression. For if the spirit is, so to speak, the link with God, the understanding is the link one with another; since by its means there is communication with each other, and the saints are able thereby “with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6).

It has been said that the verse (1 Cor. 14:15) means that I myself will understand what I am singing. This is true, but far short of the whole truth, making the apostle's argument without force or cohesion. For he is blaming the Corinthians for speaking in the assembly so that others were unable to understand. He exhorts them to have regard for others, and to speak so as to be understood by all, that there might be fellowship. Singing and praying therefore should be in such a sort that not only I (the individual whoever he may be) may understand myself what I say, but that my brethren may intelligently join and thus offer united songs or petitions to God.

This unity of action is especially characteristic of the assembly of God. There was a unity of the Israelitish nation; but it was a unity composed of twelve other unities, since each tribe was complete in itself. While Israel was represented by the twelve loaves of shewbread, we are one loaf, one body (1 Cor. 10:17). And this unity is to be expressed in all assembly action, such as breaking of bread, discipline, prayer, and singing.

The singing of the people of Israel was not of this nature, but, like other branches of the ritual, performed by deputy. A section of the Levites was appointed over the service of song (1 Chron. 6:31), who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, that is, in the Psalms (1 Chron. 25:7). So that the people only sang representatively, as we find in the days of Nehemiah. “And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to keep the dedication with gladness both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps” (Neh. 12:27).

The unity therefore of Israel in this respect was principally in the outward performance and among the Levitical singers and instrumentalists. Such a unity we read of at the dedication of Solomon's temple. “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to

be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Jehovah," &c. (2 Chron. 5:13).

This was in perfect keeping with the external and symbolic form of worship given to men of that age. But we have now a different kind of worship, as the Lord Himself said to the woman of Samaria, viz. "in spirit and in truth" (John 4). It is not an improvement upon the old, but a contrast. The shadows are past: we now have the substance. In lieu of the type we have the antitype. The seen is now supplanted by the unseen, the earthly by the heavenly, the natural by the spiritual. Hence suitable inward thoughts and feelings take the place of a rigid exactitude in the external performance.

In the ancient ritual of praise, therefore, unity was secured by the act being always performed in a prescribed way; but to-day the unity is produced by the Spirit of God filling and animating every mind with the same truth. We know that, in the books of Psalms, the Israelites possessed inspired songs, often prefaced by inspired directions as to the character of the psalm and the manner of its performance. And in order that the ceremonial might he duly observed, a number of Levites were told off to attend solely to this very thing. Now in the New Testament we have no inspired hymn book, and it is certain the Jewish Psalms were never intended for Christian worship. We have not so much as a word as to the formation of a choir to ensure efficient singing. We are unable to find a syllable in the writings of the apostles as to instrumental accompaniments of any kind. But we are carefully instructed as to the effectual purging of the worshipper and his endowment with a new and divine nature, thus giving him fitness to approach God and ability to offer acceptable praise to Him. Not a section or a selection of believers, but each one in the assembly is fully qualified as a singer by the work of Christ for him and by the work of the Spirit in him.

Nevertheless responsibility remains to sing with the spirit and the understanding; in other words, to consciously address God and that in concert with the brethren. Each of these considerations is calculated to have great moral influence upon singing in the assembly. What will induce feelings of becoming gravity and reverence like a definite sense upon the spirit of the immediate presence of a divine Person? For example, such a hymn is to be sung as that, "O Lord, we adore Thee, for Thou art the slain One That livest forever, enthroned in heaven" &c. Let us suppose it sung to a suitable and expressive tune by professional vocalists, accompanied by strains of instrumental music. The judgment of artistic listeners may be that it equals man's highest conception of a sacred musical performance. But when we bring God in, the case changes. This is not what the Father seeks according to John 4. Musical talent was owned formerly; but He now seeks the adoration of the spirit according to the truth of the gospel. And while but few of God's children could be qualified for the former, all are for the latter.

Now if the Lord Who is addressed in the above named hymn be personally before the spirit, the feelings due to that One, once crucified but now crowned on high, will at once be awakened. Such emotion is inseparable from singing in the spirit and affords an incense of praise which is acceptable on high.

Moreover, if such a hymn be sung in the assembly at the right and fitting moment, it will form the common expression of all to the Lord. For the death and consequent exaltation of Christ are truths in which the feeblest believer is instructed; so that, through the spiritual understanding which each has received, they are able intelligently to unite in this ascription of praise and adoration.

Another remark may be made before closing this letter. The scripture before us plainly speaks of “singing.” Voices as well as hearts are expected to be in accord. And that this end may be attained, a simple and familiar tune commends itself. For assembly singing is not the occasion to display the higher capabilities of the human voice for extraordinary musical effects; but it is the means of a united expression of the praises of the Lord. Therefore difficult or unfamiliar tunes should be avoided as not contributing to the fellowship of the saints; while straining after the harmony and melody of mere sound is a virtual abandonment of Christian position and repugnant to every faithful soul.

For the present I must close.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

YOD.

Chapter 247

Letters on Singing: 3. Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs

Your question as to the authority given in the New Testament for the use of a hymn book in modern Christian assemblies is by no means new and has often been satisfactorily answered. But it may be profitable to refer again to this authority since the habit of testing all our practices by the word of God is one which can never be without value.

It is certain that hymns were used by the saints in the apostles' days. This is clear from the New Testament itself, and will be evident from the following passages which show (1) that the saints were exhorted to make use of such compositions. “Speaking to yourselves, in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). “Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). “Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). Moreover we find (2) that we have actual examples of such use—at midnight in the prison at Philippi, “Paul and Silas in praying were singing praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25. W. K.); at Corinth it was the custom to sing when assembled together. “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). The apostle reproved them, not for the practice of singing (1 Cor. 14:15), but for the confusion arising from the exercise of self-will in the assembly. Surely nothing needs to be added to the citation of these passages to prove that the early saints were in the regular habit of singing praise to the Lord, since both precept and practice unite in a clear testimony to that effect.

The phrase, “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” indicates that the compositions known and sung by the assembly at the beginning were varied in character, though of course of equal value in expressing the mind of the saints at different times. It is however difficult to exactly determine the definition of each term or even to point out its salient features. A psalm may have been an elevated address or invocation to God: a hymn welled up in praise and thanksgiving, while a song would be based on an intelligent apprehension of the mind of God, and possibly partook more of a didactic character, as well as introduced practical experience in the ways of God. However that may be, it is certain that the Spirit led the saints into the expression of the various emotions of their hearts Godward by psalm, hymn, or song, as was most suited.

PSALM (ψαλμ■ς): referring to book of Psalms, Luke 20:42. 24:44, Acts 1:20; 13:33. “Every one hath a psalm” (1 Cor. 14.). “Speaking to yourselves in psalms” (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). “I will sing (ψ.) unto thy name” (Rom. 15:9). “I will sing (ψ.) with the spirit” &c. (1 Cor. 14:15). “Singing and making melody (ψ). in your hearts” (Eph. 5:19). “Is any merry? let him sing (ψ.)” (James 5:13).

HYMN (■μνος): hymns Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out” (Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26). “Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises (■μ) to God” (Acts 16:25). “In the midst of the church, I will sing praise (■μ) to thee” (Heb. 2:12).

SONG (■δ■): songs (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). “And they sing a new song and no man could learn that song” (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). “And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:3).)

These compositions have not been preserved among the writings of the New Testament, thus affording a contrast with the ancient economy. Israel possessed an inspired psalmody; but the Christian possesses the Spirit whereby the book of Psalms was inspired (2 Sam. 23:1, 2; Acts 1:16). He Who came upon the sweet singer of Israel intermittently, abides with the Christian continuously according to the promise of the Lord (John 14:16, 17). And He remains to lead the hearts and minds of the saints into that form of worship which the Father seeks. So that to confine the exercises of prayer and praise to certain stereotyped expressions is a virtual affront to the sovereignty of the ever present Spirit.

In the early church there were undoubtedly those fitted to compose Christian hymns suited for singing in the assembly. Whether these hymns were collected and how they were circulated among the saints, are, with kindred questions subjects partaking more of curiosity than practical value. Doubtless the memory was made more use of than in modern days, when the multiplication and spread of copies is such a simple matter. At any rate we observe Paul and Silas in the midnight darkness of the Philippian dungeon, not praying only, but singing aloud, as their fellow-prisoners could testify. It is highly probable therefore that they knew their hymns by heart. And one cannot refrain from adding at this juncture that we shall do well to heed the example of the apostles in this particular.

Familiarity with sacred verse is, as we shall presently see, recognized in scripture as a means of comfort and instruction. There is no question that hymn writing is just as much an exercise of gift in the assembly as exposition or exhortation and ought to be owned as such. And of course we do not imply that the authorship of hymns is by any means limited to the pastors, teachers or evangelists. But a good hymn by whomsoever composed is distinguished by the application of the truth of scripture to the emotions and needs of the spiritual nature and must confessedly be of the Spirit; and as such it is to be recognized and valued and loved by all. And why should it not be committed to memory? Why should saints be unable to sing the hymns they love most unless their books are before their eyes? Did James expect that the brother who was “merry,” would wait to get his book before he sang? It is almost certain that if this were the case his spirit of joyousness would have waned, if not altogether vanished, before he hit upon a suitable psalm

If then there are no inspired hymns preserved for use in the assemblies of the saints, what is there to guide the believer to-day, seeing there are many thousands of hymns extant in the English tongue alone? A selection must unavoidably be made; and the question presents itself as to what principles should be followed in the selection. This however goes rather beyond the main subject of these letters which is the singing rather than the selection of hymns. The recent articles on this topic in the B. T. will be of great service in this direction, especially if the references made are carefully studied.

But a further remark may be helpful to you as an individual in the actual matter of singing. One criterion alone there is by which to judge what should or should not be sung. And that criterion is the scripture of truth. It cannot be too much insisted on that the Father seeks that singing as well as every other form of worship should be “in truth.” The spiritual understanding is enlightened that

it may offer intelligent praise. So that when a hymn is proposed to be sung, its sentiments should be carefully compared with the teaching of the word, not of course in a spirit of petty carping criticism, but in the fear of the Lord. For it must not be overlooked that there is a wide difference between perusing a hymn in private and in singing the same, whether in home devotion or in the assembly. In reading a hymn we view it as the production of a certain author and seek to discover its beauty and correctness; but in singing it to the Lord, we make its expressions our own; hence the importance that as far as possible they should be in strict accordance with the only standard of truth. How shall we justify ourselves to the Lord for singing to Him what we know or what we ought to know is contrary to the plain teaching of His own word!

As the term “psalms” has been quoted more than once, a few additional words seem called for upon the use of the Jewish psalter in the worship of Christian assemblies. And it is truly lamentable to think that saints should so far close their eyes to the true character of the Christian calling and hopes as delineated in the New Testament, as to adopt, as the expression of their own hearts, words and sentiments which are utterly incongruous with their own status before God.

It must be admitted by all that the book of Psalms formed an integral part of the religion of Israel, as established in the Old Testament. And if the sacrifices of the temple are superseded, are not its songs? If circumcision is subversive of Christianity (Gal. 5:4), can we without forfeiture of privilege import the psalmody of the circumcised into the very forefront of Christian worship? It is in point of fact a retrogression from grace to law.

The sharply defined contrast between the teaching of the Old Testament and the New as to worship has already been alluded to in these letters. To enumerate all the points of distinction would be a lengthy task. And here for obvious reasons one or two must suffice.

It must be readily acknowledged that the Psalms are instinct with hopes and promises of earthly and national deliverance which involve the subjugation and utter destruction of the enemies of Israel. This deliverance is to be effected by the advent of Messiah the Prince, Whose mighty power will judge and overthrow the nations and exalt Israel to a place of supreme honor and blessedness in the earth. Righteousness not grace, hope not faith, future not present blessing, vague trust not confident assurance are the prevailing principles in these songs of Jehovah. Moreover the blessing of the Gentiles is ever shown to be subordinate to that of Israel, in contrast to the unity of the Spirit which entirely obliterates all national distinctions (Gal. 3:28). So that the points of contrast are so great and of such primary moment as to preclude the praises of the Jew from being adequate for the Christian, or in any degree suited to his heavenly calling. Their full and proper use in worship is for “that day,” when all Israel shall be saved.

Of course while there is much that is peculiar to Israel and which the Christian cannot intelligently take on his lips to sing to God, there are many portions which have a common reference to Jewish and Gentile believers. The under current of piety and devotion is there for our profit, and will profit us so much the more as we apprehend the true relationship of the worshippers for whose use these songs were provided by God Himself. The New Testament guides as to what is suitable or otherwise. We are authorized to adopt the words of the Psalmist and boldly say, “The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6; Psa. 118:7). But how can the Christian who is enjoined by example and precept to pray for his enemies and to return them good for evil, adopt such language as Psa. 55:15? “Let death seize upon them and let them go down

quick into hell; for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them." And this is not an isolated instance by any means. Passages occur throughout which are altogether unsuitable for the lips of the Christian; though proper for the dispensation they contemplate. Amongst others the following may be referred to as examples: Psa. 2:9; 3:7; 6:10; 7; 9:3, 15; 10:15-18; 11:6; 18:47, 48; 21:9; 28:4; 34:16, 21; 35; 37:2, 9, 20; 40:14, 15; 48; 52:5; 54:5; 58; 59; 60; 66:3; 68:2; 69:22-28; 70; 71:1-13; 72:4; 74; 75:8, 8; 79; 92:9; 97:3; 101:8; 109; 112:8, 10; 132:18; 139:19; 143:12; 144:11; 149:6-9.

A consideration of these and similar passages proves conclusively that the Psalms cannot be consistently used in Christian devotion, containing as they do so much that is utterly opposed to grace. And the following remark is really antagonistic to the truth, though a prevailing sentiment with many. "Surely of all books the inspired psalter commands our choice as a manual of devotion. These 'choral songs of Israel,' especially when accompanied with their appropriate music, are well adapted to carry into execution the injunction of the apostle, if indeed this inspired hymn book be not, as some suppose, the immediate object here had in view, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord' (Eph. 5:19)."

It is utter confusion of thought to assume as is here and commonly done that the term "psalms" has an exclusive reference to those found in the Old Testament. And this confusion arises from not acknowledging the entirely different relationship in which the Jew stood from that of the believer now. Israel worshipped God as Jehovah. The Christian worships God as Father. And praise to Jehovah differs fundamentally from praise to the Father, and thus it is the psalms of David do not express the fuller revelations of the New Testament. Do we get anything in the series of songs that implies the knowledge of the Father and the Son? Not a word; for the simple reason that the Son had not then revealed the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18). Now, on the contrary, the very babes in Christ are characterized as knowing the Father (1 John 2:13), thus surpassing the most advanced Jew.

So that the Psalms are utterly inadequate as expressions of the spiritual emotions even of the very young in the faith. It is blessedly true that God speaks by means of them to the believer; but it is a serious perversion of the truth to suppose that the Christian ought to make use of them as a means of speaking to God in worship and praise.

Yours faithfully in our Lord,

YOD.

Chapter 248

The Sinner Saved: Part 1

IMMEDIATELY before the deeply affecting interview between our Lord and the woman that was a notorious sinner in the town into which He had passed, we have Him pronouncing on the moral state of mankind—more particularly of those that had the word of God, the Jews. For we must remember that among such our Lord was manifested. They were not, like the heathen, ignorant of the scriptures. They were entrusted with that great privilege, and professed to prize and preached the word. They had no excuse on the ground of sitting in darkness. All the word of God then revealed was theirs; and yet what could compare with that generation, as the Lord says? John the Baptist they did not like: he was too strict for them. And when the Son of Man, the Savior Himself, followed, they called Him by still more shameful names—He was too loose for them. Thus, it does not matter what may be the testimony God gives, man has always some reason for refusing.

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” In the Gospel of Matthew wisdom is justified of her children, because the Lord there welcomes the weary and heavy-laden that come to Him, and gives them rest. But Luke was led to specify in the Pharisee's house the guilty woman of the city. It is in truth the Lord anticipating what God was going to do in the gospel everywhere. So he says, “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” Who could have expected that henceforth a child of wisdom was to be found in a notorious child of folly? This was her known and evil character; but when God drew her to the feet of Jesus, all was changed. Such is the power of His grace in Jesus. And He has taken care that this admirable fountain shall not be closed, having employed Luke thus to point it out in His word. Who else would have thought of a robber reconciled to God on the cross? who of a sinful woman picked out from the mass of human beings? a reprobate character saved by faith and sent away in peace?

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” The robber vindicated the wisdom of God; for he confessed the Messiah when the High Priest, the Roman Procurator, and the Tetrarch of Galilee, in that day, mocked, rejected, and condemned the Lord and Savior. That robber gave the lie to the wisdom of the world.

People thought not a little of education in those days; and they think a great deal more of it nowadays; but where were the “cultured"? Not on the side of Jesus, but against Him. The robber had nothing to boast on that score; but he justified the wisdom of God against all the pride, knowledge, power, and glory of man. They all rejected the Lord to their own everlasting shame and ruin, The robber at the last moment was saved; only then he became wise, for he had been Satan's dupe all his life before; but how gracious that divine wisdom which can take up its abode in the breast of a hardened criminal at the last!

And here was a woman that no decent person had the smallest acquaintance with, who had sunk into the depths of depravity; here is this woman brought forward to vindicate divine wisdom in another way altogether. There are two characteristics of human wickedness. The one is violence; the other is corruption. The woman clearly was a sample of corruption, as the robber of violence. But the distinctive truth of the gospel is, that redemption depends not upon what you bring to the

Redeemer, but on what God gives in and from Him. There is not—a single quality in your heart or life that could commend you to God; nay, if you read them in the light of God, you would yourself condemn all. “But God commendeth His love toward us [not ours towards Him], in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

It was impossible to give a greater proof of love than dying for His enemies, and enemies in mind by wicked works, not merely through some mistaken cause or misunderstanding. Sinners, because powerless, are the very persons God takes up and saves; therefore let no person whatever, man or woman, aged or youthful say, “I am too bad to be saved.” It is just because you are so bad that you need such a Savior. Therefore does Jesus bring God's saving grace to you. He does not expect any good from you as you are. You must first receive the blessing; then, as Luke proceeds to set forth, when the grace of the Savior is applied, when the heart bows to Him, His grace transforms the man or woman so that he or she becomes a totally different person. Yet not the transformation saves, but only Christ; and this gives the entire glory to God. If it were the good the Christian afterward does that saves the soul, it would be man reaping the glory.

But it is not so. Since the fall, man is altogether bad, as well as guilty. God no doubt works a great change in the heart that receives the Lord Jesus; but it is not his new moral qualities, not the difference of his life practically, that procures salvation, nothing but Jesus; and therefore by believing on Jesus. For only the sovereign grace of God, coming down to man in Christ His own Son, could save the sinner from his sins and from the judgment of God. This we are here given to know; as God has written it for the purpose.

If the story of this woman were quite exceptional, we should not have it presented as it is. Many things of great moment took place that were not historically recorded in Scripture. For instance, at the beginning of the Bible, we have not a single word about the creation of angels. Man would have put it there if he had written a Bible, instead of God alluding incidentally elsewhere as to an already accomplished fact. For God, in writing the Bible through inspired witnesses, does not state when He made angels. Why not? Because it does not fall within His design to disclose it as history. And to this faith always adheres. Let us then not doubt that what God reveals is at the right time and place, not otherwise. So here we do not find the new and blessed effects of grace in the woman, real as they were, enlarged upon. It must have done souls harm. They would fall from grace in seeking to first acquire good qualities. Even as it is souls too often strive to win for themselves a good character in order to be pardoned, and thereby Christ and His work are annulled.

Scripture simply presents the Savior, and in the background the host that invited Him into his house, a man without faith, though a Pharisee. A woman also came there uninvited, the last person seemingly to be attracted by the grace of Jesus. But God showers grace on souls that least deserve it. What a witness is here of the way of grace with one that had been altogether abandoned to evil! Is it not enough to enlarge our thoughts of God and to humble the pride of human nature? Where in the Gospels did grace produce more beautiful and deep effects, or more immediately, than in this poor woman, without a character? What produced it will practice it again. The woman was the object of mercy; the transforming power was Christ. Indelible was the impression that the Savior made on that woman's heart, and the consequence was that His reflection shone out in her ways. It would be hard to find greater humility, a clearer repentance, or

a more devoted heart. And this all wrought so soon! How great must be, therefore, the efficacy of the Savior's grace! This is what God commends. It is indeed His own love to the sinner; and faith can commend it not only to any hitherto unconverted, but to the converted that hesitate. What a reproof for any, converted or not, to be left behind by such a woman!

Let us then look into the Holy Spirit's account of this transaction. Simon, the Pharisee, asked the Lord to his house. No doubt he thought he was acting in a generous manner. But while the Lord and the company were there, a stranger entered" a woman in the city that was a sinner." Those terms are sufficiently emphatic. They do not mean a sinner in the ordinary or broad sense that we all sinned, but in that peculiar force which made the woman notorious in the town; and everybody knows what this is. What drew her? Jesus, nothing but Jesus.

The first thing for your attention is that God does not make the path of faith an easy one. His word is truth, His call is simple, so far as the message is concerned. He uses all plainness of speech to sinners, no matter where they be. But there are always difficulties for the soul. There is a lion in the way of every one that believes in the Lord Jesus. The Destroyer tries to hinder, just as much as there is a Savior that loves to save. The "lion" in the way of the woman was that Jesus was "at meat" in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Such a man, hating no faith in God's grace always stands upon morality or forms or both. The man that prided himself on his religion would be exceedingly disgusted with an immoral woman coming into his house, especially when he had company.

What emboldened the woman to go there and then? Apply it to your own case. Supposing a party invited to dinner, what would you feel at the intrusion of a worthless character, especially a woman of scandalous life? There is not a single man from a lord to a laborer but would feel that his castle, great or small, was invaded. Would not the laborer be as indignant as the lord? Nor was the intruder insensible in the least; yet Grace drew her notwithstanding, and gave her the needed courage to go at all cost. Whose grace? Her own? It was Christ's—entirely and exclusively the attractive power of His goodness. She felt herself so much in distress about her sins, so much in earnest to cast her burden on the Savior, that she said as it were to herself, "There is only One that can aid me; He who has been giving sight to the blind, and strength to the lame; He who cleanses the leper, and bids the paralytic rise; He who has been blessing even a Gentile and healing his servant; He who quickened a dead man as he was carried to the grave, might perhaps deign to speak pardon to a depraved and wretched woman like me."

What was the way of grace with her soul? The good news of Him by the Holy Spirit touched the springs of her heart, so that her awakened conscience could not but go with guilt to His feet. When it is but an idea or a feeling, there is not such earnestness of purpose. Shame, fear, pride, &c., outweigh and turn aside. Naturally the woman might have thought the difficulties insuperable, the moment most inopportune. What would the Pharisee say and do at such a liberty on her part? And the holy Savior! How could she venture to go near Him, especially in such circumstances as these? "Ah, but" (whispered the still small voice to her) "there may never be another opportunity. You may never see or hear Him again. Go now; seek Him at once." Sense of need in herself and of grace in Him silenced every doubt and refused yielding to any fear. Not a moment must be lost. Her sins, her grievous sins, drove her to Him. He was there; Pharisee, disciples, all the world, could not keep her back from the Only One that availed her. She was in good earnest. Are you, my

dear friend? Yet you know you have sins on your conscience warning you of God's judgment for evermore? How awful to put off, to make excuse, to trifle with His grace! For is not the Savior always passing by when you hear the gospel? Do you neglect so great salvation? Is He not near to everyone of us? You are called to go neither to the heavens nor into the depths to find Him. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart which we preach... that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

I remember a friend that was saved by these very words; and a remarkable man he was, one most acceptable in a certain city in the north of England. Private and public dinners were not quite complete in the place without him. He was the man for a good story and a bright song, able to enter genially into all that occupied the company. But he was utterly without God, living only for this world, pleasing himself and other people, but with no sense of sin, and no care for God. He had a friend who was rather an imitator of this. You know there are many imitative wits, but not many original ones. Now this friend was regarded as of the former class and passed off jokes like the latter in his humble way. The lesser had a grave brother who was the constant butt of the greater's pleasantry.

One day the greater met the grave man, and asked him “How is your brother”? The grave man looked graver still and said, “He is saved.” The effect was as though a chasm opened at his feet. He was astonished at the answer and the fact alleged. He had never heard of such a thing in his life before. A man saved! particularly a man he knew, who had no more thought of God than himself, not the least concern for his salvation, but living in pleasure and vanity! When he recovered his breath, he asked how that was. Why, said the grave man, do you not know the scripture? quoting the words from Romans “You do not mean to say that is in the Bible,” said he. Some that do not read the word of God, when once arrested, are much more affected than those only reading it as a duty. This shows how carelessly men read: it ought not to be; but it is a common fact. The words seemed to him wondrous. He apparently had not heard them before, though of course he had; he did not remember the words because he knew nothing of the truth conveyed by them. Asking where was this passage, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” he was told the epistle, chapter, and verse. As soon as his public position permitted, he got alone with God, and did not leave his retirement until he by the faith of Christ was brought to Himself.

That man lived a devoted Christian, an excellent and earnest preacher of the gospel, and departed to be with Christ but a short time ago. The story may show that what God describes in the Bible is going on day by day. Do not think it is something out of your reach, or not urgent on you now. Why should this man and that woman be saved, and you not? Why should you turn a deaf ear to those gracious words of God, mighty to save? Why not follow the converted robber, or the abandoned woman, brought out of all their iniquity to God? Alas! there are men and women too proud, as themselves say, to be saved in the same way as either. But, my friends, have you no fear of being lost with the other robber? There are only two ways, like the two robbers, the one lost and the other saved. Are you then too proud to be saved with the believing robber, but not too proud to be lost with the impenitent robber? What is this but supreme folly, madness, and sin? Is it not the blinding power of the enemy, God's enemy and yours?

Think of their endless doom who thus live and die; think now of that awful companionship through all eternity. Think on the other hand of the blessed on high, many no doubt taken out of the gutters of this world, out of all their wallowing in open wickedness or selfish frivolity and pleasure, yea out of darkness and evil and ungodliness even when veiling themselves in a vain mantle of religion. Oh! what a blessed portion “to be with Christ” in the blessed throng! The word declares that the Lord Jesus gives eternal life for heaven, and will adjudge to hell. All depends on how you treat the Lord Jesus. Those who believe God honor His Son. See how this woman bore herself toward Him. She was aroused in conscience, drawn in heart, and so filled with good courage that she appears not to have thought of the Pharisee or of any one else in the house but the One on Whom her soul was concentrated. She sought only the Savior, caring not for aught else that she might he saved. She went because of her sense of her sins and utter ruin. She knew how unable she was to resist temptation and refuse sin; she knew that, having sinned habitually and in the face of shame, she would go on sinning to the end. Without Him she could do nothing.

But what about you? It is not a question what kind of sin is committed. It is very encouraging for the soul that the Savior does not disdain the grossest sinner, the most unworthy man or woman. This ought to encourage you. If you say, “I have not been so bad a sinner as that,” remember that it is not the gross sinners merely that are cast into hell but sinners, whatever the sort or degree of sin theirs may be; and without doubt you are not saved, unless you receive Christ by the Holy Ghost for your soul. This is what the woman did; and mark her conduct. Assuredly she showed her faith by her works: this is always God's way. It is not that works could save of themselves for a moment; but faith working by love is most acceptable to God. This is the kind of works the epistle of James speaks of. Therein are specified two examples, Abraham, and Rahab.

Now it is plain that the work of Abraham, if it had not been of faith, would have been the worst possible. Can you conceive an act so evil as for him to have offered up his son Isaac with his own hands, unless it had been a trial of his faith in the words of God? And what does the Holy Spirit tell us of Rahab? She received the spies that came to destroy her king and country. This would have been another execrable work, if it had not been bowing to God in faith. The one and only thing that made it acceptable to God, was that He was leading His people, and she knew it and was obedient. This was the difference between her and every other in Jericho. Rahab alone had faith in the living God of Israel, and this saved herself and her family. As Abraham gave up to God's will the resistance of all natural affections in the sacrifice of his son, assured that God would give Isaac back, so with Rahab and her feelings of patriotic duty. She would have been shocked at the idea of entertaining the spies if she had not seen the authority of God at stake. Was she to fight against God? It is the same God fully revealed in Christ Who has to do with you now.

God in view of eternity is calling on you to hear Christ’s word, even commanding to believe the name of His Son (1 John 3:23) Yea, commanding men everywhere to repent. And how can one truly show repentance? By, turning away from all sins and self in the sight of God. The attempt to avoid evil and get good by watching and praying, by reading the word of God and taking the sacrament, is not repentance. It is a religious but unbelieving abuse of scripture and of those institutions of God. What is there more blessed than the word of God and prayer, than baptism and the Lord's supper, in their proper places and for their right ends? But if one make them the means of salvation, putting them in place of the Savior, it is only less evil than the worship of the mass, and prayer to the virgin and the saints, or anything alike idolatrous.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Chapter 249

The Sinner Saved: Part 2

Luke 7:36-50

BUT God, rich in mercy toward sinners, drew the woman that was a sinner, to the Lord Jesus. Who else could meet her guilt and shame and misery? And we are told that she brought with her an alabaster box or flask of ointment. It is better to say unguent (for when men speak of “ointment,” not a few think of provision for a wound or sore). It was a precious unguent fit for a king's use. But those unhappy women, living by their shameless ways, often spend recklessly on their faces in order to recommend their persons. It is not said she bought the unguent for the purpose, but that she “brought” it. One can scarce doubt that she bought it for her own purposes. All was now changed. It was the most precious thing she had in the world, and therefore she brought it with a full heart for Jesus. She did not consult the apostles nor ask the virgin Mary. Yet nothing could be more comely, or appropriate, than her conduct. Who taught her? The Spirit of God. It was because her heart was opened to the power of the grace of Jesus. She needed no tongue of man to tell her now. In the depths of her soul she knew by the teaching of God's Spirit that there was none to compare with Jesus; and she was right.

This entirely changed all her thoughts and affections. Christ was now her life, however little she understood it, transforming accordingly her character, and forming new ways. Instead of being as formerly the brazen-faced woman, henceforth she became modest and humble. Christ made her forget herself altogether—a thing otherwise impossible to any; and how in contrast with all her life before! Why should we wonder? Such is the true and spontaneous effect of Christ on the soul that believes on Him. Who could fail to observe the marked change? and all the more because she forgot the others and hid herself behind the Lord Jesus.

Up to that day she sought the eye of men; now she thought of none but that Savior. What now were any other eyes to her? Time was when she planted herself boldly and tried to catch if she could get the least admiration from anyone; but now for her soul “Jesus only”! And when she ventured in with her cruse of unguent, she stood behind at His feet weeping. What an unexpected marvel of moral beauty! It was the life of Christ manifesting itself in suited ways. She was standing as a penitent behind Him. Never did she think of coming before His face? She did not reason on it; but in truth He could give peace behind, just as readily as in front. Behind was her place. She knew by a divinely given instinct that He Who gave eyes to the blind and raised the dead would understand her need and distress and repentance. Yes, and she understood Him better than by any human intelligence.

Alas! that any should wish to reduce the Lord Jesus as much as possible to the level of an ordinary man. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” The woman knew better, as she stood behind at His feet weeping. It is known, of course, that they did not sit on chairs as we do, but when taking their meals, lay reclining on couches with their feet stretched out for their convenience behind them. Thus the woman could reach Christ's feet readily, because they appearing without would be accessible to her as He lay

reclining at table. Not only did she weep, but “began to wash His feet with tears.” Who would have thought of this but a woman deeply feeling and changed from all her old ways? She also wiped His feet with the hairs of her head. Ah! how often had those hairs been like nets to catch loose and foolish men: now they were used to wipe the feet of Jesus. “And she kissed His feet, and anointed them with the unguent.”

There were those who looked upon that scene with very different eyes. First of all turn to Simon: he had little estimate of the Lord when he asked Him to his house. This was plain enough in that he did not kiss Him (which was the usual mark of kindness in a host); nor did he give water for His feet, which was only common courtesy. He perhaps said to himself, “A man like that ought to feel highly honored, if he is asked to my house, and I give him a dinner.” But now that he saw a loose woman thus engaged, he was sure that Jesus could not be what he was thought. A prophet to his mind must be more rigid than a Pharisee; and assuredly a Pharisee would have walked on the other side of the road with a scowl at the woman, if he deigned to notice her at all. All turned in his mind against the Savior. “He spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.” How far from the blessed truth that Jesus came for sinners, not for little only but for confessedly great sinners! Who can be conceived worse than “the lost”? What does it mean now, what by-and-by when God enters into judgment? Simon entirely missed the mind of God in his thought. He was like the Pharisees generally in the darkness of nature, whilst flattering himself that he was a guide of the blind and an instructor of the foolish.

The Lord proved that He was a prophet and infinitely more than a prophet. He read the man's heart as well as the woman's, and, yet more, He revealed God's love. Not that Simon uttered a word but thought his evil saying within himself. “And Jesus, answering,” i.e., the unuttered judgment of Simon's mind, “said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee,” giving the parable of the two debtors, the great and the small. “And when they had nothing to pay, he [the creditor] frankly forgave them both. [Tell me] which of those therefore will love him most” (ver. 42). “I suppose,” said Simon, “he to whom he forgave most.” Thus did Simon unconsciously condemn himself and vindicate the grace of God. There was a man without real sense of sin, with no sense whatever of forgiveness and consequently without fear of God (Psa. 130:4), to say nothing of love. There was the woman who truly acknowledged her enormous debt in presence of grace. Her love was real and great; in faith she came to Him Who will in no wise cast out, and did not doubt that the great Savior would look on the great sinner, compassionating even her; and so He did. “She loved much,” Simon not at all. As our Lord said, Simon had rightly judged the truth in the abstract, but, having no faith, he hated and despised the Lord.

It was equally plain that the woman loved after a new and divine sort. What produced this? Faith in Jesus. Love without faith is of no account with God, absolutely worthless, merely human. Faith is the root, and love is the fruit as here. “And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment” (vers. 44-46).

O my friends, why not go and spread out your guilt before Him? Why tarry longer in willing bondage to Satan, when the Deliverer is near to save you? He knows all already, so that you may honestly confess all to the Lord. And how did she tell it? By her tears, her ways, her heart. Nor was she wrong. For He recognized the faith His own grace produced. The word of God speaks of doing the truth, as she did now. Words of truth are good; but acts are more powerful sometimes than any words of man. And there was the only Man that could read the heart and interpret it justly, truly, and graciously. This was everything to the woman, now turned from darkness to light, sanctified to God by faith in Christ, a jewel that will shine in His presence for evermore.

Dear souls, are you to be one of His to receive forgiveness and inheritance among the sanctified like her? The only way is to be at His feet now, taking the place of the lost sinner at once. Doubt not His salvation by grace. It is not exactly saying that from a lost sinner you may be a saved sinner, but a sinner saved. There is no small difference between the two. A “saved sinner” is a common phrase, which might lead a man to think that he may sin after being saved without any ado; that God allows him quite naturally to go sinning and sinning. But the word to the family of God is, “we write unto you that ye sin not” (1 John 2) For the sinner, when he obeys the call of God, becomes the saint, in other words a man separated from sin, the world, and Satan, unto God. Nobody denies that the old man is still there as a fact, but to his faith crucified with Christ, that he should not serve sin. But in himself what weakness, and how exposed to snares, and his path full of dangers! He is like one going through a furnace with his pockets full of powder. He needs a mighty Guide and Protector; and this and far more is Christ, on Whom God calls him to hang as a child clings to its mother. Without Him the Christian can do nothing acceptable to God—can bear no fruit.

We need, therefore, all through the journey to depend on the Savior. So the woman was doing—looking to the Savior and to Him only. As she listened, what must have been her joy when she heard the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of the world, vindicate her and God's wisdom with that erring child of folly, now by His grace a child of wisdom evermore! Whatever may have been your folly, it is high time now to become a child of the wisdom that comes down from above. Beware of the earthly kind, earthly, sensual, devilish. What He was to the woman once so depraved, He will be even to you in the midst of your sins to deliver you from them. Do not wait to get a better character, but go as you are to the Lord. We do not know that this woman had been even the day before brought to hate herself and her sins. Even at the moment she entered the house, she was known only and significantly as “a sinner.” What time or means or power of reform had she? No, it was Jesus attracted her; grace, yea God, she found in Him. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus that produced faith; and all that is good and holy follows: grace sees to it. Beyond doubt I am called to believe. If I believe not, I neither judge my sins and sinfulness, nor know the true God. Jesus is nothing to me. If I believe in Him, it is all mine; and all yours if and when you believe in Him. How good is our God! He has sent His own Son to do the work of redemption, to suffer for our sins. So Christ applies the parable.

Do not confound this woman with Mary in John's Gospel (not named by Matthew and Mark). The one anointing took place at the end of the Lord's ministry, the other far earlier which Luke here records. The one was the anointing of Himself by a saint devoted to Him; the other by a sinner without a character, just being brought to God. They were wholly different facts. We do not find Mary of Bethany weeping over the Lord, or any sign of penitence there. If you speak of some

resemblance, how could there but be, if divine love worked in the heart of either the lately abandoned woman or the long proved child of God?

Some have supposed her to be Mary Magdalene. This is another of the fallacies of tradition, and irreconcilable with scripture. Mary of Magdala comes forward first in the next chapter (Luke 8.) as a stranger. “And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others.” These are brought before us as altogether new persons. This Mary is nowhere spoken of as having been a woman of loose life; hers was the dreadful lot of having seven demons dwelling in her—an extremely awful case as a prey to the power of the devil, whether men believe it or not. Such is the difference that scripture makes between the two women.

To confound the penitent with Mary of Bethany, or Mary of Magdala, is one of those moral blunders theologians make with regard to the Bible, of which none would dream if dealing with any other book. Men let loose their fancy when they read or write on the Bible. They betray far less with other books. They like to lower God's book. Take up the Bible as a mere divinity student, and you will never understand it. You must approach God and it as a sinner. The scribe of this age, the “higher critic,” is insensible and lost to all its blessing. The Bible judges man; but if I set up for such unworthy criticism, I am judging the Bible, which is the essence of infidelity; for who and what is man to judge God and His word? Yet this spirit of infidelity was never so rife as now in Christendom, and never before so abundant in Great Britain, to say nothing of less favored lands, whatever some prophesy of a good time coming. It is a day of rebuke and blasphemy. It is an hour of many antichrists. The Word personal is humanized, no less than the written word. May grace give you who believe the love and reverence of the new born penitent!

The person who reads this divine story in faith gets a true and holy and profitable view of God's way with a sinner. The grace of the Lord does not tell us who the woman was. There are men and women curious to know all about her. What the Christian wants to learn is just what God reveals. The Lord threw a gracious veil over the woman's name. It is enough for us to know that, bad as she had been, grace saved her forever; and this means a new life given, as well as propitiation made in due time. What edification for you or me or any to hear her name? We shall know her in heaven; we ought to see and admire the holy love which withholds her name, while disclosing her misdeeds sufficiently. We hear that her sins were “many.” The Christian has not a good word to say about himself; and if you were known as God knows you, who would have a good word to say about you? Oh, let us have the very best word to say of the Savior, as He warrants me to say His good words to you. Indeed the Lord is a Savior in earnest and a friend in need; a Savior to the uttermost and above all price. The love of Christ, how rich and true! It was His love which, by the action of the Holy Ghost, reproduced its like in the woman's heart.

To His host the Lord turned and said,” Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much.” The word “for” is sometimes a reason why, and sometimes an evidence why. In this case it is the evidential “for,” not the causative. It was not because she loved much that the Lord forgave her. It was His grace that caused her love.

But there is more. “And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.” Without this, declared to herself, how much would have been lost It was a great thing to hear Him tell those that judged her and

misjudged Him (which was far worse), “I say unto thee (Simon), Her sins, which are many, are forgiven “; but how much more when He deigned to turn round even to her and say, “Thy sins are forgiven!” And you think all this quite extraordinary; and so indeed it is. But let no one think himself a real Christian till he is in the enjoyment of this primary blessing of the gospel. For what is it but the Lord saying to you, not of course in a dream or in transient feeling, but by the precious word which you receive from God, “Thy sins are forgiven?” How can you sing and praise with joyful heart if your sins are not forgiven? There can be no genuine thanksgiving, no cry to Abba Father, unless you know your sins forgiven. Until then, you dread God; and fear has torment; but when consciously forgiven on divine testimony, you rest on God's love to you in the Lord Jesus. Thenceforward, what matters anything the devil can insinuate? what man or woman say? or the world may frown?

It is impossible, some affirm (nay many a minister constantly teaches), that anyone can tell whether his sins are forgiven. Really one might think from such unbelieving ignorance that people had gone back to heathenism. Were there no Savior, they could truly say it; and so they might, if there were no divinely inspired record of the Savior. But for what is the written word given, but that we may know that forgiveness is as much for us who believe as for her?

What was the effect on the Jews that had the law and the prophets, but disbelieved Jesus? Very much the same as on those who, having the scripture now, hesitate to receive forgiveness at His word. “Who is this,” they said, “that can forgive sins also”? They had heard of His healing the lame, feeding the hungry miraculously, performing all wonders of power and love; but now He had gone so far as to forgive sins also: who had ever heard the like of that? Was it not God's prerogative? Undoubtedly. How does the Lord answer them?

He said to the woman, “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” How simple, suited, and beautiful! It is not “Thy love hath saved thee.” She did love and much; yet not this but her faith saved her. You recollect, perhaps, a natural philosopher (once a missionary) who flooded the country with a little book crying up love as the greatest thing in the world. It is the greatest thing where there is living faith; without faith it is not divine but merely human and of the creature.

Now God accepts not what is of the creature as between Him and the guilty soul. But His saving grace has appeared to bless the soul, however guilty; and the entrance of blessing into it is and must be through faith; and love and hope follow. Hence the Lord says, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Listen not to deceivers, who are self-deceived; listen to no words of charm, no matter how sweet they sound. Friends of error may be by your side; enemies of the truth may rise up against you. Jesus, the Son of God, is more and nearer to a needy soul than all beside. We shall all give account of ourselves to God. We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Those who mislead will not answer for you, nor avail you. Can you say, with that manifestation in view, that you are “always confident”? Does the Lord look you in the face and say to your spiritual ears, “Thy faith hath saved thee”? It is not in heaven He says this first, but here on earth; and what we have received from Him on earth, we will not lose in heaven. If we have not heard His voice here, do not expect to hear it there. A resurrection of judgment awaits you, if you believe not.

To the woman He said more: not only “Thy faith hath saved thee,” but “go in peace.” Think what a blessed word and passport it is, “go in peace” from the lips of Jesus! Whatever may come, let the trying circumstances be as they may—adversity, poverty, sickness, or death; opposition,

detraction, persecution, or aught else—whatever changes be in the course of this life, His word to every believer is, “go in peace.” Look therefore to God now, rest on the name of Jesus. You are about to return to your home, and to partake of the food that is needful for the body; but is not His message of forgiveness far more than food? Is not He infinitely more than any earthly good? You hope to enjoy a refreshing rest to-night; but what is this compared with “go in peace” from the Savior? Think of him who fared sumptuously every day; with his purple, and fine linen, and every luxury that wealthy selfishness could command; but he died and was buried, and in hell, or Hades, “he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” May this never be your portion! The only security against it is Jesus. You require nothing good to bring. Bring your sins—yourself with all your sins on you. If you come confessing your sins, but believing on Jesus, He will blot them all out. When told to wash and be clean, do not say as Naaman, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel '"? When the sinner comes to the fountain opened for all uncleanness, he is purified. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.” “This is He that came by water and blood.” The grace of the Savior can and will bless you as you are. May you not put God's assuring word from you, not neglect so great salvation!

Chapter 250

Song of Solomon 1, 2:1-2

MANY have applied this wonderful book of scripture to the church, many more to the soul, in relation to the Lord Jesus. Nor is it denied for a moment that there is a principle common to all born of God, the love to Him Who died for all who enter by faith into the love of God in Christ, the love which His known love creates, itself passing knowledge.

But is there the smallest reason to question that the book really contemplates, what the O.T does every where, that object which is so precious to Messiah on earth, confirmed as it is by so many proofs in the Psalms (especially 45.) and the Prophets (Isa. 62.)? Solomon accordingly was no unsuited vessel for the Spirit to employ in this respect. The N. T. treats Christ and the church as a secret kept hid in God till the apostle Paul was employed to make it known; so that the bearing is naturally on the mutual love of Messiah and his earthly bride, the daughter of Zion, and other such figurative terms. It seems difficult to men who look only at the past to realize what divine mercy is yet to effect in Jerusalem, when instead of her old rebellion and treachery, the city of the great king shall be the object of Jehovah's delight, called by a new name, a crown of beauty and a royal diadem in His hand, and stand at His right hand as the queen in gold of Ophir a praise in the earth.

In fact a great deal of the perplexity among the commentators is owing to misapplication. Literalists are apt here, as elsewhere, to deprive the book of a worthy object and divine character. Thus, according to one of the latest and ablest, it is intended to display the victory of humble and constant love over the temptations of wealth and royalty! Such an aim might suit the Idylls of Theocritus or the Eclogues of his Latin imitator, Vergil; but it betrays fatal ignorance of O. T. scripture, which rises habitually above the immediate historical occasions into a purpose of grace, the more easily overlooked, because its accomplishment awaits the grand future when Messiah shall have the object of His nearest affections here below answering to His love. As a whole it is typical or allegorical, however unbelief may miss the object.

The Song of songs accordingly fills a place in the O.T. which is as unique as the Book of Psalms, while both are without counterpart in the N. T. where neither was directly needed, and the Christian as well as the church could use both fittingly mutatis mutandis in keeping with our own distinctive relationship. For us redemption is accomplished, salvation come, and righteousness revealed. The accepted work of Christ glorified on high, and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit place us in a position very different from that which is contemplated in Song of Solomon Hence the wonderful reality which the Christian and the church alike and already possess of union with Christ where by the Spirit, there is still the power of hope, because we await the consummation, the actual bridals in heaven, after being caught up to be with Christ (Rev. 19.) For us the relationship is so established that the affections can flow and the walk be expected, which suit her who is Christ's body and bride (Eph. 5., Rev. 22.). This is in contrast with the Jewish position here set forth, where the relationship is as yet only desired and has to be formed, or at most re-established. Hence we have the varied exercises of the heart through circumstances of trial that issue in profit, set on the profession of what is dearest, but not yet enjoying it in peace. And as we could not

without the inspiring Spirit have had such a collection as the Psalms from a people under the law, a ministry of death and condemnation; so still less if possible such an anticipation of the mutual love of Messiah and Jerusalem that is to be; whereas the Christian and the church are morally capable of uttering our own psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, in the enjoyment of His love and our intimate relationship as one with Him.

What, next to having eternal life and redemption and our proper relationship to Christ, can be more important than the enjoyment of His love and the kindling and strengthening and fixing of ours? We love Him because He first loved us.

Let us then look briefly into the details of Song of Solomon

Chap. 1, 2:2:

“The Song of songs which is Solomon's.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;

For thy love [is] better than wine.

Thine ointments have sweet fragrance;

Thy name (is) ointment poured forth:

Therefore do the virgins love thee.

Draw me: we will run after thee

(The king hath brought me into his chamber); We will be glad and rejoice in thee;

We will make mention of thy love more than of wine.

Upright ones love thee.

I [am] black but comely, O daughter of Jerusalem,

As the tents of Kedar,

As the curtains of Solomon.

Look not upon me, because I [am] black, Because the sun hath looked upon (scorched) me. My mother's sons were angry with me;

They made me keeper of the vineyards: mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Tell me, thou whom my soul loveth,

Where thou feedest [thy flock], where thou makest [it] to rest at noon;

For why should I be as one veiled (wandering)

beside the flocks of thy companions?

If thou know not, thou fairest among women, Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

I have compared thee, my love (friend), To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.

Thy cheeks (are) comely with plaits, Thy neck with jewel chains.

We will make thee plaits of gold

With studs of silver.

While the king is at his table,

My spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance. My beloved [is] unto me a bundle of myrrh That lieth between my breasts.

My beloved [is] unto me a cluster of henna-flowers

In the vineyards of Engedi.

Behold, thou [art] fair, my love; Behold, thou [art] fair:

Thine eyes [are as] doves'.

Behold, thou [art] fair, my beloved, yea pleasant: Also our couch [is] green.

The beams of our houses [are] cedars, Our rafters firs.

I [am] a crocus of the Sharon, A lily of the valley.

As a lily among thorns,

So is my love among the daughters" (vers. 1-17, 2:1, 2).

Thus the bride expectant acknowledges the preciousness to her of Messiah's love and delights to speak of the fragrance of His grace, His name, not only to herself, but to all that kept clear of idolatrous corruptions (the virgins). On this last danger and preservation from it the early verses of Rev. 14. may be compared, to profit those that weigh both. It is certain that the future godly remnant of Jews, when the church is no longer here, will be tried by this evil again bursting forth, not merely among the nations, but in Jerusalem and the temple itself (compare Isa. 57:4-9; Dan. 11:12, 36-39:11; Matt. 12:24, 43-45:15; 2 Thess. 2.). Therefore the bride associates the faithful with herself in this purity of affection, but cleaves to her own special intimacy with the king, while confessing her love too. Then she rehearses the effect of fiery trial on herself; for indeed Jerusalem had suffered long and severely; so that His grace elsewhere declares she had received of His hand double for all her sins. Jealousy and anger had been where it might have been least expected. Yet she who should have been a blessing to the nations around in fruit to God had failed even in her own responsibility. The less would she now trust herself but with Messiah's flock and those He gave to tend them (vers. 1-7); as indeed others testify (vers. 8).

Thereupon Messiah declares His pleasure in her, as grace delights to tell her (vers. 9-11); and she rejoins in confessing the effect on her heart; to which He answers briefly in ver. 15, and she replies in vers. 16, 17 and 2:1; which all form the general view of their attitude respectively. Testimonies of mutual affection close this portion.

Chapter 251

Song of Solomon 2:3-17

It will be noticed that the bride speaks a great deal of the Beloved to others, while He speaks rather of her to herself. This is thoroughly according to her need of re-assurance, and to the truth of things, when we know that Christ is the One really intended by the Spirit; for He is above all need of the creature and by His love creates love. That He loves her she needs to know; and on this He dwells most fully. Others may learn it from the fact that His love is set upon her: she relieves her heart by setting forth His beauty and excellence to others.

“As the citron among the trees of the wood,

So is my beloved among the sons.

In his shadow I delighted and sat down,

And his fruit [is] sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the house of wine,

And his banner over me [is] love.

Stay ye me with raisin-cakes,

Refresh me with citrons;

For I am sick of love.

His left hand [is] under my head,

And his right hand doth embrace me.

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,

By the gazelles and by the hinds of the field,

That ye stir not up, nor awake [my] love, Until he please.

The voice of my beloved I behold he cometh,

Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart.

Behold, he standeth behind our wall,

He looketh in through the windows,

He glanceth through the lattice.

My beloved spake and said unto me,

Rise up, my fair one, and come away.

For, behold, the winter is past,

The rain is over, it is gone;

The flowers appear on the earth;

The time of singing is come,

And the voice of the thrush is heard in our land;

The fig tree melloweth her winter figs,

And the vines in bloom give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

My dove, in the clefts of the rock,

In the covert of the precipice,

Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;

For sweet [is] thy voice, and thy countenance comely.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards:

For our vineyards are in bloom.

My beloved [is] mine, and I his;

He feedeth [his flock] among the lilies.

Until the day dawn, and the shadows flee away,

Turn, my beloved: be thou like a gazelle, or a young hart,

Upon the mountains of Bether" (vers. 3-17).

Christ is described under the figure of the citron, the true bearer of fruit. Under His shadow she had rapture and sat down, and His fruit was sweet to her taste. Moses did not avail Israel though faithful as a servant. Nor did the first covenant meet the need, but provoked transgressions, and brought forth death and ruin. Christ is the spring of all good. Yet even at this early point the bride feels that the bright time is coming. It is evident that in the Song of Solomon is the revelation of the mutual affection between Messiah and the Israel of God, such as is found nowhere else. And this will be the sweeter to the people of God when brought by the Holy Spirit to judge their whilom truant affections; for Israel had gone after many lovers in the past: see Jer. 3., Ezek. 16., Hos. 1:2. 3. But her restoration to Messiah in the discovery of His faithful love, notwithstanding her shameless infidelity to such a lover, will be all the deeper; and this book supplies the needed expression of it all on both sides: so gracious is God, so complete His word, Who knew all from the beginning and reveals fully what will be realized only at the consummation of the age.

The psalms of David are rich indeed, but they reveal the rejection and the sufferings of the Messiah, no doubt in infinite grace, and the people's wickedness, sins, unbelief, and need generally, rather than the mutual love expressed in the Song of Songs. Still less do the Law and the Prophets show this forth as here. Yet Zeph. 3:17 is a beautiful word that illustrates, as far as it goes, the bearing of Song of Solomon Sympathy in sorrow predominates in the Psalms. Everything in the scripture is perfect in people, place, and season. And those taught of God find Christ to their everlasting profit and joy everywhere, save in such an unfolding as Ecclesiastes (the remarkable writing by the same hand which indited Canticles), the nothingness and misery of all where Christ is not, spite of the utmost round of passing pleasures and pursuits with the largest means and power of enjoying them. That the style necessarily differs immensely goes without saying: none but a simpleton or a malignant would expect, or if able, execute, otherwise. Yet in all these inspired books, however profoundly instructive to the Christian, the Jewish people are those immediately and primarily in view, not the church of the firstborn ones, not the saints blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ as we are now.

After the introductory sketch of chap. 1., the godly Jewish remnant are here shown as going through the spiritual process to make Messiah's love appreciated and fruitful. And the charge in ver. 7 should be compared with a similar one in chap. 3:5, and in chap. 8:4. In each case the coming of Messiah follows suitably to the advancing action of the book. The bride anticipates it by faith; for He is not yet come, however warm the language that realizes its blessedness. Jehovah shall arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come, though the Psalmist alone could suitably add that His servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof. It is here His voice that is heard, as He comes leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills. What He spoke and said reached the ear, the heart, of the bride (vers. 13, 14), where we next hear of “our” vineyards (ver. 15): compare chap. ii. 6-11. The first expression of conscious relationship follows (ver. 16). Progress is clear, when we compare what appears afterward. It is rather Himself and His love to her that comes out on this mention of His coming. We shall see more on each fresh occasion; but here His fullness of power, the suitability of the time and circumstances, and the welcome sound of His love to her, have their due place.

Chapter 252

Song of Solomon 3

WE have seen how faithful is the Bridegroom's attention to that Zion whom He loved and chose, and will in the end reclaim from all her long folly and from the hand of all her foes; and that the making of her heart true and responsive to His love is the object of this book. That there is a principle common to every believing heart, and so to the church as a whole, is certain and important; so it is with scripture generally. But it is as important to discern that Christ's special relationship here is with the Jewish bride for the earth, as in the Pauline Epistles and the Revelation with the church, the Lamb's wife for the heavens, though now rightly anticipated and enjoyed in the Spirit on earth. Truth has suffered through the same unbelieving ignorance which has for ages since the apostles blotted out these immense differences and merged O. and N. Testaments in the confusion of heaven and earth, Israel and the church, the present and the future in one vague and undefined object of mercy from the beginning to the end of time, in collision with all scripture, to the enfeebling of truth, to the darkening of divine purposes and love, and to the sad marring of the affections, worship, and walk of faith, especially in Christians.

To us all is sovereign grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The consequence is that believers, whether from Jews or Gentiles, are brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light by the gospel, and, resting on redemption in Christ through His blood, are sealed with the Holy Spirit; as by the same Spirit they are baptized into one body and made God's habitation (Eph. 1; 2). The Christian, the church, thus blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, is responsible to walk accordingly, together no less than as individuals. If souls go back, it is fatal as we see in Hebrews 10., whatever the grace that restores the repentant faithful; if there is public corruption maintained in pride under the plea of unity as in Babylon and her daughters, there is no restoration but divine judgment.

With Israel it is wholly different. Her backsliding and rebellion under the law, the Jewish rejection of the Messiah, inexcusable as all was, are wholly different from the apostasy after redemption and the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven. The Lord will come to take His own who await Him to the Father's house; when apostate Christendom and the mass of the Jews will ripen for judgment, which the Lord will execute as the second and displayed act of His advent, after working by grace in both Israel and the Gentiles separately (not in one body as now), as we see in Rev. 7. and elsewhere, to prepare earthly witnesses of 11 is saving mercy before the beginning of the millennial age. Thus both heaven and earth are to have appropriate denizens, the O.T saints and the church on high in their glorified bodies, saved Jews and Gentiles in their natural bodies, the living demonstration of His blessed power as a King reigning in righteousness, when the Man of God's right hand receives the kingdom that all the peoples may serve Him. The God of peace will bruise Satan under the feet of His saints.

But as long as the church is being called and formed for heavenly glory, the veil lies on Israel's heart: whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away, that is, in the interval during which the church is caught up, and before the Lord appears with His saints in glory. This interval

has divine light cast dispensationally on it, largely in Daniel, and in the Revelation yet more. The Psalms largely express the working of conscience and heart in them, their hopes and their distress Godward, when converted but not brought into settled peace till they see the Lord and have the Spirit poured on them, as we have had since Pentecost. But it is a great error to confound that first and real work of grace, in which souls to be fully blest are born of God, with the rest and deliverance which only come through learning our own powerlessness as well as guilt and need, and thereon finding all met in Christ and His redemption. The Song of Solomon supplies another lack, the bringing of the Israel of God, the earthly bride, into the sense of Messiah's personal relation and love to the people of His choice.

It need not be said that we have what is analogous in that bridal affection, so feebly developed among us, the saints since apostolic days, though we are already one spirit with the Lord before He come and the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated on high. Hence, as we have in the N. T. no special book of psalms and hymns provided for us but are capacitated to pour them forth from hearts filled with the Spirit, so we have not like Israel the need of a book analogous to Song of Solomon to kindle and strengthen our affections, as they will find here supplied in the most direct way. The sad truth is that Israel was married to Jehovah, as the prophets remind the people (Isa. 54.; Jer. 3.), and their unfaithfulness is branded therefore, not like the N. T. Babylon as prostitution, but as adultery (so in Hos. 3 and elsewhere), however His grace may by-and-by deal with Israel not as a guilty widow but as a woman forsaken and a wife of youth.

Hence then the painstaking labor of the Holy Spirit both in the Psalms and the Song of Solomon to lead the godly remnant into all exercises of heart, not only as saints, but in their proper relationship to Messiah. But hence too its necessary form for Zion, after so grievous a breach, for that renewal of blessedness, which was never truly known of old, and which will stand assuredly as long as the earth lasts, the results of which pass not away but abide when the new heavens and new earth are come in the full and final sense.

“On my bed, by night

I sought him whom my soul loveth;

I sought him, but I found him not.

I will rise now and go about the city;

In the streets and in the broad ways

I will seek him whom my soul loveth;

I sought him, but I found him not.

The watchmen that go about the city found me—

Have ye seen him whom my soul loveth?-

Scarcely had I passed from them,

When I found him whom my soul loveth;

I held him and would not let him go,

Until I had brought him into my mother's house,

And into the chamber of her that conceived me.

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,

By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,

That ye stir not up nor awake [my] love, Until he please.

Who is this, that [fem.] cometh up out of the wilderness

Like pillars of smoke,

Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,

With all powders of the merchant?

Behold his litter, Solomon's own:

Threescore mighty men are about it,

Of the mighty of Israel.

They all handle the sword, experts in war.

Each hath his sword on his thigh

Because of fear in the night.

King Solomon made himself a palanquin

Of the wood of Lebanon.

Its pillars he made of silver,

The base of gold, its seat of purple,

The midst of it being paved [with] love

By the daughters of Jerusalem.

Go forth, daughters of Zion,

And behold king Solomon

With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him

In the day of his espousals,

And in the day of the gladness of his heart" (vers. 1-11).

It was not the day, but in hours of darkness the Beloved was sought. The heart truly turned to Him. So the Lord had warned, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. And she must know herself better to value Him aright. It is not the lesson of heart which the church, the Christian, knows in Him come and fully revealed through

accomplished redemption. Yet souls now often pass through similar vicissitudes, because they put themselves under law instead of knowing that we, having died with Christ, are justified from sin (as well as our sins), our old man crucified with Him that the body of sin might be annulled that we should no longer serve sin. Whence we, Christians, are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. But the godly Jews here in view are in no such peace. Even when, after passing from the watchmen to whom she appeals, she does find the Beloved, we are not to conceive it more than anticipatively in the Spirit of prophecy, as with others of old. It is not to the church but to Israel that the Son is born (see Rev. 12)

But there is progress after the second charge; and the vision is seen of the earthly bride coming out of the wilderness on one side, and on the other a greater than, the Solomon of old in the delight of His heart for the day of His espousals.

Israel, however, is the mother whether of the Bridegroom or of the bride: not the church, which is never set forth in that relation, but solely as the Lamb's bride. We do hear of Sarah as the free mother of the heirs of promise in contrast with the bondmaid Hagar gendering to bondage. But this is another order of thought, where the church as such does not enter. It was the catholic system which confounded the two and spoke of “our holy mother” the church; as the Roman Catholic went farther astray and made her not mother only but “mistress” in human vanity and pride.

Chapter 253

Song of Solomon 4

HERE it is the voice of the Bridegroom to His earthly bride, and so a wholly different strain from the rehearsal of experience just before. He lets her know fully what she was in His eyes, her beauty, and this in detail (vers. 1-8). Then in vers. 7-15 he tells her that she was all fair and no spot in her, though from the haunts of danger and death. With this, though of course in another style of grace suited to the case, we may compare what Jehovah compelled the heathen prophet to declare of Israel in Num. 23. and 24. Here it is the expression, not of separation to Himself and justification and goodly power and glory, but of tender affection and all read in this light.

“Behold, thou [art] fair, my love; behold, thou [art] fair;

Thine eyes [are] doves behind thy veil;

Thy hair [is] as a flock of goats

That appears on the side of mount Gilead.

Thy teeth [are] like a flock of shorn [ewe

Which go up from the washing,

Which have all borne twins,

And none bereaved among them.

Thy lips [are] like a thread of scarlet,

And thy speech comely.

As a piece of a pomegranate [are] thy temples

Behind thy veil.

Thy neck [is] like the tower of David Built for an 'armory:

A thousand bucklers hang thereon,

All shields of mighty men.

Thy two breasts [are] like two fawns, twins of a gazelle,

Which feed among the lilies.

Until the day dawn (or, be cool) and the shadows See away.

I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,

And to the hill of frankincense.

Thou [art] all fair, my love and [there is] no spot in thee.

With me from Lebanon, spouse, with me from Lebanon;

Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon,

From the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister spouse;

Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,

With one chain of thy neck.

How fair is thy love, my sister spouse!

How much better is thy love than wine,

And the fragrance of thine ointment than all spices!

Thy lips, spouse, drop honeycomb;

Honey and milk [are] under thy tongue;

And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

A garden shut up is my sister spouse,

A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Thy shoots [are] an orchard of pomegranates with precious fruits

Henna with spikenard; plants; spikenard and saffron;

Calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense;

Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,

Which stream from Lebanon.

Awake, north wind, and come, south;

Blow upon my garden [that] the spices thereof may flow forth.

Let my beloved come into his garden

And eat his [or, its] precious fruits" (vers.1-16).

It is the expression of Christ's love which by the Spirit forms divine affections in the saints. We may see it in all the Gospels, but especially in that of John, and nowhere there so strikingly as in chaps. 13-17. This "Song" is the divine word, which the Spirit, as He has used the principle for all who have pondered these communications to profit, will afresh apply in a still more exact and immediate way to the godly remnant that will succeed us in the dealings of God's grace. The love which so feels and speaks to its object, whatever this may be, has transforming power on all that have faith in Him, and enables those who are so loved to witness in their measure a good confession of Him. The right faith is that we worship; and none ought to know and feel this so

deeply as the Christian and the church; to whom the love of Christ is now revealed in a form and power altogether exceptional; as indeed we need it to suffer unflinchingly with Him, while we wait for His coming.

Chapter 254

Song of Solomon 5

THE last chapter gave the bride inviting her Beloved to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. But she must learn more of herself yet: whatever she was in His eyes, He was (sad to say) not everything to her. And if we are apt to think too well of our state, grace deigns to teach us it experimentally. So it will be with the godly Jewish remnant by-and-by, as we are here shown.

“I am come into my garden, my sister spouse;

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;

I have drunk my wine with my milk.

Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, beloved one.”

“I was asleep, but my heart waked.

The voice of my Beloved that knocketh [saying],

Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, mine undefiled;

For my head is filled with dew,

My locks with the drops of the night.

I have put off my coat: how shall I put it on?

I have washed my feet: how shall I defile them?

My Beloved put in his hand by the hole [of the door];

And my bowels yearned for him.

I rose to open for my Beloved,

And my hands dropped with myrrh,

And my fingers with liquid myrrh.

I opened to my Beloved;

But my Beloved had turned away—was gone.

My soul went forth when he spoke:

I sought him, but I found him not;

I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen that go about the city found me,

They smote me, they wounded me;

The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,

If ye find my Beloved,

That ye tell him, that I am sick of love" (vers. 1-8).

Alas! how readily we understand such experience. The very, and the fullest, assurance of the Savior's love is apt to induce carelessness in our hearts. When we are assured that we are precious to Him, if we know Him at all, we are earnest and importunate; but when all is fully out in His incomparable grace to us, how readily the flesh creeps in and takes advantage of it as if it were a matter of course! When faith is in lively exercise and the flesh consequently judged by the Spirit that dwells in us, His wondrous words of love act powerfully in drawing out the soul's delight and praise and worship. But there is always for us the danger of that which the bride here is brought to feel and own. She yielded to sloth and circumstances; and truly though she loved Him, she made difficulties, slighted His love, and found to her shame and sorrow that He had withdrawn Himself—was gone!

This painful experience is turned to further profit. The bride is now so moved that she roams the streets of the city in quest of Him, unconscious of the strangeness of her acts in the eyes of those responsible for its order, who know little or nothing of her affection or her sorrow. This is her secret. They see one abroad at a time when she should be at home. So the love she has, and grief over her folly expose her to a blame in the eyes of those whose office it is to guard outward propriety, of which she never thought at such a moment. But when she awoke to it, could she deny that all was her own faultiness? She turns in her distress to others from whom she expects a sympathy not to be looked for in the watch or the keepers of the walls; and, not without fruit from that rough dealing, she pours out her heart to her inquiring companions.

"What is thy Beloved more than [another] beloved,

Thou fairest among women?

What is 'thy Beloved more than [another] beloved,

That thou dost so charge us?"

"My Beloved [is] white and ruddy

The chiefest among ten thousand.

His head [is] finest gold:

His locks [are] flowing, black as the raven;

His eyes [are] like doves by the water brooks,

Washed with milk, fitly set;

His cheeks [are] as a bed of spices, banks of sweet herbs;

His lips, lilies dropping liquid myrrh;

His hands, gold rings set with beryl;

His body [is] ivory work overlaid (with) sapphires;

His legs, pillars of marble, set on sockets of fine gold;

His aspect, as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars;

His mouth [is] most sweet;

Yea he [is] altogether lovely.

This [is] my Beloved, yea this [is] my friend,

O daughters of Jerusalem" (vers. 9-16).

The bride can speak freely of the Bridegroom's beauty to others: it is ever her happiness and suited place. And this is not only suitable in itself; but we can see how her own negligence with its bitter consequence made her feel and speak more fully than ever in His praise.

Song of Solomon 6

THE inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem serves but to draw out the progress of the bride in her appreciation of the Bridegroom's worth and love, as well as of her value for the relationship.

“Whither is thy Beloved gone,

Thou fairest among women?

Whither hath thy Beloved turned,

And we will seek him with thee?

My Beloved is gone down to his garden,

to the beds of spice,

To feed in the gardens and to gather lilies.

I [am] my Beloved's, and my Beloved [is] mine:

He feedeth [his] flock among the lilies.

Thou [art] fair, my love, as Tirzah,

Comely as Jerusalem,

Terrible as bannered [hosts].

Turn away thine eyes from me,

For they overcome me,

Thy hair [is] as a flock of goats

On the slopes of Gilead.

Thy teeth [are] like a flock of ewes

Which go up from the washing,

Which have all borne twins,

And none [is] bereaved among them.

As a piece of a pomegranate [are] thy temples

Behind thy veil.

There are threescore queens and fourscore

concubines,

And virgins without number.

My dove, mine undefiled, is one;

She [is] the only one of her mother,

She [is] the choice one of her that bare her.

The daughters saw her and called her blessed;

The queens and the concubines, and they

praised her.

Who [is] she [that] looketh forth as the dawn,

Fair as the moon,

Clear as the sun,

Terrible as bannered [hosts]?

I went down into the garden of nuts,

To see the verdure of the valley,

To see whether the vine budded—

The pomegranates blossomed.

Before I was aware,

My soul set me [in] the chariots of my willing people.

Return, return, O Shulamite;

Return, return, that we may look upon thee? What look ye upon in the Shulamite?

As upon the dance of two camps (Mahanaim).' (vers. 1-13).

How wonderful is the grace of God always and in every relationship! On His side, on the part of Him Who alone is His perfect image, the accomplisher of His counsels and the expression of His ways, love abiding though never insensitive to the failure of the object of His love, and ever turning the failure to the correction of faults and a deepening sense of relationship. So it is here. In the earlier stage (chap. 2:16) said the bride, My Beloved [is] mine, and I His. And this is the right order of apprehension. She thinks of Him as the object before her heart and rejoices that He is here though even then she can say that she belongs to Him. But the exercises of soul through which she passes, in consequence of her failure in answering to His love and of her review and self-judgment, lead her now as appropriately to say, “I [am] my Beloved's and my Beloved mine” (ver. 3). This is no less true, and learned experimentally more than at first; but that is now the deep feeling of her heart, and out of the abundance of it she speaks. How overwhelming that such as we should be so near to Him! and how re-assuring that the only Worthy One is ours! So Jerusalem will say in truth of heart ere long.

Then follows the Bridegroom's renewed declaration of the bride's charms in His eyes. The nations are to be blessed in that day, some of them peculiarly in that prolonged and future hour of earth's blessing to the praise of Jesus. Isa. 19:23-25 is plain enough if the ears were not dull of hearing. The blessing succeeds the judgment of Jehovah which that day opens. Instead of mutual hostility, and each seeking mastery over Israel, Egypt shall serve with Assyria: both subject to the God of Israel. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, certainly not to enfeeble, Isa. 11; 12; 14; 24-27 (to refer to nothing beyond the same prophet), but to assure all of the divine mercy to all as yet in unbelief when all Israel shall be saved and He will have mercy upon all (Rom. 11.). Jehovah of hosts shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients in glory. The name of the city from that day is Jehovah-Shammah. How great the favor of Israel, Abraham's sons and not seed only in that day, when they shall be a blessing in the midst of the earth, not a reproach and a curse as now because of their infidelity! But when Jehovah of hosts has blessed them, it will be in large mercy, saying, Blessed be my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and mine inheritance Israel. So near is Israel to Him, that it is in no way demeaned by being named third. The bride of the Beloved is one, His undefiled, the only one of her mother, the choice one of her that bare her; so she will sing. As Jehovah counts when writing up the peoples, This Man was born there. His blood has washed away the reproach of the blood-shedding for Jerusalem believing and blessed and a blessing. The daughters saw her and called her blessed; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. No more rivalry and treacherous dealing of the vile called noble; for a king shall reign in righteousness and the Spirit be poured from on high to bless man on the earth, instead of severing from it those now united to Christ on high for the heavens.

When the Bridegroom looks on the bride according to her unique place and destined glory on the earth (ver. 10), as He had expressed afresh what she is for Him, He goes down to see how all flourishes by His grace, and before He is aware, His soul set Him on the chariots of His willing people in glory. It is no longer “Who is this coming up out of the wilderness”? as in chap. 3:6, where He had found her again and recalled her to Himself. Here He anticipates her triumphant glory when He leads Israel in the day of His manifested power, and they, His people no longer unwilling, have said with believing hearts, Blessed He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. Then indeed the Shulamite shall have returned from long and fruitless and sad wandering, and Israel, no longer weak, nor longer needing a staff, shall become two camps, God's host.

Song of Solomon 7

THUS will be accomplished the confident and bright anticipation of “the Israel of God,” expressed vividly in Psa. 73:24, but travestied in most versions through unbelief of their just hopes, and the consequent substitution for them of Christian feeling, quite beside the mark in the psalm of Asaph or of any other in the book. “Thou wilt guide me by [or M] thy counsel, and after glory thou wilt receive me.” So it will be with the earthly bride, but not with the heavenly; which last being assumed probably led to the singular departure from all legitimate construction, and tends to keep the unwary English reader in the continual misinterpretation of the Psalms. Christ, as made known to the church, was received up in glory on the accomplishment of redemption, and will receive us to Himself changed at His coming, before He displays us as the sharers of His heavenly glory in His kingdom. The reception of Zion, guided in a way little known and through desolating sorrow, will be after glory appears. Compare Psa. 85:9; 102:13-22, and Zech. 2:8.

Like the last chapter from ver. 4, this again is the utterance of the Bridegroom save from the latter part of ver. 9 to the end.

“How beautiful are thy steps in sandals,

O prince's daughter!

The joints of thy thighs like jewels,

work of the hands of a skilful artist.

Thy navel [is] a round goblet,

wanting not mixture;

Thy belly, a heap of wheat set about with lilies;

Thy two breasts are two fawns, twins of a gazelle;

Thy neck as a tower of ivory;

Thine eyes, the pool in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbim;

Thy nose as the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus;

Thy head upon thee as Carmel,

and the locks of thy head as purple—

The king held captive in the tresses.

How fair and how pleasant [art] thou, love, in delights!

This thy stature [is] as a palm-tree,

and thy breasts [grape-] clusters.

I said, I will go up the palm-trees,

I will take hold of the branches thereof;

And thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,

and the smell of thy nose as apples;

And the roof of thy mouth as the best wine

Goeth down aright for my beloved,

Gliding over the lips of those asleep.

I am my beloved's, and his desire [is] toward me.

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,

let us lodge in the villages;

Let us get up early to the vineyards,

let us see if the vine hath budded,

The blossoms appear, the pomegranates bloom:

there will I give thee my loves.

The mandrakes yield fragrance;

and at our doors [are] all choice fruits:

New and old I have laid them up for thee, my beloved" (vers. 1-13).

It is the expression of His complacency in the bride. What a change for the Christ-despising Jew does grace effect! We know it, for ourselves too well, too little for Him. All that He accounts goodly and fragrant is of Him whether now or in that day. And the fruit of the godly remnant's progress in the knowledge of Messiah's love appears in verse 10, as compared with chaps. 2:16, and 6:3. They, as ourselves, as all that are genuine, must begin with "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." It is the true order of grace. He looked on the bride and deigned Himself to become hers, as she is His. Now at length she wakes up to the infinite love that she once blindly and proudly refused to her ruin. Now she knows that He is the King, and that He loves her spite of all and is hers, and that she is His. Even then how much had she to learn! But she does gradually learn more and more of His love to her, and what she was in His eyes. Hence, in chap. 6:3, she can say, even after feeling her folly and the self-judgment it wrought in her, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." This is a great step in its season, and the mark of confidence in His love. And here, in chap. 7:10, it again takes the first place with language which seals her sense of His affection. "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." Surely it is most holy and sovereign in its grace, but love that answers, by the Holy Spirit's power, to Him Who, as the prophet says, will not only save but rejoice over His bride with joy—will rest in His love and exult over her with singing.

Then will follow in due time the mission of Israel, renewed and humble, and the going out of heart for the blessing of others. What joy for all families of the earth when the ancient promise to the fathers of the faithful is literally in all its extent fulfilled! What a morrow after the long night of sin and shame and tears But this cannot be till the faithless one owns her sins and receives the Beloved, saying in truth of heart, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. Then too, when men are blessed under the Blesser, shall the earth itself yield its long pent increase. But none the less shall Zion have her own peculiar place of love and honor here below. It is ours to enjoy and testify the grace that gathers to the glorified One in heaven, whence we look for Him and are assured He will come and take us there, even to the Father's house. But in that day Zion will be glad and the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of His judgments which inaugurate earth's peace and blessedness under His righteous rule.

Chapter 257

Song of Solomon 8

THE closing chapter appears to present summarily the object and principle of the Song, after a pouring forth of her affection, which the speaker desires might be gratified without reproof and in all purity, as will assuredly be when she becomes the bride of Messiah. No wonder if, after a review of her painful past misconduct and of His glory once despised, her heart needed re-assurance.

“Oh that thou wert as my brother,

That sucked the breasts of my mother!

Should I find thee without, I would kiss thee;

And they would not despise me.

I would lead thee—bring thee into my mother's house:

Thou wouldest instruct me;

I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, Of the juice of my pomegranate.

His left hand [would be] under my head, And his right hand embrace me.

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,

Why should you stir up, why awake [my] love, till he please.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?

I awoke thee under the apple-tree:

There thy mother brought thee forth,

There she travailed that bore thee.

Set me as a seal upon thy heart,

As a seal upon thine arm;

For love is strong as death,

Jealousy is cruel as the grave:

The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,

Flames of Jah.

Many waters cannot quench love,

Nor can the floods drown it:

If a man gave all the substance of his house for love,

It would utterly be contemned.

We have a little sister,

And she hath no breasts:

What shall we do for our sister

In the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall,

We will build upon her a turret of silver; And if she be a door,

We will enclose her with boards of cedar.

I [was] a wall, and my breasts like towers;

Then was I in his eyes as one that findeth peace.

Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon,

He let out the vineyard to keepers:

Every one for its fruit was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:

Thou, Solomon, shalt have the thousand,

And the keepers of its fruit two hundred.

Thou that dwellest in the gardens,

The companions hearken to thy voice: Let me hear it.

Haste, my beloved,

And be thou like a gazelle or a young hart

Upon the mountains of spices" (vers. 1-14).

It is throughout the Spirit of prophecy, as in all the O.T and again in the Revelation, after the present action of grace is over and the glorified saints are seen in heaven, respecting whom God foresaw some better thing. The testimony of Jesus, as we are told, reverts once more to that prophetic character which could not but be of old, before He came and suffered rejection at the hands of His own people, but therein also accomplished redemption, and as the firstborn from the dead became on high Head of the body, the church. But it has consequently the Holy Spirit sent forth and dwelling in it as the power of actual relationship and communion in a way beyond example, save His own when here below: only that He had it as the seal of personal acceptance, we solely through grace by His work and accepted in Him as the Beloved. But Judah renewed, the godly remnant will look onward prophetically and through many a needed lesson of experience to the place in Messiah's love which is predestined. And what follows sketches how it will be effectuated.

After a final charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, there is a fresh vision of the bride coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved. Once of old the people had come up out of it, not without wonders of divine goodness and power; but all was vain, for they leaned not on Jehovah or His Christ, but on self and law, which for sinful man, and such they were, can only be death and condemnation. Far different will it be when the generation to come emerges from it leaning upon the Beloved. What brings about so great a change? “I awoke thee under the apple tree; there thy mother brought thee forth; there she travailed that bore thee.” As was noticed in chap. ii. 3, Christ is meant by that tree; and it is His to awaken her from her long slumber and give her that life which alone lives to God. Compare Mic. 5:3. Not till then will the residue of His brethren return unto the children of Israel. The rejection of the Ruler, the smitten Judge of Israel, was fatal for the time: they were given up therefore, and God brings out His heavenly counsels in Christ and the church, until the day when Israel gives birth to the destined bride for Messiah here below, and the Jewish link will be reformed, not under law that works wrath, but by faith that it may be according to grace and stand in God's power, not ruin out of human weakness.

Then indeed will the prayer be answered, and Zion be set as seal on Messiah's heart and arm: how strong and jealous His love! and there is the answer to it in that day. Death and Sheol only proved His love; flames of Jah tested it; waters and floods could not quench it, unbought and above all price, so that all man could give is utterly despicable in presence of it.

But who is the “little sister” (vers. 8-10), when Jerusalem is thus renewed? The house of Israel, it would seem; for they will come forward later for blessing. They suffered for their idolatry, as Judah did afterward; but they did not return from captivity as Judah did to refuse the Christ, nor are they to receive the Antichrist. Consequently the dealings of grace with Israel by-and-by do not assume the deep and retributory character which will be the portion of Judah. Compare the type of Gen. 42-45 when Joseph makes himself known to his brethren, and especially Reuben on the one hand and Judah on the other.

The allusion to Solomon and his vineyard at Baal-hamon thus becomes clear. As Lord of multitudes, the King of Peace in that day will have His widely extended sphere of fruit let out to His servants, the keepers; and the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall render tribute; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him. No doubt, the bride will have her especial vineyard, which will be kept (compare chap. 1:6); but the revenue she will lay at Messiah's feet, whatever may be the gain of others thereby. The bride no longer begrudges the Bridegroom's voice to others; she will be too restful in His love to doubt; but she desires to hear it for herself in that day. The closing verses reiterate the call for the coming of the Beloved.

P.S. It may interest the reader to know that the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the most ancient witnesses extant of the Septuagint, itself the oldest version of the Hebrew original, divides the Song into four sections, each sub-divided into lesser parts, which briefly indicate the speakers and circumstances throughout.

The four sections are: (1,) chap. 1:1-14; (2,) chaps. 1:15-3:5; (3,) chaps. 3:6-6:3; and (4,) chaps. 6:3-8:13.

The reader that is curious about the copyist's view may see it all in the No. of the Journal of Sacred Lit. for April, 1865. It may suffice here to give as a sample the headings of the lesser part under § 1. (chap. 1:1-14): ver. 2, the bride; ver. 4, the bride to the damsels; ver. 4, the damsels speak, and again proclaim to the Bridegroom the name of the bride; ver. 5, the bride; ver. 7, the bride to Christ the Bridegroom; ver. 8, the Bridegroom to the bride; ver. 10, the damsels to the bride; ver. 12, the bride to herself and to the Bridegroom.

It is clear therefore that this weighty document bears testimony in the first half of the fourth century era to the application of the Bridegroom to Christ, rather than to Solomon, still less to a shepherd of the northern kingdom (Hitzig), or any one else. The Song was then by some at least read without hesitation reverentially and believingly. But there is another inference, which if sound is even more remarkable, from the heading of chap. iv. 16: “the bride asketh the Father that her Bridegroom may come down “; which is understood to point to the Jewish election as the bride in the copyist's judgment. Now the idea prevalent, among the Fathers so called in that age and since, identified her with the church, though individuals, as Theodoret lets us know, were not even then wanting who denied its spiritual reference. Origen, learned but precarious and even wild, had taught that the Bridegroom is the Word of God, and the bride either the soul or the church. The ancient Jews held to its allegorical character, God being the bridegroom and Israel the bride. Had they believed in the Messiah (Who is God), and seen the godly Jewish remnant of the future, the object of His restoring love in the latter day, it would have been more accurate. But this would have been the truth, known in the rejected but glorified Christ, and incompatible with Judaism as it has been and is. Only the Christian can have the truth, because he has Christ and life in Him and the Holy Spirit guiding into all the truth. Alas! how many that bear the name abandon its privileges and lapse into a skepticism more guilty than heathenism or Judaism. It is the spirit of the apostasy that is at hand. W. K.

Chapter 258

The Sorrowing Sisters of Bethany: Part 1

No comfort can be true and divine and consequently effectual, that concerns itself alone with the trial and sorrow. It is truly a welcome relief to the aching heart to find another heart entering into its grief; but this is sympathy rather than comfort.

The characteristic of comfort is that it strengthens the soul to bear its burden with fortitude as well as resignation; and it accomplishes this result by considering the trial in the light of the glory of God. When sorrows overtake and overwhelm the soul, it gives itself many a bitter pang by reiterating the question—Why do I suffer this? Why has this come upon me? And under these circumstances there can be no real comfort, until such a one lays hold by faith upon the fact which scripture abundantly reveals, that the clouds and storms are but agents in the development of the beneficent purposes of God. All things are working together for the accomplishment of good; and this to those who love God and who are the called according to purpose. This we had not known but for the word of God; but He has given it for our comfort, and that we may thereby trace His hand in each event, minute or mighty, which befalls us. Leave God out, and all is confusion and anarchy: a crowd of pitiless misfortunes grinding man to the very dust of the ground from whence he was formed. Bring God in, and the man of faith can rejoice in tribulations also.

The incident at Bethany (John 11) with its touching and pathetic details illustrates how the golden threads of divine purpose are interwoven with the darkest texture of the lives of God's saints. It was undoubtedly written for the comfort of those of His own who are called to face what is perhaps the bitterest of all the sorrows of this vale of tears.

Bethany was a place of particularly sweet and precious associations in the life of our Lord. It Was in Bethany, the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, that the Lord found a retreat from Jerusalem where He was hated and despised of all. It was there that Blessed One found the excellent of the earth, the saints in whom was all His delight (Psa. 16:3). So that we read “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus” (John 11:5).

It is of great moment to note this last fact, stated as it is at the very outset of the narrative. This family was not simply a part of those of “His own” to whom He came, but they were of those who received Him and believed on His name (John 1:11, 12), and who thus became “His own” in a higher sense. And in that circle of favor and blessedness the trio of Bethany, had by their faith and love, their piety and devotion, advanced to such eminence that they are described like a certain other disciple, as those whom “Jesus loved.”

It might be supposed that such a favored household would enjoy a complete. immunity from the ravages of sorrow, sickness, and death. So they would think who knew not that Messiah the Prince was also the Man of Sorrows. And where He is the Guest, it should be no matter of surprise if afflictions attend in His train.

And so it came about at Bethany. A mortal disease laid hold on Lazarus, who doubtless was the least to be spared of any in that household. To him the sisters clung in womanly affection; on him

they rested in womanly dependence.

In their distress they appeal to Jesus. He was not in their vicinity, but they send a message, brief but full of faith and implicit confidence. “Lord,” they say, “behold he whom thou (dearly) lovest is sick.” It was not an importunate passionate petition, but calm and restful in the assurance that the Lord's interest would be at once awakened. It rose above the prayer of the leper— “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Assuredly the leper had not reached beyond faith in the Lord's power, while the sisters knew and believed His love as well as His power. And it was this sense of the love of the Lord that imparted to them a firm trust that He would speedily and effectually help them. They put it to themselves whether, supposing they had the power to heal their brother, they would not fly to his deliverance. How much more then would Jesus, seeing His love for Lazarus exceeded even their own!

Yet although the Lord loved the sick man (so much that even the unimpressionable Jews said when they saw Him weep at the grave, “Behold, how he loved him),” and although the message from the sisters displayed such reliance on His loving interest, the Lord abode two days longer in the place where He was. It was not His wont so to receive the petitions for aid addressed to Him. Usually the answers came swift, and sure, and abounding. The touch of a woman in the crowd, the message of a Roman centurion, the cry of a Syro-Phænician woman, all received an immediate and suitable reply. But the desire of these, His very dear friends, received no direct response.

Truly His thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither His ways as our ways. For while the Lord's ways were human they were at the same time superhuman; while they were natural, they were also supernatural. Right affections have swayed servants of God into wrong paths; but never the perfect Servant. Patriotism might take Jonah to Joppa instead of to Nineveh, and human relationship along with kindly benevolence might influence Barnabas to choose his nephew John Mark, in spite of the apostle Paul's judgment; but close friendship did not open the lips of the Lord to speak a word of healing on behalf of dying Lazarus. There was no honey in the meat-offering (Lev. 2).

One consideration alone regulated the movements of the blessed Son here below. As the glory-cloud was the guide of the ancient people of God through the wilderness, so the glory of God was ever before the Lord Jesus. Hence the word spoken on this occasion, showing what was governing His actions then as at all other times. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.” And it was essential for the due accomplishment of that glory, that He should sojourn two days longer where He was. And nothing, whether obstacles or enticements, could swerve Him from the path of perfect obedience.

And here we see the perfection of the Lord. Who but He could maintain intact the rights and claims of God at such a moment of deep sorrow? Who could love and perfectly sympathize with the aching hearts at Bethany and yet calmly await the slow approach of the moment when, and not before, the glory of God might be accomplished along with the restoration of Lazarus to his bereaved sisters? There was but One, and He, the Son of God.

And as He was perfect in His subjection to the glory of God, so may we not say He knew perfectly the administration of comfort to His soul. As He says in the Psalms, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” May the contemplation of His excellence

produce a counterpart within us.

(To be continued, D.V.).

Chapter 259

The Sorrowing Sisters of Bethany: Part 2

WHEN the Lord arrived at Bethany the body of Lazarus had lain four days in the grave. For those four days the sisters had been mourning the loss of their beloved. brother. And not the least bitter ingredient in their cup of sorrow was the thought that He who could most and best help and comfort them remained absent. Why did He not appear to their relief? What made Him disregard the message sent Him? Could His love really be so great for them as they had supposed? Others had been blessed, strangers and sinners alike, all classes of sick and infirm. The widow's son and Jairus' daughter had been raised to life. But for those in Bethany there appeared neither word or deed.

Such doubts might unbelief suggest, but how dishonoring would they be to Him whose love is as unchanging as His power! His heart was with them all the while, carrying their sorrows, and at the proper moment He would come and give them back their brother from the very tomb. And while these sisters were waiting for the coming of the Lord, they had His own word to comfort their souls during the interval of His absence. They might not have known that Lazarus in his grave would even then hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth before their very eyes. But at any rate they had the Lord's own message sent by Him to sustain their souls: “This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.”

In what way was this calculated to comfort their hearts? By lifting them above themselves and directing their attention to what they and we are so prone to forget, viz.—that our God and our Father controls and guides all things to bring about His own wise ends which include our ultimate and ineffable bliss. They were not to think therefore that they were the victims of a “fortuitous concourse” of untoward events, but on the contrary the chosen instrument in God's hands for the display of His glory.

It is such a consideration as this that ever imparts strength to bear and nerve to endure under similar circumstances. It gives what truly deserves the name of “solid comfort.” And it is to be observed further how closely the glory of God was bound up with their relief. For it was the quickening of dead Lazarus that was the occasion whereby God was glorified in His Son. Here was a man not only dead but corrupt: at the word of Jesus he issues from the, tomb perfectly restored to life and health. Who but One could so speak and bring it to pass? It was none other than the Lord from heaven; for the resurrection of Lazarus clearly marked Him out as the Son of God. But this very act, which so redounded to the glory of God and His Son was the very act needed to remove the burden from the hearts of Mary and Martha. To raise Lazarus from the dead was the most effectual way of wiping the tears from their eyes. And thus the one act ensured at one and the same time the high claims of God and the relief of the mourners.

But we are not to suppose that because the Lord did not hasten (as we might speak) to the help of Mary and Martha, that He was on that account insensible to their anguish of heart. There is enough in the scripture before us to indicate that the Lord entered into the sorrow in a far deeper way than they did or could. It was not His purpose to remove the sorrow, but He would fit them to

bear it by assuring them it was for the glory of God, and also by the display of His tender compassion and perfect sympathy. He sent them His word from the first (chap. 11:4). And when He came He showed His loving interest which He had felt all the while. “When Jesus therefore saw her (Mary) weeping and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him Jesus therefore groaning in Himself cometh to the grave” (chap. 11:3-38).

How beautiful is this! Had they allowed themselves to suspect the Master? The groans and the tears were the answer. His tender question of the broken-hearted sister, Where have ye laid him? shows how gently the Lord lightened the burden of the sorrowing heart by causing her to see that His heart was just where hers was—at the tomb of Lazarus. To the widow of Nain the Lord said, Weep not. To Jairus He said, Thy daughter is not dead but sleepeth. In each case His purpose was to wipe away the tears. But in Bethany the Lord weeps with His saints. The grandest display of the power of the Lord to quicken the dead was accompanied by the greatest witness to His profound sympathy with the bereaved.

When both Mary and Martha see the Lord, they both express the same thought, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Both were right in believing there could be no death in the presence of Jesus; but they both erred in common with many more of God's saints in assuming it would have been better for them if their sorrow had been prevented. If the Lord had come, they reasoned, they would have been spared their bereavement. But if so, they would not have seen the glory of God: as the Lord said to Martha, “Said I not to thee if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God” (John 11:40)?

And at His coming they surely saw the glory of God. Lazarus came forth at the call of the Lord from corruption and the grave. What a triumph of the Lord's power was thus displayed in sleeping Lazarus! Jairus' daughter was raised from the bed, the widow's son from the bier, but Lazarus from the grave.

We can now see the gracious purpose of God in that which happened to this family. And what we see so distinctly portrayed in the history of these events might have been grasped beforehand by faith. But without blaming Martha and Mary for being weak in faith, let us remember we shall be more to blame in like circumstances than they, if we do not benefit by the record of what befell them and how God wrought by Christ for His own glory and their ultimate blessing.

The Thessalonian saints were similarly troubled about those who had fallen asleep before the Lord came. What sorrow would have been spared them, if the Lord had come from heaven before their loved ones passed away! But the apostle shows them that, when the Lord does descend from heaven with a shout, even those in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth. Therefore they were not to sorrow as those that had no hope. Their dear ones had not taken a leap in the dark. The power of the Lord would gather up to Himself both the living and the sleeping saints at His coming.

And while we like Mary and Martha at Bethany await the Master's coming, we have the unspeakable privilege of His present sympathy as well as the comfort of His word. For He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He Who wept and groaned at the sepulcher of Lazarus is

not insensible to the tears and cries of His bereaved saints to-day.

May we therefore seek to meet our sorrows with the unalterable persuasion that they must inevitably work out the glory of God and that we also have with us in the midst of the trial none less than the Blessed Son of God Himself!

W. J. H.

Chapter 260

The Soul Neither Mortal nor to Sleep: Part 1

IT is a grave and humbling fact that the immortality and even existence of the human soul, distinct from the body, should be seriously questioned in Christendom; yea, that Scripture should be wrested against it by such as love to have it so. But so it is, with the sanction of some who have the reputation of piety. All things from the highest downwards are put on their trial, as if man were judge, and not God. Nothing is sacred for inquiring spirits and unhallowed eyes. Because human tradition is stupidly false and blinding, men are indisposed to believe anything on God's word, as if He were altogether such a one as themselves. Gnosticism was an early plague—not less is Agnosticism in these days. Sense only they admit in evidence, enduring, momentous, and truly elevating for man! For their very principle is to ignore the everlasting future for weal or woe. It is to live for self, though it may claim the greatest happiness for the greatest number, in rebellion against God and His gracious testimony of Christ in person and redemption; whereby, through the Spirit, He delivers from sin and wrath into present, living, imperishable relationship with Himself.

Herein lies the transcendent value of Scripture. Senses cannot avail beyond what acts on them. Reason can draw no more than conclusions or probabilities. Even to ascertain facts is beyond its province; still more, truth moral or spiritual. How can reason furnish man with what most deeply concerns his being and state, present and future? How, above all, make God known and enjoyed, served and worshipped, now and evermore? Reason cannot, ought not, to be a groundwork for souls in view of eternity; and it is only perverted thus by such as will not bow to Scripture. What must be, is one thing; what is, reasoning, which deals with inference, cannot discover. Now, truth is the making known what is; and this in divine things can only be by revelation. Facts rest on sense or testimony; supernatural facts on a testimony above man, even if through him. To be made known with divine authority for man's blessing, they must be revealed by God, as they are in the Bible. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

How else could we know with assurance whence we came, and whither we go? Conscience may whisper that we are guilty, yet responsible before God. The more active and thorough its exercise, the more we are forced to feel our unfitness for His presence. There is therefore no prospect before us, as we are, but a fearful expectation of judgment. For conscience can tell us no way of escape from our own evil, no means of righteous reconciliation with God. His word confirms, in plain, strong, and solemn terms, all that we cannot but judge of our own state. But His word adds far other and better things; it makes known Christ, the coming Judge of quick and dead who despise Him and the God that sent Him to die for sinners; to all who repent and believe the gospel, it makes known in and through Christ the victory of His grace. The believer is not only rescued from the wrath to come, but brought already into divine favor, and even the relationship of a son of God; and henceforth, instead of dreading the Judge, he is entitled, while he serves a living and true God, to wait longingly for His Son from heaven. Such is the gospel Christ commands His servants to preach to every creature.

Scripture gives us sure and abundant light, not only as to God, but as to ourselves and all things as connected with Him. He who made us as well as the universe can alone inform us with certainty. Nor is any theory or tradition of men comparable with the clear, simple, and comprehensive dignity of the inspired record. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Matter did not exist eternally, as most philosophers conceived (some falling into the more evil folly of “no God”); nor was chaos “in the beginning,” as heathen poets sang, and many a theologian has taught. “In the beginning,” says John, “was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.” It is impossible to affirm more definitely or to deny more exclusively. Angels preceded not man only, but the material creation (Job 38:7); but by (■ν) the Son were all things created, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and by (in virtue of) Him all things subsist together (Col. 1:16, 17).

But, in creating, God created not a confused and disorderly mass; He created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. The heavens, in fact, were never thrown into confusion the earth was, as we see in Gen. 1:2; but this was after the beginning: how long is not said. Thousands or millions of years may have elapsed. It answered no moral end to reveal what science would investigate or conjecture. Only it is revealed, as befitting the divine character, that He is not a God—not a creator—of confusion. The confusion of the earth was subsequent, the reason or cause being unexplained as is the interval or the history. The fact is distinctly revealed; and nobody would have failed to discern it, if philosophers had not misled the divines who are vain of standing well with the men of science. Geologists differ fundamentally to this day: some insisting on catastrophes, followed by renewals; others contending for continuous action of forces gradually operating. If there be a measure of truth in both, scripture leaves room for all, without straining the six days, which are wholly distinct from the immense ages that preceded man.

Days and weeks, months and years, have to do with the human race and God's moral dealings on earth, after God had created and destroyed—it may be, many times—within those vast periods differently characterized before man was made, though not without a beneficent design for him on God's part. The principle and fact, first of creation, then of disruption, before the immediate preparation of the world for the race, is the revealed communication of Gen. 1:1, 2; the days, 1:3-2:3, are the commencement of time as we reckon it, not of creation, but of that latter and special form when man was ushered into the earth. On the first God said, “Light be;” and light was. It is not intimated that light was then first created. The previous ruin may have hindered its action till God uttered this fiat with a view to man's earth. On the second day, with the severing of land and sea, came the expanse as we have it (strangely rendered by the Seventy, whence “firmament” came through the Vulgate into the English version); on the third the vegetable kingdom, herbage and tree yielding fruit; on the fourth, the luminaries in the expanse, not first created but set to give light night and day on the earth; on the fifth, animal life begun in the waters and for the air.

(To be continued, D.V).

Chapter 261

The Soul Neither Mortal nor to Sleep: Part 2

ON the sixth day the earth was commanded to bring forth the living creature; the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and the reptiles.

Last of all, man is created on the same sixth day; but how different the language! “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and every living thing that creepeth on the earth.” Notice the striking change. It is no longer, Let there be this or that; no longer, Let the waters, or Let the earth, bring forth: so had it been for all other things earthly. God marks the introduction of man with words of unparalleled solemnity. He, as has been often remarked, holds counsel with Himself about it. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Man, therefore, clearly stands, not only at the head of creation here below, with title to rule it, which no angel is said to possess, but with a place of peculiar nearness, and, in some respect, resemblance to God. “And let them have dominion, &c.” “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them (Gen. 1:26, 27).” Of no other creature does God so speak. They were not only to replenish but to subdue the earth, and have dominion over fish, fowl, beast, and every living thing that creeps on the earth (ver. 28). Who can wonder? It is a superiority, not in degree only, but in kind: both a moral nature and a mind capable of indefinite progression, as compared with the mere instincts of the lower creation.

But this, and more than this, in chap 1. only comprises the general ordering. In chap. 2. we have what is much more specific. Accordingly, not “God” only, but “The LORD God” is introduced: not the originating Creator only, Elohim in contrast with the creature, but the moral governor, Jehovah Elohim, with man in special relationship to Himself, as well as to his sphere, his companion, and his subjects. Jehovah God is from Gen. 2:4, the first three verses being the true sequel of chap. 1. Here, therefore, we are told, ver. 7, that “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground [as a potter might mold his vessel], Who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.". All animals were living souls; but they lived when made. Not so man: the outer vessel was formed for man of God, Who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Man alone had the wondrous privilege of God's inbreathing. It was thus only that man, and man alone, became a living soul; therefore is man's soul immortal. He derived his living soul from the divine inbreathing. This is the ground of his special relationship with God: man now responsible to do his will, as by-and-by he gives account to God.

In accordance with this presentation of relationships we hear of Eden in the next verse; not merely the earth in general, but that garden of delight which the LORD God had planted eastward, where He put the man He had formed. Here also, in the same connection, we are told, not merely of every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food that the LORD God made to grow, but of the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus we see the test of responsibility, and (entirely distinct from it) the means of life. To eat of the forbidden tree was disobedience and death: life depended on eating of the other tree, which was expressly

distinct. Further, we find all the other creatures brought by the LORD God to man, who gave names to them as he would; and, last of all, the special building up of woman by the LORD God from a part of man's own body.

These, in short, were the relationships of man, not only to God, but to the sphere he enjoys, to the beings that were put under him, as well as to her who was made a help-meet for him. In every respect man has a place altogether peculiar and above all other mammalia on the earth; yet more, in virtue of God's breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, the inner man was derived directly from God. He was thus God's son (Luke 3:38), God's offspring (Acts 17:29); and this naturally, quite apart from becoming by grace a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. He could not shirk the responsibility of his high estate and relationship to God, ht him debase himself as he might, as they had done to whom the apostle then preached at Athens, as elsewhere.

Is it not, then, pitiable to find some who bear the Christian name laboring to reduce man as much as they can to the level of a brute? A living soul, or animal, they argue, is a phrase distinctly applied to the brutes as to the human race, for which they cite not only Gen. 2:7 but 9:10, Psa. 104:30. and Rev. 16:3, as well as 1 Cor. 15:44-47. In its measure and way, the argument is like that of Unitarians, who flatter themselves that they exclude the Deity of Christ when they prove Him to be a man. So those who deny the soul's immortality assume that they have gained the end into which the enemy has seduced them, when they point out that Scripture speaks, as does everyone of common sense, of man as an animal. But the fact remains that, from the very first Scripture which so speaks, man alone of all creatures on earth is carefully shown to have got his inner being from the inbreathing of the LORD God. No intelligent Christian holds that the phrase “living soul” is chosen to distinguish him from the rest of the creation. But the statement of an immediately divine source in the sole instance of his natural life, as distinguished from all other animals set under his rule, was assuredly meant to convey, what no one ought to have doubted, that man, as man, apart from eternal life in the Son of God, essentially differs inwardly from all other animals. Psa. 104:30 is no more identical with Gen. 2:7 than God's hiding His face from the creatures in the preceding verse has the same import as His hiding it from Christ in Psa. 22 The ingenuity of error is deplorably pernicious. Outwardly, be is shown in the same passage to be of the meanest origin, “the dust of the ground;” inwardly, he is of the highest, and this constitutionally. God is the Father of spirits, speaking of man. It is not of Him, but of the enemy, to degrade man's distinctive nature.

It is not denied that a beast has a soul, and even a spirit: only the soul and the spirit, in this case, being simply animal, have an incomparably lower character. In man, personality, self-consciousness, will, is in the soul; capacity is by the spirit. Each has his own soul, and so is personally responsible. The spirit is faculty or power; and so John the Baptist was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, not in any other's soul but his own. So all animals have a soul, and show it by a will of their own; as they have a spirit shown in the capacity of their species. Man only has a soul and a spirit immediately derived from God: these may be distinguished, but are inseparable. Hence, man's body only is treated in Scripture as mortal (Rom. 6:12; 8:11)-never his soul or his spirit. So we read in 2 Cor. 4:11 of “our mortal flesh “: flesh, not spirit in man's case, is mortal, whatever may be true of a beast. Again, in 2 Cor. 5:4, “mortality,” or “what is mortal,” applies only to the body which will be swallowed up of life at Christ's coming.

Therefore, the Lord says “Be not afraid of them that kill the body. but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Gehenna). This destruction is not annihilation, which, indeed, is unheard of in Scripture, and as contrary to fact as it is to Scripture. For, as no creature can annihilate another, so God is never said to annihilate, but to judge and punish His enemies. Destruction here is their ruin judicially; not their ceasing to exist, but their continuance in wretchedness, suffering the due reward of their deeds at His hand Whom they despised, hated, and rebelled against. It is, therefore, called “everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might,” and “everlasting punishment,” the lot opposed to “eternal life.” Men could not possibly doubt the meaning of such language, save from the will to please themselves, and determination to doubt God's word when it opposes that will. The conscience of the sinner unforgiven might rightly tremble, but in no wise doubt. The meaning is as sure as it is plain; and it supposes the soul immortal, as well as the body to be raised. Both shared in the sin; both join in sharing the punishment, when God judges, as He will, by our Lord Jesus at the end.

Nor is it true that between death and the resurrection the soul sleeps. The Lord, in the Gospel of Luke, has made the truth no less certain for both the wicked and the righteous. In chapter 16., He shows us the beggar dying and carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This was certainly not the body but the soul; for the soul is the seat of personality. Whilst alive, soul and body are together. When death comes, the soul is the person till the resurrection, when they are together again for evermore. And therefore, it is that only man rises from the grave; for he alone possesses a God-inbreathed soul—an immortal principle from God. As death is but an intermediate and incomplete state, resurrection (whether for just or unjust) will restore the full being, and in a condition for eternity. But, meanwhile, the beggar was, according to parabolic language, with the blessed beyond death. He was blessed with faithful Abraham, and not asleep. The rich man also died, and was buried. His body was laid in the grave with no little pomp. But in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. His soul, thus, was not asleep; he was in torments. It is perfectly certain that this is a picture, not of resurrection, but of the intermediate state; for he is represented as entreating for his five brethren, that some startling testimony might reach them, “lest they also come into this place of torment.” When resurrection dawns, there will be no question of testimony to save. Besides, the Lord stands for the divine authority of Scripture. They had the inspired witnesses; and if these were not heard, neither would they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.

Again, in Luke 20, in answer to unbelieving Sadducees (who said there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit), the Lord lays down that the God of the fathers is God not of dead but of living; “for all live unto Him” (ver. 38). It is not only that the saints rise for the first, holy, and blessed resurrection, but that meanwhile also they live for Him, if not for man; and that “all” so live, not the saints alone. With eternal life in Christ the believer is mortal; without that life the unbeliever's soul lives, save spiritually, after he dies. And spiritually dead the natural man is while he is alive.

Most simple and instructive is the case of the converted robber in Luke 23:43. He asked to be remembered by the Lord when He comes in His kingdom, and receives the answer, “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” That very day, through faith in Jesus, by virtue of His precious blood, should his soul be with Him in Paradise. The paradise of man was lost and cannot be regained. The second man, the last Adam, opens a new and better Eden, the

Paradise of God; and the first soul to enter there after Jesus was the converted robber. Oh! what a testimony to the grace of God, and to the blood of Christ. The Lord will come surely in His kingdom by-and-by; but this newly converted soul has not to wait for that day. On the day he died he enjoyed the heavenly Paradise with His Lord and Savior.

So Stephen when dying (Acts 7:59, 60) says “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The Lord Himself when dying had said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” This, after suffering as He did, was His perfection; and He alone could properly use these words. Stephen fittingly, in his place, calls on Him and says, “Receive my spirit.” To be with Christ, then, is what departing from the body means; not sleeping, certainly, which would be far worse than the portion we now while alive enjoy in His love. “To depart and be with Christ,” as the apostle says (Phil. 1:23), “is very far better.” It is to be absent from the body, no doubt; not sleeping, still less non-existent, but “at home with the Lord.” And, therefore, we are “willing” rather to be absent from the body, as compared with living here. But it is not what we are “longing for;” for verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation, which is from heaven. Therefore, now we groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed (that is, divested of our body), but that we would be clothed upon (that is, invested with our changed bodies), that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

What is this but proof upon proof that the soul is immortal for man even though lost, and that the saint's soul, separate from the body, will have immensely increased enjoyment of and with Christ in heaven? The notion of sleep, still more of extinction, for the soul, is a baseless and wicked fable.

(To be concluded, D.V.).

Chapter 262

The Soul Neither Mortal nor to Sleep: Part 3

I AM aware that some, who plead for the mortality of the soul, adduce, 1 Tim. 6:16 to this end but when it is said of God that “He only hath immortality,” the reference is to essential, not to conferred, being. Even the mis-users of the text do not deny that the angels are immortal. Certainly our Lord has laid down that such is their condition, and that the risen saints shall resemble them in this respect. “Neither can they die anymore, for they are equal unto the angels” (Luke 20:36). Therefore God's only having immortality is perfectly consistent with the immortality of angels; and, if so, with the immortality of the human soul. The soul is immortal as angels are; but it is through God's constituting both so. God only hath immortality. Again, the objectors urge that Christ abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:11). But this, as far as “immortality” is concerned, is notoriously a mistaken version, known for many years to all scholars, and now corrected by the Revisers, who properly say “incorruption” for immortality. Christ has brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel; life in Himself alive again for evermore, and incorruption for the body. For the last, the soul is not in question here at all. Further, in 1 Cor. 15:53 and 54, not only is it plain that this corruptible must put on in-corruption, but that this mortal must put on immortality—two clauses which refer only to the body when the resurrection comes.

Mortality is never said of man's soul. All Scriptures of Old Testament and New Testament alike treat the inner man as immortal, though in the Old Testament it may be somewhat obscure. Through the gospel all is now brought to light, whether for soul or body. Hence, in the Book of the Revelation, no shadow overhangs the prophetic visions. “And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, the Holy and True, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:9, 10)? “These are the souls of saints, no doubt, but they are neither extinct nor yet slumbering; and as they cry with loud voice for the righteous judgment of God, there was given to each one of them meanwhile a white robe, and the dealing of the Lord is assured in due time. No doubt there is symbol here as there was figure in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; but the symbol here, like the figure there, supposes life and acceptance and communion with God's mind, not extinction of being nor stupor after death. They had died as to the body, not as to the soul. It was separate, not sleeping, and it awaits resurrection.

So again in the vision of Rev. 20:4, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and (I saw) the souls of those that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God; and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” The first class, consisting of the enthroned, were already in the resurrection state; but two other classes follow in the separate state, whose souls accordingly were seen by the prophet, as they are subsequently said to live in order to reign with Christ, no less than those who already sat on thrones. Here, again, the souls clearly existed, even before

they “lived” in the sense of their bodies being re-united to their souls.

The doctrine of Scripture, therefore, is throughout certain, plain, and consistent; and this for all souls, wicked as well as righteous. Even while living the wicked are by Scripture called “lost” or “destroyed” —the very same word which ignorance would force to mean annihilated. That this is false is therefore unquestionable; for whilst they live now, they are said to be destroyed as positively as when judgment seizes them forever. Then only will it be everlasting destruction. Annihilation is, therefore, out of the question. They are morally destroyed, certainly not annihilated, whilst they now live to reject the Savior and the gospel. No honest man can deny it. The fact is, that God alone could annihilate what He has made, and this He never says that He will, but expressly—a wholly different thing—that He will raise the wicked, and judge them by the Lord Jesus. For resurrection will introduce into a state fixed and changeless forever.

And now, my reader, be not turned away from the truth by empty speculation, or by vain jangling of words. If not born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. You have spirit, soul, and body of incomparably higher character than that of natural animals without reason, made to be taken and destroyed. You have far greater advantages than the Jew of old, as he had much profit every-way over the heathen. You have God's oracles in all their fullness; you hear not the law merely, but the gospel. But you are fallen; you are a sinner, yea, a rebel against God, not only in will, but by that spirit which is the highest part of your nature. In vain do men seek to allay your fears or their own by the false philosophy which denies immortality to that inextinguishable nature which belongs to the human race alone of all that breathe on earth. You are not a superior sort of brute; nor does the difference consist only in powers of mind, reflection, and language. You have the consciousness not only of self but of God in your soul, and about your spirit as well as your body. You, therefore, alone of animals are morally responsible, alone must be raised from death, alone must give account to God.

But with all your endowments and privileges, especially under the gospel and the church, you are lost forever if you flee not to Christ and His precious blood which cleanses from all sin. In Him only is eternal life, by Him only eternal redemption. They are God's free gift to every one that believes. Oh! then repent, and believe the gospel. If you turn from Him Who now speaks from heaven, you prove that you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life, that you prefer the world to heaven with Christ before the Father. So living, so dying, what can be said to you by and by, but “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels?” Not Moses, but the Son of Man so warns. It was not for guilty man that God prepared this everlasting punishment. It was for the enemies of God and man; but if men now reject His grace in Christ to take part with the enemies, the doom of the enemies will be theirs. And what more just as against those who trample on mercy to the uttermost? The greater the grace preached in the gospel of God, the more unsparing will, and must, be His righteous retribution, when the rejected Son of man appears in His glory, and executes judgment not for this life only but for eternity.

W. K.

Chapter 263

The Sower

IN the preceding chapter the Lord had pronounced solemnly on the Jews. They had spoken against the Son of man, and there was forgiveness for it; but they were hurrying into that blasphemy against the Spirit which admits of no forgiveness. No sign should be given but that of Jonah the prophet—the death and resurrection of the Son of man. That evil generation must have its last state worse than the first. And thereon the Lord formally disowns His relationship natural, stretching His hand toward His disciples and saying, “Behold, my mother and my brethren!” —only such as do the will of His Father that is in heaven.

Accordingly in the first parable of Matt. 13 the Lord addresses the multitudes which from the beach heard Him in the boat, and presents Himself as a sower, “Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some [seed] fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth; and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was risen, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and chokel them. And others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear” (vers. 3-9),

The Lord could not, did not, forego the rights of God, as later He made known in the parable of the Householder, and of Himself, the Son and Heir sent to receive the fruits (Matt. 21:33-41). But, well knowing the sad issue, He was come for the deeper purposes of grace, whatever be man's evil and rebellion. He is “the sower” who “went forth to sow.” He begins a new work on God's part, though man cannot escape the responsibility of receiving and rejecting the seed sown, “the word of the kingdom.”

Alas! man is indisposed, sinful man, to receive the word that grace sends through Emmanuel, God's Son yet Man in the humiliation of love. And we have light unequaled given by His words; for “never man spake like this Man,” His enemies themselves being witnesses. He explains the various cases of human unbelief with a simplicity and depth all His own.

The wayside hearers are those who receive nothing from God. The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart. Unless the conscience is reached and sin is judged before God, there is no quickening. The man that only hears abides in unremoved death; he is not born anew; he cannot see or enter the kingdom. The seed, instead of taking root, is devoured by the birds, that is, the enemy.

In the second case appearances were better. The seed fell in stony places and forthwith sprang up, where there was little earth. It was but a work in man's nature. And as hasty feeling received the word and it had no root, so when trouble or persecution arose because of the word, they as quickly shirked suffering. When the sun was risen, they were scorched, and withered away. A divine work is laid in the conscience, and life abides. Here all was superficial and evanescent.

The third case looks at first rather more promising, the seed that fell among thorns. But the thorns grew up to their ruin. Here the bad result was slower; for though the word was heard, the anxiety of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word, so that fruit could not be.

It is remarkable that in these instances the word is not “understood.” For there is no true spiritual understanding of the word without the work of God, without life; or, as the third Gospel puts it, without believing and being saved. How is it with you, dear reader? Have you so learned and judged yourself that you listen to Him assured there is only death within? Are you no less sure that life for you or any is solely in Christ? that it is in no institution, still less in the church? Do you know by faith that life is in Christ for every soul that believes in Him? So God declares in His word. This fallen man resists and resents. His confidence is in his own powers, or in something or some one like himself, nor God's grace; for, having an evil conscience, he distrusts God.

Christ came on an errand of infinite love from God. In Him man if he had not been blind would have seen what he should have been toward God, and what God is toward man. Christ was the wholly dependent and the unfailingly obedient man; but God was also in Him reconciling the world to Himself, the perfect expression of divine love to the guilty and miserable. But man would have neither: his unrighteousness hated true righteousness; and his enmity to God hated the love that came to save and bless him. As He said Himself, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which 'none other hath done, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [it is] that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:22-25).

As this is absolutely true, so is man evidently lost. But God declares the truth that He may repent and believe the gospel. It is by the word of truth that we are begotten of God. And this shows itself from the first in our receiving the word, which reveals how evil we are before God, and how good He is to us in giving His own Son to die for the ungodly. Thus it is God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Such is God's righteousness for the unjust, God's salvation for the lost, as He makes known in the gospel to every one that believes.

So here the beginning of our goodness is in the real owning of our badness, and yet believing God's grace to us in Christ. Here, when the seed is received, it is “into the good ground.” The souls hear and understand and bear fruit, one a hundredfold, one sixty, one thirty. For among believers there are differences. When the eye is single, all is bright and blessed; but flesh and the world hinder, so far as they are allowed; and all therefore do not bear fully.

Chapter 264

The Stone Laid Before Joshua

When dying Jacob, gifted with faith's clear and penetrative vision, blessed his twelve sons with those blessings which should have their special application to "the last days"; having had occasion to speak of "the mighty God of Jacob," he instantly added that brief parenthesis: "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." This did this aged patriarch clearly set forth the origin of that "stone" or "rock," of which so very frequent mention is made in the word of God.

With that selfsame rod, which in his hand had before been instrumental in bringing down God's righteous judgment before Pharaoh and Egypt, Moses smote

"THE ROCK IN HOREB,"

and it instantly yielded its copious stream of waters to quench their thirst, and to refresh His people Israel. To this the Spirit of God long afterward refers, for the purpose of presenting in one view this type so richly instructive, and the antitype even more full of instruction. Thus we read— "Our fathers did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). Bearing in mind the important fact that the words just quoted disclose, and perceiving that the "stone of Israel," being "smitten," became the prime source of refreshment throughout that long wilderness journey, we are the better enabled to enter sympathetically into the joy of Moses at its conclusion, even at that moment when in rapturous strains he sang of "God.... the Rock "; yea, of the

"ROCK OF HIS SALVATION,"

even then, alas! as this sweet singer in the same song sorrowfully admitted, "lightly esteemed "and forgotten." Moses went on faithfully to forewarn Israel that the "rock" would certainly quell the unrighteous and "shut them up," while granting to the righteous a most glorious deliverance (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31).

This fair assurance, and not the recollection of former happy experiences, was the realized stay and support of the sorely tried Psalmist, who was then perforce silent in the presence of his enemies, yet confiding and outspoken when alone with Him Whom he reverently addressed as

"GOD MY ROCK"

(Psa. 42). Proceeding rapidly onwards, we perceive the faithless banded together, and in opposition to the warning voice of the prophet Isaiah, being only desirous of consummating a union, which was not, could not be, strength. "The foundations of the thresholds were moved" at the cry of the seraphim, and Isaiah himself had cried "Woe is me!" The heart of Ahaz, and the hearts of his faithless people were moved, and trembled exceedingly from a totally different cause (Isa. 7:2). The Lord's "disciples" of that day were exhorted not to "fear their fear, nor be afraid." The Lord of hosts should be their "fear," their "dread," and—oh the comfort of this latter!— "a sanctuary" for them. Meanwhile He should be "for

to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa. 8:8-14).

Coming to Isa. 26 a chapter which principally treats of the time of "the great tribulation," we see that one certain effect of the saint accepting the Lord as his "sanctuary" is, that the trusting one is kept in "perfect peace." This assurance is instantly followed by that needful exhortation: "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength "; or, as the margin renders it,

"THE ROCK OF AGES."

Here we have Him as the Unchanging One (Heb. 13:8), the perfectly Invincible Deliverer (Isa. 1:7, 8; 1 Peter 1:5); and that Rock, in the cleft of which every believer has found, finds, and will find a safe and abiding shelter.

"Rock of ages cleft for me,

Grace hath hid me safe in Thee."

But for those who believed not, how solemn is the lesson (which so many in the last days need to thoroughly learn) that is taught us, as we perceive what those rejectors of Christ in that day, whose favorite project was "a confederacy," were finally committed to (Isa. 28:14-15)! For that it did apply to certain unbelieving Israelites living when those very significant words were penned, we doubt not; while we now seek to point out that the time hastens when they will have a wider and more general application.

Beloved fellow-believer, pray suffer me to sound aloud this note of warning. The evil tendencies of men on all sides of us this day are rendered all the more clear by their openly discarding the "Rock of ages" as the only one divinely appointed center; to which all (such is His grace and goodness) may and ought to gather. The Lordship of the Christ of God is totally ignored by those who have begun by arrogating the claim of "human brotherhood." And these, if they repent not, but proceed in their evil course, will sink much lower, and Isa. 28:15 shall have its second and most complete fulfillment involving their ruin.

Jehovah has marked in the past, and will mark in the future the iniquity of such wicked men (not one of whom will be able in the judgment to stand before Him. He rebukes their wickedness) by saying, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold,

I LAY IN ZION FOR A FOUNDATION A STONE,

a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

The fearful declension of Israel in the days of the first kingdom, with all its disastrous consequences, will be eclipsed by the yet more awful apostacy of Christless professors, and the fearful judgments that will swiftly overtake all such. But, just as in the former time, in the which the evil fruits of backsliding Israel were fully ripening, He that is of purer eyes than to behold evil could gaze with divine complacency upon the foundation stone set at naught indeed by the builders, but in the counsels of God already laid in Zion, and made the head of the corner (to become thenceforth the one Object of the faith of the believing remnant of that day) even so, in these last days, in which evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse, deceiving, and being

deceived, that wonderful

“LIVING STONE,

disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God,” is infinitely precious to Him that gave His Son that we might live through Him.

After his filthy garments had been taken away, and his iniquity caused to pass from him, was it the will of God that Joshua the high priest being graciously restored to former privileges, and condescendingly acknowledged in his official capacity should gaze simply upon his own person, or upon that truly marvelous “change of raiment”? By no means. The authoritative voice of the Lord of hosts absorbs the sole attention of Joshua and his fellows, thereby drawing their thoughts away from the contemplation of themselves, and their several honorable positions; and this in order that they might

BEHOLD THE STONE LAID BEFORE JOSHUA:

for whatever they may hereafter find in themselves to cause misgivings and searchings of heart, in Him they would see an absolute perfection in all respects, to which not one of them could, while on earth, ever hope to attain.

Not in looking at himself or others, however highly favored, does the believer of to-day obtain soul-satisfaction; but while occupied in looking off unto Jesus. For then we happily realize the true force of that encouraging oracle— “Unto you therefore which believe is the preciousness “; and our misgivings are not so much on account of our own passing trials, severe though these sometimes prove, but rather because of our deep and true concern for others “which stumble at the word, being disobedient.”

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

Chapter 265

The Tempest and Unbelief Rebuked

Matt. 8, Mark 4, Luke 8

HERE is another manifestation of divine power and goodness in the Lord Jesus here. below. Matthew wished to take it out of its historic place, after the parables of chap. 13. were uttered, for that express purpose; or rather the Spirit Who employed him, if one may so say reverently.

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish” (Matt. 8:23-25).

Thus did the gracious Lord test the faith of His followers, that they might confide in His supremacy over all need, His concern for them in all dangers and difficulties. Was not He with them Whom God had sent to save? Was not the Reconciler not only of all believers but of all the universe, in the ship? He, Who was come to lay the basis the new creation and everlasting glory? It He could not perish Who was here to rescue from everlasting destruction all that look to Him in faith, how weak and unworthy to wrong His love as if He would leave them to perish? Yet appearances were allowed to prove their hearts. The sudden violent squall, the sea raging, the little ship or boat on which they had gone aboard, the waves beating in so that the ship was already filled, the Lord asleep (not on a pillow but the boat-cushion)!

It was assuredly perilous increasingly, with but one ground of confidence: Jesus was there. But this to faith should have been everything; and it would have been, had they looked away from the wind, sea, and all else, to Him. When they woke him, it was but with the appeal, “Lord, save us: we perish.” Even on the resurrection day they were yet more sad and despairing, if not blinded by alarm, because He had bowed to death and suffered on the cross; and He had then to reproach them as senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. He, despised and rejected of men, had only to speak the word, and the elements least controllable by man obeyed His voice, Who stooped so low in love, yet was their Creator. “And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” But He said also, “Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith”?

Sinner, or saint, what a word of truth to both! No doubt there is a difference immense, between him that believes and the unbeliever, for the one is in the hand of the Father and the Son; the other lies like the whole world in the wicked one. Yet the unbelief which in the latter resists the Holy Spirit fatally, so far as it works, dishonors the Lord and injures the believer; and scripture abounds with proofs of both, that each may respectively be warned. It was certainly fear that prompted the importunate repetition which Luke records (chap. 8:24), “Master, Master, we perish.” The disciples soon learned the vanity of their alarm when He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; though they to the end of the earthly pilgrimage need to look earnestly to Him, as His love values it, and it is due to His glory. And if a rebuke to unbelief, how strengthening to the heart when we learn afresh His faithful and effectual intervention, whatever the manner of it!

But is this nothing to you, who are perishing in sins and unbelief? The Creator of all things did not become a man save to glorify God and to bless man, as blessing could only be thus; and by nothing short of death, the death of the cross. His incarnation was not only to manifest Him in life, solely doing God's will, as it never had been on earth before, but to suffer for sins in the body God prepared for Him, that sins might be taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice, and that believers might be sanctified, yea, perfected forever. For this Heb. 10. declares to be the fruit, of the Savior's work.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. Whatever may be the good things in store for Israel when they repent and look in faith unto their pierced Messiah, the good tidings are now sent by God to any sinner, Jew or Gentile. Oh, take the place of truth, and own to God your sins and ruin, that you may not come into judgment. For His judgment (and the Lord Jesus is the Judge) is holy and righteous, and therefore must be utterly destructive of the guilty. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31). He is the object of faith set before any and all by God, that whosoever believeth may not perish, but nave everlasting life (John 3.).

Listen not to the wiles of the devil, who whispers that you are taking away from God's honor by looking to His Son, the Lord Jesus. Not so; for “he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also,” and “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2). And this is the reason why “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;” that all men might honor Him as the Father (John 5). Those who believe honor Him now, and have eternal life in Him, and by grace walk accordingly; but all who now dishonor the Son, by refusing His word and disbelieving. Him Who sent Him, must be raised to a resurrection of judgment which will compel them to honor Him in the solemn endless day of their everlasting ruin. So He declares Who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Sin no more against God and your own souls; but believe on Him Who by the grace of God tasted death for every one. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus a man, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due times “; and so He is to you now, that you may no longer neglect so great salvation, but believe on Him to the saving of your soul.

Chapter 266

This Do in Remembrance of Me

IT is to be remarked that only in Luke's Gospel and in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians are these touching words of our Lord recorded. They give to us in the clearest and simplest terms His desire as to what should engage the thoughts of our hearts when breaking bread—the precious memory of Him crucified, and crucified for us. Another has pointed out that the word translated “remembrance” has an active signification of “recalling,” or “calling to mind,” as a memorial. The words then are to be read thus— “This do for the calling Me to mind.” There is a striking contrast in this respect between the Lord's supper and the Jewish sacrifices. In them “there was a remembrance again made of sins every year.” Their repetition called the sins to mind, i.e., proved that the sacrifices were inefficacious to put them away. On the contrary, when the Christian “breaks bread,” he calls Jesus to mind Who has put his sins away by the sacrifice of Himself. Unspeakably precious memorial! which not only speaks peace to the conscience and hope to the soul, but fills the heart with the warmest affections for Him Who has so loved us when ruined and guilty, and so eternally redeemed us to God by His blood.

It is a marked feature of the Gospel of Luke that in it everything that the world values, all that is highly esteemed among men, is shown to be abomination in the sight of God. A blessing is pronounced on the poor, whose solace and comfort are not in the abundance of the things they possess, but in Christ; while a woe is threatened to the rich who have received their consolation apart from Him. The folly of laying up treasure for oneself is illustrated in the parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully; and the appalling termination of a life spent in fleshly mirth and worldly splendor is vividly portrayed in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, a story carried on to their state after death. Indeed all earthly riches are called “the mammon of unrighteousness.”

In the Epistles to the Corinthians the same line of truth is pursued, warning against the spirit of worldliness in the church. Satan is shown to be “the god of this world,” transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers fashioning themselves as ministers of righteousness. These were beguiling the saints with that which nature can admire, which the flesh can glory in and the world appreciate. Thus the Corinthians (when the apostles of the Lord were accounted as the off-scouring of all things, and in hunger and thirst and nakedness) were full, and rich, and reigning as kings.

In ministry, they were taken with men who commended themselves and exalted themselves even to bringing them into bondage. Paul, as withstanding all this, had to speak very plainly, contrasting such ministry with his own. Only in this way could he deal adequately with such fleshly glory, such worldly ways, such boasting in men, such exaltation of gift. But evidently to call Jesus, their Lord and Savior, to mind, to show forth His death, crucified by the great ones of the world and crucified in weakness,

“Every mark of dark dishonor Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow,” would most effectually deal with their fleshly admiration of worldly men and things, if they had any tenderness of conscience at

all. And what a priceless gem do all who “love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness,” and are themselves not “corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ” —what a gem, we say, do such possess in the inestimable privilege of calling their adorable Savior to mind, of having communion with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit and with each other, not in certain truths only, but in that death on the cross which has displayed infinite perfections and accomplished inconceivable results! Let us listen to what one has found in this feast. “Were we right-hearted, we would say—What sermon would be more profitable to us? What singing of a full congregation more sweet in our ears than the voice of that ordinance which tells us (so clearly, and with such rich harmony of all kinds of music) of the forgiveness of our sins, of the acceptance of our persons, and of our waiting for the Lord from heaven; and all this in blessed and wondrous fellowship with the brightest display of the name and glory of God?”

It is a sorrow to some that even at the table of the Lord their minds wander, thoughts intrude, unwelcome as the men who sought to break in Lot's door when he was entertaining angels unawares. And even when things are not so bad, there is the tendency to recall the vast extent of the wealth of the saved, rather than the depths of the poverty to which grace brought the Savior: as if He had said; “This do in remembrance of your blessings.”

Perfect and everlasting blessings are indeed made ours—redemption, righteousness, life, sanctification, reconciliation, glory to come. These, and ten thousand blessings more, are ours in Him; but none of these is what is meant by “This do in remembrance of Me.” And indeed we may say that, boundless as are to the chief of sinners the results of the work of Christ, and infinite in worth as His work is, HIMSELF, the Divine-and-Human Worker, must be greater than His work and its results. They cannot be separated; but it is possible to dwell on many precious truths and not on Him. What is the cross, and all that it has done and won for me, if I entertain unworthy thoughts of Him Who hung upon it? Have we not there presented to us the perfection of moral loveliness in a way that never can be repeated? Only a true believer, we admit, can see form and comeliness in that “visage so marred more than any man, and that form more than the sons of men.” Indeed the sons of men among whom we move are earnest and constant in their efforts and endeavors to be as far removed from the beauty of the One we call to mind as possible; and how strong is the tendency in our own hearts to do the same, and to admire what men admire? A study every day of Phil. 2:5-11 would give us an enlarged view of the special character of beauty which was so surpassingly displayed in Jesus, and which has won for Him righteously all honor and glory, as well as love, from God and His Father. Yes, for this every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess Him Lord.

Our attention then, when at the Lord's table, is called, is centered, is fixed on Jesus crucified, His body given for us, His blood shed for us—our sins borne, and we cleansed from them thus—but this adorably precious Savior for us, both as to His body and His blood. He is, and ever will be, for us in glory, but never so displayed as for us, as in death; and we therefore adoringly celebrate His death.

We not only believe in, but also rejoice to confess in the world, our crucified Lord. If the multitude refuse His authority, and will not have this Man to reign over them, we, while waiting for all things to be put under Him, rejoice that we are put under Him. We bow the knee in grace, we serve this Lord whom the world crucified and still refuses. Precious fruit of remembering Him!

But more, the sacrifice was perfect, and our clearance, perfect; as our God, in the full display of His nature and attributes, was perfect, and Jesus, in obedience, grace, and love, was perfect. Jesus was crucified. There was joy set before Him, and He endured the cross, despising the shame. He was crucified. It was the will of His Father and God, and He loved and obeyed. He was crucified, and crucified for us. Behold then “communion,” Christian communion with the Father, with the Son, and with each other. Israel after the flesh when eating the sacrifices were in “communion” with the altar, the symbol of the Jewish religion. Their religious wants rose no higher, shadows satisfied them, though Christ had come. The Gentiles ate of their sacrifices, and when eating had “communion” with demons to whom their deceived hearts offered idolatrous worship (see 1 Cor. 10:18, 20). They ate and drank, as worshippers.

Shall then our “communion” be a matter of indifference? Oh! how great the loss. It can only arise from ourselves, from carelessness as to sin; otherwise, the word is, “Let him eat.” The sacrifice is, as we have said, perfect. Infinite and inalienable grace invites us, and enables us, to judge ourselves, and this without hesitation and fear; to discern ourselves, each one himself to see the true nature and character of “the old man” the “I” that had to be, and was, crucified with Christ, its worthlessness and wickedness; and to refuse and repent of its thoughts, words and deeds. His sufferings for sins, though forever over, are remembered; and each can say as he discerns His body, in sacred remembrance, He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, that I, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” Has it been so with me?

Is then the supper a scene for tears? Not as needing consolation, such as was the natural purpose of the bread and cup among the Jews (Jer. 16:7). It is a time of blessing, of praise and thanksgiving: “the cup of blessing which we bless"; and the Lord “gave thanks.” Neither is it as an ordinance to be observed to add to the soul's assurance, but a touching memorial of One well known, confided in, and loved. “This do in remembrance of ME.”

W. B.

Chapter 267

The Trial of Faith: Part 1

Gen. 22

THE trial or proof of faith is more precious than the trial of gold, even if it is proved by fire (1 Peter 1:7, R. V.) And the result will be seen at the revelation of Jesus Christ Who died and rose again, to His praise and glory and honor. The faithful will sing of victory over the world at His appearing, when the world will know that the Father loved the church as He loved the Son.

Faith is the gift of God and approves itself on trial. The vessel, that receives the gift, needs to be tried; for it is a heavenly gift in an earthen vessel. “Every good gift and perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17, R. V.), i.e. every gift from the Father of lights is good and perfect. Faith in Christ may be considered in two ways, as a practical principle within, or as the way by which God gives us a new standing before Him, from darkness to light, from death to life, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of the Son of His love, from condemnation to justification. It looks at what Christ has done for us, at what Christ suffered on the cross, having died for us when we were enemies, that by His blood we might be cleansed from sin and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. We are clothed as with a robe which we could not make, but which gives us entrance to the King, and will bear His searching eye (Matt. 22:12), when we sit at the wedding feast. Therefore His work is altogether outside of us; and every one that comes to God through Christ is clothed with the wedding garment. His obedience to death for us yields the robe that covers us; we become God's righteousness in Christ, It admits of no diminution or increase, but is perfect; its purity is not increased by death, nor diminished by contact with the vilest.

Our acceptance does not depend for its value on the greatness or the feebleness of our faith in Him (the enjoyment flowing from it does), but is the same for all. Thus the word is plain and is addressed to a would be suicide, “Believe... and thou shalt be saved.” Our faith (i. e. in the earthen vessel which influences it) may be defective like that of the leper who said, “If Thou wilt, Thou canst,” acknowledging the power but doubting the will; or like that of the man who brought his afflicted son to the Lord, and said, “If Thou canst,” as if doubting the Lord's power; or it may be strong as that of which the Lord said, that it was greater than He had found in Israel (Matt. 8:10). In each case there was deliverance sought for, which did not depend on the faith of the men asking but on the love and power of the Lord. And these are measured by the cross—love for the world and power to bear the weight of its sin. Thus faith in Him, even feeble faith, brings His love and power to be for us. Faith in Him, be it strong and vigorous, or weak and trembling, as in the publican that dared not lift his eyes but despondingly smote on his breast, crying for mercy—faith in Him brings salvation. It is God's way of justifying a sinner, and his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Not that his righteousness is measured by his faith, but by Christ; therefore we boast not in our faith, but in Him; and we in spirit say, Jehovah our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). The sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is brought immediately into a new standing before God, and righteousness is reckoned to him. Faith was reckoned for righteousness to Abraham

before he was tried (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4.).

But Peter speaks not here of faith (in Christ as the object of faith) as reckoned for righteousness, but of the believer's faith after righteousness is reckoned, of faith as the power of divine life in the believer, wherein is manifested the power of the Holy Spirit Who works in us, so that we overcome the world, and all temptation. Such faith becomes more precious than gold proved with fire. The believer has to show the genuineness of his faith by his works; for as James says (chap. 2: 14. &c.), faith without works is dead. Indeed, the power of the Spirit of God is needed at the first to enable the contrite soul to believe in Christ in Whom is redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. And so interwoven are the two principles that His power is absolutely requisite for faith and consequent peace through the work of Christ for us, as it is for holiness of life in us after we have believed in Him. Peter says the trial (proof) of your faith, of you believers. The believer is identified with his faith, his victory is commensurate with his faith; and the fiercer the fires that try, the higher the praise that redounds to Christ. Faith untried is like ore containing gold; it must be put into the furnace that the dross may be consumed. There may be any quantity of unsuspected unbelief, and therefore unholiness: all must be purged that faith unalloyed may be found unto His praise and glory and honor at His appearing. The fires which try faith sometimes expose much that we did not suspect. But God, Who gives the faith, guides the trial, and sustains the believer all through. There is the obedience of faith, and the confidence of faith; the dependence, endurance, and trust of faith. In glory we shall sing its victory to His praise. A foretaste of victory is given now; but it is known only to Him Who gives and to him who receives.

How fierce were the fires that tried those mentioned in Heb. 11. who wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, in caves and dens, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; whether past or present saints, all are waiting for His appearing, all will be perfected together in glory. The obedience of faith was seen in Moses, who was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, surrounded with the affluence and splendor of a court, yet who chose affliction with the people of God rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; there was obedience at the cost of all. But in Abraham the varied qualities of faith are seen. Hence he is called the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:16), because he stands in the foremost rank of trial, for historically Abel might be called father (being the first believer). So Abraham is pre-eminent for that kind of faith which accounted the power of death as no hindrance to the word of God, and which may be called resurrection faith, as it is markedly the characteristic of Christian faith. Habakkuk triumphs over circumstances; he will rejoice in the Lord, though the fig-tree shall not blossom (Hab. 3:17, 18). Job triumphs over fear, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15). But Abraham triumphs in resurrection; and so he told his servants, “We will come again,” and we have the solution of the word and the intended act in Heb. 11:19. Death with its terrors is thrust aside; nothing stands between Abraham and God. No saint before the cross had ever defied death like Abraham. Justly is he the father of the faithful. The faith in the prophet Habakkuk goes not beyond the earth. Death to Job would have been deliverance from present sorrow. But the Holy Spirit has recorded Abraham's faith, as if to tell us that such faith as his goes not only beyond temporal things, and is calm at the prospect of death, but that it is sometimes (apparently) in opposition to our most cherished affections—yea, when it seems contrary to the word which we have believed. It is only a seeming opposition. However contradictory it might appear, Abraham would offer up Isaac and still believe that his seed should be as the sand on the seashore for multitude. Blessing for the world through death and

resurrection is early taught. This may be its first practical lesson, and Abraham the first learner, but the Holy Spirit records in the Hebrews that he learned well. R. B.

Chapter 268

The Trial of Faith: Part 2

Gen. 22, Heb. 11

The lesson (Gen. 22.) begins with an announcement that prepares us for something extraordinary. God, Who had shown such mercy and forbearance hitherto, now appears to try Abraham. “And God did tempt Abraham, and said, Take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering,” &c. Tempt may be now limited to solicitation to evil (James 1:13), but the meaning here is try or prove. Try if the earthen vessel will let faith have its perfect work. God tested the man to whom He gives faith. And at the end of Abraham's trial Jehovah said, “Now I know that thou fearest God,” &c. (ver. 12). It was not that He did not know from the beginning; but the proof of it was now given and recorded for strengthening believers who partake of like precious faith. Scripture gives a sample of it (shall we say?)—a sample of its obedience, of its confidence, and dependence, yea, its endurance of fire and trust in God, of which no brighter example is found in the word of God.

Thus obedience in faith is seen at the first. The divine command is given; and early in the morning Abraham sets out toward the mountain indicated and has the full scene before his mind. Quite inexplicable was this command, most painful to him unless he was stoically indifferent; but that he was not is proved by his desire to have a son (Gen. 15:2, 3), even as his great love is proved by the way in which God points out Isaac, “thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest.” God knew the special love that Abraham had for Isaac, who was a miraculous gift from God; nor could obedience be put to a severer test than to offer up as a sacrifice that son whom he loved. Abraham's obedience proves that what he loved most was given to God. There is no wavering during the three days' journey. Had he been indifferent, he would not have shown obedience but hardness of heart. But his obedience was manifest; he answers immediately to God's call and prepares to depart. He rose early in the morning, even slave the wood for the burnt offering, and, without telling Isaac the design of his journey, departed with him and the two young men to the mountain in the land of Moriah. No doubt his affection was tried to the utmost, but there is no wavering. And it was not only natural affection that might rebel against what would appear a strange command, but long before (Gen. 13.) God had pledged His word to bless all the world in Abram generally; and because he believed God, circumstances notwithstanding, had he not been accounted righteous (Rom. 4:19-22). And now Isaac, the only visible link and first of that chain of blessing, which the world is to receive through him, is to be offered up as a sacrifice! Nature might say all would become impossible.

But where would be God's promise? Where would be the righteousness that was reckoned to Abraham for believing it? There would be not only a conflict between the natural feelings of Abraham and the word of God, but a seeming contradiction between the command and the previous promise. Thus there was room for nature to question if his obedience could be right under the circumstances. Did he hear and understand aright the command? Would not the promise that his seed through Isaac should be a countless multitude and dominant in the earth imply that to

sacrifice Isaac would be to thwart God's purpose concerning him and the world, and be like abandoning His promise? Did not the natural feelings of a father afford scope for doubt and unbelief, and help the thought that he had misunderstood? Here were three sanctions working with no small effect on Abraham's mind. Natural affection, and in this case a very special affection; secondly, faith which be by no means relinquished and by which he obtained righteousness, with which moreover nature could clearly unite to withstand obedience to the third sanction, viz., the present command of God.

What a device of Satan to bring past truth into apparent collision with present obedience! But with Abraham natural feelings counted as nothing compared with God's unmistakable though inexplicable command; and all that passed through his mind was at once brought into subjection to the word of God. There was in truth but one way in which he could bring together and harmonize the promise and the command, and that way he took, wonderful as it was and unheard of. It was the way of resurrection. Abraham accounted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. No such thing had he heard before, that any one should be raised from the dead. He might have heard of Enoch's translation; God could prevent death. But to bring through death was an unknown thing; and now it must be, for the command was irrevocable. If Isaac's birth was miraculous, so would his life be. At all events every doubt and every fear was hushed by his ready obedience in faith. And thus Abraham and Isaac journeyed together till the third day. And when he sees the mountain, his faith does not fail but seems to grow stronger. He bids the young men wait with the ass, while he and the lad go yonder and worship; and his worship was to sacrifice the lad, and to receive him in resurrection, so that it gives a new feature to the original promise. Abraham's seed must still be as the stars innumerable. But death is in the way; only by resurrection can the promise be made good.

How wonderfully the purpose of God for the whole earth is combined with the trial of faith in an individual saint! Indeed we are told by the Holy Spirit that Abraham had the assurance of resurrection, “accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” His faith in the previously given promise is not shaken by the present command. Mark the words “worship” and “come again.” It is a seal to the promise, and Abraham worships. Faith removes all difficulties, and the path of the believer shines more and more unto the perfect day. In the quiet command to his servants there is no boasting of his faith: enough for them that he, the father, and the son, will come again; in his bosom the yearning of nature and obedience to God are reconciled by faith. And faith governed Abraham from the time that he was called away from His kindred, not knowing whither he went, only knowing that he was to receive an inheritance.

Nor does Isaac know the object of the journey, for he inquires for the lamb. How it must have awakened afresh the affections of the father, if indeed they ever slumbered, when Isaac innocently asked, “My father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb.?” There was an apparent shrinking from telling Isaac that he is the lamb; perhaps a father's feelings led him to evade a direct answer. His faith was between him and God. It was to him, as to the saint in Pergamos (Rev. 2:17) a white stone, upon which was engraven a new name, the new name of resurrection, which no one knew save He Who gave and he who received. All he says is that God will provide a lamb for Himself. Could that lamb be Isaac? But the thought did not turn him from simple obedience. Indeed his obedience in faith shines all through this trial. And when Isaac is bound and laid upon the altar, he makes no resistance, but bows to the command of God. Had Isaac faith in

God's raising him up again? Be that unknown, at all events there was submission. It was Abraham's faith that was tried, and it was found to the praise of Him Who gave it, and sustained it all through. Yet with what joy they must have substituted the ram caught by its horns in the thicket! How they must have rejoiced together in “coming again” to the young men! Abraham's faith shone brighter than the purified gold. And how precious to God in the trial was Abraham's endurance of the fire, his obedience, and his confidence in the certainty of the promise! Abraham's joy, after his trial must have been like that spoken of long after by James, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). Temptations in this scripture are outward trials. R. B.

Chapter 269

The Trial of Faith: Part 3

Gen. 22, Heb. 11

But there is more than his obedience in faith; there is also the confidence and the dependence of faith. For what can more express confidence in the truth of God than the words, “we will come again?” This confidence was clearly stronger than the fear of death, or his inability to reconcile the past promise that Isaac should be heir of the world with the present command to offer up his son. Every circumstance was against their coming again, and forbade the thought. Nay, the word of God seemed to place a barrier to their coming again, which he could in no wise surmount save by resurrection. But Abraham cleaves to what God is. It would be a wonderful way of deliverance no doubt, but he surrenders all into the hand of God, the promise, the command, and the reconciliation of the two. He is calm in the presence of such a dead-lock. It was impossible for God to fail; he would not judge by appearances. The word of God should be His rule (see John 7:24).

The promise was as explicit as the command, and he would cleave to the promise and obey the command; he could count upon God to bring him out of the seeming difficulty. How this dependence is felt and acknowledged too in his answer to Isaac, when the latter inquired for the lamb— “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb!” Besides the dependence due to God, the father's love is subdued by real trust in God Himself. But it bursts out in the words, “My son,” and is as quickly brought into submission, as is evident by the words following, “God will provide.” Whatever the distress, if he felt any in his soul, all was calmed by this, “God will provide.” His dependence on God is unshaken and firm, and makes him like a rock when assailed by mighty but unavailing waves. And this when his natural affection and his faith in the promise that he was to be the father of a numerous seed would have led him to hesitate as to the sacrifice of his son. He had sent away Ishmael, and was going to sacrifice Isaac, none being left. What would become of the promise? This is his strength, “God will provide.” During the fiery trial how his faith shines, rising above circumstances and seeming contradictions! And, when the trial is completed, with what joy and confirmation of faith he would sing in his heart, Jehovah-jireh!

Thus in Abraham is displayed the obedience to God, the confidence, dependence, endurance and trust of faith; as also in resurrection the answer to faith. Faith is not to be weakened by any circumstances, however adverse they may seem. And “Jehovah will provide” comes with increasing power as we gaze on him from his rising early to cleave the wood till his parting word to the young men, “We will come again.”

In very truth full blessing waits for resurrection. So had Abraham (in figure); it was from death that he received Isaac (Neb. 11:19). But our Isaac is already risen, and in the midst of trial we can say, “Jehovah-jireh.” But the rest of victory and the crowning will come at Christ's appearing, and the faith which seems now so weak will then be as pure gold.

The Holy Spirit brings believers into a new place. Once we were as others, the children of wrath; now by faith in Christ we are sons of God (Gal. 3:26); now by faith in Christ we bear a new

character before God. Christ is the best robe, the wedding garment, clothed in which we stand in God's sight. Every believer has it; he has not to wait for a high development of this or that as if there were an esoteric class among believers to which each must attain before he can put on such a robe. It is the only garment we can wear in the presence of God. And it is for all, for the least as for the greatest; and with it eternal life is joined, nor can they be separated. Without it a man is a child of wrath and as such is lost forever. Even now clothed with this garment he is translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and must be conformed to the Son's image—must learn, so to speak, the rules of His kingdom. And the faith in which he stands becomes, wielded by the Holy Spirit, a motive-power by which the inward man is renewed day by day (see also Eph. 4:23)—alas, amid much weakness, pressure and perplexity, pursued and smitten down, yet the Holy Spirit leads us on to victory: a victory through resurrection, the thing typified—unknown to Abraham, but revealed to us, for we have redemption in Christ and are risen in and with Him. Hence the apostle, in view of death and resurrection, and of the untold blessings to the believer, better than creation contains, could say, “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:17, 18). “Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

After the resurrection (figurative) of Isaac, God repeats and thus confirms His promise to Abraham (compare Gen. 22:18 and 12:3 with Gal. 3:16), and enlarges His promise, not only that his posterity should be as the stars in heaven and as the sand on the seashore, but also his Seed (i.e. Christ) should be for the blessing of all nations. Thus all, even the earthly blessing through Israel, depends upon resurrection. And this may be called the earthly side of the wonderful event on the mount. Not even the blessing and joy of the millennium could be secured without resurrection. Did this render Abraham's eye clearer when he looked at the city which had the foundations? when he looked onward and saw the day of the Lord? (John 8:56).

But it is not merely a trial of Abraham's faith; it is typical as well as historical. Another purpose arises, which was beyond the vision of Abraham, though even that one with all its sorrows and glories was needed for the blessing of his race, but in which there was a fullness where Israel was but a light thing. For a mystery was hidden till the time of its revelation, which we only now know because the great sacrifice is completed, and Gentiles are called in to share with Israel the blessing of the cross. Now after the sacrifice on Calvary we can trace the foreshadowing in Abraham's trial, which would otherwise, as a type, have been unintelligible. With the antitype before us we see how imperfectly any type can foreshadow the depths of Calvary. Like Isaac He was led to the slaughter, but unlike Isaac He knew where the Lamb was. And as Isaac bare the wood, so did the Lord Jesus bear His cross. As Isaac was bound and laid on the wood, so was the Lord Jesus nailed to the cross. But there the type fails; no creature is sufficient to be a type. God may use a creature to set forth faintly some of the wonders, the sufferings, and glories we see in Christ; but what creature gathers them up in his own person? A voice from heaven arrests Abraham with the knife in his hand, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad.” A voice from heaven said, “Smite the Man that is My Fellow” (Zech. 13:7). Isaac passed through death figuratively; the Lord Jesus in reality. God told Abraham to spare Isaac, but did not spare His own Son, the Well-Beloved and Only-Begotten. There was no ram substituted on Calvary; the blood of Christ alone cleanseth from all sin.

(Transcribed by R. B., Junr)

The True Vine

CHAPTERS 13. to 16. form a very distinct section in the Gospel of John, and present to us the Lord's precious communication to His disciples in the upper chamber at Jerusalem on the night of His betrayal. They are sub-divided, however, into two parts. Chapters 13. and 14. are characterized by grace—He promises to return, to send the Comforter, to manifest Himself to His own; and gives them His peace. Chapters 15. and 16. the rather press responsibility. This is very strikingly seen in the parable of the vine and the branches. Christ declares Himself to be the true vine, His Father the Husbandman. Of old Israel had been called the vine of God. Jehovah had brought a vine out of Egypt, and had cast out the heathen and planted it (Psa. 80). He had bestowed much patient care upon it and had granted many privileges; but where was the fruit? “Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isa. 5:4). Israel—man in the flesh—failed; privileges and favors developed no good where all was evil and corrupt. How often had Jehovah sent how patiently had He borne! but all was vain, Israel was a fruitless unprofitable plant. When Christ came to His own, He did not find idolatry as in the evil days of the kings; He found religion and plenty of it. We nowhere read of the restored remnant lapsing into the old idolatrous ways of their fathers; but when Messiah came, He found them sunk into cold dead formalism. Feast-days were kept, sacrifices were offered; but fruit, where was it? Alas for Israel!

Therefore He takes Israel's place, so to speak (brought out of Egypt by God, as truly as they, Matt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1), and commences Israel's history afresh, saying, “I am the true vine.” The same principle is seen in Isa. 49 Jehovah there addresses (not the nation, but) Christ, “Thou art My servant, O Israel, in Whom I will he glorified.” Though Israel had failed, He would not; but would bring forth abundance of precious fruit in the scene where hitherto the Divine Husbandman had looked for it in vain.

But the vine has branches; these are the disciples, and indeed all who attach themselves to Christ, and profess His name. There is an immense difference between salvation and fruit-bearing, between being a branch of the vine and a member of Christ's body. To fail in seeing this difference is to lose the instruction of John 15, and, more serious still, to imperil the peace of conscience which those are entitled to enjoy who rest upon Christ and His work. When I think of salvation, I think of grace; but when fruit-bearing is before my mind, I think of responsibility. Every branch in Him should produce fruit: only thus are they manifestly His disciples; and fruit can only be borne as the result of abiding in Him. Where are we without Him? “Apart from Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Thus are we taught the ever needed lesson of dependence. It is ours to count on Him and draw upon His fullness of grace that the new man may develop himself in the power of the Holy Ghost. “Much fruit” is His desire, not merely a little here and there: anticipating thus the perpetual fruit-bearing in the glory of His presence (Rev. 22:2).

The Father is glorified in us thus, and we walk in the enjoyment of His love, keeping the commandments of Christ. The Father's hand is upon His own—ever in love—to increase their

fruitfulness: “every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Purging is oftentimes painful and grievous, and we are prone to miss the divine mind as to it when experiencing it; but love orders all for the divine glory and the soul's welfare. Things spring up in us, and quietly develop and grow, of which perhaps we are but little conscious, but which, nevertheless, would seriously retard our progress in moral conformity to Christ's image, if permitted to go on. We are under the care of the Husbandman. The saints are God's husbandry (1 Cor. 3:9), and the pruning knife is graciously and in love applied. Precious dealings! needed because of the deceitfulness of the heart while passing through this present scene.

But all the branches are not true men, for profession, not life, is the subject here; and the reality of profession is shown by fruit. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Therefore the Lord proceeds to say, “If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Note, the language is general, “If a man.” The Lord does not say to the eleven, “ye,” as in vers. 4 and 5; of their reality there was no doubt, the Lord Himself having just pronounced them clean through His word. He had spoken differently in chap. 13., when washing their feet—Ye are not all clean—for Judas Iscariot was then present; but the traitor had gone out, and all who remained were true, however failing. Judas Iscariot was a sample of the class of whom the Lord now speaks; he had not abode in Him; to his own eternal loss and ruin. More of such are found in John 6. His sayings were “hard” to them. They went back, and walked no more with Him, even though He, and He only, had the words of eternal life.

Wholesome indeed are the “ifs” of scripture; not indeed to distress the believer, such being by no means the object of the Spirit, but to sift and test those who profess the Lord's name. Where divine counsels are expounded, as in Ephesians, “ifs” are not found, for there all is of God. But where human responsibility comes in, as in Colossians and Hebrews, they are brought forward solemnly again and again by the Holy Ghost. There is a right use of such warnings, and there is a grave misuse.

W. W. F.

Chapter 271

Upon One Stone Are Seven Eyes

IN considering this important subject it may be well, at the outset, to deal with the particular numeral given, which is found here as elsewhere in scripture to signify perfection. And as in symbolic language “the eyes” or “eyes” signify intelligence, and further, in the passage under consideration, “seven” and “eyes” are brought together, it is obvious that the correct interpretation of these two symbols here conjoined is, that they thus are expressive of the perfection of intelligence.

This boundless range of a vision, so penetrative and clear-sighted that no object can possibly be hidden from it, had been pointedly referred to by earlier inspired writers, and ascribed to Him “that sitteth in the heavens.” To give an instance we quote from Psa. 33 (R. V.)—

“The LORD looketh from heaven;

He beholdeth all the sons of men;

From the place of His habitation He looketh forth

Upon all the inhabitants of the earth;

He that fashioneth the hearts of them all;

That considereth all their works...

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him,

Upon them that hope in His mercy;

To deliver their soul from death,

And to keep them alive in famine.”

In another (Psa. 11) we read—

“The LORD is in His holy temple,

The LORD, His throne is in heaven;

His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.”

Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great before the flood, but Noah found grace in His eyes.

What more desirable truth could Moses possibly have uttered with reference to Israel's promised land than this— “The eyes of the LORD are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deut. 11:12)? The personal responsibility of each individual inhabitant in a land thus highly privileged was correspondingly grave and great. He was to hearken to the voice of the LORD God, to do His commandments, and “to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD

thy God” (Deut. 13:18).

As having, each in his day, acquitted himself well in the carrying out of his personal responsibility, honorable mention is made of David (1 Kings 15:5), of Asa (1 Kings 15:11), and of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:43). Each therefore might take comfort from the express promise given to such in Psa. 101:6, even when experiencing searchings of heart because of personal failures, which each had occasion to mourn over with humbled spirit. Absolute perfection is only to be seen in the LORD'S “Servant.” He alone could abide the being tested by this high standard of excellence, and say, “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.”

To Him did the Spirit of God draw the attention of Joshua and his fellows. What though but a remnant had returned as yet, and the great bulk of the nation of Israel was still in foreign lands; this fact could not to faith make Him less “glorious.” More than this, the conscious weakness of that feeble remnant “in a day of small things” only made it the more incumbent upon them to accept Him as their strength. Well might their memories revive painful recollections of past dark days, wherein their guilty fathers had been again and again admonished that, in consequence of their shameless wickedness, Jehovah's eye would not spare them, nor would He have pity upon them; because their tongue and their doings had been against the Lord, “to provoke the eyes of His glory” (Isa. 3:8). But giving place to slavish fear did not become these living representatives of the same nation, whose safe return to the land had made themselves examples of mercy glorying against judgment. He, Jehovah's servant, was interested on their behalf, and His grace would be sufficient to meet their present and future need.

That Stone with seven eyes should be their abiding confidence. All the past was fully known to Him: yet had these personally been restored by grace into His favor. Their feeble condition at the moment then present could not escape His notice. Their realized weakness He would make an occasion of proving the all-sufficiency of the might of His power. As to the future, He understood them better than they did themselves; He would not fail them; and in their own and the nation's interests would take upon Himself responsibilities which none save Himself could possibly fulfill.

When one reads the significant words addressed to Israel by Isaiah (“And when ye spread forth your hands; I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” Isa. 1:15), one can enter in some measure into the feelings of Hezekiah upon receiving Sennacherib's letter of impious threatenings. Then in the anguish of his spirit he cried, “Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open Thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.” Henceforth Joshua and his fellows should have the comfort of knowing that before them was the Stone with seven eyes.

At a moment when he had least expected this, Nathaniel suddenly recognized Him in Jesus, on His saying, “Before that Philip called thee,

WHEN THOU WAST UNDER THE FIG TREE I SAW THEE

The surprised Israelite could not but instantly exclaim, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the king of Israel.”

The woman of Samaria discerned first “a Jew,” next “a prophet,” and ultimately “the Christ” in Him; for He had brought up before her notice all her past actions, and, while arousing her conscience, attracted her heart and satisfied her longing soul.

Others in the synagogue at Capernaum may never before have had the faintest suspicion that amongst them was a man possessed of an unclean spirit, until his inability to endure the presence of Jesus was made manifest by his crying out in real alarm. Nor did those who brought the woman taken in adultery ever in all their past lives experience such searchings of heart as when He made each one's sins manifest to himself. Herod's deep craftiness, as also theirs who raised the question about the paying of tribute, He openly exposed, and thoroughly disconcerted the hypocritical and self-righteous by answering, not simply their designing questions, but also their own heart's most secret thoughts.

Not one of her “many sins,” committed by the woman that stood behind Him weeping in Simon's house, had escaped His notice. Of them He bore witness before all, yet gave her the assurance that all were forgiven, and that those affections for Him that flowed out from her broken and contrite spirit were already met by her Savior's incomparable love for this repentant sinner.

The thrice repeated “Lovest thou Me? searched poor Peter's heart and conscience. “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee,” was his reply, at that moment discerning to his unspeakable relief that before him stood the “Stone with seven eyes.” And we, beloved brethren, have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” yea, to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith;” although we do well ever to bear in mind that, concerning ourselves and others, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.”

John beheld, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, standing “a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes.” Here we have the perfection of power allied with the perfection of intelligence. He has absolute authority over emperors, kings, and all nations.

Those ministers of His that do His pleasure go every one of them straight forward, giving place to none as they perform His sovereign will. The earth's mighty ones can place no obstruction in their path.

His “eyes” run to and fro through the whole earth, beholding the evil and the good. Nothing can by any possibility escape His notice, whether it be done in the far east, or the extreme west; at either of the poles, or at the equator. He that has, again and again, shown “Himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him,” is He that controls the destinies of the nations, and of the whole earth.

When He shall break each seal in heaven, the corresponding effects will be experienced on this earth.

Chapter 272

The Water That Was Made Wine

This was the beginning of the miracles, or “signs” as they are Galled in the fourth Gospel, wrought in Cana of Galilee. In it the “Lord Jesus manifested his glory,” a glory truly divine. The occasion was a marriage feast, to which He was invited, and His disciples, His mother also being there. How instructive the grace which thus lighted up with love and holiness from above an institution of God that began in the paradise of man, but apt to sink with the fall of man into levity and license! The law failed to retrieve it; the Lord alone vindicated it according to the mind of God that had been expressed before the law (Gen. 2; Matt. 19).

The Lord's bearing is a hard thing to those who idolize Mary. It is written for everlasting profit that, when the wine failed, His mother said to Him, They have no wine; and that He replied, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come (vers. 3, 4). Assuredly if any infer disrespect from these words, they are in error; but so are those who do not learn that the Son of God solemnly objects to dictation where divine glory was in question. He was sent to do the will of God His Father, not to please His mother, as here in her amiable solicitude for a family with whom she was evidently intimate, and at a time which engaged her feelings in their strait. Christ had already as a youth of twelve years testified to Joseph and Mary, after their anxiety, His consciousness of Sonship in the highest sense; now when emerging into public ministry He remonstrates with Mary, who as evidently now alone remained. Not even His mother must interfere with the glorifying of His Father, by a wish of hers however kindly meant.

And Mary understood it, saying to the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. She was still the meek bond-servant of the Lord, if others blasphemously make her the Queen of heaven and claim falsely the honor due to the Eternal Son. He, not she, is the One pre-eminently to be heard; as the Father's voice proclaimed on the holy mount, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. No more unworthy thought of fallen nature than to doubt His grace in Whom all the fullness dwells, or to imagine that He the one Mediator needs her intercession to stimulate or strengthen His love. He is Himself full of grace and truth; and He is able also to save to the uttermost (completely) those that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. On the contrary she is unable, either to save or so to intercede for others, and needed to pray herself, as she was a sinner like others to be saved by faith. So we find in the last record scripture gives of her in Acts 1:14: “These all [the apostles] with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer with [several] women, and Mary wine. It is the wonder of grace, yet of divine the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” What righteousness through redemption. And it is a contrast with ecclesiastical development in no long time! How soon men turned from him that called them in Christ's grace to a different gospel, which is not another, but perversion!

According to scripture, to hear His word and believe Him that sent Him, is to have eternal life and not to come into judgment, having passed from death into life. And that life is a life of obedience and love, as 1 John 5 carefully shows. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides

on him. Practical obedience flows from submission to His person, and proves the reality of the heart-subjection of faith.

Christ's hour was not yet come for going down below all depths to glorify God; still less to be set on high with all things put under Him. He was here to give such witness as might please His Father in all dependence. And a worthy witness followed. For as six stone water-pots stood there according to the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three measures (probably the Jewish Bath), He said, Fill the pots with water. And this was done to the brim; whereupon He bade them, Draw out now and bear to the feast-master. Thus the servants and the feast-master became the irrefutable vouchers of the work Christ wrought; as did the bridegroom, who for the moment reaped the credit of reversing man's way, and, instead of supplying what is worse when men have freely drunk the good wine, of keeping it till the last.

But no! It was Christ Who thus made grace to shine; not the first man, but the Second, and this, manifesting His glory, yet never leaving the servant character He had taken, always refusing to allow the honey of humanity in the offering no less than the leaven. If He proved the omniscient to Nathanael, He is here the omnipotent. It was the true transubstantiation of God's word. The water was made wine, and the good wine, as all could see and taste, and bow to the manifestation of His glory. To reject Him is to men's own shame and ruin, who obstinately will not have God or His Son on any terms, even when divine glory veils its splendor with flesh and in lowly grace adapts itself to our every need with power incontestable. Such is the Lord Jesus. He is speaking still to every soul in the gospel. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.

“The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word that we preach,” says the apostle; “because, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” To be saved from perdition through faith is not a miracle, sensible outwardly; but it is a greater wonder than the water made wonder God is showing day by day in all who believe, to the honor of His Son. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh, and is near you on the earth, the Son of man now in glory Who came to seek and to save that which was lost, Jesus the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever., Blessed are all those that put their trust in Him.

Chapter 273

Woman

Gen. 2

ALIENATED as fallen man is from God, nothing is so strange to him as the truth. And no wonder. It brings the true God before him, and reminds him of his departure from God. He is under Satan's lie, and naturally opposes the truth, which he is inclined to treat at best as myth, philosophic or religious. But it is by the word of God's revealed truth, that the Father of lights brought of His own will any forth, that they should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. His word is truth; and of that word Christ is the great personal object of faith, Who puts every soul that hears the gospel to the test. To this end is Be born, and to this end is come into the world, that He should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears His, voice, and follows Him Who gives the believer eternal life. “He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life” (1 John 5:12). If a man recognized his ruin and guilt before God, how would he not from his heart receive the Savior!

But, owning neither his own need nor God's grace in Christ, he stumbles at the word, being disobedient, and judges scripture, instead of being judged by it, as all believers are. Such an one sets Gen. 2. against Gen. 1., because through incredulity he sees God in neither, and is unwilling to learn the truth in each and in both, alike necessary to give us a complete view.

Beyond controversy Gen. 1:26-28 presents in noble terms the creation of man, the chief of his works here below. Here only did He call Himself into council; as man only He proposed to make in His image after His likeness, assigning dominion over the rest of earth's living creatures. But whatever may be the expression of singular dignity, it is simply mankind's place in creation, notably distinguished, and indisputably the highest, but yet the highest of earthly creatures, “male and female” like the rest of animated nature. It is therefore God, Elohim the Creator simply, of Whom we here read. It could not with propriety be otherwise.

Gen. 2. regards the scene from the point of moral relationship which brings in the name of Him Who governs on earth as revealed to Israel nationally, and so, in the O. T. as a whole, Jehovah, but Jehovah here carefully identified with the Creator, Jehovah Elohim, the LORD God. For there is none other. It is ignorance to account for the different names of God here or elsewhere, and any difference of words, style, &c., by imagining distinct writers, when all is demonstrably due to change of standpoint, and the simple but profound and exquisite accuracy of thought and language in Holy Writ. It is no rival account by another hand, but the same writer guided by the inspiring Spirit to set out man's moral position; the garden of Eden as the scene of his care, and, in the midst of abundance, the prohibition laid on him under penalty of death; the subject beasts, and birds, brought to him and named by him as their lord; finally a helpmate, in contrast with every other formation, taken out of himself in the wise goodness of Him with Whom we have to do.

All is consistent with the presentation of relationship, beginning with Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) in chap. 2:4, not Creator only but Moral Governor. Hence here, not in chap. 1, is the garden

of delight planted by the LORD God, the testing place of man's obedience. Here only in the midst of the garden we hear of the two trees: one the sovereign gift of life naturally; the other of responsibility. Here only are we told of man formed of the dust of the ground on one hand, and on the other by the LORD God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam was thus “son of God” (Luke 3:38), a living soul, not as other creatures by creative power wily, but he only by Jehovah Elohim breathing into his nostrils. Nor is the effect lost for the race; for, as Paul quotes to the Athenians, we too are His offspring, as no other earthly creatures are. Therefore is the soul immortal for good or for ill; if saved, it is forever with Christ; if lost, for everlasting punishment, because He is refused and men die in their sins. Such was man's relationship to Jehovah Elohim; and the test of obedience here therefore follows.

In pointed contrast with the relationship to him of every animal of the field and every bird of the heavens, to which their master gave names by divine authority, no helpmate appeared, till Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on the man. Then He took one of his ribs, and built it into a woman, and brought her to the man (vers. 21, 22). And the man, notwithstanding his deep sleep, recognized her at once as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. “This shall be called Woman (or She-man), because she was taken out of man.” It is the strongest possible statement of her peculiar relationship to himself, and as perfectly suiting chap. 2 as it would have been out of place in chap. 1. How sad that men of learning, professed theologians, should be so dull to discern the mind of God in scripture, so ready to plunge into the dark after any Will-o-the-wisp of rationalism to their own loss and the injury of all who follow them!

The apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11:8, 9, tersely sums up the truth of the case as having God's authority: “For man is not of woman, but woman of man; for neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” Those who venture to dispute the fact must one day learn what it is to give God the lie. It is the ground of the sanctity of marriage, one woman for one man: such was the order from the beginning of Him Who made her, as He did, of man, and so to be one flesh, alas! too soon forgotten by men generally and even by Israel. But there it was indelibly written to instruct the faithful and shame the rebellious.

And is it nothing for souls that the same apostle in Eph. 5:25-33 refers to this oracle of God? Yes, the first man Adam foreshadows the Second man and last Adam, on Whom fell a deeper sleep, that a heavenly Eve might be formed, even the church for which Christ in His love gave Himself, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. No doubt this mystery is great, but it is no less true and blessed. It is infinite grace, and only possible through the death of Christ, by which a poor sinner is reconciled through faith to God.

O despise not the living and abiding word! Despise not the grace of God which sends you His glad tidings in Christ and in His blood which cleanseth from all sin! It is for you, that, believing on the name of the Son of God, “ye may know that ye have eternal life,”

Chapter 274

The Woman Healed and Sent Away in Peace

Matt. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

Here we have a living picture of a soul smitten incurably for man, every effort fruitless, all medicine and physicians in vain, her resources spent, herself nothing bettered but rather grown worse.

But faith cometh by hearing; and, having heard of Jesus, she carne in the crowd behind, and touched His garment, or, as Matthew and Luke say, its hem. Faith is always sure of the Savior; it may have as feeble knowledge of itself as of Him, but it does not doubt in Whom the virtue lies. Much remains to be learned and corrected, but it goes straight to its object. For she said, If I but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole. And faith does not fail to receive its answer through grace. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of the scourge.

But the Lord knew the whole case better still, and meant for her no half blessing. She did not question His power; she seems to have connected it in her mind with His person and surroundings physically. She must learn that His soul acted with it, that His mind and heart were engaged in the blessing. It was not a charm, as heathenism made it in thought; nor was it even dependent on His bodily presence, as Jews were apt to conclude. He Who had deigned to become the Servant of divine love, in a world where sin reigned and had wrought fell ruin, would show her the kindness of God.

Touching the hem of His garment stealthily, she would, if the case had been left there, have ever felt that it was underhand and surreptitious. She did not as yet know God, though availing herself of Messiah's healing energy. The Lord could not in his grace consent to so partial a mercy. He is entitled, and He loves, to bless fully all whom He blesses at all; and “him that cometh to Me,” said He elsewhere, “I will in no wise cast out.” So fully did He come as a servant, that He was here only to do the Father's will, not His own. Whosoever came, He received. And the full blessing He gave from first to last; He would lose nothing, but raise up at the last day.

So even at this day He not only forgives transgression, and covers sin, and imputes no iniquity, but takes guile from the spirit. This the healed woman needed; this the Lord gave. So immediately perceiving in Himself the power from Himself gone forth, He turned round in the crowd and said, Who touched my clothes? The disciples, as so commonly, misunderstood; and Peter, with the rest, talked of the crowds hemming Him with their pressure. But the Lord alone knew in the highest way, that a certain one did touch Him; and He looked about to see who had done this. It was not that He could not have named her, but to give her opportunity to confess the truth. How little she knew the grace that filled Him! For frightened and trembling, conscious of what had been done upon her, she came, and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. How little she knew that such was the condition of her better blessing! And He said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go away in peace, and be well of thy scourge. How transporting to her as yet confused and anxious spirit! What solid abiding comfort for her to be thus in His presence, and to have all

out before Him, and to know Him more than confirming all she had got, with a message of peace unfailing for all chat is to come!

Such is the Lord to every need that is brought to Hine; such is He roost of all to that deepest need, which demanded not power only but propitiation in His suffering to the uttermost, the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. As He does not change, among human shiftings and men's various and strange doctrines, so neither dues His power, nor His love. But to be blessed fully we must meet Him face to face, and know from His own lips grace given to us. It was an immense mercy to have the mischief stayed, the living death arrested; but how touch more to hear His voice banishing all fear and sending her forth in peace, as we pass through a world of strife, and spite of a fallen nature which ever tends to pleasures that war in our members

There may he crowds around the Lord. He is not occupied with them, but passing through. The touch of faith, however uninformed or feeble, arrests Him at once. But a blessing, though immediate and rich, is not enough to satisfy him. The Blesser will be known, that faith may have a blessing, good measure, pressed down, shaken up, and running over: so does God give, not man. If it is for His glory that all be clear and confessed, it is also the condition of peace by faith. When silence is kept, the bones wax old through roaring all the day long, and the Lord's hand is heavy night as well as day, so that moisture is changed into summer's drought. But peace is known, when one's sin is acknowledged to Him; this cannot be while one's iniquity is hid. “I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” So it was, so it is, so it must be, as long as grace brings sinners to God. Nature is all wrong in fearing that the Lord begrudges blessing, and the fullest, and forever. It is no question of our merits who have but sins and death and wrath as we are naturally. It is His grace that saves; and His grace would have us to know that He makes salvation assured with all His heart.

Chapter 275

Women Praying and Prophesying

Q.-1 Cor. 11:5. Does it imply that in apostolic days women prayed and prophesied in public? Compare Acts 1:14; 2:17, 18; and 21:9. V. L.

A.-It is in ver. 18, that we hear of “in public” or in assembly. The early verses of the chapter treat of decorum in females. Wherever they might pray or prophesy, they were bound to walk in the subordination of God's order. But 1 Cor. 14:34, 35, enjoins imperatively silence on the women in the assemblies. It is not permitted to them to speak. They are to be in subjection, as the law also says. If they wish to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the assembly. Compare too 1 Tim. 2:11-14. It is likely that among other disorders Corinthian women spoke in the assembly: if so, the apostle put an end to it. Yet women might prophesy, as Philip's daughters in their father's house, and even then with careful decorum of subjection even outwardly marked. It is certain that they were charged to keep silence in the assemblies of the saints.

Chapter 276

Women Speaking in Public

As to women speaking in any way in the assembly, scripture is clear—it is not to be. 1 Cor. 14:34-35 cannot be misunderstood by those who only desire to do the Lord's will. The whole chapter gives the fullest liberty to the saints when gathered together, the only rule being that all must be done to edifying, which I need not say calls for the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, without Whom nothing can be to profit, or to the Lord's glory. Then we get the exception: “let your women keep silence in the assemblies: for it is not permitted unto them to speak,” &c. Substantially the same thing is found in 1 Tim. 2. Verse 8 says that “the men (for the definite article should be there) are to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Then the women's word comes: “In like manner also that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel,” &c., followed by “Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a Woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” I doubt not these words refer to the assembly, as 1 Cor. 14, for the great object of the first Epistle to Timothy is to show how one ought to behave (for so the verse should read, it not being merely, personal direction for Timothy as the A. V. would infer) in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. There are two reasons assigned why women should not lead: (1) the place God gave her at her first creation; (2) her part in the fall. (1) God formed Adam first, then Eve, and as 1 Cor. 11:3, puts it “the head of the woman is the man,” never vice versa. God having given her the second place, it becomes her never to seek the first. (2) “Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Satan introduced sin by means of the weaker vessel (Adam's case being worse rather than better or excusable, for, not being deceived, he sinned with eyes open): God therefore sets her aside from leadership.

A further reason for her subjection or silence seems to be given in 1 Cor. 14:36. “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you?” Now, weigh this word well and see what it involves. The word of God comes to the church (the woman), not out from it, as Romanists would teach us; the Christian woman is to learn and act upon the great principle, and learn from the man, and not assume to be the man's teacher.

It is noticeable that scripture nowhere forbids a woman to preach; but it is easily accounted for. An Eastern woman (and we must remember that the Bible was first placed in the hands of Easterns) had too secluded a place given to her to permit her ever dreaming of such a thing. But in the assembly of God, where all present are members of one body and saints of God, she might suppose a measure of freedom; hence the injunctions we have been considering.

But this is scarcely the point that is exercising some souls at the present moment; to it I now come. Is it permissible for sisters to take part at a Prayer meeting or a Bible reading? I admit freely that such meetings are not meetings of the assembly as such, unless specially so called at any time from the Lord's table; but may sisters take a part? My conviction is that, being a meeting with the doers opened to the public generally, it is out of order. I know no scripture which sanctions a woman acting in public. Though such gatherings are not strictly of the assembly, I feel the

principles apply; and in a day such as the present, when women in the world and to some extent in the church are changing entirely in their deportment (even in their attire), those who through God's mercy, stand for God's order in the assembly, at no small cost in many cases to themselves, should of all men stand firm in such a matter as this. Surely Christian sisters wish to do the will of the Lord, and net to follow the spirit of the age, though it is the easiest thing possible to get infected by it.

The instructions of 1 Cor. 11 I take to be of a different character. There, beyond dispute, women are allowed to pray and prophesy, provided they 'they do it with covered head, “because of the angels.” Now this is clearly not in the public assembly, for the same Epistle, as we have seen, expressly forbids it (and no reverent reader of scripture believes that scripture contradicts itself); it must therefore be in meetings of a private nature. In the early days more than now, saints often got together in an informal way, in private houses and elsewhere, for prayer and edification. TO such gatherings, not meetings of the assembly as such, and not of a public character, I conceive the exhortations of 1 Cor. 11 to apply. This' was resisted, I may remark, by some lately.

I trust I have written clearly and given the mind of Lord as revealed. I believe so, but if in any wise there be error, I shall be thankful to be corrected, by whomsoever the Lord may choose.

W. W. F.

Chapter 277

On Worldly or Religious Unions

WHAT leads to these few words is a letter from Chicago, which discloses the deeply painful and astounding fact, that there are professors of Christ, gathered to the Lord's name, who are banded on oath with the recent conspiracy in that city, or elsewhere also, of so called labor against capital. That this issued in robbery and arson, in mutilation and murder, and other forms, not of wickedness only, but of lawless and criminal violence, is only the natural and necessary result:

It appears that these unworthy abusers of the Lord's name have defied the meetings (leavened by their presence) to put them out from their midst, and dare to plead the names of J. N. D. and of the Editor of the B. T., as abettors of their ungodliness. For such a plea they have nothing but their own willful falsehood. Not only has there never been a word orally from either to furnish the smallest pretense for their talk, but the published writings of both are well enough known (wherever in the English, French, and other languages, they are read among Christians). Both refute the calumny and prove how hateful such combinations must be in their eyes, even if clear of any punishable enormities. None living ever more decidedly or constantly rejected their very principle as opposed to Christ.

We have always maintained that, as brought unto God, the Christian is bought with a price, the incalculable price of Christ's blood, and bound to glorify God in his body. As having the Holy Spirit of God, we are members of the one body of Christ even now and on earth; and no one estimating such a bond loyally and intelligently, as all profess by being gathered to His name, could consent to belong to another body, disparaging His, or yet more antagonistic to its nature, character, aims, and hope. To any one rightly instructed it will soon appear that special societies for Bible or tract distribution, for missionary work at home or abroad, for training of the young or for help of the sick and suffering, are usurpations of the functions of God's assembly or of its members as such; who are bound to do, in a better and holy way by His word and Spirit, what those societies attempt piecemeal and in a plan more or less human and worldly. Yet no fair mind doubts for a moment that in abounding grace God has deigned to bless these mixed and irregular agencies in the present anomalous and broken state of the church.

But nothing can justify a saint of God joining the irresponsible societies which resort to force and fraud in execution of their self-will, animated by motives alike short-sighted, selfish, and sordid. Their springs are infidel, their objects are revolutionary, their means are fallen man's will, coercing all they can, without a thought or care for God, Who sanctions nothing but faith working by love. This of course cannot actuate the natural man. But here we are contemplating those who claim to be sanctified and redeemed. Do any Christians claim under lying pretexts to be allowed also to trample God's revealed word under the foot of men who bear on their forehead the stamp of destruction, veritable enemies of the cross of Christ? No meeting sheltering the known members of such guilty societies of the world has the least title to he considered an assembly of God—at any rate, after the question has been fairly raised before the Lord and His word. If the meetings persist in disobeying the holy word of God, they become defiled with great guilt, and cages of

Satan. W. K.

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