BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 3

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 3, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

195 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 3

Notes on 1 John 1

THE great leading truth of all this Epistle is what is expressed in the first verse. That eternal life has come down—a real positive life. That eternal life that was with the Father, actually entered this world in the Person of Christ. The old thing—what the first Adam was, is entirely rejected. It is true, we have got both in its as long as we are in the body. But there is a Second man, the Lord from heaven, who has come in, because the first man was turned out. In blessed grace He comes down. And we have seen it, he says, land heard it—the word or life—that is, in Christ. He was walking about this world, another kind of life altogether. That is what He calls “from the beginning.” It was an entirely new thing, manifested here below.

Wherever there is the fullness of grace brought in, i.e. our privileges and relationships, we get the Father and the Son. Of course it is God, but God brought out in these relationships.

The first thing we have here, in virtue of the life of God given to us, is the fullness of the privileges of the saints in Christ. They have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. That brings a second point out, and it is this: —If you say you have that kind of fellowship, and walk in darkness, it is all false, because darkness cannot have fellowship with light. If you have perfect grace bringing in divine life—the life that was manifested in the person of Christ, and then communicated to us, he next says, “It is light.” God does not change the holiness of His nature; and therefore the pretense to have fellowship with it, if we are walking in darkness, is all false. Then he presents the remedy as regards our state; that is, that Christ cleanses us and makes its fit for the light. And the second thing which routes out in the next chapter is, that when, in our weakness, we had fallen into sin. “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Grace has provided for the evil, though there can be no communion with God in it. First, we have the fullness of the blessing; next its nature and character—God's light and purity; and then the means by which it is possible that such sinners as we can have all this blessing —first, by the cleansing, and then by the advocacy, of Christ.

“That which was from the beginning, which, we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which, we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life.” Christ is looked at in this world as the beginning or everything. It is not that the saints before had not received life from Him above, but the thing itself had never been manifested.

“'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard.” &c. It was in a man bodily. It comes by the power of the word now, but they had seen this eternal life in the person of a man walking about in this world. Just as we can see natural life in Adam, so we see divine life in Christ. If we look at the life in us, it is united with failure; but I can see and know what the perfectness of the life is by looking of “And the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” There we see and know it; and our spirituality depends on the degree in which we realize it. They had seen it as come in the flesh, amid it is declared unto us, that we may have fellowship with them and their fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is not merely a person justified before

God by the work of Christ, but it is fellowship with God in virtue of a life which was in Him before God—a life perfectly conformed to all that God is. Looking at the new nature given to us, in its holiness, and its love, it is the same thing as that which is in God. He gives me this life that there may be power. It cannot reveal things to me, but it can give me fellowship with God: It is not merely that I am justified before Him, but I have the same thoughts and feelings: He has them in and we having them from Him, they are the same. There is fellowship. There are common thoughts and joys and feelings with the Father and the Son, and that we know and have. He has given us the Spirit that there may be power, if the Holy Ghost works in us. All that was perfect in a man's feelings, according to the divine nature, Christ has had. If my soul delights in Christ, and sees the blessedness of what is in Him, do not I know that my father delights in Him too He delights in holiness and love, and so do we: that, is fellowship. You get fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is the blessedness that I have got. It is not merely the fact that I am accepted, who was once a sinner, but that, Christ having become my life, I get the blessedness of fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The, Father loved the Son—the Son loved the Father— and I get their divine affections and have fellowship with them. This is where He brings us; it is perfect blessedness.

Nor is this merely true in heaven; because Christ had not communion with His Father in Heaven. He served His Father upon earth—gave up His will in everything. The life was manifested to us here, not in heaven. Of course the full blessedness of it will be known in heaven, and therefore he says, “These I things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” We have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is nothing beyond that in heaven, itself. Therefore it is, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” That is the blessing He puts us in.

Now he brings in the test, that there may be no self-deception. This then is the message which we have heard of flint, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” if He manifested this eternal life, He manifested God too, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” With the thought of this life, He brings in that which tests everything in us too: that is the other side of it. It runs all through this Epistle. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Here it is said, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” The light is the purest thing, and it manifests all else. That was what Christ was—perfect purity, and as such He manifests everything. “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” It is impossible in the nature of things. If there is not the purity of this divine nature that is light in us, there is no fellowship with God. If we say that, there is, we lie, and do not the truth. There is no limit short of God Himself. The thing that is revealed is God. You cannot give man light, nor find the light for yourselves. It was in Himself. Now God has been manifest in the flesh, and therefore you have to “walk in the light as be is in the light.” And if we do, “we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.” We have in that seventh verse the three parts of our Christian condition looked at as men walking down here. We walk in the light as God is in the light, everything judged according to Him with whom we have fellowship. Next what the world does not know anything of, we have fellowship one with another.” That is, I have the same divine nature with every Christian—the same Holy Ghost dwells in me; so that there must be fellowship. I meet a perfect stranger traveling, and there may be more communion with him than with one whom I have known all my life, just because the divine life is there. It is a natural thing to the new creature; there is fellowship. But besides these, I am

cleansed— “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

We are in the light as God is in the light; we have fellowship together; and we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then he enters a little more into the practical condition of our own conscience. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” There is where truth in the inward part comes out. The new nature in us judges all the sin that is in us. He does not deny that we have learned the truth; but if Christ is the truth in me, it must judge all that is of the old man and sin. If a person has only learned the truth outwardly, he may gloss over all the rest. But if the truth is in us, everything comes out. If I say, I have no sin, looked at as in the flesh, I deceive myself and the truth is not in me. Yet it is not merely saying that there is sin in me that is the thing. It is when really the heart and conscience are touched so that I own I personally followed the flesh. It is not a doctrine then. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” His hearing towards us is gracious and forgiving, and he cleanses us completely.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” If we pretend not to have sinned, we make Him a liar; it is not merely that the truth is not in us, but I am making God Himself untrue in His Word. To say that I have no sin is to deceive myself; but to say I have not sinned is to deny God's truth even outwardly, because He says all have sinned. I am denying really the whole truth of God. But these are the two things that are called for: first, to know that the truth is in us; and then to confess our sins. A man may be dreadfully proud and not like to confess it; but when a person has, through divine grace, got the upper hand, he hates himself instead of excusing his sin, he confesses it, he has got right with God, and God says, I will forgive you; it is all done with. We stand before God in the sense of His favor. But besides that, we stand before God with the consciousness of being perfectly clean in His sight.

If I get into the light, with any dirt upon me, I see it there; if I am in the dark I see no difference. If we are in the light before God, all is seen. But if I am cleansed and in the light, I only see the more that there is not a spot in me. The two opening verses of chap. ii. are the means of maintaining us in the light.

The first chapter takes up these two things: first, the fullness of the blessing, in fellowship with the Father and Son; and, secondly, the nature of the fellowship, and then how a sinner can have it—the individual state of soul as judging and confessing sins, and truth in the inward parts. I cannot say I have no sin, and yet I say I am clean before God. There is where people mistake. They want a divine nature, which, instead of pretending to works, judges everything according to the light. Wherever there is sin on the conscience there cannot be communion, though there is a blessed means of grace that does cleanse. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” in chapter ii. 1, 2, we have the remedy for daily defilement. There it is Christ, not to maintain righteousness, but to restore communion.

Chapter 2

Notes on 1 John 2:1-11

THE two first verses connect themselves as a kind of supplement to the preceding chapter. He had put before them this privilege of fellowship with the Father and the Son, which must be in the light; and there was this perfect remedy, the blood of Christ, which presents us clean in the light. Now he says, “These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.” The object of all this was that they should not sin. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It is not exactly the same thing as in Hebrews, where we find a Priest with God, because there the question is of the possibility of our coming to God. There it is making good the truth that we can. go to God, and it has that character throughout. But all through the Gospel and Epistle of John he speaks of more than merely going to God as a public worshipper. Here we are much more intimate with Him. It is a different thing that I can go and worship before God and approach Him, or that I am in intimate fellowship with Him. We get into relationship with him. Whenever he speaks of grace, he speaks of the Father and Son, and when of light he speaks of God. In John 8., where they are all convicted of sin, it is God. “Before Abraham was, I am.” When He gets to grace, He speaks of being a good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep, and whose voice the sheep know. He says there is as much intimacy between you and me as between me and my Father. There is the perfect revelation of love in an intimate relationship like that.

Advocacy here is connected with the Father. Where communion is interrupted, it is restored: we do not cease to be sons and to be accepted. It is not a question here of whether as a sinner I can come to God or not, but of the loss of this intimacy which the least idle word destroys. And that makes it still further plain that accepted persons are spoken of here. It is not a question now of God's accepting. Not even priesthood had to do with that, still less advocacy with the Father. It supposes that we are naughty children, and that the freedom of this intimacy is destroyed, and Christ takes the place of Advocate to restore it. Grace works, but is never any mitigation of sin in itself: it is no allowance of sin.

The ground is thus laid in this remarkable manner. There are two things to consider; our standing in the presence of God, and on the other hand, the evil which is inconsistent with it. Christ has met both. “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” That never changes. The place which we have with God abides there, because Christ, the righteous One, is there. The perfectly accepted person is in the presence of God, and God is honored about the failure. “And He is the propitiation for our sins.” So that the advocacy of Christ with the Father is founded upon this acceptance, first of His Person and then of his work for us. We are accepted in the Beloved, and that never changes, because that righteous one always appears in the presence of God for us. And yet the Lord does not allow anything contrary to Himself. Sin is not passed over. “have an Advocate.” And yet, if He is the Advocate for these persons who have failed, it is because He is the propitiation for their sins. There is perfect acceptance. Having met all requirements about sin on the cross, we are put in the presence of God in the acceptance of Christ Himself.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” This bloodshedding is put upon the mercy-seat, in virtue of which we can go and preach the gospel to every creature. It does not mean that all are reconciled, but that the testimony of God's mercy went out not to Jews only, but to every creature in the world. Through this blood we can stand in His presence; but there failure comes to be the question for the conscience of the saint, and then comes in the advocacy of Christ.

But now he takes up another subject. The practical tests before men that we have got this life. In the main we may say that love to the brethren and righteousness or obedience are the grand tests. This eternal life we have seen in contrast with sin, sustained by the grace of Christ. Now we come to the same life shown in its fruits down here; and they were calling in question whether they had this life or not. Therefore he gives, in order to keep them in the consciousness and certainty that they had that life, these traits of it, which some of those of high profession had not. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” I would just observe here that throughout this Epistle you will find God and Christ so entirely confounded or united in the thought of the Apostle, that he speaks of one and then of the other as the same thing. Look at the last chapter. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in This Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” God is revealed to us in Christ. It may seem confusion, but it brings out the glory of the Person of Christ. So here, (ver. 28,) “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” He begins with Christ's appearing, and the same sentence ends with God himself. So here, with regard to God's commandments. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” They are Christ's commandments, and yet they are God's too. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.” A man says he knows God and does not keep His commandments—the truth is not in him, because this life is an obedient life, and if Christ is our life, the principles of Christ's life are the same in us. If the principle of obedience is not there, life is not there. But that is not all. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know, we that we are in him.” That gives a great deal more than the mere fact that he is a liar, if he says he knows God and does not keep his commandments. Another thing to be remarked is this. All John's statements are absolute. He never modifies them by bringing in the difficulties or hindrances that we may have in the body. “He that is born of God,” he says in chap. 3., “does not commit sin.” He is speaking there according to the very essence of the nature. The divine nature cannot sin. It is not a question of progress or degree, but “he cannot sin because he is born of God.” He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” (chap. 5.) The wicked one touches the Christian often; but he never can touch the divine life: and John always states it in its own proper absoluteness, according to the truth itself. There are plenty of other scriptures that show our inconsistency. But if the flesh acts, it is not this new life, but you get the measure of it in itself. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected,” &c. That is absolute. if I am only saying an idle word, that is not keeping His word.

This is an immensely blessed truth. Because if I was under law and took his word in that way, I should have nothing to do with life. It tells me to love God, and in that I fail. But here the revelation

I have of God in Christ is perfect love. The love of God is manifested, and if His word dwells in our hearts, His word is love and His love is perfected in us. “if a man keeps his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.” In him not only towards Men. If the word is kept, that word is the power of Christ in us, and that is the perfect love of God enjoyed in the heart. We may fail in keeping it, but the Apostle does not give these kinds of modifications, but the truth in itself; and it is thoroughly true, and experienced in the measure that the word of God is kept in the heart. The Holy Ghost is the power, bat we cannot separate that from the word. He is in us, and we have got that love in our souls—God's love as manifested in Christ. Supposing I got disobedient, I get sin in my heart instead of Christ.

“Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” Now he says we are in Him. We dwell in God. If I say I am in Him, I have got this strength and shelter in Him. Now you must walk as He walked. Christ is my life. Then I must walk like Christ. Not to be as He was—but we are not to walk according to the flesh. Therefore he does not say, You ought to be what Christ was; but that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.” If you say you abide in him, you are there always: you should always walk as He walked. There is never any reason for walking after the flesh. The flesh is in us, but that is no reason why we should walk after it. I am always at liberty to walk spiritually. There is liberty before God as to the walk. If I have got a fleshly nature, a commandment comes contrary to the will of that nature. I want to go into town, and I am ordered oft into the country. I do not like it. But supposing I was longing to go into town, and my father says, You must go into town; why then to do the commandment is liberty. So now all the commandments of Christ are according to the nature that I have got already. Christ is my life, and all Christ's words are the expression of that life. And therefore when Christ's words are given to me, they only give me the authority to do what my nature likes to do. All the words of Christ are the expression of what he was. They told out His nature and life and being, and when we have got that nature, they guide and direct us. Therefore it is real and holy liberty. We ought to walk even as He walked.

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.” That is, from the beginning of Christ—His manifestation down here.

“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you,” &c. Because they were looking for something new. One thing, he says, I boast of is that it is old, because it is what Christ was when upon the earth. But if you will have something new, it is Christ as your life by the Holy Ghost now. It is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the light now shines. It was true in him when here below, but now all this truth of the divine nature is as true of you as of Christ. Therefore it is new enough. It is old, because it was in Christ Himself; but it is new, because it is in you, as well as in Christ Himself.

So far we have had the first great principle of the divine life—obedience—walking in righteousness. Now comes the other side: loving the brethren. You are in the light, for God is light. Well then, God is love, and you cannot have one part of God without the other. If you have the light, you must have the love. Christ, when He was here, was the light of the world; but he was love too, and therefore if you have him as your nature, you will have both. “He that said he is in the light, and hated his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the

light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." In its very nature and way there is no occasion of stumbling. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." This is true really in detail. Because if I am walking in hatred to my brethren, I am walking in darkness. But the Apostle only gives the principle here. It is an old thing, because it was in Christ on earth; but is a new thing, because it is true in him and in you. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We get there what I many call the characteristic tests of Christ our life. One is light—obedience—for no righteousness can be, unless it is obedient. Christ says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Therefore we get this principle of obedient dependence which is righteousness. The other is love.

Here then we have, first, as a supplement to the previous chapter, the advocacy of Christ; and then, in the other parts of the Epistle, the tests of this divine life as manifest in obedience and love to the brethren. In the life of Christ Himself all was most wonderfully, perfectly, and blessedly brought out.

Chapter 3

Notes on 1 John 2:12-28

This comes in now as breaking in upon the general course of the epistle, and giving an account of why he wrote, and what he felt in writing.

And first we find him speaking to all Christians, whom he calls “little children,” and then addressing different classes of Christians, and telling why he wrote to theme. It is his heart opening itself out to those to whom he was writing; and then we get some important practical truths.

In verse 12, the “little children” is the same as in verses 1, 28, but different from the “little children” in verses 13, 18. In the former, he is speaking of all Christians, and calls them his “little children” whereas, in the other verses, it distinguishes between the young men, fathers, and the babes as these young Christians. But in the 1st, 12th, and 28th verses, the word includes all saints.

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake.” That is true of all Christians. It is their universal condition. He had said before, “Hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments.” This was not to throw any doubt upon Christians being forgiven, but to stablish them in the truth, because he says, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins am forgiven for his name's sake.” That was a settled thing; they were all forgiven, and he wrote unto them because they were forgiven. A person that is not forgiven, the epistle does not apply to. He takes that ground in writing to them. “He says, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake.” That was the common condition of all Christians.

But now, when he comes to the different classes of Christians, there is a different character and position given to each of them. “I write unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning.” Amongst the little children of verse 12, there may be old Christians and babes. The fathers had known “Him that is from the beginning.” We have seen before, that means Christ in the world; His person manifested in flesh. “Ye have known him that is from the beginning.” That is where all experience ends. Not in a knowledge of self merely, as being occupied with it, but in such a knowledge of it as empties us of self, and gives us Christ. When a person is a young Christian, he is occupied with his feelings; it is all fresh and new to him, and it is right enough he feels such wonderful joy in being forgiven. But, as you grow up, you get more and more emptied of self and occupied with Christ. Christ is this, and Christ that. In verse 14, he only repeats the same thing when writing to the fathers. He has a great deal to add, when he writes to the young men, but, to the fathers, it is still, “Ye have known him that is from the beginning.” We learn our own foolishness and weakness, and so are cast upon Christ, and learn more of the depths of His grace, the perfectness of His person. All right experience ends in forgetting self and thinking of Christ.

Next, he comes to the young men: “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” Having Christ with them, they have got strength in conflict and in service—they have overcome Satan. Then he says, “I write unto you babes, because ye have known the Father.”

Here again, we get another remarkable fact as to what he thought about Christians. That is, the babe in Christ—they that were but children, had the Spirit of adoption. He has no idea of the weakest Christian not knowing that he was a child of God. To know Christ well, in the riches and excellence of His person, is to be a father in Christ. But the youngest Christian knows that he is a child, and that the Father is his Father. It is like all Christians being forgiven—it is his place as a Christian. “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” It is not that you will not find persons doubting. You will find many a person who if you ask him whether he is a child of God or not, will think it very humble to doubt about it, but who, in his prayers, cries “Abba Father,” with all his heart. It is between him and God.

Repeating it over again, he has nothing to add to what he has said to the fathers, because all ends in Christ. With the others he goes more into detail, because of the difficulties of the way, and he brings out the secret of strength for them—the word of God, in the midst of this world, where nothing is owned of God—God's mind comes into this world, and that it is what we want. There is no way in the desert, as is said in the Old Testament. The word of God is God's way in the midst of a world where there is none. Therefore, when they are in the conflict, he says, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” That is the word by which Christ Himself overcame, when the wicked one came and offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, He answered by the word—He overcame the wicked one.

Then He warns them:—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” These things belong to it. All the glory of this world is not of the Father at all.

And the more we look into John, and indeed all through the New Testament scripture, you get two great systems brought out plainly. He does not say you do not love Christ. But there is one great system that belongs to the Father, and another that belongs to the world. Everything belongs to God as a Creator; but morally all is departed from Him. It was the devil that made this world, looked at as a moral world. God made paradise, and man sinned and got out of it, and then made up this world. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and builded a city, and called it after the name of his son. Then God sent His Son, and they would not have Him, and thus it was a judged world. God has put it fully to the test; without law, under law, and then by His Son: and then He says, It is all judged. But then He has a way of His own, the Father has, and you cannot have both. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. You may be tempted by it, and have to overcome it; but if you love it, the love of the Father is not in you; because He has got a system of His own, and you are going to the other system. It is so, all through. In the gospel we get divine life in the person of Christ, and in the epistle, this divine life in the person of Christians. In John 8, you will see the same truth. “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world,” There is no middle path with God. If they are of this world, they are from beneath; and if they are not of this world, they are from above. He says, I am not of the world; I am from above: because He came from the Father. You are of the world, and therefore from beneath, because it is Satan's world. So here—if the love of the world is in you, the love of the Father cannot be. There is another divine system, where the love of the Father is displayed, and if you

belong to that, you have to overcome the world. It is not of the Father: it does not belong to that system.

Then he adds this:— “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” Satan's works cannot last. They are seductive while they are there, but they cannot last: “but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” —We have the same thing in another epistle. “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever.” So here. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever” —he that follows that word. The word of God brings all this into us, and that is what we have to follow.

Now he turns to the third class, having given this warning to the young men. For when a Christian is first converted, he would not thank you for the world. But when he has got on a little, that freshness fades; the world gradually eats out his freshness. If he is not careful if his soul is not full of the things that are not seen, he gradually slips into the world. If he is full of Christ, he does not even see the things around. in chap. 5. John speaks of overcoming the world. There is the loss of all power and spiritual enjoyment, if the spirit of the world comes in; you cannot think of the things which the world suggests and the things of the Father at the same time. If the Holy Ghost is suggesting divine things to me, I have the present consciousness of belonging to all these things.

He turns, in verse 18, to the little children, and he tells them, “It is the last time.” That is a remarkable expression, because 1800 years have gone on since then, and it remains equally true that it is the last time; only the Lord, in His patience, is waiting, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But it is the last time, because the power of evil has come in. When Christ was here, and was rejected, the power of evil was in the world. Then, when God raised up the Church by the presence of the Holy Ghost, while Christ was on high, so that a man was in heaven, and the Holy Ghost in the world—there came power of redemption into the middle of Satan's world. That was not the last time. But now antichrists had come in, and he says, “this is the last time,” because even this had failed, and nothing will come after this but judgment. “Little, children it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” These babes in Christ had broken with the world—done with its course. But here was a new kind of evil in the very place of divine power; persons setting up themselves, abandoning Christ, and that was more dangerous. They had broken with the world, and knew what it was. But here comes in spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. He warns the babes against these enemies of the last times. Thank God we have the warnings now. The Apostle Paul even says, these are the last days, which is stronger still. But there is entire security where Christ is looked to. It is remarkable how He looks at the presence of the Spirit of God in the saints. He may be a babe; but God will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able to bear. There may be the young men, but God gives them discernment; they know not the voice of strangers. These people may come to them with ever so much pretension, but it is not a voice they know. They know the voice of Christ, and they follow Men.

We saw that the babes in Christ knew the Father, and now we find further that these very babes have the divine unction, so that they will be able to judge through divine knowledge. He is pressing upon them their own competence, not as others, in themselves, but as taught of God, to avoid all snares. It is the subtlety of Satan, and therefore he warns the little ones more against it. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no he is of the truth. Who is a liar but He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” There he gives us the full character of the antichrist. There were many antichrists, because the spirit of it had come in. Here it is the full character of it. It takes a certain Jewish character denying Jesus to be the Christ. And it is opposed to Christianity, denying the Father and the Son.

Then he presses another point of immense importance, because people in these days use a great many fashionable words, such as development.

“Let that, therefore,” the apostle says, “abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” It is the person of Christ. Instead of talking about the Church as a body that teaches, I say it is taught.

The thing that is revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that which was from the beginning. But if my soul is resting upon that, the truth about Christ as taught by the Holy Ghost, I am taught of the Father. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes... of the Word of life.” And now he says, “Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.” It is the person of Christ that is the great thing, and it was by the revelation of that, that the Church itself was formed. It exists in virtue of being taught of God. The Church had nothing to do with teaching at all. God may raise up individuals in the Church to teach, but the thing pressed upon us is that which we have heard from the beginning. It is a test of divine truth that we hold fast the starting point—Jesus Christ. This is what tests everything. Where people insist upon the authority of the Church, they never have the certainty of being children. If I am taught of God, I shall know what I have got for certain. Faith is always absolutely certain. IF I have got the Father, I know that I am a child. I may be a naughty child, but still I am a child. “If that which ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.” He has promised me eternal life, and I shall have it; it is a perfectly settled thing.

“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all thing's, and is truth, and is no he, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” There is real divine teaching. God may use an instrument to put it before us, but there is no real faith in the soul except where there is this unction of the Spirit of God. There may be convictions of sin before we get our souls clear as to being saved. But the moment I am divinely taught the person of Christ, say I have got eternal life—the life that God sent into the world.

A babe in Christ being most in danger he enters into these kind of warnings; but a person grown up, into Christ knew very well where these things came from. What we should think now would be very learned things in Christianity, he says to the babes; but the great thing that marks those that

are the most advanced—the fathers—is their knowledge of Christ.

Chapter 4

Notes on 1 John 2:28-29 and 3:1-11

The apostle takes up again in this twenty-eighth verse all Christians in general, with an exhortation to abide in Him. You get here God in Christ so before the apostle's mind, that he says “Him,” without saying who He is. He had been talking about the anointing— “even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” Previously, it was rather God as such spoken of; but “when He shall appear,” we know Christ is meant thereby.

“And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” If they did not abide in Him, the apostle had lost all his work. It would have been so far to his shame. You get the same thing in the second epistle, (ver. 8,) “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” It is just what the apostle says in Corinthians. (1 Cor. 3:12, &c.) If we build upon the foundation, wood, hay, and stubble, the work will be burnt: there will be loss: he is proved to be a bad workman. The apostle here is pressing upon them to abide in Christ, that he may not be ashamed as a bad workman. It is “that we may have confidence and not be ashamed,” &c. Not you may have confidence, &c. Just what you get in the second epistle.

Then he takes up the second great object of the epistle—that communication of the divine nature of Christ, as our life, which gives us the same traits and characters that there are in God Himself—“which thing is true in him and in you.” God is love, and the Christian loves. God is holy, and the Christian is so too. In His almighty power, God, of course, is alone. But in what may be called the character of God, inasmuch as we are born of Him, we are like Him. And this divine nature enables us to enjoy God, as well as to be like Him.

Then, again, we see that God and Christ are so absolutely one, that the apostle says, “that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming;” but immediately adds, “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him.” We are born of God, yet it would appear to be speaking of the same that should come—which is Christ. We find the same truth in Dan. 7. The ancient of days described there, in Rev. 1 is the Son of man. We get in Christ what the character and nature of God is, in a man as living in this world; and then he shows that it is true of us too, as having the same life. He is righteous; and if a man doeth righteousness, he is born of Him. He has this nature. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.” When once you come to grace, we have the Father spoken of again. We are called God's children because we really are so. “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” Who? Now the “Him” means Christ. The world knew him not: it does not know us for the same reason. We have the same life and character that He had. The world cannot recognize and own what is of Christ in us, because it did not recognize it in Christ. It is extremely remarkable and blessed for us to see this man, the humblest man that ever was, and to find out what He really was, that God really became a man. The Word was God, and was made flesh.

We have got the same life; and when we have found Christ, we know that we have found God in all His blessedness close to us. And the world cannot know us. It does not know God, and cannot know us. You will find persons with a difficulty as to knowing whether it is Christ or God here, because the apostle carefully puts them together.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” It has not been seen what we are to be. The apostles saw it for a moment in the transfiguration; but as to the revelation of it, it does not yet appear. But being saints of God, having the same life, we know that we shall be like Him. He identifies God with Christ, and in a sense identifies us with Him. His glory is not yet manifested; but we shall be like Him, for “we shall see Him as He is” —not as He will be, but as He is now in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. The flesh could not see this and subsist. Daniel fell as one dead, and John too, at the appearing of it. But we shall be like Him, and therefore capable of seeing Him as He is. This is a matter of infinite blessedness. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. If we were only conscious that there was all this blessedness, and yet had the thought, I am not to be like it, that would not be joy: whereas we are in it with the consciousness that we are the same. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” That is, in glory as He is at the Father's right hand, and we shall see Him in that way.

“And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” That is, the hope of being like Him— “that hath this hope in Him,” that is in Christ—the hope of being like Himself. It does not say that he is pure as Christ is pure. But I have got the glory; and as it is mine, and I am going to be like Him, I must be as like Him as I can now. I must purify myself, and He is the measure of it. We are called by the glory to be up to it practically. The apostle says, “I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I have not got this resurrection from the dead, but I am pursuing it. But when Christ comes, He will change our vile bodies—and then we will have got it. The connection between glory and present walk is striking. As long as we are down here in. this corruptible body, there is not a bit of glory. But the Spirit of God applies all this glory to the affections. I long to be like Christ, and therefore I get like Him in spirit. It is like a man that has a bright lamp before him at the end of a long passage. I have not got the lamp till I get to it, but I get more of it at every step. So with the glory. I have not got it till I am in it; but I get more of it the nearer I move towards Christ. So in Ephesians, He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. He was washing and cleansing it, and would take away all spots. But it was that He might present it to Himself without spot. The spirit takes of the things of Christ and presents them to us, and transforms us into the likeness of Christ. In Philippians he is speaking of the spiritual effect, by actual resurrection, upon the heart. “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” It is the actual thing, and he gets it applied to his heart now. “Not as though I had already attained, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Christ, in grace, had laid hold of him for the glory. Now he sees the glory, and follows after it. It is the glory in resurrection applied to the man's heart all along the road. So it is here. “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” This bright and blessed glory fixes the affections and purifies the heart and forms the proper Christian path. It is a sanctifying hope—the soul being occupied with Christ, so that it is kept out of the evil.

He then goes on to another thing. If I go and commit sin, it is the lawlessness of the flesh, and nothing to do with Christ. “Whosoever committeth sin, committeth lawlessness; and sin is

lawlessness." He does his own will in spite of God if he can. Because without the law sin was in the world. It is a kind of background he is taking. If you are not purifying yourselves, as Christ is pure, it is the lawlessness of the flesh; it is entirely opposite to Christ. There is no middle path. There is nothing good in this world. It is either Christ or flesh. Man is fallen and out of paradise, and there is nothing owned at all of man now. God made paradise, and man is out of it; and He made heaven, and man is not in it. But between the two there is nothing that God owns. God never made the world as it is, nor man as he is, i.e., not the moral state that the world and man are in. It grew up when God had driven man out from His presence. Then Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his seed outside God. It must be either "ye are from beneath," or "I am from above." "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." If the law, then, is applied to the flesh, of course the flesh transgresses it.

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." There was no sin in Him; and He came to do this away.

Then he takes in the strongest way the opposition between the two. "In him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." He is taking the two things as opposed in every way. Because, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," he says to the same persons. But here, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," &c. The divine nature cannot sin. The thing that is born of God cannot sin, and that is ourselves so far as we are in Christ. As the apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Of course, that is not sin. The saint is never looked at as in the flesh; but "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." It is not merely that you are changed, but you are made partakers of the divine nature. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." He has got the same nature which walks in the same path. Christ has died as regards our guilt, and what is spoken of now is the communication of this nature. A man might come and make a great boast of high doctrine, and not do righteousness. Then I say, "That is not the divine nature. We have it in Rom. 6: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" You are dead. How can you be living in sin? Through carelessness you may fall into it, but that is not living in it. In general he takes what the truth is in itself, that we may know it in all its force. "He that committeth sin is of there devil." He takes the opposite thing altogether. "For the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." How can he "For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." It does not say, "he ought not to sin," but "he cannot." It is not a question of progress, but of the nature. The nature a man is born of is the nature he has, Take any animal you please, and this is true of it. We are born of God, and we have got that nature, and I say that cannot sin. I have got the treasure in an earthen vessel—that is true. The flesh is there, but the new nature is a sinless nature. It is, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," &c. "In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." There are the two traits which show themselves in a thousand details of life—righteousness, practical righteousness and love of the brethren. Mere amiable nature you find in dogs and other animals, it is animal nature; but the love of the brethren is a divine motive. I love them because they are of God. I have communion in divine things with them. A man may be very unamiable naturally, and yet love the brethren with all

his heart; and another may be very amiable, and have no love for them at all. Lower down, he says “We know that we have passed from death unto life, be. cause we love the brethren.” It is the great test of the divine nature. It is the life of Christ which is in us, reproduced in our ways and walk. It is not merely avoiding sin, because there is more in Christ than the absence of sin. There was the manifestation of this divine nature. He was the divine nature walking through this world, and He had special love to the disciples, as we shall have special love to the brethren. He was a new being, introduced into this world to manifest God in it. And that is what we have always to do—to represent God in this world. “Ye are the epistle of Christ.” People ought to read Christ in you, as they read the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. If they read that, they will not read evil. We have the flesh to struggle against, but not to walk after. It is not an effort to try and be like Christ, but that being full of Him it comes out. Therefore He talks of abiding in Him. So “he that eateth me abideth in me.” He has become our life, but he is also our life in every-day exercises. We are sent to be in the world to manifest God. Then comes difficulties and hindrances, and if we are not full of Christ we give way to them; whereas if we are full of Christ, we manifest Him in them. If not, we show heat, temper, or some evil thing. But there is no need of living in the old nature. We never can excuse ourselves for living in it, because Christ is ours.

Chapter 5

Notes on 1 John 3:11-24 and 4:1-7

WE again see in the first of these verses the proof of what “the beginning” is here. The great thing we have to look to, as regards life and what that life is, is Christ manifested in this world. “This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” We get Christ very distinctly there as the One who alone could give us the true measure and character of all else: He is the truth. Divine light, such as this, was not till Christ came. He was the faithful witness. Then you find another thing: there is the evil life or old Adam, and the good life, which is Christ. Both principles are at work. In the one there is hatred and his works evil, just as in the other we find love and righteousness. These go together. It began in Cain and Abel and has gone on ever since. Those that are really God's people are hated. Therefore it is said that “he was of that wicked one and slew his brother.” “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” It was the spirit and nature, the being departed from God, of which the devil was the spring and the strength. “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.” You must not be surprised, therefore, if the world hates you. It is natural to man. In the first place, Satan is the prince of this world, and besides that, it is the nature of man as he is. We were in death spiritually, and wherever that was the case, the spirit of Satan ruled and governed, and therefore there was hatred of God's children. But then there is this new life, and “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” If a man does not love the brethren, he abides in death. That is where we all are naturally. He is looking at the very principle of life. If I only find a sign that it is a wild apple tree, I know what the tree is. On the other hand, get the life of Christ, and the fruit answers to it. It is not a change of human nature as it is, because that abides in death. But the new life that comes is a life that bears its own fruit, just as that which is grafted into a tree. What sprouts up from the old stock is what came from the nature of the tree before.

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” He has not this good graft. It is a clear case.

Then he rises up to the source of it. “Hereby perceive we love.” What is this love? How can I tell it In that He laid down His life for us. And if Christ is really my life, He will be the same thing in spirit in me, as He was Himself. Christ kept the law because He was born under it. But the law calls upon man to love God and his neighbor, and that Christ did. But, besides that, He was the manifestation of God's love to man, and specially to His disciples, when they did not love God. That is what we have got to be. Christ, who was the activity of His love, laid down His life. We perceive what this love of God is by this. But you ought to manifest this same thing. It is an immense privilege. Not only I am required to do certain things, but I am called upon to be a witness of God in a world that is without Him. And there is no limit to it. I ought to go as far as Christ went. And there have been some that have done this to death. Many martyrs have laid down their lives for Christ. “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Besides the immense privilege, it is an

essential truth. We have to manifest God in this world, because Christ is in us. That is, if we are children of God, there is communion with the source of it, and then there should be the display of it in our walk—the epistle of Christ known and read of all men.

“Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” We have another mark there in the dwelling of the love of God. It is not merely love to God, because it is the spirit in which a person walks himself towards his brethren. It is the power of this divine nature dwelling in us which will show itself in love to God and man. The love of God dwelling in us is the way of God Himself, who through the Spirit thereby brings His love into us. It is not God's love to us, but it is the power of that love working in us, and therefore it will soon show itself to others. “My little children, let us not love one another in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” Now he looks to the effect of walking with God, as giving, not the knowledge of forgiveness, but confidence. He wrote to them because they were all forgiven; but if I want to have my heart assured before God, I must walk in this way. If my intercourse with God is a constant reproach, you cannot call it confidence. If I am not walking according to God, I must either get away from Him, or if I find myself in His presence, His Spirit is constantly reproaching me, and that is not confidence.

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” He knows a great deal about me that I do not know myself. If a child has got a bad conscience, he sneaks about, if his father is coming; but if not, he runs to meet him and throws himself into his arms. But he cannot have that kind of confidence, if his heart reproaches him. That is what we have always to look for:—to be with God, and in entire confidence with Him—no thought behind that perhaps He has something against us, not as to condemnation, but as to present confidence. How far it goes, the entire, full counting upon God—counting upon His present activity for us! It is not only a question of the day of judgment, but it is the present dealing of the soul with God, and of God for the soul. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” In chap. 5 it is said, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We are brought into a present, confident spirit with God, so that we expect everything good from Him. If a child is going on naughtily, he cannot go on in confidence. He may say, My father loves me, but he is going to give me a whipping. But when the heart is all right, the child expects everything that flows from his father's love. So here. “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” That has nothing to do with acceptance, but with the every-day out flowing of the Father's kindness, so that the child counts upon it. It is the terrible effect of looking at acceptance and forgiveness as the end of the Christian's course, that this confidence is almost unknown. The apostle began with forgiveness: “Your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake;” and now he is speaking of the confidence of the heart towards God. You get this in John 14; 15 (ver. 23:) “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him,” &c. That is not the grace that saves. In the latter it is, “We love him, because he first loved us.” There it says, (ver. 21,) “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” He is speaking of the present exercise of this love to Christ.

It is a great thing to say I have only to ask according to God's will, and I am sure to get it. He loves us in such a way that I can ask nothing without an answer. I want power, and I get it directly. I want

some hindrance removed out of the way, and it is removed directly. I may ask my Father here for something, and he may tell me I cannot do it. I cannot attend to you. But that is never the case with God. You can ask nothing, according to His will, without getting it. In a right path I have the whole power of God at my disposal. I may see mountains before me—all Satan's power. But never mind. If you are walking right, “ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.” You have thorough present confidence in God. He is never too busy to hear us. All that we can come about is ours. Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments,” &c. It is the direct government of God with our souls. This is where the question, between us and God, right and wrong, comes in. As regards our responsibility as men, we were ruined. Now we are saved, and God's dealings meet us on that ground, and then he delights to do everything for us. It is not what we will, but “whatsoever we ask.” It is the will of the new nature; i.e., obedience really. In that path of obedience God always heard Christ, for He was obedient, and God hears us; He puts us, in this life of Christ, into the same place as Christ.

“And this is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” He comes now to another most important point. Not merely that there is life, but that God by His Spirit dwells in. us. There is power of communion as well as life. God dwells with him who is love. It is not merely that I am redeemed. But as it was said of Israel, “They shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them;” so it is said of us, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” Christ was the obedient One, and God dwelt in Him; and he who is an obedient one now, God dwells in him. Christ said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” In us it is only derivatively by His Spirit; but still He dwells in us. In the obedient man God dwells as in Christ Himself. “And hereby know we that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” That is, it is the presence of the Holy Ghost with us that gives us the consciousness that God dwells with us. He does not add in this latter part of the verse that we dwell in Him; but simply that the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost was and is, that we know that God abides; in us.

Then he warns them against false spirits. (Chap. 4: 1-6.) Every spirit is not the Holy Ghost. Many false prophets are in the world. The saints must beware. The question is not, whether a man be converted; but whether he who speaks, speaks by God's Spirit or a demon. The touchstone is the confession of Jesus come in the flesh. He who is guided of God confesses Jesus Christ Himself so come (not merely that He is come.) To confess His coming is to recognize a truth: to confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh is to own the person and lordship of Jesus. Once a demon is discerned, it is important to treat it as a demon: otherwise your sword is broken in your hand. To yield to human considerations, to play the amiable under such circumstances, will find you powerless against Satan. It is not to have communion with God in His thoughts of Satan. How precious is the word before such dangers! Holding it fast, with uprightness and humility, nothing will stumble us. God is faithful, and will guard the feeblest of His own. But outside this submission to God and His word, no matter what may be the beauty of a man's sentiments, or his ability, he will sooner or later fall under the power of the enemy. But we come to a new point here. Besides the life of Christ, there is the dwelling of God in us and of us in God. This was fully manifested in Christ, and the more we think of that, the more we shall see that the new life we have is a

dependent life. Our Lord Himself said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.” Therefore we see He was a man praying always—leaning on His Father. For though He was God, He never used that to take a false position as man; but He took the place of dependence. That is where He puts us—in the place of dependence, and therefore the place of power from above. It is not a question of sincerity, but of that lowliness which is the sense of dependence and looks for help and power from Another.

What a privilege and motive for holiness, that God dwells in us! And when we want to glorify God, the presence of His Spirit is the power. How distinctly God has come into close communion with us, and brought us into intimacy with Himself by forgiving us and saving us and giving us a life in which we walk with Him! It is a life of constant trial here, but of having Himself by the Holy Ghost as our power dwelling in us as we walk through the world. And this is what we have to see to: that the life of the saint should be developed according to Christ. And it is there that daily experience comes in, and we find our weakness if we are not looking to Christ.

Chapter 6

Notes on 1 John 4:7-21

Another great fact, brought in at the close of what we last saw, was the giving of the Holy Ghost. In the first verse of this chapter, the apostle drops that to distinguish between spirits, not merely evil men. But there is a much greater action of Satan going on in the church of God than we are apt to suppose, and if we do not treat it as such, there is no power. If we come to terms with it, we cannot have power, because God cannot come to terms with Satan.

Then there is another thing in the sixth verse:" We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Thereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Receiving the apostles' teaching is one of the tests of knowing God. "He that is not of God heareth not us." A person that does not listen to the Scriptures as such is not of God at all.

He comes now, with the additional fact of the Holy Ghost being given, to the third part—love of the brethren—and shows you how deep its source goes. It is not merely obligation, or righteousness, but the very nature of God Himself, what He is, as Christ is the pattern of human righteousness. He goes to the very nature of God Himself as such. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God." It comes from Him, has its source in Himself. "Love is of God." Because we have got His nature, we can say that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." But there I stop. It is a course of righteousness. But now I say, "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It is not merely duty that I do; it is the true nature itself that I have. If a person has this nature, he has that of God. John is not speaking of mere natural affections: these you have in the brute beasts. But it is a question of the divine nature. That which marks divine love is, that it is first of all while we were yet sinners. It is above evil. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. He that loves knows God. That is a great thing to say. I know what a man is because I am a man. An animal cannot tell what I am, because he has not my nature. In that way, when we love, we have the nature of God—we know what God is. There may be a great deal to learn, but still we have got the nature, and therefore know what that nature is. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." If that new nature is in me I enjoy it: I have a nature capable of enjoying it. Every nature enjoys what is suitable to it. If we have the divine nature we enjoy God. We know Him in the way of enjoyment of that which belongs to our very nature.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." If I have it not, I do not know Him, because that is what He is. It is an immense truth, as regards the saints, that I know God. I have got the nature that enjoys God: and that is what everlasting enjoyment will be.

"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The apostle turns outside to get the proofs of this love. He is not looking inwards, as others do. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." If I want to know divine love, God's love, I do not look within; because "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is another thing here which spews the perfectness of this love—it had no motive. It is what God was. "If we love them that love us, what reward have we?" The manifestation of this love has

a double character here. First, the Son is sent to be the propitiation for our sins. He loved us when we were guilty and deified. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” &c. God's love to us has its proof in this—when there was nothing at all in us to bring—when there was not a movement in us towards God, there was in God towards us. We had no spiritual life, but we were guilty, looked at as born of Adam. Therefore, this love is a perfect love. It has no motive in us, and, therefore, is perfect in itself; and it is exercised towards us according to our need. Here we have the proof of this love.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” How he draws the practical conclusion! If God has so loved me, I ought to love the brethren. I ought to get above all the disagreeable things and untowardness, because God loved me when I was as untoward as possible.

Now we come to another thing. It is God Himself present. Not merely have I got the divine nature, but God is present in a very remarkable way. “No man hath seen God at any time.” How can I know and love a being that I have never seen? “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” The Apostle Paul expresses it in a different way. “The love of God,” he says, “is shed abroad in our hearts.” Now, what makes it so remarkable here! If we look at John 1:18, it is said there, “No man hath seen God at any time.” How can I know and love a person I have never seen? “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” That is, in the gospel, which is to bring Christ before us, I find the sense to be this:—Well, you have not seen God, and yet you have; because He who was the very delight of the Father—who is in the bosom of the Father—the immediate and closest object of the Father's delight—He has declared Him. Therefore I do know Him. It is the answer to the difficulty, that no man ever saw God. Christ has made him known to me. Here, in the epistle, it is, “no man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” That which is revealed in Christ is brought directly into our own hearts, because the Holy Ghost is in us. When Christ was in the world, it was the Son casting out devils and doing mighty works. And yet He said, “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” Now, by the Spirit, He says, “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” He makes God dwelling in us the answer here to not seeing God—as Christ being in the world was then the answer to not seeing God. Having washed us in the blood of the Lamb, He comes and. dwells in us. We have a knowledge of God in that way. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” It is not merely that the nature is there, but God is there. “Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” This is the way we have the consciousness that we dwell in God, because, as God dwells in us, and He is infinite, we have the consciousness of dwelling in God. He is our home: we dwell in Him: He is our abode. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost that gives the consciousness of God's being there.

Still he turns back to objective truth. “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” I have got God in me, and have the knowledge of that love. How did He prove it to me? By sending His Son to be the Savior of the world. The proof of it is that which has been done without me—not anything within me. A person might say, But I have not got that. Then I say, You have got nothing. If you say, That is too high for me: I cannot speak of God as dwelling in me; then I answer, You are not a Christian at all. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” He does speak of the blessed

consciousness of it as our portion, but then he declares that it is the truth as to every Christian; and therefore if I am not enjoying it, there is something that is hindering me. If we had the Queen in the house, and did not trouble ourselves about her, we should have no enjoyment of the honor and privilege of having such a guest. And we may be going on in such a way as to have no consciousness of God's being in us. It shows a habit of living without intercourse with the God who dwells in us. The Christian has a life from God, which lives with God. He says therefore, after having spoken of this, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” That is the kind of character he gives of a Christian: “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” There is no uncertainty. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,” &c. It is the very nature of God.

Now he goes on. We have seen the love manifested when we were mere sinners, when we were guilty and dead. That was the starting point with us. We were spiritually dead: there was not a single movement in our hearts towards God. And then God loved us. But we had a natural life from Adam, and therefore were guilty: and then God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Then the next thing is, that we dwell in God and He in us: we have this blessed communion by His being in our hearts. Then be comes to the third thing in. the 17th verse. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.” Now it is not merely that He has loved me when I was a sinner, and that I enjoy Him in communion, but that all fear for the future is taken away entirely. I get boldness for the day of judgment: that is a different thing. It is blessed love that Christ came into the world for such sinners as us. But then there is the day of judgment. When I think of the love, I am all happy; but when I think of the judgment, my conscience is not quite easy. Though the heart may have tasted the love, the conscience not being quite clear, when I think of judgment I am not quite happy. That is what is provided for here. “As he is, so are we in this world.” The love was shown in visiting us when we were sinners; it is enjoyed in communion; but it is completed in this, that I am in Christ, and that Christ must condemn Himself in the day of judgment, if he condemns me, because as He is, so am I in this world. I am glorified before I get there. He changes this vile body and makes it like to His glorious body. When I am before the judgment-seat, I am in this changed and glorified body: I am like my Judge. If He is my righteousness, as He is, that I am now; because it is Christ's work, and Christ's work is finished, and Christ is appearing in heaven for me. And thought I have exercises and trials of heart, yet, “As he is, so am I in this world.” There love is perfected. God Himself can do nothing more blessed than to make me like Christ in His presence. There is an end of judgment practically as an object of dread, because I am the same thing as my Judge. He judges by His own righteousness, and that is my righteousness: I am that. I am united to Him, and, in that sense, am the same as Himself. There love is made perfect, that I may have boldness in the day of judgment. There has love been shown, and it makes me miserable if my heart does not answer to it. I have not got boldness in the day of judgment. There is a judgment, and in order that love should be perfect in our hearts, there must be no dread of judgment. In order to have all its perfectness, I must have boldness in the day of judgment, and that 1 have by being as Christ is. That is true now. It is not that we have got the glory yet; but it is true as having Him for my life, and being united to Him. Now he draws the conclusion at once. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” Fear is all gone. If I am dreading my Father, I cannot enjoy His love—there is torment in that. Love casts out fear. There is nothing to fear if God loves me perfectly, and does nothing but love me. That is what the Lord Jesus says: “I have declared thy name unto them and

will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” And so again He says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” The same peace that He had Himself He has given unto us. He was not dreading His Father. He had ineffable peace and delight. Well, “As he is, so are we in this world.” Then comes, as a consequence of knowing this love, “We love him, because he first loved us.” That is the fruit and consequence in our hearts. All this love which He has shown to us, has been in us and is perfected with us. “We love him because he first loved us.” The heart turns back in thankfulness and love to him.

But now, as through this epistle, the apostle brings a kind of counter-test. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” If his image in the saints does not draw out any affections, you do not really love Him. You may say you do, but it is not true. We find running all through the epistle, this kind of counter-tests. Another remarkable thing we see here. Even love itself does not get out of the place of dependence in its exercise, “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” However blessed may be the workings of the divine nature in us, it is always in the shape of obedience. That was true even of Christ. Speaking of His own death, where His perfectness was brought out fully, he says, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do.” It was still the commandment, as well as love. So love makes us serve and love the brethren, and yet it is obedience. Whatever is not obedience is not Christ. It is not a commandment against our nature, because we delight in doing what God commands. Still it is obedience, although it is the obedience of a joyful nature that has pleasure in obeying; and that, through God's dwelling in us and revealing Himself in that very way, in this nature, in our souls.

It brings the position of the Christian to a wonderful point: his actual condition in the way of connection with God. It is not merely that the Holy Ghost dwells in us in the way of power, (that would be a proof of the holy Ghost's, i. e. of God's, being in us,) but it would not prove that we are in God.

When we think what kind of enjoyment and privileges we have here, what foolish creatures we are not to realize God more and to enjoy Him! “The diligent soul,” it is said, “shall be made fat.”

Notes on 1 John 5

There is a kind of summing up in this chapter of who these are: not what they are, but who they are, and what that is in which they have part. It was loving the brethren, for instance, we were seeing in a previous chapter. Now comes the inquiry, who is my neighbor, and who is my brother? “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.” It is not now a spiritual or moral test to see whether the love is real, but we get those who are these children of God, and then “everyone that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.” that is if it is really this divine love, I shall love those that are born of God. If it is for the parent's sake, I shall love all the children, and this is the way in which it is put here. But in the 2nd verse he gives a counter-proof that it is genuine. I know that I love God by loving the children of God; but I know that it is real loving them if I love God and keep His commandments. If I love them as his children, I shall love Himself. It runs all through this epistle, a kind of counter-check, which is of the greatest use. If it is the Holy Spirit, it is the spirit of truth too. I have thus the means of checking one thing by another. I might seem to be loving God's children very much, and it may be only a party feeling. But if I love God, I love all for his sake. Anything else may be merely a feeling of human nature. It is the bringing God in which brings all in. In 2 Peter it is said, “add to brotherly kindness charity.” by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. If I love them as God's children, it is because I love Him that begat them. It takes them all in, but it always takes him in, and therefore it is a question of obedience. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.” The great difficulty is the world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” there is a nature we have received which belongs to a system which is not of the world at all. “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” “Ye are from beneath, I am from above.” This world, as a system, is of the devil—not of God at all. All that is in it, “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world.” The father is the head, and source, and blessedness of a great system to which the world is entirely opposed: and therefore when the Son came into the world, the world rejected him, and that has put the world, as a tested world, in perfect antagonism to the father. We always find that it is the flesh against the spirit, the world against the father, and the devil against the son. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” It is truth which sanctifies. The difficulty is the world. We look on the things that are seen, and not on the things that are not seen, and therefore we are weak. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith. It is not merely a nature that is given to us, but as creatures we must have an object for this nature. I must have something, and therefore “who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” he is occupied with something. When I find that the one whom the world has spit upon and crucified is the Son of God, I say that is what the world is. And therefore when my faith really rests upon Jesus as this despised one, the son of God, I have done with the world: I overcome it as an enemy.

There we get the short account of these saints. They are born of God: they are a set of people that belong to Him as those that are alive; they live in another world that belongs to the Father. He then speaks of the spirit and power in which Christ came, that by which we are connected with this scene of blessedness that belongs to the Father. “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” This gets back to a most vital principle that we have had all through the epistle. If it had been by water only, John the Baptist came by water. The word of God being applied to man as a child of Adam, could not purify him. Christ coming into the world by that put man to the test; and man was God's enemy and, therefore, there was no mending him at all. It then became a question of redemption, of blood as well as water, and that life was in the Son; not in the first Adam, but in the second. “This is He that came by water and blood.” There is a cleansing; but this is the effect of redemption on the new life. It was out of a dead Christ that the cleansing came. A living Christ coming into the world presents Himself to man to see whether any link could be formed between God and man. But then was man finally condemned, and death comes in. It was always so. There is no life in us. “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” And that is the reason why He says you must eat the flesh and drink the blood. If you do not take him as a dead Christ, you have nothing, for that cleansing came out of a dead Christ. It is death to the old thing, and a new life entirely is brought in. Then there comes another blessed truth. We have a dead Christ, now alive for evermore; and then we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. But that is all as belonging to a new world. “There are three that bear witness on earth—the Spirit, the water, and the blood.” We have the cleansing, the Spirit bearing witness, and the water, the cleansing power; and the blood, the expiatory power; and these all agree in one. There is no cleansing of the old nature, but there is a new nature given. “God hath given us eternal Life, and this life is in his Son.” It is no mending of the old Adam, but it is a gift of the new. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” There is no life belonging to the old man, it is a rejected thing, and there will not be two Adams in heaven. It is the Son, and those that have life in the Son. God began working out that in the fall, but the full truth of it was brought out when Christ was risen.

Then there is another point in connection with this here, and that is, the knowledge of it. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,” because we have got Christ, through the Spirit of Christ in us. Therefore, I know that I have eternal life—that I am the child of God. We have got this blessed consciousness and comfort—the work has been wrought, the blood shed, and, besides that, I cry Abba, Father, through the Spirit that dwells in me. That is, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” He has got the thing: got Christ, in a word.

The fault of the unbeliever is not that he has not got that, but that he makes God a liar. God has given an adequate witness about His Son; and “he that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” And therefore a person rejecting the gospel is rejecting God's testimony about His Son. The witness was sufficient. We read of many who believed on His name. But they did not overcome the world, because there was no real faith. Jesus did not commit Himself to them.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” It is of all importance to see that it is not a mending of the nature that we have already, but the giving to us one that we had not before, in receiving Christ as our life. And all the rest is accomplished. The Spirit is the Holy Ghost present in the world. The water came out of His side as well as the blood. Water cleanses what already exists. The water is the washing by the word—but not without the

power of the Holy Ghost. It is the application of the word by the Holy Ghost. But besides that, the water gives the idea of the washing by the word; and therefore he says we are born of water and the Spirit.

One thing remains—the present confidence that we have with God. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” And then there comes every-day confidence. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We are really reconciled to God. It is not an uncertain condition with God, but we are at home with Him. We have confidence in Him. It is not merely the fact that we have been saved, but we have present confidence. “And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

Then there is another privilege we have—that of intercession for others. And now, too, we get just a hint at the dealings of God in the way of government with a man that is saved. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto death.” In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, that was a sin unto death. There is a constant dealing of God in government with his children, which, if the sin be not of that character as unto death, (it may go on to it,) it is a question of discipline. There is many a sickness that is a discipline of God in some shape or another—positive discipline, that if the heart were bowed to God about it, would be for good. Chastenings are not always for actual faults. In Job it is said, (chap. xxxiii. 18, 19,) “He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. he is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain” —and that we find from the seventeenth verse is for the purpose of hiding pride from man. Then in chap. xxxvi. the chastening is for positive faults. (Ver. 9.) “Then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.” There was a positive discipline of God. It is not merely here that there is this discipline, and that if there is a “messenger with him, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, that there he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit,” &c. But now, as a Christian, you are competent yourself to be a messenger. The Christian, having the title of intercession, and walking with God, he has this access to God, to be heard in whatever he asks. When, then, you see a brother sin, and come under the discipline of God, you go and be this messenger, one among a thousand, to him. It is a matter of discipline and chastening for sin; and if this intercession be used, he will be restored. It supposes a person walking with God to be able to be this interpreter.

“We know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not.” The man is living after the flesh, if he is giving way to sin. The new nature sinneth not. If he sins at all, therefore, it must be because he is acting in the flesh. If we walk in the Spirit Satan has no power over us at all. “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” He sums up all in these two verses. “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” and “we are of God.” We blink things that are so plain sometimes, in order to save a little bit of the world. But “we know that the Son of God

is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." God being revealed in Christ, and we being in Christ, we have got our place in a scene outside the world altogether.

We have here, too, a remarkable witness to the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." It is an immense comfort; because, when I have found Christ, I have got God. I have found Him. I know Him. I know what He is to me. "He that hath the Son hath the Father also."

Notes on 2 John

What specially characterizes the epistle, is the connection of the truth with the manifestation of love. Both the second and third epistles are occupied with the receiving of those who are going about preaching. The third epistle commends those who went forth for Christ's sake, to the love of the faithful, who in receiving such, became fellow-helpers to the truth. Here he warns this lady against receiving certain persons that did not bring the truth. He had pressed extremely the walking in love in the first epistle. And so here too he says, “I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.” Then he takes these two guards of true charity: one is the truth and the other is obedience, just what Christ was when He was in the world. He was love come into the world, the witness and testimony of love, and He was the truth, and he was the obedient man. His love to his father was shown in his obeying him in all things. He was the truth in showing out everything just as it was. Besides, he came down to do the will of him who sent him. John takes up these three great principles here. Love—divine charity—is insisted on, but it is always the truth, because it is Christ; and if it is not in the truth, it is denying Christ: it is saying, there can be love in nature. The third thing is this obedience to the commandments of Christ. Such is the business of a Christian obeying Christ, with truth in the heart, and love as the spring of all. And that is just Christ. You cannot separate them. The flesh may put on the appearance of a thing: it may put on a great show of love; but if it is not truth and obedience, it is not Christ. Here it is a question of conscience with anyone. It is not an ecclesiastical question, but of a woman if so called on. It is a matter of personal conscience with every saint, the question of the individual receiving Christ in his members and of refusing whatsoever denies Christ. And this is the means of judging of it: “for the, truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.” The apostle loved the lady and her children, but it was for the truth's sake. Where there was not that, there could be no divine love. In the next verse, again, we have “from the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the father, in truth and lore.” “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the father.” Now he brings in the obedience; it is a commandment from the father. He will have the son honored, even as himself.

“And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.” Just as Christ walked after the commandments of God because He loved Him. As He said, “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:31.) So it is with those that follow Him. “This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

Then he adds, “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” If this divine love came down in a man, and they denied that Christ came as a man, it could not be a holy man come to the flesh. That could not be said of a mere human being. If a man say, I am come in the flesh, I should ask, What else could you come in? That is what you are; you are a mere man. But whosoever shall “confess not

that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, this is a deceiver and an antichrist." Perfect man, He is infinitely more.

"Look to yourselves." If they had all departed away, his work would have been burnt with fire. And therefore he says, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." The reward of labor in that sense is for the work that he has done in the souls of others. As it is said of the Lord Jesus, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" so we in our little measure receive it.

Now we have a little more. After having spoken about these deceivers, he adds, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." If you have not got the true Christ, you have not God at all. That is the first great broad principle. All through John, when he is speaking of relationship, it is the Son; but if of nature, it is God, not the Father. In John 8 it is God; and Jesus takes that place— "Before Abraham was, I AM."

There may be the rejection of the truth, and then I have not God in any way; I am outside the whole scene in which this grace is displayed: I have not the doctrine of Christ, i.e., the truth as to Christ; I have not got God at all. "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." He gets the whole unfolding of this unspeakable grace. It is the perfect revelation of God in its own blessedness within itself, not outside, but you have God inside; and you have got here all blessedness, in which the Father loves the Son and has given the Son for us; you have got both the Father and the Son. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." ... "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we he and do not the truth." He has not communion with God, because God's nature is light. You have, first, the great fact of not having God at all; a man is absolutely without God if he has not Christ. Then, secondly, when he unfolds the truth, it is the Father and the Son. He urges decision upon these saints. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." To do so would be encouraging and helping him; it is to tamper with my own conscience, because I am allowing something to be Christ which is a false one, and the deepest dishonor to God. If I show this appearance of love where the truth is not, it is not Christ at all; it is denying Him, and saying that what is false is as good as what is true. It is helping the antichrist as much as the Christ, or rather more. "He that biddeth him God speed," (i.e., literally salutes him going away,) "is partaker of his evil deeds." It was a sign of recognition and companionship.

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full." I get there another thing, that is, the kind of affection which should reign among the saints. It was not a sort of mere abstract love; but there was gladness in seeing them, real comfort in it, and rejoicing to see them doing well. The Holy Spirit always encourages this activity of love, however strong He may be for the truth. Christ has come into the world: the one point round which souls can rally and find God in grace. When anything unsettles that there is no resource at all. If Satan cannot do anything by persecution, he tries to unsettle souls about the truth in Christ. He is a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour; that is persecution. But he is not always a roaring lion. When he comes in as a serpent (that is, when he steals along, and does not roar at all,) it is a great deal more dangerous. A person is tried by his violence and rage, but it is far more serious when we have to withstand the wiles of the devil. Still, wherever Christ is held to simply, all is simple. Here it is the case of a lady.

It is personal faith that clings to Christ for His own sake. The person may not be wise enough to set the world right, but there is something that faith clings to. I must have Christ. The secret of all is the individual personal faith that holds fast to Christ and His truth. It is a wonderful mercy to have that which is a test of everything, and a proof of Christ's love. To have a clear and distinct object that carries me through, according to God's mind, that is what Christ walked in; and if we hold fast to Christ, it is always true.

Notes on 3 John

We have here the same great principle in general that we saw in the second epistle—that is, loving the truth. Only, there, John was warning against any one that transgressed the doctrine of Christ, and here he is rather encouraging gracious ways and liberality towards those that were going about with the truth

There is here the kindness that works among Christians. He desires that Gaius might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. This Gaius received the brethren that went about preaching the word, and Diotrephes was jealous of them. He not only refused to receive the brethren himself, but hindered those that would. There was resistance to the free witness to God rendered by these persons going about. “Because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” They went out freely, trusting the Lord, and Diotrephes would not have such things. So he not only would not receive them himself, but if other people did he forbade them, and cast them out of the church. The Apostle writes to strengthen Gains in the spirit of hearty welcome in receiving them.

With Diotrephes it was love of prominence, a fleshly desire in him, and that even rose so high, that he was speaking against the Apostle. Still, the main point that the apostle dwells on, in writing to Gaius, is that he was in the truth. It is remarkable in John, that, while he speaks of love, he always guards it in the most definite way by what he calls “the truth.” Real charity is God Himself. He is love, and wherever love is real, it must be guarded by the truth as it is in Jesus, or it is not of God. Therefore, before he commends Gains for his love and hospitality to the brethren, he says, “I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.” That is the first thing he dwells upon, before he even speaks of what he does to the brethren and to strangers.

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well; because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” Gains was evidently a gracious man, hospitable to these strangers. “We ought therefore to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.” It is a remarkable expression— “the truth.” “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” Christ is the truth. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Whatever was not Christ was nature, and that was not the truth, and you never could be able otherwise to discern good and evil. Christ is “the truth.” If we speak of the truth, we mean that it is a person speaking exactly what is true about anything. Christ tells us the truth about God. Satan takes very fair forms, as, in the case with Peter, when he said, in reference to the sufferings of Christ, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” But Christ says, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me,” &c. He told the truth about that. It looked a very fair, gracious speech; but it was really denying all that he had to do, and Christ tells the truth about it.

And so about man. Who would have suspected that man could have done such things as he did when Christ was here? There you get the truth about man; all his evil was brought out; it was not fully detected till Christ came. So, too, I do not know what sin is till I see it in the cross of Christ. And just the same about righteousness. Christ is the truth. Whether it is God, or man, or Satan, or righteousness, or sin, the truth about everything is in Christ; and if we have Christ, we have the truth. When we have got to discern our way in the mdist of good and evil, we do not know the truth unless we have got Christ. The truth is in Him: it is not in me. The moment that I have Christ, and that I judge according to His feelings and thoughts, I am able to say that is sin. It may take a very fair form—perhaps the loving your father or mother; but still the truth detects everything. God has shown Himself to be love, rising above all evil; but still it is always “the truth.” if He rises above the sin, He shows also what the sin is. It is of immense importance to hold fast Christ, else we do not know what the truth is. Satan is the father of lies, and no lie is of the truth. With the apostle, we see that it was his joy to get this truth sharper than any two-edged sword, sparing nothing in himself. It was his joy to see his children walking in the truth. Then, when the truth is settled, the outflow of love is beautiful. “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church.” There you find the love coming out beautifully. The moment it is settled in Christ as the truth, so that our own heart is judged, then God is free to act. The moment I have got the truth—Christ, then, freed from self, this divine love begins to act in its right channel. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” God has a peculiar love to His Own, but He is gracious and kind towards even the very sparrows—makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

“Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.” They were these preachers going about. “Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” They were casting themselves upon God.

“Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself.” John looks at “the truth” as a thing standing in the world, and going through a great service in conflict. Demetrius is witnessed to by the truth: the gospel itself bore him witness. The gospel or truth is personified. If a man is hated for the truth's sake, we say that it is the truth that is hated. The gospel is love in the truth, and this working in the world. That is the substance of this Epistle. First, the truth; then, the working of love and grace, which becomes a fellow-helper to the truth. Then he says that there were these persons coming into the Church, who were setting up to have a high place in it. They did not even receive the Apostle. But that did not take away the Apostle's power. “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth.”

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” We have seen the truth first, and then grace to the brethren and to others in general. If you do good, you are of God. It is not the question of mere evil; but “he that doeth good is of God.” It is the active service of love. God does not do evil—that is clear; but He does good. “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.” Demetrius was one of those that was going about in this way that Diotrephes would not have, and one that the Apostle encourages Gaius to receive. It is an interesting thing to see not merely great doctrines in Scripture, bat all the interior of what was at work even then. We are apt to see things upon stilts. Things were going on then just

as they are now. There were some going about preaching the truth, and some did not like to receive them. We see thus the interior of Christianity going on, whereas we generally think it was something extraordinary; instead of being just the same struggling with good and evil, in principle the same kind of thing that is going on now. The Apostle was left to watch over the declension of the Church, and to give us the warnings that were needed all through.

It is a wonderful thing to know that “the truth” has come into the world. It is not merely that certain things are true, but the truth itself has come. I have got that which is God's own truth, in the midst of men's thoughts and confusions. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” We have seen here these two things: the truth which has come and tested everything, and then grace towards the brethren and towards strangers, according to this truth. It is a great thing to have what links us up with Christ, that is to rest forever. This world is all passing away, and man's breath goes forth. “He returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” But we have the truth in the midst of it all. The word of our God abides forever. Holding peacefully fast by that, we have got, by grace, what we know is everlasting. Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Chapter 10

Brief Thoughts on 1 Peter 1:1-9

SANCTIFICATION of the Spirit is spoken of before the “blood of sprinkling.” Israel in Egypt were taken and set apart (which is the same as sanctification) for God while they were in Egypt. This sanctification is spoken of in Jude's Epistle as the Father's work” sanctified by God the Father.” In Hebrews Jesus is spoken of as sanctifying— “That he might sanctify the people with his own blood.” Here, in Peter, it is spoken of as the Spirit's work. The setting apart to God is a different thing from having forgiveness, and it is the accomplishing of God's purposes, though not the purposes themselves. The prodigal (Luke 15.) turned back in the far country, and then he was set apart for God. There was a total and utter change, but not all the effect yet. When he began to return, his face was turned towards his father; while, when he went away, his back was towards him. So the soul set apart by God is livingly turned to God in power; it may be as the prodigal, in rags and want; but there is the turning of heart, and, like Paul who was converted on his way to Damascus, he is a new creature. The will is broken. There will be conflict afterward as the result, but the whole man is changed. It is not that there are not difficulties to be overcome, but the object before the mind is different. The soul is thus said to be “sanctified unto obedience.” It is not a question of being better or worse, but it is turning to God; and if it is sanctification to obedience, it is also to the “blood of sprinkling.” Now I have to learn the value of that blood. He has brought me under the sprinkling of blood, as Israel was by coming out of Egypt; and what was the sprinkling of blood then? It was the seal, while liable to the sentence of death, of the covenant which they were to obey. (Ezek. 24:6-8.) if they obeyed, they stood, but if not, the penalty of death was their portion. Is it so with us? No. We have disobeyed, but He (Jesus) has suffered for us, and we are sealed under the covenant brought in by Him for the disobedient. We are brought under the blood of sprinkling, whatever its efficacy is. Nothing has power against this title. Does my guilt rise up? or Satan come against me? All is gone, because of the value of His blood. I have, as the first thing, redemption through his God, perfect deliverance from all that was for my condemnation. I am, in my whole condition as a sinner, redeemed out of it forever. The covenants, we know, were sealed with blood. Abraham and Jeremiah killed a calf, and the blood was a witness to the covenant. This covenant differs from former ones, inasmuch as it is not binding as to guilt if we fail; on the contrary, it discharges us from guilt by the blood that was shed for it.

Another kind of purging is that of cleansing from defilement, so that by the blood we are not only acquitted of guilt, but made absolutely clean. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” Another effect is, that it brings us into wonderful nearness of thought with God. The blood has been already spilled. Christ has done it and I see in it that He has taken the deepest interest in my soul, and given Himself, that I might be delivered. Was he all alone in it? As regards man, He was; but God the Father had to do with it. He spared not His own Son, and I our reconciled to God by His death. That is more than being merely turned, in will, to God. Where is my assurance of its efficacy? God himself having done it, who “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?” We have, then a dying Savior, but a living hope. We have life in Him, power in Him, through the Holy Ghost. The Second Adam, the Quickener, is He

who went into death for our sins, but who came out of death, and is risen in the power of an endless life. This life then makes us pilgrims and strangers down here, and there is not a single object here for the Christian but to please God. With Jesus it was ever His delight to do His Father's will. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,” &c. This puts the heart to the test. Do you say what harm is there in this or that? Your flesh is after it, and that is the harm! Are you to live after the flesh? If the old man is working in you, that is the harm. We are “begotten unto a living hope,” &c., “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” —just the contrast of everything here. If the divine nature is in us, it has divine tastes suited to that to which it belongs. My heart's affections have found a home, where God has found His rest, in Christ.

Besides, it is “reserved in heaven.” No moth or rust can corrupt there, neither thief break through to steal. It is preserved by God, and “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have,” &c. It is safe. Another thing is, we must wait for it; but we know it is well kept, if God keeps it. “Reserved....for you who are kept.” The inheritance is kept for you in heaven, and you are kept on earth waiting for it. He will keep you for the inheritance and the inheritance for you. It is then not a question of my perseverance but of God's faithfulness. Do any say, Oh! I shall never hold on to the end? But God has said, “Thou shall never perish.” Ah! but it may be said, there is all the power of Satan! Again, “None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.” “I and my Father are one.” There is one common counsel between them. “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed.” There is not something to be done, something not yet accomplished. No! it is done, and that is what could not be said when Christ was upon earth. But now He has passed through death, risen out of it, ascended to the right hand of God, where He is waiting until “his enemies be made his footstool.” It is ready to be revealed, and is only delayed while souls are being brought in for the completion of His body. That is matter of joy to wait for; though, in one sense, we should desire it were already completed, that His glory may be revealed. But there is rest to the heart in the consciousness that the salvation is ready, and that we are kept through faith. There is blessing in that, through exercise, because the flesh never has faith; and if a single worldly or careless thought comes in, faith is not in exercise, and the image of Jesus is dimmed in us. We do not live, except when and so far as faith is in exercise; for all that is of the flesh perishes. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Another blessed thing for us, is, that everything becomes matter of exercise. We must never do a thing we have not faith for. This makes us feel the need of having the affections “set on heavenly things.” “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” “Therein ye greatly rejoice,” &c. Are you greatly rejoicing in this salvation? “It shall be in you a well of living water” was the word. There are none so subject to inertia as the Christian who is halting between two opinions. If worldliness, love of ease, self in this or that form come in, who are so weak and wretched? We cannot find happiness in the world and be rejoicing in heavenly things. If the soul is occupied with this great salvation, it will rejoice in it. There will be heaviness through manifold temptations, but the valley of Baca will become a well, the rain filling the pools.

We now have the “earnest of the inheritance;” not the earnest of God's love, for that is fully our portion now, and not merely the earnest of it. The “trial of faith will be found unto praise,” &c., at the appearing of Jesus Christ. He has entered within and has His crown; and now at the thought of that, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It is “unspeakable” because it is himself, and “full of glory” because He is in the glory: and lest the fire which tries should cast the

least cloud over the hope and the joy, it is said, “receiving the end of your faith.” I have received the salvation of my soul, and that is really the end of my faith, though I may have to go through trial to purge away the dross.

Is your face turned upward to God, and not as the beast's which goeth downward? or is your back towards God, as Adam turned when he had sinned and was ashamed?

2 Chronicles 20

Circumstances of outward trial and difficulty are what we have here. It is not a question of internal conflict, which is often really unbelief and the unjust power of the flesh. This is not the proper warfare of the Christian. Conflict in Scripture is the power of evil against us, because we are with God and know it. It is either the aggression of the saint in taking further possession of blessing and making advances for the Lord; or it is the violence of the enemy's assaults upon us, because we are on His side. But proper Christian conflict is never the mere experience of the working of sin within us, though the latter may have been painfully realized also. We have all of us been so much under the law that it is often with great difficulty we have recovered from its effects; it is apt constantly to come in.

Where we understand the ways of God more simply according to His mind and word, we have an immense show of Satan's force brought out to attack the people of God and drive them from their place of blessing. Thus, we find Israel here surrounded by enemies; but they were seeking the Lord, and the way in which He used these very circumstances for good was what chiefly pressed on my own mind, and leads use to say these few words. For we are entitled, because we know what God is, to be quite sure that there is never an assault of the devil upon us, but what, if our eye is towards the Lord, we shall be more blessed than we ever were. “Believe in the Lord your God.” Jehoshaphat says, “so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” Blessing would come, through the goodness of God, even if there were not the quiet confidence which is due to him. But it is clear that as His children this is not what we desire. it should not be merely the Lord to make up for and cover our cowardice, We ought to desire to enjoy what God gives us for that purpose. This scene is intended to teach us a great, truth. When there is a mustering strong of the adversary, and we see no loophole of escape, nor any thought of how they are to be defeated, if our eye is only simple in the confidence of His love, we are entitled to go into what seems to be the battle with songs of joy. And this not merely like Israel after crossing the Red Sea, when their enemies were gone altogether, but we are privileged, even when we are about to begin the battle, to sing as if the victory were won. The battle that we have here is one of the few where they did not strike a blow. This is exceedingly sweet to have God so manifestly taking up our cause, that there is not the need for a single stroke on our part. It is a painful thing personally to have to wound any one, and it is a great mercy where God far more than answers the confidence He inspires, and the enemy is defeated without our fighting. God intends that the first taste should be that, of the trial; but that the best thought should be what is God for us. and what he feels about those who join in all their strength, to crush, if it were possible, the glory of the Lord in the poor one of His choice. May our hearts be towards Him! The valley through which we have sung before the battle, is the valley through which we shall return singing again, and enriched with more than we can carry.

Chapter 12

A Word on 2 Corinthians 1

I do not pretend to say every Christian is practically in the state in which Paul was when he could say, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” (Chap. 4) Paul held himself as dead; life only was acting in him—the life of Christ was unhindered in him—death as regards the world, and all that is in it; therefore Christ only was working in him. The Christian should hold himself as dead; so would the life of Christ be displayed in him. It is important our hearts should understand what practical Christianity is. It is not merely gracious effects produced in man as passing through the world as belonging to it. The Christian does not belong to it at all, no more than Jesus did. Jesus was not of the world. (John 17) All that is of the world is not of the Father. Was there ever the smallest link between His heart and the things of the world? We are brought into the same place of separation. Our wills must be broken, lusts judged, and then fullness of divine consolation is poured into the soul. Paul was a vessel into which the direct flow of comfort could be poured. Self must be crucified. He knew what relationship with the soul and God is; tribulations were only the occasion of bringing it out. He could thus “glory in tribulations;” he could “glory in infirmities,” &c. They only brought him into more direct communion with the blessed source of strength. We prove the blessedness of what God is, and thus it flows out to others.

Ver. 8. “For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” The occasion brings before him the distinct consciousness of what life and death is. There was no hope as to natural life. How does it find him? With the sentence of death in himself. If death finds a man where natural life has no place, they only want to take that which has already gone. Paul takes Christ's cross into his heart; he reckons himself dead; he holds himself as one living in Christ who had already died. He therefore trusts in Him who raiseth the dead. Here we get the expression of Christ in his soul. It is not merely one passing through the world with the wheels a little better oiled, but every link with the world must be broken.

The sinner has to do with God as a judge. Israel in Egypt was saved from God who was executing judgment: but when they had passed the Red Sea (type of death and resurrection) they get a place with God—the full salvation of God—Egypt done with totally and forever, because Egypt has nothing to do with God, nor God with Egypt. He has taken Christ once and forever out of this world, never to return, save when He comes to reign. When the world put Christ to death, the sentence of death was put on all that is in it; but we have complete deliverance out of it. Israel is brought to the other side of the Red Sea; Egypt is behind. They are brought out TO GOD, and so are we. Christ went down into death for me. In Him I come out the other side, as dead to the flesh and the world. I have got a new place where Christ is. I have left the place of sin by faith, and have got a place with Christ. I am “accepted in the Beloved.” If a Christian, I am not alive in the world. Where have I got my life from? Christ in heaven. That is not the world. The first Adam was turned out of God's paradise. God did not create the world as it is. God created paradise; and this world has grown up to what it is now, sin having come in. God has taken the Second Man into heaven, in virtue of the work done for me. As a sinner, my place is in the world; as an accepted one, my place

is in heaven. Have you got into the place to be able to say with Paul, “when we were in the flesh?” (Rom. 7) In chapter 8 we read, “Ye are not in the flesh if so be,” &c. We are not alive in the world; we are in Christ. If I speak to a sinner, I say, There is salvation for the vilest. To the believer I say, You are in Christ before God. It is Christ and nothing else. To realize this practically, you must hold yourself dead: death must be applied to everything down here. Then we get the inflowing of all that belongs to the new life. If links with the world are broken, we have the consolations of Christ abounding, the blessed inflowing of divine favor as it rested on Christ Himself.

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” (2 Cor. 4:8, 9.) The poor vessel may be troubled, but not in despair, for God is there. It may be persecuted, but not forsaken, for God is there.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” Here we get something more. In the death of Christ, was there one link with the world left? Not one. He looked for pity—there was none. He might have looked for justice; but the judge washes his hands and gives Him up. The priests cry, “Away with him,” &c. His very garments were taken from Him. He stands alone, deserted, and cries out, “I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” Was there, I ask, a single link with the world left? Not one. There was no one ingredient wanting in the death of Christ to make His cup bitter. And Paul could say, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” &c. There should be no more link between me and the world, than there was in the cross of Christ. In verse 11 we see God passes Him through circumstances which keep this alive in him. Then are things and circumstances which God uses to write the cross upon our will and nature.

Death must be written upon all, that Christ only may be seen. How wonderful to be permitted to walk through the world, and be the epistle of Christ! We are called to manifest the character, ways, spirit, and temper of the Blessed One who is perfect. If self is not crucified, it cannot be so. I am put before God in all the perfectness of Christ Himself and Christ, in all His perfectness, is put before me. Do you shrink from this? I do not ask, Do you realize it? Paul could say, “Not as though I had already attained,” &c. But how often is the language of the heart, Spare a little nature, it cannot all be crucified! as much as though it were said, Do not let me have all Christ. How then can we know the power of joy, if we are thus making terms (I do not say we should own to this, but do not our ways speak thus?) with God, not to have Christ out and out If I cannot say, “To me to live is Christ,” as my object, my eye is not single. Paul could say, “This one thing I do,” &c. He had no other object; he reckoned all else dung and dross. It did not cost him much to give up dung and dross. If Christ has such a place in our hearts, the rest is easy, though such a life passes us through exercises and trials. If we reckon ourselves dead and risen, we get a free, open channel between us and heaven for divine consolation to flow. As a child of God, my place is in Christ, and there is no end to my blessing. The cross has settled my place in Adam. Will you be before God in the day of judgment to answer for what you have done? or have you believed the fact that Christ has come into this world, and taken the whole question up for you, and set you before God in virtue of what He has done, instead of what you have done? He disciplines us that we may be emptied of self, and find everything in Christ, and Christ everything to us. But He begins the lesson with the assurance, I love you perfectly. I bring you into the desert to learn what I am, and what

you are; but it is as those I have brought to myself! He gives us a place with Christ, but then shows us what Christ is and what we are. The discipline of the way teaches this; but if He, in His love, strikes the furrows in the heart, it is that He may sow the seed which shall ripen in glory. Are you content to be in the wilderness with nothing but the manna? or are you saying, We see nothing but this light food? If we want it for our journey, we shall find it every morning, and find it enough; but if we want to settle down, it will never satisfy us. Are you content to have the flesh crucified? Have you so tasted the love of a dying Jesus, and the glory of a risen Jesus, as to wish for nothing else? He creates a void in order to fill it. May the Lord give the distinct consciousness that we are redeemed out of the place of sin and condemnation, and that we have got a place with God! That is peace; then we shall have the joy of communion. We are as white as snow— “accepted in the Beloved.” “We shall be like him.” It is perfect love. I know that love, though I cannot measure it. I cannot measure eternity, but I am sure I shall never come to the end of it; yet I know there is eternity: so with God's perfect love. We learn and prove this love in the wilderness, in a way we never can in heaven: our very need brings it out to us. This world is a terrible house to live in, but an excellent school to learn in.

Chapter 13

Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 15

It is amazingly sweet that the very day on which we came together to remember Christ, and to show forth His death, speaks to the intelligent ear of eternal blessedness tells those who come at the bidding of the Lord Jesus that the great victory is won; that that is removed which was the only difficulty in the way of God. And, beloved, there was but one thing that ever was a difficulty to Him, and I think I may say with reverence, that there was a difficulty even to God. Undoubtedly all things are possible with God; but then it was possible only at the cost of His Son. Now this was the great thought always before God. For there never was a more profound mistake than to suppose that sin was a mere accident that came into the world; and that the gift of Jesus, the redemption of Jesus, was a bare remedy and necessity on God's part, if that terrible thing, sin, was to be taken out of the way. It is perfectly true that sin was in no wise entitled to fill a place in the universe of God. “An enemy hath done this.” It was God's enemy that brought it into a world once spotless, and the outward reflection of God's beneficent power; and all was ruined. But then it is of all importance for our souls to bear in mind steadily that it was always the thought of God to permit that the very worst should be done, in order that He might show His own depths of love and grace to those that were ruined by sin, that He might bring out such tenderness, and patience, and wisdom, and goodness in the midst of evil, as never else could have been seen. And goodness is never so thoroughly proved as where there is that evil which resists it and hates it. It is all well when things are smooth. We know from personal experience that it is an easy thing to go on when there is no difficulty in the way, where everything is congenial and in favor of what is good; where there is no trial and no contrariety to the spirit. But that which puts the soul to the proof is where everything runs hard and foul against it.

Now God permitted that the enemy should introduce into this world that which denied and opposed Himself at every point; that which left God not a particle of character in the world that He had made; for what in God has not been belied of Satan? What evil, what calumny has not Satan invented, have not our hearts believed about him? Who is it we have so much dreaded as God? Who is it we have most endeavored to flee from? Yet, in the face of all this evil which God has allowed to come out in its worst colors, He has provided that there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a feeling that Satan could excite in this world, but brings into evidence something of God that never had been so well known before. The wonder is this; the Son of God has come, lived, died, and is risen; and we assemble here together at His bidding on His resurrection day. The evil meanwhile goes; on; God has Himself told us that it must increase; “evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” —bad times—worse times the last days the worst of all—until what God has wrought in the death and resurrection of Christ is brought out before the whole world by His power. But just think, now, what a wonderful place is ours! And this was the prominent thought upon my spirit; that we, having found Christ, have had our feet, as it were, set upon the rock of ages by God Himself, that we stand upon that which is imperishable and unchangeable, and which brings us into association with the very deepest thoughts of God, and with the greatest victory that even He has ever achieved. For, in fact, all other victories are but the

result of that one which is already ours in Christ. Because it must be evident to every intelligent mind that, if that which is the worst of all, and the root of all the confusion, has been met; if the poison that has been trickling all over the world, and penetrating and corrupting everything else—if that has been dealt with, it is only a question of God's will, the bringing out of that which He has already found and given to us in the death and resurrection of Christ. Now, every Christian knows that he has found it there. I do not mean that every Christian realizes what God has done there. If so, there never would be anything but hearts entirely above all the circumstances of this world. There might be holy weeping and loving sorrow over a groaning, sinful world, but the heart would be evermore overflowing with thankfulness to God. For it is quite possible to have all the affections of our hearts drawn out towards the saints of God in all their trials, and to have the deepest feeling for the poor world, and yet have nothing but praise and thanksgiving as we look at Christ and think who has given Him for us and to us. This is our place. This is what God Himself brings before us in connection with the very day on which we assemble to remember Christ; and it is a blessed thought for us that God did not choose that day when Christ died. Most solemn it was that the Messiah should be smitten in the house of His friends—though it was the death of Him by whom alone our sin could be put away; for God Himself was obliged to turn away His face from His beloved Son when our sins were laid upon Him. But the day of the cross is not that which summons us together, nor is it the day that intervened between his death and resurrection—the day when man was keeping, alas! his holy day; when those who thought themselves something for God on the earth, but who were really the enemies of the Father and the Son, vainly supposed that they were sanctifying a day to the Lord of Hosts—the day when their own Messiah lay in the grave, slain by their wicked hands.

But now this is the grand change, when God has put forth His power once more—not now to make a world that Satan might come and spoil it all, but the day when the new power is put forth—when God has raised Jesus up from the dead, who had all our sins laid upon Him. And where are the sins? Where is that which God charged upon Jesus? It is gone! He is risen! And out of His resurrection flows every blessing, and this not to the Church only; for there is no lasting blessing that God will confer but what is founded on that death, and flows out of that resurrection. Yet the evil was allowed to go on. The world was making merry, little thinking that such a work was done. Nor was it, indeed, intended of God to be openly, undeniably known to the world yet. But God speaks from heaven Himself. He sends down the Holy Ghost to those whose hearts are opened by His grace upon the earth. And they know this mighty work that God has wrought—that Christ is risen, the first-fruits of them that slept. And there we have the Holy Ghost; for He cannot rest when He opens such a theme till He shows us the end of it—if indeed end it can be called; for he launches out into that scene where God shall be all in all, and there shall be no end—where there will not be one single enemy to put down—not a sorrow to heal—not a breach to repair; but when all will be the full and suited result of the power of that life which is already ours in Christ.

Beloved friends, how do our hearts enter into all this? We owe it to God that we should feel all that is around is—that we should take notice of that which He is doing—that there should be no sorrow of the creature or of His own children, but what we should have hearts entering into it, and expressing our groan by the Spirit to God. For, so richly are we blessed, that God calls us to be imitators of Himself in this evil world. And how does not God feel for every wound and all the havoc that His enemy has caused? He is tender in pity towards all. Even if he were going to execute

judgment upon the proudest city that had threatened to ravish His beloved people—the city of Nineveh, He must first send a prophet to warn them; and that prophet, little entering into His mind, might prefer judgment to mercy, if his own character as a prophet lay at stake. Yet, on the confession and repentance of the people, God turned aside the blow. It might be but a little confession, and one that soon passed away. And the destruction came afterward, and fell upon the fickle, guilty people, for their early repentance was but a transient thing. But there never is even so much but what God takes notice of it. And, therefore, when there was even this outward repentance of the people—clearly not of the Holy Ghost (for had it been the work of the Holy Ghost, it would have had permanency), God sets aside His own prophet, makes him heartily ashamed of himself, and even the little children and the very cattle of the place are brought into the remembrance of God.

We little enter into the largeness of His goodness, and His compassion, for every creature that He has made. But again, the very depth of His compassions, when despised, and where there is the unbelief that rejects Jesus, only brings the more surely eternal destruction from His presence.

But what a thought is this astonishing mercy and compassion of God for the ruined and miserable in the world! It is true that misery is not taken away, and the death of Christ has left the world apparently in the same state. The world, in fact, only got rid of One that troubled it. But what have the saints got through it? We are on God's side. We look at the death and resurrection of Christ, on the side not of man, but of God. And what do we see? In this poor world, which man might think but a speck in creation, we see the wonder of wonders that puts to shame not merely all on earth, but everywhere else; for what is there in heaven itself compared with the death and resurrection of Christ? Never, at any time, nowhere in any sphere that God has made, and that man in his poor thoughts and feelings might set above it, is there ought to be compared with that which calls us together this day. We remember One who was God, but who became man for us—One who did not only come from heaven, full of goodness and power, but to suffer death, the death of the cross, because we had sins that could not otherwise be put away. But what thanks shall we render unto God that we know this? that we have His own certain testimony of it? that all that God wants is that we should take the fullness of the blessing He has given us? We cannot make too much of Christ's death and resurrection. God has brought us within the precincts of perfect goodness. He has borne away all our evil; and what we have to do is simply to believe and enjoy and rest upon Himself. We may even find death encroaching, coming near and touching and withering up, as it touches that which is very dear to us. But we know resurrection—life in Christ—a far better life than a life would have been that had not known death. For what would have been even Christ, living in this world, if Christ had not died? (2 Cor. 5) It is His death that proves the power of His life, as of His love—the life which triumphed forever over death. For the eternal victory is won, and God has given it to us. There is nothing more to be done for us in respect of our sins. There is a great deal to be done in respect of our bodies and of the heavens and earth over which we are to reign. But there is nothing to be done to make good our position before God, or our deliverance, and the putting away of everything that could be a difficulty before God. The only real difficulty has been grappled with, and it is gone. The difficulty was that we lay under sin, and that God could not get over sin. But it is gone—entirely gone. He has done it Himself, at the cost of His beloved Son, and God leaves us in the world that we may learn the sufficiency of His grace in practice, as we know the triumph of it in Christ. And we are come to remember what He has done and to rejoice in what

He is to us, to anticipate the sure glory that is coming, glory without end. No doubt it is glory that we rejoice in hope of—the glory of God. Am I not put in the place of a son in his father's house, who has perfect community of interest in all that his father has and is? We are waiting to be manifested as sons and heirs through Christ; but such we are even now. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” Nothing will be altered as regards the world till God has taken us to Himself to be with Jesus—till Jesus has come to receive us and to represent us in the Father's house. For there will be no such thing for us as slipping into heaven. He will come for us to receive us, that when we do enter the Father's house, it may be with fullness of acceptance in that Blessed One who makes all sweet that the Father looks upon. We shall be ushered in by the Son Himself—not even the least one will be left behind. What a change will it be for all—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! Then God will have the joy of having all His own way, and then Satan will have the misery of seeing all those whom he had attempted to injure fully blessed of God!

Such is our portion even now in hope. We are not like those who have to wait till our bodies are changed to know what God feels towards us. May we remember that we are not dependent upon anything that may happen. We rest upon this—God has shown us Jesus. He has given us to believe in Jesus, and not only in Him, but in the mighty work that God has wrought for its in him.

May we enter into this our portion with increasing simplicity, remembering that the day approaches!

Chapter 14

2 Peter 1

WE were seeing a little lately into the place of the glorified Man in heaven, and of those associated with Him in living union.

We then entered into the heavenly position of the saints, but in all this Epistle the subject, is not touched. Saints are looked at as saved ones, of course; but the subject is the difficulties that accompany their condition, with the hope of being in the glory.

Peter takes up the saints as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, God Himself being their governor, yet not displaying His government as among the Jews.

Still He is watching over them and caring for them. “Every hair of their head is numbered.” Nothing is allowed really to harm them, although they may have to suffer; and “if for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.” Thus it is not only as saved ones that saints are looked at here, but as under God as their governor: His ways towards His children are brought out. Peter does just hint that there is something beyond, for those set in association with Christ: but the main thing is divine, moral government. In the close of this Epistle we find the end of all things glanced at, when the heavens shall be dissolved and the elements melt with fervent heat,” the whole scene closed, and the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness looked for.

But what the Apostle is occupied with, is the thought of God governing His children, in the midst of this world's system, a system of evil, without a proof in it that He is the governor. When Jesus came, the thought of many a heart was, that He would reign in righteousness, knowing that God would nut clear the guilty nor let the wicked go unpunished. Israel was set up as a present scene of God's government; but, instead of peace reigning, Christ was called to suffer. The only righteous man, the alone One, who could have met the claims of justice was condemned by injustice on the one side and by righteousness on the other. Righteousness and peace had not kissed each other, but the contrary. It was doing well and suffering for it. And this aspect—the one in which Christ was seen on earth—is what we see Christians contemplated in here. They are looked at, in a double character, as suffering. It may be for righteousness or conscience' sake, or for Christ's sake in other ways. Sufferings may come upon us through our ordinary occupations, the daily routine of business, or the actings of every-day life. The Christian cannot, do as the world does. It is more consequence to me as a believer to live Christ than all else besides. The Christian cannot resist evil, nor assert his rights, nor maintain his place in the world. It is more important to me to keep clothed in Christ's character than to wear any other mantle. The Lord Jesus does allow His saints to suffer. Their portion is in heaven. Suffering is good for them. Their salvation is perfectly accomplished. They are united to Christ. Is their suffering essential to salvation? No, salvation is Christ's work and outside the acts of the Holy Ghost altogether, who convicts of sin and bears witness of God's righteousness. The Holy Ghost afterward operates on the new nature—the Christ within; and practically exhibiting Him, will bring on suffering. “For me to live is Christ.” Not only do I desire to be in the place where He is, as Zebedee's children did, but to live out what He is. All the exercises of my heart, all my desire for God's government to be displayed in

power, give way to the longings for the affections of Christ. And now He is in heaven, my one aim should be to manifest Him. So in 1 Peter 2., “This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience' sake,” &c. It is not the spirit of love yet. Again in chap. 3:10-14 the great principle is brought out. In chap. 4:12-17 we are not to think it strange if we have reproach and sufferings for Christ's sake, but to be glad with exceeding joy. Of course none of us should suffer as evil doers. God will govern His children. Judgment must begin at the house of God. He will have His house clear. Indeed, strictly speaking, it is the only place God judges in; for He has committed all judgment to the Son. If the righteous arc scarcely—i.e., with difficulty—saved, (it was with difficulty, but Christ overcame it,) God never gives up what He is. He is the Holy Father, and, when He saves sinners in sovereign grace, He makes them what He is. He will maintain His character. I may deserve chastisement and God may meet me in grace; but He will deliver me from my sin. He cannot allow evil, neither could Christ. He ever dealt with men according to their ways and the truth of their condition, while meeting them constantly in grace. It is true He could say, I am your perfect salvation, but it was on the ground of total ruin as the sinner's part.

The heart of God would give us everything: and the title to all is—we are in Christ, and He is in us. You cannot say you have done a single thing perfectly, if there remains any part to be done. Salvation is fully wrought. It would be imperfect if there was one thing to be added. Christ keeps nothing back. He came to reveal the Father, and the Father He did reveal. “I have declared unto them thy name.” “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” “I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Language is exhausted in trying to maintain us in the place we are called to. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the risen Christ. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We are sharers with Him in all His honor and glory, save that which is peculiar to His Godhead, while He always has the pre-eminence.

God truly loves us. Not a sinner is saved, but therein the ways and dealings of God are displayed. In John 15. the Christian is taken up as a branch in the vine. The word is, “Abide in me.” It is not, I abide in you that you may bring forth fruit; but, “If ye abide in me.” He does always abide in us—that we know. But if I abide in Christ, I have the present enjoyment of the Father's love, and bring forth fruit to the glory of His name. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He does not say He will be our friend—that He ever was; but “Ye are my friends.” Now, my dealing with my friend is after an entirely different order to what it is with my servant. I go and tell out my heart to my friend. Abraham was called “the friend of God;” and God says, “Shall I keep back from Abraham the thing I am going do?” He tells and acts out His heart before His friend. This was what Christ did. In everything His end was to tell out the Father to those He called friends.

All Christians have their sins forgiven them. There is no uncertainty about that. The grace of God has brought salvation. The Father sent the Son. To be saved and to be a Christian is the same thing. Some will say, I know all men are called Christians; but am I a REAL Christian? (See Acts 13:38, 39.) Exercises of heart in that state never get beyond the desire to know if I am a Christian. I believe, one says, that God sent His Son to save sinners; but I do not know that I am saved. What nonsense it is! “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” Now all such exercises of heart, though they may be well enough in their way, will only prove just this—that I have nothing whatever to stand upon. If I have conflict, that shows there is evil, and evil cannot stand before the holiness of God. Where, then, is my hope? “Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” There is nothing God does not do for me. The very thing that

brings me into His presence without sin and without fear, is that which He has done for me in Christ. In 1 John 2, we have three classes of Christians addressed. “The little children” of ver. 12, and 13, are quite distinct. The former (ver. 12,) embraces all Christians—the latter only babes, or young, immature saints. All Christians are forgiven—all needed the blood of Christ. The babes rest on it as much as the fathers. It is not what they think of it, that is the comfort, but what God's thoughts are about it. It is through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son I get to the Father. And what is the Father—what is God? He is perfect love. I see Him at the well of Samaria—taking up children—weeping at the grave of Lazarus. In Him there is no evil—no hatred; never rejecting him who comes—never condemning the self-condemned— “I judge no man.” The Father was perfectly displayed in the Son. How can I make known to you what my Father is but by telling you what I have known Him to be—by living Him before you? This was what Christ ever did; and it is what we who have the Spirit of adoption should be doing.

In John 8:19 we hear Christ say, “If ye had known me, ye should have known the Father also.” He came not only to bring light, but “the light of life.” If He heals the sick, or restores sight to the blind, the moment He touches them, there is light and life shown in grace. If He is the Good Shepherd, He is the first out. He goes before the sheep. John 10:4. He not only shows us God as the tight, but He unfolds the Father. The babes in Christ have these two things—the new nature and the Spirit of adoption. So have the young men, and it is only in the energy of this Spirit they can overcome the world. When the fathers are addressed, it is “because you have known Him, who was front the beginning,” and that is all he has got to say. It is not their experience he has to speak of, but Christ. He is the object, and He is the title to all blessing. If my failures grieve me, (and they ought,) my comfort is that Christ is not touched. Even a revelation does not fit us for conflict. This we see in Peter. When he had a revelation from the Father and the very truth or confession Christ was about to build His church on, in the self-same chapter he is treated as Satan! The flesh in Peter was not broken. The object before him was not Christ; he was not practically occupied with Him. If I come to Christ, I rest upon the love and power of One who has overcome. He has been tempted and knows how to comfort. I may have to suffer—He had. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. Our ways, too, may cause God to deal with us now, (1 Peter 1:17,) for holiness the holy God must have. But if we are walking with the Lord He will only bless. Suffering for Christ's sake is a position of honor and favor. (Phil. 1:29.) God cannot ever brook evil in His house. The ark and Dagon cannot dwell together. God will vindicate Himself. If there is an Achan in the camp, it must be known. No matter how bad things are around, God is still God. Compare the days of Solomon with those of Elijah. Was Solomon more to God than Elijah? No. The ark was once in the land of the Philistines, but God will not give up what He is, neither will He give up the objects of His love. If we do evil, His grace may meet us; but His love must deliver us from evil. If we are walking with Him, either as an assembly or as individuals. He will only communicate His love. The Father will discipline his children; if needs be, He will chasten them; but come what will, Christ is not touched.

In the chapter before us, the first thing we see, is that those who have obtained like precious faith have all things that pertain to life and godliness, and are called to glory and virtue. It is too often the case, that the conflict takes place when Christ has not power in the soul; then we are overcome, for all power is in Him. Therefore, the need of giving all diligence; “add to your faith,” &c. Whilst we are practically exercising these graces, we shall never fall. There will be no room for

the flesh, but “there shall be ministered unto you an abundant entrance.” We shall have the kingdom of our Lord in power in our souls. The third thing we have in this chapter, is that Peter had seen the glory and could say he was an eyewitness of His majesty. But did this save him in the hour of temptation? No. He had been sleeping instead of watching, and so lost all power of escape. In verse 19 we find a sure word of prophecy, a lamp shining in a dark place until daylight dawn. Mark this. The lamp of prophecy shows the children what is coming on the world—the judgment of the quick, &c. And surely in this our day we see these two things, (though so contrary the one to the other,) men's hearts failing them for fear, and yet saying peace and safety. This is an important testimony, to which we do well to take heed. The loving Father has told us of a coming kingdom. Then will shine the broad day, which the world shall see; but the dawn is for those who, through the darkness of the night, are watching. The daystar here is for the saint's heart, not for the earth.

In Rev. 2:26, not only is there a promise to the saint of power over the nations, but “I will give him the morning star.” Blessed portion with Christ! Yes, those who have believed on Him who is not seen shall be with Him where He is not seen. I will give him the morning star—a portion with Myself, and in Myself. I will give him Myself above, before I am manifested to the world. So in Rev. 22:16, Christ, is the bride's object; and the moment He says, I am the bright and morning star, she, directed by the Spirit, says Come. “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” The Bride is not the water of life, but she has it, and can say come. It is in Christ for the poorest sinner.

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Chapter 16

All of One

All of One." (Heb. 2.) Christ, and those set apart for God by the Spirit, are all one company, in the same position before God. It is not one and the same Father: else it could not be said, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" for He could not then do otherwise. Neither is the meaning exactly that He and others were of the same nature as mere children of Adam. It is only the sanctified, the children whom God has given Him, that He calls His brethren: if it were simply a question of humanity, He shares it, of course, with all mankind, though not in the same state as any other, whether saint or sinner. Still, he and the sanctified are all in the same human nature, as it is before God—a position taken in resurrection. Then only (Psa. 22) Did he so speak of them fully and properly. (John 20.)

Irvingite doctrine is the error of identifying Christ with men, as such—with sinful humanity, and not with the sanctified.

Chapter 17

“Before Abraham Was, I Am.”

The Jews were immersed, not in the truth of their system, but in the mere ignorance of acting on present appearances. This is a deep, essential principle (-.): error, which one has to watch—not seeing God and things according to His mind, (which was exactly in question,) but the mind of man in the things of God. Hence precisely the present state of the Church. It was the grand question between Jesus and the Jews, the point in which Jesus has to be recognized, and in which faithfulness to Him rests as in Him to His Father, quoad hoc. The Jews, therefore, said to Him, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” They thought the sense of this the same, because they looked not beyond the outside. But, on man's ground, the Jewish reasoning was generally correct. It was utterly, morally wrong, without conscience, therefore without God, and that which God alone could teach. They now brought it to the point of the mere manhood of Christ—the point of their darkness. Our Lord, as the truth, could but give the light. “Before Abraham was, (ye see not,) I am.” Ye know not my existence, my being. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” The great truth was told, the essential, vital, eternal truth, on which all hung, without which there could be no truth, nor coming unto man, nor bringing man back in redemption to God. For how could he be restored by that which was not? And this was true of everything save One. Should dust be a redeemer? Yet out of dust man was to be redeemed.

The great truth was declared. He there could be none against it. The necessity of the existence of the Savior assumed the nothingness of all else—could be, not falsified, but only denied by violence. They might say it was blasphemy, and take up stones in their zeal for God, rejecting Him manifested. Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” The time of their iniquity was not come: His time was not come. But what circumstances! and with whom discussed! and what a truth! Do we believe it? Do we, I say, believe it—that Jesus (a man even as we are, save sin) was “I am?” All is told, if we believe Him thus dead and alive again; for therein is the redemption, and through this must He pass. It is true, most simply true, the center—wondrous, wondrous to us—of all the manifestation of God, and rightly, in its glory, to chosen sinners; lovely in its blessing to all simmers; deep, therefore, necessarily, in its condemnation of blind, rejecting sinners. “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh, justified in tine spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world” —and yet, more wondrous still, “received up into glory.” Thus, as to the essential truth, He was “I am.” Then, as to the dispensation, the thing thus revealed, or rather discussed with the Jews, is the subject of John 8 The Lord is traced as the light of the world; as Son of man lifted up; all through as the Son in the power of life, in person as Son, up to this great revelation of “I am:” the real truth and fulfiller of all Jewish hopes, and the basis of common promises, and this as, and by, the word—the essential characteristic. I know of nothing that has so astonished my mind as this revelation of “I am,” or the real thought that Jesus could say, “I am;” the connection of these—to man—inconvertible possibilities, and the concatenation in which all the dealings of God are brought out as fulfilled in it, while yet He remains truly God; and yet could say therein, “the Son of man, who is in heaven.”

How manifest it is, that nothing but the gift of faith could, even in a single tittle, understand or know the truth in the person of Jesus; while yet, by the perfection of its manifestation in the flesh, every soul was put under the responsibility to receive it as the true word of God, our God, in love. The broad, penetrating fact, “I am,” the all-embracing word, must at once close all controversy. We must be opposers or bow before the throne of God. We must stand in awe of Jesus. Well may it be said, “Kiss the Son!” Lord Jesus! what sort of subjection is this we owe to thee.? We have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now our eye seeth thee: we abhor ourselves. O! Can we see this in Jesus? Have we seen it? None can see it out of Him. It is the truth only in Him. Surely we should move mountains if we believed it: yet it is simple truth. Dwell on it, my soul! Jesus, that thou knowest, that stranger in the world among His own, is “I AM.” Henceforth let us be dead to all but this. I do indeed stand incapable of utterance. I do read and talk with Jesus, I watch Jesus in His ways, a servant, and behold, he, even He, is “I AM,” with whom I am, whose way I follow, whose grace I adore. Christ is the union of these two things: the man, the rejected man, whom I look at now with most thankful sympathy, and, behold, the presence of God! How low it lays men's thoughts, experience, judgments, notions! The perfection of God was there—God rejected of men. What can meet or have a place along with this? Let this be my experience. Glory be to God Most High. Amen. Yet to me it is Jesus; in truth it is “I am.” Here I rest; here I dwell; to this I return. This is all in all. I can only be silent, yet would speak what no tongue can utter, and no thought can think before it. This we shall learn, and forever grow in—more beyond us forever, for here is God revealed in His essential name of existence—God revealed in man, in Jesus! if know Him, am familiar with Jesus, at home with God, honoring the Father in Him, and Him as one with and in the Father, yea, delighting to do it. But I say, do we believe it? I do believe it all; and yet, as it were, believe nothing. I am as nothing in the thought of it, yet alive for evermore by it, blessed be God and his name. All shall praise Him so. Yea, Lord Jesus, God Most High, so shall it be. Lord Jesus! thou art “I am,” thou art “I AM;” yet didst thou take little children in thine arms; yet didst thou suffer, die, and be in the horrible pit—yea, for our sins! Thus I know the mercy-seat: I know that there is no imputing sins to me, that I am reconciled to God, and that God is the reconciling One.

Chapter 18

Scripture Query and Answer: Our Besetting Sin

Q. What is our besetting sin, in Heb. 12:1? Is not unbelief the sin which so easily besets us all as saints? If what is popularly known as “besetting sin” was intended, would it not have been expressed thus—and the sins which do so easily beset us? If we believed everything said in the word, would we not be strong and unconquerable?

W. G.

A. I agree with the querist, that the popular application does not seem to be the thought intended. Neither is it to be restricted to the particular sin of unbelief. Cares, &c, may weigh down the Christian in his race; lusts of any kind may entangle his feet. All these are to be cast off, and only can be by looking away unto Jesus.

Chapter 19

Born Again

John 3.

THE truth connected with the Holy Ghost, together with Christ and His work, is the great safeguard, against the error by which Satan is working in the present day. The enemy's craft must be met by the truth of God. In this chapter we have the work of) the Spirit in quickening souls; and this is brought out, in contrast both with God's previous trial of Israel, and with man's natural power in the reception of outward evidence. from chap. 2:24, &c., we see the need of getting hold of God's truth for our own souls. The profession. of Christ may be ever so sincere, but apart from life and fruit it is worth nothing. The people saw He was the One who should come, the Person sent from God and they had right thoughts about His works, and yet all that went for nothing, and was worthless in the sight of God. The solemn question was, what was in man? The conviction spread amongst them that He was the Messiah, because of the miracles he did, and they were ready to have Him in their own way. Nicodemus said! “we, (not I) know that thou art a teacher sent from God,” &c., but the wickedness of man's heart was not all come out. Man proved what he was in the treatment he gave the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding the undeniable evidence vouchsafed in His works, that he was come from God.

There are none so hostile, to truth as those who know but will not have it. The spies who had been up and seen the land were those active in speaking, against it. One cannot go the way of the cross without having its trial and difficulty, as well as its infinite gain. The cross is not pleasant, of course, and it never was intended to be pleasant. Directly I see that Christ has a right and claim on my conscience, my nature rises to resist His power; I see He ought to have the first place, and that other things should give way: this I do not like. The cross must be contrary to our nature.

The Lord now meets Nicodemus with the declaration that he must be born again, or rather anew, (which is a stronger word than “again,” or “from above.") It is the same expression in the original as from the very first,” in Luke 1:3. You may find lovely qualities in human nature, but nature never loves Christ, where the cross and the glory come together. The new birth is a thing totally new. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Christianity does not alter it at all. Man is in love with creation, and neither loves God nor believes His love. The creation is ruined. Spotted—not willingly, as man is, but still it is fallen. Man's will is gone away from God. His intellect may be all very well in its way; his disposition may be amiable, but you never find one who naturally seeks after God. Nay, you generally find the most amiable person the last to turn to God. Man must be born entirely anew; he must come into heaven with a new nature altogether distinct from that which he has got. Man will use his good qualities as well as his bad, just as an animal, but with more intelligence. The eye must be opened. It is a new ground and way of perception, by which we can even see the kingdom of God.

There was neither holiness nor righteousness before the fall. The original state was something distinct from both. Adam innocent, but not properly righteous or holy. To apply innocence to God, or to the Lord Jesus, would be absurd. God is holy; seeing what is bad and abhorring it, which

holiness, negatively, at least, consents in. A righteous man judges what is contrary to justice and hates it. An innocent man did not know things in themselves good and evil, though, of course, he knew that it was his duty to obey God. Adam's sin was inn trying to be like God; our goodness is in desiring to be like Him. Ought we not to seek to be like God—to imitate Him, as the Apostle Paul exhorts? We are called by glory and virtue, and are seeking to remind our souls that God's counsel is that we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son. This one thing we should do, “forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” Adam knew nothing of this; his whole moral nature was entirely different. In sinning, man got his conscience, and was ruined in getting it, because it was a bad one. Consequently, he was afraid of the God he wished to be like. he lost innocence, and we never regain it; but we are renewed after the Second Adam. We are, after the image of God, created in righteousness and true holiness, made partakers of the divine nature, and brought to judge of sin as God judges it, and to love holiness as He loves it.

It is after God we are created again. (Eph. 4:24.) Not only have we, as men, the knowledge of good and evil, which made the man afraid of God and hide himself, but now, in being born again, it is another thing. We have life in our souls in a divine way.

We have the holy moral nature that God has, and in this nature, there is a positive delight in the righteousness of God, which does not condemn it, because it is the same. This new nature feeds upon, and delights in, what is of God, and is satisfied with the object before us, even Christ Himself. God has chosen us in Him that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love—he has us before him in this, the image of His own nature. In Christ we have all that God delights in, brought out and displayed in the man. He is the perfect and blessed display of all God is, and He is the expression before God of what He has made us to God. We have the image of God in the man, and more than this, we have what man is for God.

This quickening of the Spirit has a double character; it is death in both. We are dead, and are to reckon ourselves “dead indeed unto sin,” &c. This is liberty, but there is death practically, or putting to death, and that is what we do not like, for this is the cross. We like the liberty, but not the mortifying, or putting to death, our members on earth.

The sentence of death that God has passed on flesh and sin, is an unchangeable sentence, and it is a positive blessing to have done with the flesh, for it is a condemned thing. The sentence was executed upon Christ, the new man, that we might live after the power of that new man, Christ. There is an important point as to this, which is often confounded and mistaken. We must live, that we may die—not die that we may live, as is often represented. Men talk of death before they have life, but they are wrong. Heath, morally, is the consequence of having life. And this is just the difference between a monk—not using the word offensively—and a Christian. As a monk, I mortify myself, in order that I may live; instead of first having life, as a Christian, from God that I may die. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter,” &c. (Ver. 5.) “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.” God has begotten us by the word. “Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” “The word gives light and understanding to the simple,” and the effect of the light's coming in by the word is to bring the judgment of everything in man, as it brings delight in that which is of God.

“That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” There is the communication of a new nature in believing; and when born of God, the truth sanctifies and cleanses. There is “the washing of water by the word;” but this cannot be till after we are born of the Spirit by the word. There would be no sense in saying, That which is born of water is water; but that which is born of the Spirit, is of the spiritual nature of God, not of man's nature.

The “living water” made the woman at the well, to whom Jesus spake, hate herself. It detects what is in man. Hence, Christ could say to His disciples, “Ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken to you.” In the new and holy nature, in which I am created of God in Christ, I can now take up everything that I delight in; and I can judge everything contrary to it. Thus the word has a cleansing power. Baptism may be the expression and figure of it here, as the Lord's Supper embodies the truth of John 6. ("whoso eateth my flesh,” &c.,)—though I do not say that the Lord referred to either institution, but to the reality of which each is the sign. The substance of the thing is not the putting away the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who came by water—not by water only, but by water and blood. It will not do to look at ourselves with approbation. See what is said of the king of The. (Ezek. 28.) We must not look at self, nor take pleasure in it. We want an object outside ourselves—even the renewed man does. The moment there is the communication of the divine nature, there must be delight in Christ Himself.

This is brought out in this double way in John 5; 6 In chap. 5. there are dead sinners quickened, or raised. This speaks of God communicating the divine nature. I do not speak of filth now; but it is God's own power that is spoken of—God quickening. In chap. 6. we get faith still more fully insisted on: and here is the object of my faith presented. This is perfection—to be so occupied with Christ, as to be forgetful of self. While told to reckon ourselves dead, we are looked upon as dead already in Christ. How is this? Christ is looked upon as coming down into the place of death, that there, where I was without stirring, Christ might be, and rise up out of it, for my deliverance. Because of what he suffered on the cross, as manifested in the power of His resurrection, “old things have passed away, and all things have become new.” God will have none of the old thing now. It is defiled and corrupted, and good for nothing. “All things have become new” —not renewed. “In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” he is the eternal life that was with the Father, and is manifested unto us. This is not the man that fell out of paradise! How then can God and man be connected? “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” There was the inseparable barrier of man's will on one side, and the power of death on the other. Therefore He says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” But “if it die, (the corn of wheat) it bringeth forth much fruit.” “The exceeding greatness of his power,” &c., (Eph. 1:19.) is in resurrection. Then, passing over the allusion to the Church, in the next chapter we read, You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,” &c. In connection with, and the basis of it all, is Christ, who is dead and risen, with whom we are quickened together. The second Adam has not His place as Head of the family except by death first. Why? Because redemption could not have been wrought. Nor would it have been, as now, a question of God's righteousness. These being accomplished, He is entirely and in everything fitted to be the head of the new creation. This new link is wrought by the Word. The living word, by the Spirit is the power, and resurrection-life with Christ is the standing into which we are brought.

Christ speaks to Nicodemus about the things that he, as a Jew, ought to have understood. (Comp. Ezek. 36.) He says, “If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” God's earthly things were not evil or fleshly things, but the promised earthly portion, which the Jews were to look for. In the latter day they must be sprinkled with water and have a new heart from the Spirit before they can inherit. This Nicodemus should have known. Then there are the heavenly things which are better. “The wind bloweth where it listeth.” &c. There is the sovereign acting of His grace. He will take any poor sinners of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, and bring them into the blessing He has to give. “God so loved the world.” This goes beyond the Jews. It is not there, God so loved Israel. For all alike Christ was needed. For the best, the Son of man must be lifted up, and for the worst God would give His only-begotten Son. Under promises, law, or nature, death must come in, if man is to be saved. In nothing can they be taken up in their own title.

What are we brought into by that which Christ has done? He says, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” Here was the double revelation of God. Christ is speaking as a divine person, and as one who has seen divine glory. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” He knew and saw, as One familiar and at ease with the Father and the Holy Ghost, with the glory of the Godhead. He was, Himself, in the unity of the divine essence. And though we were not only men outside it all, but fallen men, yet now, as born of God, what we are not brought into! We have resurrection-life in Him; we are one spirit with the Lord. It is not the poor thing of the mere renewal of good qualities; but it is Christ, the Son, Himself making us partakers of His own things.

Chapter 20

Christ, Having Suffered Here Below

Christ, having suffered here below, is ascended to heaven, “that He might fill all things.” He came down in grace; He is gone up in righteousness; He will come in glory. Thus, while the church is being formed by the Holy Ghost's personal presence here below, the two-fold truth comes fully out: the heavenly man, as such, takes his place above, and the earthly man is judged. Henceforth old things are passed away, all things are become new

Chapter 21

Christ Is All and in All

THE tendency is to satisfy our souls, even when we are born of God, with one of these truths, instead of enjoying them both. And although they are blessedly harmonious, as all truths must be, still there is a manifest difference between the two statements, “Christ is all,” and Christ is “in all.” For I apprehend when the Spirit of God says that Christ is all, that He thereby puts down completely in the things of God whatever we were in nature, and all that is of the world; that He thereby excludes all questions about the difference between Jews and Gentiles—between those who had thoughts of God, exalting themselves above others by covenant, or rite, or law, as Israel had; all questions of wise or ignorant, as to the learning of this world—barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free—it matters not what, as to their social condition in this life; so that He gives a most comprehensive glance at the ways in which men draw lines of demarcation. These have their place before the eye, as regards the world; for clearly natural relationships exist, and very rightly so, but not in heaven. And we must remember that Christian worship goes upon the ground of what is true in heaven. Therefore it is that Paul, when exhorting the Hebrew Christians, invites them to draw near “into the holiest of all,” because it is there that faith carries us. Our bodies may be together in any place on earth, but it is in heaven that the true worship is carried on in spirit, in “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.” Therefore we may say, that the only real place of worship now is heaven, where our Priest is, and where our sacrifice is presented. There we by faith stand in the presence of God Himself; consequently, in what has merely to do with God, Christ is all. Everything that pertained to us in the flesh completely disappears.

But there is another side of the truth. While there is the negation of all the distinctions of the flesh as to the things of God in that statement, “Christ is all,” it is most important to see that Christ is “in all.”

There is not one of those who bear His name but what Christ is in him. Faith acts on this. This it is which draws out the only love that is worth having, and that God recognizes in the things that concern Himself; that love which is of God, and which God Himself is. What is it? Not mere sympathy because of community of sentiment; that is the parent of all sectarianism. What is it that binds together those who naturally may have nothing in common? Christ is in all. Then comes, along with that, the most solemn responsibility. Wherever what is not of Christ is displayed in a Christian, it is not to be passed over and made nothing of, because, as might be said, “for all that Christ is in him.” The real truth is that Christ is in him in order that all that which is of the flesh and inconsistent with Him who is our life may be judged and put away. Anything but this as a principle in our souls would be to do evil that grace may abound. Still it remains true, and it is a most precious truth, Christ is all, and Christ is in all. If the one truth makes nothing of us, I may say that the other makes everything of us. The one blots out what is of the first Adam, while the other just as much gives the full and proper value of Christ to every one that belongs to God, spite of much that might be trying and painful individually. It is the character of the last Adam attached to all the saints. It is in their mutual relations that the greatest trial is felt. The family circle may illustrate this. You may often find a great deal that is very pleasant and courteous outside the home, that is never

known in it. This, of course. is most sorrowful, but it is just in the home circle that the trial comes chiefly; for we there see much of one another's failings. It is the same thing in the things of God. We are put to the test by our relations with the saints of God. Do you, do we, know how to practically reconcile these two truths—Christ “all,” and Christ “in all?” To love Christ in all, and at the same time to exalt nothing but Christ? I speak now of the relations of saints one with another in the things of God.

But there is another Scripture that I must just say a word upon, because it is often confounded with the one we are looking at. It is in 1 Cor. 15—an expression that we are all familiar with. God shall be all in all—a totally different truth, which does not refer to the same time. It has no bearing upon what is going on now, but upon a state of things that we may say is still far distant. It will not be true till then, except to faith, which gives a present existence to all truth. But if you come to the accomplishment of it, when will God be “all in all?” Not even when we are taken to be with the Lord, nor when the Lord has brought back His ancient people, and blotted out their iniquities, and made them to be the grand instruments of His blessing here below. Even then it will not be true that God is “all in all.” When will it be, then? When the Lord shall have delivered up the kingdom. He will receive it for the express purpose of making good all the promises of God, and putting down all the evil that rises up against God. That will be the object of Christ's earthly kingdom. And when everything is put down, and the last enemy is destroyed—when there will be no death to touch the body, and no devil to tempt the soul, (for I am not now speaking of the temporary binding of Satan, but of the time when he is entirely set aside and cast into the lake of fire,) then, and not till then, will God be all in all. In the millennium, when there will be the full blessing in heaven, and a grand measure of it upon earth, still there will be the control of evil under the government of Christ. But what will be most prominent then? Man will be all in all, in the person of Christ. As man, He will take the kingdom, which will be the vindication of Him who was crucified. It was as man that He suffered, and it is as man that He will be exalted in that kingdom which will be the display of Him as (so to speak) man all in all. And when He has used all the power and glory with which He is invested, to reduce everything into subjection to God, then will come the eternal scene, when God will be all in all. This will be the blessed answer to what man has been doing from the first—arrogating to himself what belongs to God. Even where it is a question of a sinner getting the forgiveness of his sins, man is trying to have them forgiven by himself—though “who can forgive sins but God only?” All through, it is man taking the place of God, and taking it, alas in wickedness. When Jesus is exalted in this blessed kingdom, all the object and result of His glory will be to the glory of God the Father. And when all is perfectly put down, and not one blot is left upon the whole universe of God; when all evil is judged, and good is brought out in the full glory of God, better even than when creation was first put forth (for the new creation is better than the old); then will shine the grand truth of all eternity—God all in all; God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For we must be very tenacious as to this. It is not that God the Father may be all in all—which is never said in Scripture, and would be derogatory to the Son and Holy Ghost. But He who has been holding the kingdom as man will deliver it up, that GOD (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) may be all in all—the praise of every creature, without one single thing to dim and tarnish the scene forever and ever.

Chapter 22

The Christ of God: the True Center of Union

The cross may gather all, both Jew and Gentile; but they are gathered to Christ, not to the cross: and the difference is a most important and essential one, because it is of all importance that the person of the Son of God have its place. Christ Himself, not the cross of Christ, is the center of union. The two or three are gathered to His name, not to the cross. Scripture is uniform in its testimony as to this.

But further, where saints are gathered in unity, without any questionings, they have the truth and holiness to guard. It never was, nor I trust ever will be, the notion of brethren, that the truth of Christ's person, or godliness of walk, was to be sacrificed to outward unity. It is making brethren of more importance than Christ. And even so, love to the brethren is false; for, if true, it is, John assures us, “love in the truth, and for the truth's sake.” Supposing a person denied the divinity of Christ, or the resurrection of His body, still declaring his belief in the cross—supposing he declared his belief in the cross and resurrection, but declared it was only a testimony of God's love, and no substitution or expiatory value in it, as many clergymen of high reputation now do—is all this to be immaterial? I shall be told that no true believer could do this. In the first place, a true believer may be seduced into error; and further, the test offered becomes thus the opinion formed that a man is a true believer, and not the plain fundamental truth of God and His holiness. It If be granted that the gathering is round the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is quite true: but what person? Would it be equal if He were owned to be God, or if it were denied? If He were the Son, the object of the Father's delight at all times, or if He were a man or really risen from the dead? If it be said, All this is supposed, then neutrality is a delusion and denies itself. For that is what I insist on—that I must have a true Christ, and that I am bound to maintain the truth of Christ in my communion. I am aware that it is stated that we can deal with conduct, (with morality,) but not with these questions. But this is just what appears to me so excessively evil. Decency of conduct is necessary to communion; but a man may blaspheme Christ—that is no matter: it is a matter, not of conduct, but of conscience. It is hinted, that perhaps if it be a teacher, he may be dealt with. In truth, the apostle desires even a woman not to let such a person into her house. It is not therefore so difficult to deal with. Just think of a system which makes blasphemous views of Christ, which may amount to a denial of Him, to be a matter of private conscience, having nothing to do with communion! And here is the very root of the question.

I affirm that that is not a communion of believers at all which is not founded on the acknowledgment of a true Christ. Where the truth as to this is commonly held and taught, I may have no need for particular inquiry. But this is not the case here. If I find a person even in such a case denying the truth as to Christ, communion is impossible, because we have not a common Christ to have communion in. But here all faithfulness is thrown overboard. No call to confess a true Christ is admitted: it is a new test or term of communion!

We are to meet as Christians: but a man is not a Christian in profession who professes a false Christ. I cannot judge the state of a person's heart while his profession is false. I may hope he is

only misled, but cannot accept his profession. If wholly or not willfully ignorant, it is another matter; but we have to do with the case where, heretical views being held, they are declared to be matter of private conscience; that a false Christ is as good as a true one, if a person's conduct is good—we can judge only of the last! Now this principle is worse than false doctrine; because it knows the falseness and blasphemy of it, and then says it is no matter. I do not own such meetings as meetings of believers; for fundamental error as to Christ is immaterial for communion—a matter, not of conduct, but of conscience.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God has raised him from the dead.” Suppose a person held Christ was a mere man, and quoted the passages to prove it that God raised Him, and made Him Lord and Christ, would he be received? If not, you do try whether a man has the faith of God's elect: otherwise a Socinian is admissible as a believer, or you make your opinion of his being a believer the test, entirely independent of the faith of Christ. It is said, You can only require a person to say he receives all in Scripture. The supposed Socinian would accept such a test at once. They do so. Why should you ask even that? A man may be a believer and a rationalist in theory, (sad as such a thought is,) and not accept all the word of God, and say, I am a believer in the cross: you have no right to make a difficulty. If after this you object to any doctrine, or insist on any truth, you have not even scripture to lean on against his denial of it. Scripture says, “whom I love in the truth,” “and for the truth's sake.” The other principle says, that is no matter. You think the person spiritual, a believer; the truth of Christ is no matter, a false one is just as good.

I add no human document to the divine: I make no term of communion besides Christ. God requires that those who have blasphemed Christ should not be admitted. I am told that it is a matter of conscience, &c., and people cannot read doctrines to know whether He is blasphemed or not. These blasphemers have been received deliberately and avowedly, upon the ground that no inquiry is to be made; and therefore the plea of additional bonds or terms of communion is all dust thrown in the eyes. Is it a new term of communion to affirm that faith, faith in a true Christ, (not a false one,) is called for for communion, and that blasphemers of Christ are not to be received? That is the true question. If a person thinks they are not safe in reading the publications, how are they safe in fellowship and intimacy with those who have written or refuse to disown them? I confess I do not admire this argument. Simple believers do not hesitate, reasoning minds do. Ask a true-hearted believer if Christ had the experience of an unconverted man. He would soon say, I will have nothing to do with one who says that. A reasoning mind might make it a mere matter of personal conscience. Is the truth of Christ's person, and His relationship to God, a variety of judgment on a particular doctrine? Here is the whole question—raise for Christ and the truth as to Himself Definitions are not required, but that, when blasphemous definitions have been made, the blasphemers should be refused. Is it the Shibboleth of a party to reject such doctrines as, that Christ was relatively farther from God than man when they had made the golden calf; and that he heard with an attentive heart the gospel from John Baptist, and so passed from law under grace? Or is it faithfulness to Christ to extenuate them by saying, that in such deep doctrines we shall not express ourselves alike?

It is not real love to the members, nor love for Christ's sake, to despise Christ, so as to bear blasphemies against Him. The truth of His person and glory is a test for those who are faithful to Him. I cannot talk of liberty of conscience to blaspheme Christ to have communion with it.

Chapter 23

Christ the Propitiatory

Rom. 3:25

The mercy-seat was the cover of the ark in the most holy place. There God dwelt in glory, The Shechinah, winch marked the presence of the God of Israel, was there. And upon the mercy-seat there was blood, the blood of a victim slain upon the day of atonement. On that day one man stood forth in the midst of guilty Israel—one man confessed the sins of Israel—one man slew the victim for Israel, carried the blood into the sanctuary and put it upon and before the mercy-seat—seven times sprinkled the blood upon it, and seven times before it. God now declares that what that type held out in prospect, the work of Jesus is: that all the substance of that which was foreshadowed in the blood-stained mercy-seat, is now true in Jesus. Think what a blessed thing that is! Not a soul but one brought the victim, and there was one victim slain for Israel and no more. Not a soul goes in of all Israel, but one, the high priest. And he went in not merely for himself and his own house, but for Israel. The goat, whose blood was shed for Israel, was so entirely distinct in the type that, as the high priest was a mere sinner like another, he had a separate sacrifice or bullock slain for himself and his own house. But Christ needs none, and therefore can be wholly for the sinner. How thoroughly there you have the substitute! How entirely the question is taken away from the sinner and laid upon Him that is mighty—the only One that could meet our ruin in the sight of God? On that day the great confession was they had not Israel's, but the high priest's. No doubt they had been troubled and mourning before, and on that day they did afflict their souls, and did no work. But if there is one thing that, more than the law or than hell, makes sin to be thoroughly felt, it is God's judgment of it in the cross of Christ. Oh! the goodness of God who brought out all the horrors of my sin, that He might take it upon Himself in the person of Jesus, and become responsible for it! If a man has to suffer for his own fault, he makes up his mind to it, and tries to harden his heart in pride, or sinks into despair. If you have to answer for your sins you are lost Forever. But what touches the heart is, another suffering for his sins. And when a soul knows that God Himself has become a man in order to suffer, that is, measured all sins in His own divine light, and brought out their true blackness—that the blessed Son of God has had it all laid upon Himself and borne its punishment—that now the blood is shed, and more than that, sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. O what love, what truth is this! The blood of Jesus sprinkled upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. And lo! the veil is rent and I may enter in. What meets me there? My sins? Not one is there. The law? It is completely hidden from view. The lid of the ark the mercy-seat itself—shuts it down. The law is, no doubt, there: it is honored, and is where none can sully or gainsay. But as far as I am concerned, nothing so establishes the law as faith. Its claim was so sacred, and God's majesty so bound up with it, that Christ Himself must be made a curse by that very law and suffer all the consequences of it, if He took the sinner's place. And He did! His death sanctioned the law in the most solemn manner and to the full. But Christ is also the end of the law to everyone that believes. If the seal was upon the law in Christ's death', for that very reason I am completely delivered.

The light of God's presence shines only upon the blood on the mercy-seat and what does that blood speak? Has God any fault to find with it? Can he, looking at the blood of His Son, say it is not sufficient? His word is, that it cleanses from all sin. Listen, now, you who do not know what it is. to have rest for your souls. God Himself speaks to you by His word; He has brought your sin before you; He has told you that all your attempts to get better are vain—that they are, in fact, but setting yourselves up against the sentence of God: your works are wicked, your nature hopelessly evil. God Himself declares, “There is no difference.” And if you are resolving and laboring to improve, you are just trying to make a difference. God, I repeat, declares there is none. Oh! the hatefulness of the heart, where fruits of the Spirit have never grown. It is a wilderness indeed, full of briars and thorns. Such is man's heart in God's sight and estimate, yet His joy is that the wilderness should rejoice and blossom as the rose. But the question of sin must be settled first. I must be delivered and justified, before the fruits can appear... how is it to be done? “Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.” He points to the mercy-seat. Not a single thing but the blood of Jesus is offered there. God is looking at that blood. And when in Israel the sin had been all brought out and confessed by the high priest, what was not their gladness as, from the presence of their God, he came forth the witness that all sins and iniquities had been put away? Israel did not see the blood sprinkled within—they believed it? they had been in humiliation and sorrow till then, but all was changed now. Why? Because the blood of atonement was upon the mercy-seat. And yet that was but a goat's blood. Whereas, now, the Son of God has died, and His blood is before the living God—that great and only-sufficient sacrifice for sin. God now proclaims, throughout the wide world, the eternal efficacy of that blood for poor sinners. If there is no goodness in me towards God, there is goodness in God for me. Have I known this from God? Then I have repented. God stands to the value of that blood. Have I taken His word for it? This is faith, and there is the first place where the battle must be won. “Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Am I to look at my own heart and say, now I know that my sins are gone, and that I am a Christian because I feel myself to be a little better than I was a year ago? The Lord preserve you from such a delusion! It is but the old man again, essaying to make a difference where God has said there is none. A Christian is one who has confessed himself completely lost and bankrupt. He is miserable about it; he feels that He has wronged God, but believes that God has wrought salvation in the cross. Hence He can weigh all and own it to God. For the first time he is really honest in heart. Begin, then, with Christ and his blood. Having Christ for my sins, I have also Christ in mile to produce the fruits of the Spirit. I want to bring praise to Him. I desire the whole world to know He has become the object and life, as well as the salvation, of that poor wretched creature who was born blind but now sees.

Chapter 24

Fragment: Christ the Truth

Christ on earth was the truth, as he is always. Truth exists before the church of God. His word is truth, and faith in the truth gathers the church by the Holy Ghost. But the church maintains the truth; and when the church is gone, men will fall into a strong delusion. That which is not the pillar and support of the truth is not the church as God understands it.

Chapter 25

Fragment: Christian Responsibility

Christian responsibility is founded on this—that God has delivered our souls, and that he mesas to have us with himself in heaven. Our conduct never flows from a pure and right spring, where it does not flow from the certainty of the favor of God, that has made us His own forever. The mere thought of duty, however just, will not stand the day of trial.

Chapter 26

Scripture Query and Answer: Church or Assembly

Q. Acts 7:38.—Is the word “church” right here?

Enquirer.

A. Certainly not, if the reader thereby gathers “the Church of God” as unfolded variously in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The meaning is clearly the assembly of Israel in the wilderness. Hence “assembly” or “congregation” would be a better rendering, as avoiding ambiguity and leaving the reader to infer from the context what assembly is meant. The word itself is capable of other applications, as in Acts 19, where it is applied to the meeting of the Ephesians. It is technically used in Greek authors for the legislative assembly to which the citizens belonged.

Chapter 27

Fragment: What Is the Church?

In order to judge what the church is, we must know, and be able to distinguish, the truth and the living God whose presence is there.

Chapter 28

Church's Part

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honor and incorruptibility, eternal life, &c., &c.; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile.” Rom. 2:16, 6-11

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Rom. 14:12.

3. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or BAD.” 2 Cor. 5:9, 10.

4. “But he that doeth WRONG shall receive for the WRONG which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons,” Col. 3:25.

Note the passages 2, 3, 4, in reference to “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9. Heb. 10:17.) L. D. G.

A. It is important to bear in mind that, whatever may be the display and power of grace, the principles of righteousness are in no way set aside, but, on the contrary, maintained thereby. The day will declare that God renders to each according to his works. Life eternal He will give to those who by patient continuance of good work, seek for glory, honor, and incorruptibility. He will give this, I say; because here eternal life is viewed on the side of glory, not as a present thing, as the Apostle John does; and hence it appears as the issue of a holy, fruit-bearing course. On the other hand, to such as are contentious and disobedient to the truth, but who obey unrighteousness, there shall be indignation and wrath tribulation and distress, on every soul of man that worketh evil, &c. (Compare John 5:29; Gal. 6:8.) Mark the two-fold truth. “Each of us shall give account of himself to God.” Yet shall the believer not come into judgment (John 5:24)—not into condemnation merely, but judgment. Doubtless, in the unbeliever's case to give account of himself will be, in effect, both judgment and condemnation. But neither is true of the believer.

Nevertheless, it is certain that the believer will be manifested (not judged) before the judgment seat of Christ. All must be manifested there, in fact, whether saint or sinner; that each may receive the things done in (or by) the body, according to what things he has done, whether it be good or evil. Even for the believer, all his ways are far from being the fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ. As for the laborer, there might be work done with sorry materials, and this will have its consequences in, glory, though the person should be saved.

It is just the same principle in the last passage, as indeed in a crowd of others. 1 John 1:9 does not modify, much less contradict, this. It is involved in repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor does Heb. 10:17 clash either, as some might think. No sin is remembered as a question of pardon; nothing is forgotten as a question of divine vindication and retribution. We shall know as we are known, and God be magnified in all His ways.

Chapter 29

Fragment: Church's Part

The church’s part is to confess the truth when communicated, not to communicate it. God reveals to and by individuals, as apostles and prophets. Accordingly, the apostle says, not “where” but “of whom hast thou learned these things.”

Chapter 30

On Cleansing Before Atoning

Sir.—The scriptural order of cleansing before atoning has often puzzled me. Can any of our more deeply, taught brethren explain it? We are, I think, in the habit of considering the atoning blood to be the foundation of all that we are in the way of holiness and acceptance with God: yet, when the twin ideas of purification and expiation are presented to us in Scripture, under whatever variety of language or symbol, they stand in this order so uniformly that it can hardly be otherwise than significant.

For examples, the leper had first to wash and then to bring the sacrifice whose blood was to atone: so throughout the various washings with sacrifice. Again, in Heb. 6:2, “the doctrine of washings (not baptisms—see Greek) and of laying on of hands;” that is, the doctrine of cleansing” and of transfer of sinfulness to the sacrificial victim. Again, in 1 Cor. 6:11, but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been (justified, i.e.) pronounced free from condemnation. Again, 1 John 5:6, (see Greek,) this is he that cometh through water and blood, Jesus, the Christ, not with the water alone, but with the water and the blood. This by the way is a very important declaration of God, in the present day, when Socinianism, Rationalism, Neology, &c., concur in saying that Christ saves by “water alone;” that is, by causing or promoting, in one way or another, my personal cleansing henceforth; and not by blood,” by His death as an expiatory sacrifice. But to return to out question, How is it that the blood is not placed first Again, “there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water, and the blood.” Again, 1 Cor. 1:10, “Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I have quoted merely those passages which occur to me without seeking them.

But further, not, only is this order observed when the purification relates to the great work once for all, at our new birth, but even in its less fundamental aspect of progressive development or growth of the “new man” created in us as shown by his more and more resisting the “old man,” and so bringing our natural powers more and more into the service of the new man. This brings me to a passage which though, as an example, it is too uncertain to serve as a basis for my question, yet it was the first which suggested the question to lay mind long ago, and led me to the other passages. “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood,” &c. Most Christians, probably, suppose these two forms of expression to signify the same thing; but I think not, both because the two are so frequently repeated even in modified forms, as “my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed,” and yet without abbreviation by the omission of one; and also from a consideration of their precise spiritual import by comparison with similar types in other Scriptures. The eating the flesh, like the feeding on a portion of the offering of old, denotes our drawing spiritual sustenance and strength from contemplating and appropriating to ourselves Christ, as regards His offices, doctrine, and personal character, as we receive, and assimilate natural food so that it goes to form ourselves; while another remarkable and unexplained fact is, that while the figurative idea of drinking the blood of Christ our sacrifice is inculcated in the New Testament, both by word here and by act in the Lord's Supper; yet it is expressly and repeatedly forbidden in the Old Testament, not for mere physical convenience, but emphatically on account of the symbolic

meaning of blood, in the Mosaic rites which were pre-eminently types of the doctrines of Christ.

I feel that some profitable thoughts must be involved in the true reason of each of these circumstances.

W. P.

A. The main point is met completely by the expression in 1 Peter 1., “Sanctified unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” We are born again to have a share in the value of Christ's blood and work. When the things are named together in Scripture, sanctification is before justification. Ordinary language is very different. Righteousness is not so put, because that is the foundation of God's dealing in blessing with us and bringing us, by that regeneration which sets us apart from Him, into the full acceptance of Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness. There is practical progress then in holiness.

The use of John 6 goes somewhat further and differently into the matter. Chap. 5. had presented the Son of God as quickening whom He would. In the latter, it is sovereign life giving; in the former, it is appropriated by faith, and this of the Son of man; i.e., the Lord come in flesh. Hence He is the bread that cometh down from heaven. But it is not the Christ to the Jews, received as born on earth, but the Son of man (the word made flesh) giving life to the world. He must be received in this character. And to receive Him in this character in which alone is life, we cannot stop short of His death. We must eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is His death—the blood separate from the body. Incarnation is of no avail for life—unless death comes in: otherwise there is no atonement—sin is not put away. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” Eating the flesh comes first, because it is the first prominent, point of incarnation—Christ comes in flesh for man, for the world. Drinking the blood is added because that is available as a dead Christ—the blood out of the body. Hence the monstrous character of the refusal of the cup in Romanism, as well as the doctrine of concomitancy (that is, that the blood is in the bread or alleged body of Christ). The forbidding of blood in the Old Testament denoted that man in the flesh could not meddle with death. Life belongs to God. Our drinking Christ's blood shows that through His death we come in freed from flesh as dead; and that death thus is life and liberty to us, deliverance from the old man and its guilt, too, to us who have received the quickening of John 5.

Chapter 31

The Coming and the Day of the Lord

2 Peter 3.

IT may be felt by some to be strange that the Spirit of God, instead of entering upon the subject of the coming of the Lord, should at once turn from it to speak of His day. And I have no doubt at all that many readers of this, and other parts of the New Testament, have, through haste, been led to confound the two things together, because of that very circumstance. But we may be always sure that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, as the Apostle Paul says in writing to the Corinthians. They, too, were somewhat confident in their own knowledge. They were reasoning about the ways of God. Why could not God, they might have said, have redeemed and saved His people in a way less full of pain and shame than by the death of His Son? The sacrifice of Christ was required to atone. That cross, the apostle goes on to show, which seemed to some a foolish thing, as it always appears to the world, is the profound wisdom of God. Not merely did He accomplish redemption in the cross: He was putting His sentence upon all that is in man, and bringing out by His love the world's inveterate hatred against Himself.

Peter is writing to those who had been Jews formerly, and they would be, therefore, somewhat familiar with the thought of “the day of the Lord,” for it is much spoken of in the Old Testament as the tremendous day of Divine dealing with the habitable world. For that is the point. Not merely the time when men will be raised from the dead, to be judged before the great white throne. The day of the Lord is God dealing with the world as it is; stopping all its wheels; arresting men in the midst of all the busy scenes of life, and calling them to account. The Old Testament, as it deals with man upon the earth, naturally lays great importance upon “that day.” The great white throne judgment is outside the world altogether. Heaven and earth will then have disappeared; it will be a judgment not connected with time, but ushering into eternity.

Mark the wisdom of God here. These men do not scoff at the day of the Lord; even an unconverted Jew, with the Old Testament Scriptures in his hand, would have been afraid to appear to make light of that. But they were saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?” You Christians are waiting for the coming of Christ to make you happy. You are the most miserable people in the world. You enjoy nothing. You separate yourselves from all our interests and pleasures. You find fault with everything, not only with our bad ways, but with our best endeavors; and, after all, He does not come. “Where is the promise of His coming?” This is just the place in which the coming of Christ puts the Christian. What says the Spirit of God to those who derided the hope of the saints? His answer in effect amounts to this, I think:—I will not talk to you about the hope of the Christian, a theme that you make light of. But I warn you of a terrible scene that you have forgotten. There is such a thing as “the day of the Lord” coming. That is, He drops the subject of the church's and Christian's hope, the coming of the Lord to receive us to Himself which will take us out of all this scene, bring us into heaven and put us in peace and blessedness before the Father. The Holy Ghost in 2 Peter does not enter into this. In Jude, he just gives us a little passing glimpse of the blessedness of the saints before God. “Unto Him that is able to keep you from

falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." There you have a glance into the deep inner joy of God's saints that the world will know nothing about. It can never see what the Christian will enjoy best in the presence of God the Father; nor will they know anything of the coming of Christ which will introduce us into that scene. But the world is to see the day of the Lord, and when that day comes the Lord will have all His saints in heaven, in the full brightness and intimacy of enjoyment of the Father's house. Afterward He will bring them out and display them in His Father's glory and that of the angels' before the world, and then will come retributive judgment. The Lord will come from heaven and deal with men in the midst of their busy ways, and works, and plans here below. This is what we see taken up in 2 Peter 3. You mock, he says, at our hope, but I will remind you of your fear, and when you hear of it you may tremble. "Be not ignorant of this one thing (and let the beloved saints of God remember it well) that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," &c. The Lord can amazingly crowd up events that might have spanned a thousand years into a single day; while, on the other hand, he might linger out those of a day into the patience of a thousand years. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise. He is unwilling to strike the terrible blow that is about to fall on the world. He "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." These words entirely set aside the horrid idea (technically called reprobation) that any man ever was made for the purpose of being cast into hell. God, on the contrary, desires to save. His heart yearns over men. He waits upon them, entreats them. sends the gospel to them that they may receive it. No doubt it is pure grace and only grace that awakens one soul to the love of God. But it is the sin, the unbelief of man (whatever be the judicial hardening in certain cases) that shuts them up in the rejection of His mercy.

Whether the delay be short or long, whether of a thousand years or one day, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It will come suddenly, and be most unwelcome in this world. He makes the day of the Lord to comprehend the whole space from the coming of the Lord in judgment, through the millennium, till the great white throne. For all that is implied here. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, &c.... The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," must take place before that day closes.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." You may feel, and you ought to feel, what man is in his scoffings against the truth of God; but the best answer to it all is that of a godly conversation—the effect upon your souls and in your walk of the knowledge of that hope, and your sense of the dreadful doom that awaits those that despise not only the righteous will of God, but His mercy. The Lord here shows us the importance of it. "What manner of persons ought ye to be, &c... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." That is, we do not want this day to be delayed for our own sakes, but we love the patience of God towards men, and that reconciles our hearts to the delay, while personally, we long for the Lord to come; because we know that when he has come and taken us away, the day of God must quickly close in upon the earth.

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." That gives the key to Peter: righteousness is the thought in this epistle as well as in the first. The coming of the Lord for His people is not the display of righteousness but the unfolding of His grace. He has begun and He will end with us in full and heavenly grace, which has chosen us to be with Himself. But here I get the day of the Lord, which has an aspect of

righteousness even for us. When that day comes we shall be manifested. “The day will reveal.” It is the time when we shall have rewards for special suffering or faithfulness of any kind: it is the time which will, therefore, detect where we have been unfaithful, and why we failed. The day of the Lord will not close till all evil has been banished and righteousness brought in and established, all enemies having disappeared. The day of the Lord is as emphatically righteousness as His coming is grace. The world is never said to see anything of the coming of the Lord for His saints. It will miss them, no doubt. The warning of grace will have closed, though there may be raised up a testimony of the coming kingdom and judgments, and some hearts may be opened to receive it. But not a word of hope does Scripture hold out for those who now refuse the gospel.

Chapter 32

Confession

CONFESSION and humiliation suit and, in a peculiar, become the children of God in the present day. Neither the glory of God, nor the honor of Christ, nor the presence of the Holy Ghost has been faithfully cared for by us; and the Church—Where is it! and what is its condition upon earth but it is not the wide range of Christendom, or the narrower compass of England, to which I look. Is not confession and humiliation called for from ninny a one in the narrower circle into which these lines may come! Humiliation and confession for what? Let each think, let each speak for God, and for Christ and truthfully (according to his own best and eternal interests in the Spirit) for himself, too, in giving the answer. I will do so here for myself; let others see how far they are wide of my mark.

Christ gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. The friendship of the world is enmity against God, and the minding of earthly things is enmity to the cross of Christ.

Now, speaking for God and for Christ, what shall say as to myself—as to my brethren in this respect Are we—have we been—practically, in heart, and thought, and action that which we are in, spirit— “not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world!”

I speak not now of worldliness as the men of the world, or even as men (Christian men) upon this earth speak but I speak of worldliness according to the sanctuary.

Peter's self-complacency and self-confidence, and the mighty energy of personal love to his master, which (working with mixed motives, and from an unhumbled heart in him) led him to use the sword and to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, was fleshliness and worldliness when weighed in the sanctuary. There has been this, I judge, to be confessed by many of the best in our day—zeal without knowledge—light as to its object, wrong as to many a thing in oneself as vindicator, and wrong as to many a means and course pursued, and much of this through self-complacency and self-confidence in our own line of things.

My conviction is, that worldliness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the minds, and hardened the hearts, to an extent very few of us have any idea of; and that, as a consequence, no case touching upon the morality of the Church's walk can be fairly judged by the mass of believers. In cases innumerable which have occurred, the affections to Christ Himself have not been lively enough to make persons indignant at open insults put upon Christ, and determined to stand apart from that which, in its association, was minded to sanction dishonor done to him.

God forbid that we should use worldliness and earthly-mindedness, or the pretense of confessing them, as a cloak to cover up indifference of the heart's affections to Christ's, or to gloss over want of zeal, to separate from every association with those that avow and act upon a liberty to be indifferent to his honor.

Yet, while I would clear myself of the conduct which; looks like indifference to Christ, and from all association with those who plead and act upon their liberty to think their own thoughts in this respect, the question will rise, And what is it, after all, that hinders so many dear to you, and dear to Christ, from seeing that his honor has been assailed? The true answer, I fear, is worldliness and earthly-mindedness—the fruit of our own doings. Now I avow this; for I do believe that a more Nazarite walk on my part and on that of some others might have given power to act upon consciences; and, some how or the other, to get then; separate from a course in which I dare not walk, than walk in which I would rather walk alone the rest of my earthly days. Christ's honor has been assailed—the morality of the Church has been assailed—directly by some and indirectly by others, who do not care so much for their Lord and Master as to be willing to separate from association with those who have openly blasphemed Him.

I own that the low, earthly-minded, worldly state of saints, which caning meet this, is a consequence of the Holy Spirit having been grieved and quenched.

I desire to go down as low as possible, bearing any and all blame; but, come what may, never to sanction that which corrupts the morality of the Church—never to be tolerant to that which insults Christ, and never to be identified by association with that which cares neither for the glory of Christ, not for the morality of His Church, nor for its unity.

Chapter 33

Correspondence: Isaiah 53:11 and Daniel 12:3

(To the Editor of the Bible Treasury.)

The writer on Daniel in the Bible Treasury of this month objects, and I think correctly, to the generally received idea that, in Isa. 53:11, “by his knowledge” means, by the knowledge of him.

On consulting the Englishman's Hebrew Concordance, find the precise form of the Hebrew word occurs only in one other place: “By his knowledge the depths,” &e., (Prov. 3:20) clearly by God's knowledge. By his knowledge” (Isa. 53:11,) I take to be Christ's knowledge of God. (Comp. Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 3:13 -19; 17:3-26; 1 John 5:20, &c.)

The Son is the exponent of the Father. All was an enigma, so to speak, until he came, who uttered things kept secret from the foundation of the world. How that God desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (Hos. 6:6) He that teacheth man knowledge. (Psa. 94:10.) 1 cannot concur with the writer in altering “shall justify” for “instructing in righteousness.” The word translated “justify” occurs in that precise form of the verb only in Ex. 23:7: “I will not justify the wicked;” i.e., God will not make or pronounce a wicked man a just man. Again, “God forbid that I should justify you;” (Job 27:5:) i.e., acknowledge you to be just in what you have spoken. “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” (Isa. 53:11.)

God is now known as the God that justifieth the ungodly. He is the just God and the Savior, just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus; for He gives the ungodly, the poor sinner, a righteousness, and in doing so demonstrates His own righteousness. (Rom. 3:21 - 26.) Thus grace reigns through righteousness. (Rom. 5:21.)

December. R. S.

If R. S. had more fully weighed the context of the scriptures in question, he would have found the key with far more certainty than the mere occurrence of the word, indicated by a concordance, can afford. Everyone who consults a Hebrew lexicon may see that the usual, regular meaning of ■■■ is ■'justify;” but this sense, even where it, or something like it, might be given in English, is susceptible of very considerable modification according to the proposition in which it occurs. Hence it is even used for cleansing the Sanctuary in Dan. 8:14. And I find that Gesenius (in voce) takes the word substantially as I do, in the two passages we are discussing. ·'Justum s. probum, pium reddidit aliqueni, exemplo et doctrina. Indeed, R. S.'s admission, that “by his knowledge” means Christ's own knowledge of God, seems to me decisive of the question. He might teach many thereby; but how could knowledge “justify?” This would be strange doctrine. “To instruct in righteousness” restores the balance. Still plainer is Dan. 12. We can understand Christ justifying by His blood, by His obedience, though not by His knowledge; but how human teachers could “justify” anyone, is to me an enigma. Here the Authorized Version is to my mind much nearer the truth; for there “justify” is dropped for “turn to righteousness.” But I have already given reason enough in the “Remarks” for preferring instruct in righteousness. For the object here is “the many,”

not many; and this phrase is a standing one in our prophet for the apostate mass in Israel, who may be instructed in, but assuredly are not turned to, righteousness. This, the necessary meaning in Dan. 12, makes an excellent and consistent sense in Isa. 53.

Chapter 34

Correspondence: Objections to “the Banished One Bearing Our Banishment”

Dear brother, I do not at all desire to make your Bible Treasury the vehicle of controversial papers; but allow me to draw your attention to a paper in a magazine supposed to be exclusively occupied with edification, or what was intended for it. It is so utterly without basis, or attempt to found its assertions on scripture (the only two or three it quotes it quotes falsely on the point in question) that I should not have thought it worth an answer, but for the bold presenting of the doctrine which it is its object to circulate. In this way it may be useful. “Not merely was he,” it is said, “the rejected of men,.... But he was the outcast, the condemned one.... As such, his true place was outside the city of God; outside the dwelling of the holy one. If permitted to resort to Jerusalem, he can only do so as a stranger or wayfaring man, who comes in with the crowd during the day, but retires at night, if allowed to frequent the temple, he can only come as far as the outer court, on the common footing of a sinner—just as the publican might do. He might stand and see the daily sacrifice offered.” (p. 314.) For whom? Let me ask in passing. Was it with a consciousness that it was not for him—that is, that as to his relationship to God, he could go into the holiest, or ignorant as to this, and in his relationship, supposing he needed one himself? The writer has brought the point pretty much to the test by this way of putting it. What was the blessed Lord's sentiment when he saw the sacrifice offered? I continue: “He might watch the shedding of the blood, and the consuming of the victim; but only as one of the crowd. He might stand, on the day of atonement, and see the two goats chosen by the high priest; he might listen to the confession of sin over the head of the one, and mark the pouring of the other's blood; he might see the high priest take the basin, and carry the blood into the holiest, himself standing on the outside; and, though the blessed one, waiting amid the crowd to receive the well-known blessing. But more than this He might not do. Were He to go beyond the circle thus marking off the limits within which he was to walk, he would not have been acting as the sin-bearer, nor submitting to be dealt with as an outcast and a curse for us.” (ib.) I shall notice this: but I continue my quotations. “He is so completely identified with the sinner, the outcast, the banished one, that He is not only deemed unworthy to live within Jerusalem, but unworthy even to die within its walls. As the great sin-offering, He goes without the camp, there to complete his sin-bearing work, and to sum up the testimony which his whole life had given, viz., that he was standing in the sinner's place, enduring the banishment of the banished one, bearing the curse of the cursed one, submitting to the condemnation of the condemned one, and never for one moment contradicting or modifying the testimony intended to be given by his life to his sin-bearing character and work.” (ib.) Is that all the cross was? The writer must be singularly absorbed with his doctrine to speak of it in this way

“The one hindrance to His exercise of this His divine right of entrance into the holiest of all, was our iniquity, which was lying on Him. That kept Him out. Until that was fully borne, He could not enter either the sanctuary below or the presence-chamber above. In taking our sin upon Him, as He did from the moment of his incarnation, He had consented to forego for a time His right of entrance into the Father's presence, and into that place where the glorious symbol of that

presence dwelt." "It was as such (the outcast) that we find Him walking in Solomon's porch; thus proclaiming to all who truly understood His character and work that He was acting as the sinner's substitute." (p. 325.) One sentence I have omitted I will quote here. "he was Himself the true Sacrifice, the bearer of sin. As such He lived and died. In all that He did, and in all that He abstained from doing; in the places which He visited, and in the places which He abstained from visiting, he kept this in view. He was loaded with our sin, our curse, our condemnation our leprosy; and, as such, He must keep at a distance from the holy and the clean." (p. 314.) "Let us then, look, at Christ in these two different conditions.

...1. As walking in Solomon's porch—He walks there as our Substitute; our Substitute as truly as when He groaned in Gethsemane or died on Golgotha. As one consenting for a season to be shut out from the presence of God, that we might enter and dwell in that presence forever, Ito stands, or walks, or sits outside the sanctuary. Thus it is that He bears our banishment; He takes upon Him not merely the penalty of, suffering and death, but the penalty of exclusion from the house and home of God. That penalty He has endured; that exile He has undergone; that distance He has experienced; and all this as the Substitute, bearing what we should have borne." (P. 325.)

The difficulty of answering the paper, from which I have here given extracts, is, that it is such a mass of absurdity, that it is hard to know at which end to begin. I refer to it, as I have said, only as an audacious attempt at circulating the doctrine it contains.

In the beginning, it is said, there were several reasons why Christ could only have access to the outer court, and had to keep outside the holy and most holy place; Dr. Bonar then gives three: personal, He was of the tribe of Judah; Ceremonial, He had no blood to offer; Typical, He was loaded with our reprosy. This is found pp. 313, 314. When in the full flow of his subject, he says, "the one hindrance to His exercise of this his divine right of entrance into the holiest of all, was our iniquity." Then in p. 325, the two others are forgotten. It may be alleged he was only speaking, in the latter place, of Him as God. But, then, if the holiest of all was really then the dwelling-place of God, and God there, so that He could not approach, as Jehovah He was there. But this is not true: the house was empty, swept, and garnished. His own body was the temple where Jehovah dwelt. There was no shechinah in the second temple. It is alleged that He never went to the holy places of Israel. Who says He did not? But let that pass. Did He come here to turn Israel back to old shadows, and typical service, and places counted holy by them? But among others He did not go to Bethlehem. What profound sense there is in this! If this was because it was already a holy place, He became the leprous and unclean thing in the holy place. Because it was so—and all the imperial world was set in movement to have Him made leprous there—I suppose to desecrate it. If it was His birth that had sanctified it, then He could not go to a holy place because of what He was when He had consecrated it by being that. is it possible to conceive greater nonsense than all this? He did not go into the temple, because it was impossible, and out of God's then order, and inconsistent with every Jewish and every Christian thought. If spoken of as God, He was there as far as God was there; but, as I have said, His body in this sense was the true temple: He calls it so. If as man, He was not a priest: there were other priests to do it, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us. As come, He was not there to set up Judaism, but to submit to its order; as burn under the law, His entering into the holy place would have been a gross violation of it. Was He there to establish the earthly system as a divine thing, to have his place and title as Son in an earthly sanctuary? We are specially referred to Solomon's porch! It was the common place of assembly in

the temple. Was his being there a proof He was a substitute under a curse? All the apostles were afterward with one accord in Solomon's porch. Were they all substitutes under a curse? I will speak of the doctrine. I speak now of the ridiculous absurdity of such reasoning. But further, it is still more absurd; because, if He were a leprous man, and keeping this always in view as to holy places, other holy places lepers might have gone to as much as any one else; but the really holy place, in a Jewish sense, which a leper could not go to, was the temple, and there He came, and was in the crowd of the clean, for none else could go there. It is painful to have to meet all this folly, used to make a leprous man of the Lord. Leprosy was defilement, not merely a type of guilt; our Lord, therefore, took a defiled place. Clean persons could not have gone into the holy of holies: there we are told He could not go because He was leprous. Leprous persons could not go into the temple, or he among the crowd of clean Israel; but there He was, and that is a proof that He is leprous! and, strange to say, drove the defilers out, because it was a holy place. But the true answer is simple. He came not to build lip the holiness of Hebrons or Bethels: He went into the land of Zabulon and the land of Naphtali, Galilee of the Gentiles, because it had been prophesied of Him, that the poor of the flock, who sat in darkness, might see that great light, and light spring up on those in the shadow of death. He was there because He was light, not because He was leprous. He left Judea because the Pharisees had heard that He made and baptized more disciples than John; was that as a leper, or did His disciples baptize, not Himself, because they were not leprous and He was? It is asserted, without the most remote foundation, He did not sleep in Jerusalem. He visited Jerusalem only during the day, retiring from it at night to Bethany, as one cast out! That was only the last week, when He had judged Jerusalem; (but that was the time He rode into the holy city as its king: was that as a substitute and leper?) and when He cleansed the temple, because it was defiled. If the reader ask what scripture is alleged for His being a substitute, or avoiding holy places on this ground—which there was no ground for doing—the only scripture is the one emanating from Dr. Sonar's private assertion. In God's word there is not a single trace of it. Dr. Bonar does not attempt to allege a symptom of scripture—for the simplest reason: there is none to allege. It is simply an unholy fancy of Dr. Bonar's; but he does quote some scriptures as to Christ's state during His life. I will examine them.

“He was made sin for us;” this is referred to His life. But it is He who knew no sin whom God made sin for us. Hence, through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God. He was not made sin when “that holy thing” was born of the Virgin Mary. When it could be said of Him, as a man “who knew no sin” then He was made sin, “a curse for us.” “As such, His true place was outside the city of God;” but He went into it, and into the temple, and did not stay outside; that is, according to Dr. Bonar, went out of His true place. But He was made a curse for us. But scripture says, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree. That is, He was a curse as crucified, not in His life. “The most holy place was, we may say, the type of that very bosom of the Father out of which the only-begotten Son came forth.” It was nothing of the kind. Dr. Bonar confounds God in His throne in government and the Father's bosom; but let that pass. Dr. Bonar's doctrine hangs on this—that He came forth out of the Father's bosom, and could not go into it. Now, the only passage which speaks of the Father's bosom, is a careful statement that he did not come out of it. “The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” He was competent to reveal God, because He had not come out of it at all. His going into the empty earthly place of God's throne, is fit only for Dr. Bonar and his school. Not only so, but scripture is careful to connect

this presence in heaven with His manhood, and show that as such, though bodily on earth, He was personally in heaven. “No man hath ascended up to heaven but he who came down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.” So that He was in heaven at the time Dr. Bonar says He was taking the sinner's place of exile outside the blessed heaven where He had dwelt from everlasting. One scripture more Dr. Millar quotes, if quoting it can be called. “Such,” he says, “is the efficacy of our Substitute's life and death, that we have boldness to enter into the holiest.” This is not quoting scripture, not ignorance, but falsifying scripture.

Heb. 10 is solely occupied with the sacrifice of Christ. The point on which chap. ix. had insisted, was that there was no forgiveness without blood-shedding, and that Christ must have suffered often if He had offered Himself— 'often' excluding all idea of forgiveness but by death. Chap. x. then sets aside Jewish offerings, and substitutes a Christ come to do God's will, but speaks only and exclusively of His offering; by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for: thereupon declaring that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. That is, Dr. Bonar leaves out the one point on which the word of God insists; and introduces what it does not introduce, but excludes. I can only say the word of God is pure. “Add thou not unto his words lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” All this I must call wickedness. And now the main point—Christ—is the “banished one bearing our banishment.” Banished by whom? Banished whence? Is that, Christian, your thought of Christ, that He was banished from heaven? is that the way—is it in that spirit scripture speaks? or, that He came in His own love, and was the blessed and holy one given in love, sent of the Father? Is it not the infinite preciousness of that gift that exalts the love of the giver? Was He given as a precious one, or banished? Forsaken He might be when He was made sin, as to the anguish of His soul; but banished, never! Did He cry, Why hast thou forsaken me at that moment, having been forsaken all His life; yet hardly to be forsaken at any time, for He was never near God—had to keep at a distance from what was holy—experience distance and the penalty of exclusion from the home and house of God— “outside the blessed heaven where He had dwelt from everlasting?” Was that the Son of man who is in heaven? He could tell of heaven, which no one else could, (He declares to Nicodemus,) inasmuch as He was still in it though come down. This, Dr. Bonar interprets, by His being banished and excluded from it. And, mark the result, He could look on in the crowd at the offerings, coming as to the publican might do, on the common footing of a sinner; he might listen to the confession of sin over the head of the scapegoat, waiting amid the crowd to receive the well-known blessing. This, because He was excluded, because He was loaded with our leprosy! But, if He was their sin-bearer, why in the crowd looking at another sacrifice, and waiting for the well-known blessing? Blessing for whom? For the crowd, of which He was one in virtue of the sin-offering. Is this Dr. Bonar's view of Christ, standing as the Substitute for the crowd, for He died for that nation—and yet one of the crowd looking on, in respect of His own state, on another sacrifice, founded on which blessing was to come on Him as one of the crowd? If He carried the sin there, if it was already laid on his head, why was He with the crowd looking to another sacrifice and seeing the sins confessed on it? and why Himself waiting; to receive the blessing? suppose, because He needed it; or, at least, that it was real. Did He need the blessing flowing from atonement? How could it be real for Him, when He knew the very sin it professed to put away had not been there at all? It was resting, in all its weight, on His own head. Think of the Son of God waiting in the crowd, as a Substitute to receive the blessing flowing from the atonement, Himself

really bearing the sins all the time, which were not put away; and, to complete the confusion, excluded as a leper, because they were on Him, from the holy place in which He nevertheless was! But the confusion is too horribly mischievous to do anything else than to point it out in its naked character. This article may do good. It will show the true bearing of that which clothes itself in pious forms, though here, if one has any sense at all, it can hardly be said to do so. I do not attempt an elaborate article: these one or two hints are enough to show its character. I do not see the smallest trace of divine teaching, but a man left to himself in a special way to expose the folly and evil of his own inventions.

Chapter 35

Definition: A Covenant

A covenant is a principle of relationship with God on the earth; conditions established by God, under which man is to live with him. The word may, perhaps, be used figuratively or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel; but strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel. The gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy indeed all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being of God; but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter. The now covenant will be established formally with Israel in the millennium

Chapter 36

Remarks on Daniel 1

It must be evident to any attentive reader, that this first chapter is purely a preface to the book. It introduces us into the scene to which the prophecies, of which Daniel was either the interpreter or the vessel, are the great after-piece, the subject-matter which the Spirit of God is about to convey to us. We may therefore take advantage of this, to inquire into the peculiar nature of the book on which we are about to enter.

The properly prophetic part of Daniel begins with the second chapter. Then follow certain historical incidents, which, as I conceive, have a most intimate connection with the prophecy, if not directly, in the way of types, which show out the moral principles or the issues of the powers of the world, with which the hook is occupied.

In order to understand Daniel, it is necessary to bear in mind that prophecy in the Old Testament divides itself into two great parts. There were prophecies that concern the people of God, Israel, when they were still under His government; unfaithful often but still subject to His discipline and owned of Him to a certain extent. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and indeed many of the lesser prophets, such as Hosea, Amos, and Micah, have this first character. Israel was still recognized as God's people, if not the whole, at least that part of the people with which God still had certain dealings in the land. Of course I refer to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which clave to the house of David. After awhile they too fell, and the heir of David became the leader in rebellious idolatry against the Lord. Then a change of the utmost importance ensued. The throne of the Lord, which was established. in Jerusalem, ceased altogether upon the earth. God no longer owned Israel; not even Judah, as His people. And I call your attention particularly to this, because there are often vague thoughts as to what is meant by “the people of God” in Scripture. As Christians we look at God's people as those that really belong to Him—His children by faith of Christ. Now there is a danger of carrying the same thoughts back to the language of the Old Testament. But it will be found, if we examine Scripture with care, that, in the Old Testament, by people of God is meant only the Jews or Israel. Nor is it merely a certain aggregate of the elect there, but the entire nation, or that part which still clung in a measure, though very unfaithfully, to God's king, and whatever they might be, owned as the people of God. Then came a time when God disowned His people. This was predicted by Hosea. It was accomplished when God gave up the last king of Judah to the Chaldean conqueror. God would have sacrificed His own holiness, truth, and majesty, if He had longer tolerated the Jews or their idolatrous king.

Now, it is a remarkable thing in the history of the world, that although there were certain powers of growing importance and ambition in the east, none before had been allowed to step into positive superiority to all rivals. In the west there were only hordes of wanderers, or if some were settled, they were uncivilized barbarians. In the east and south powers had rapidly risen; one of them, Egypt, is particularly well known in connection with Israel. Another too, Asshur, is quite as ancient in its origin: indeed, we read of its name, and of certain aspirations and efforts after power, before we read of Egypt at all. These were the great rivals of the early world, and they had a civilization of

their own. It might have a rude character, but that it was barbaric grandeur none can deny who believes the Scriptures, nay, who sees the relics of Egypt and Assyria. Well, these powers were constantly struggling for the mastery. But however God might use the Egyptians and Assyrians, or others less considerable, as a rod of discipline for the good of Israel, yet to no nation on earth was supremacy allowed until it was perfectly plain that God's people were proved to be unworthy of being His witness and the scene of His government on the earth. First, then, Ephraim (the ten tribes), having sunk into hopeless idolatry, was swept away. For a long time there had been monarch after monarch only following or exceeding each other in evil; and all through it had been a scene of rebellion and idolatry. Thus God had been compelled to put such a people, that only disgraced Him, out of the land where they had been planted. Still the two tribes that cling to the house of David were owned. But clouds hung over them, and snares were laid by the enemy of the most fatal kind. At this crisis prophecy shines out in all its fullness. For prophecy always, I think, supposes failure. It never comes in during a normal state. But when ruin is impending or begun, then the lamp of prophecy shines in the dark place.

This we find true from the first. Take the revelation in Gen. 3—that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. When was it given? Not when Adam walked sinlessly, but after he and his wife had fallen. Then God appears, and His word not only judged the serpent, but took the form of promise to be realized in the true seed. Certainly a blessed disclosure of the future, on which the hope of those who believed rested. It was the condemnation of their actual state. It did not allow the faithful who followed to sink into despair, but presented an object above the ruin. on the part of God, to which their hearts became attached. Again, Enoch is the person in the antediluvian world who, above all others, is said to have “prophesied,” though we do not get the record of it till one of the latest books of the New Testament. “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. Now that the evil, found in the germ in Adam, had broken out into all but universal corruption and violence, we have a well defined prophecy of judgment coming on the world. It was the interference of God in testimony before He acted in power. Then Noah is seen, who still more than Enoch was publicly connected with this evil state. I believe that Enoch's prophecy had a remarkable application to the deluge, though it looks onward, of course, to the grand catastrophe in the last days. When a prophecy is given, there is often a partial accomplishment at the time or soon after. But we must never look back at the past pledge as if the whole thing were exhausted. That would be to make prophecy of private interpretation. And this is the true sense of 2 Peter 1:20: “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” We must take it in the vast scope of the plans of God, and the unfolding of His purposes, which alone find their consummation at the close. It is to that point that all prophecy looks. Then only we have the grand fulfillment.

Again, let us take the patriarchs, who are expressly called prophets. “He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” Their claim to this title may be explained on the same principle. They were the then interpreters of the mind of God; “called out,” because there was a new and fearful evil come into the world, which we never read of before the days of Abraham—idolatry. Idolatry, as far as Scripture reveals to us, is only mentioned after the flood. This was spreading everywhere, and

becoming paramount even in the descendants of Shem; and therefore God called out a witness in word and deed separate from so flagrant iniquity. Prophecy, or a prophet, always supposes the presence of new and increasing evil, because of which God is pleased to unfold His mind with regard to the future, and to make it of present practical value to those then on the earth.

In the case of Moses it was manifest. For though he was the great lawgiver, the golden calf was set up almost immediately after, and thus the ruin of Israel, as a people under law, was complete. And so it remained for him, as the great prophet of Israel (Deut. xxxiv. 10,) to reveal the sure and growing corruption of the people, whatever might be the resources of God's grace at the end; as at an earlier epoch, he had predicted the inevitable judgment of God upon Egypt. Coming lower down in the history of Israel, we have one who begins the line of prophets emphatically so-called; for he is mentioned thus: “Yea, all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after,” &c. His call was at a very critical period in Israel's history; at a time when the children of Israel had fallen into such a frightfully low state, that they were willing to use even the ark of God as a charm to preserve them from the power of their enemies. Then it was that God put His people to shame. His own ark was taken, and Ichabod was the only name that godly feeling could dictate. The glory was departed; and about that time we hear of Samuel the prophet. If this was the token of some new crisis, equally at least did it showed that God, in vindication of His own name, brings in the light of prophecy as a comfort to the hearts of those who stand for Himself.

Descending still further, we find the full outburst of prophetic light in the time of the prophet Isaiah. The reason is apparent. Not merely had Israel committed itself to idolatry, but the king, David's son, had actually taken the pattern of the heathen altar at Damascus, and must have such another for himself in the holy city! There was a sin, heinous and most insulting to God. Isaiah is set apart with unusual solemnity to the prophetic office. The evil condition of the Jews is realized by him. He sees the glory of the Lord, which draws out from him the immediate confession of his own and the people's uncleanness. “Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” But one of the seraphim touches his lips with a live coal, assuring him that his iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged. And he is sent with a message of judicial darkness upon the people, which must last till the cities were wasted, and the land made utterly desolate. So that we have prophecy so much the more brilliant because the evil was manifest and profound. The consequence of the prophetic warning, where received, was, that a spirit of repentance and of intercession followed; and God subsequently raised up a royal witness for Himself, so that for a time the evil was suspended.

And all this while you have prophecy coming out with more and more distinctness, directing the hearts of the saints to him whom the virgin should conceive and bear—the Son of David, Emmanuel, that was to be the only and sure foundation for the people laid in Zion. I need not now attempt to give even an outline of the great features of the prophets that followed. But thus far, I trust, the great principle is clear, that prophecy, as a whole, comes in when there is ruin among the people of God. As the ruin deepens, prophecy adds fresh light in the goodness of God.

Besides this universal character of prophecy, we have seen it, first, while God is still disciplining the people and owning them as His. But there is another form of which Daniel is the great example in the Old Testament. This is, when God, no longer able to address His people as such, makes an

individual to be the object of His communications.

For this is the distinctive feature of Daniel. It is no longer a direct address to the people, reasoning, pleading, warning, opening out bright hopes, as in Isaiah, &c. Nor is it, as in Jeremiah, a prophet “ordained to the nations,” with most affecting appeals to Israel and Judah, or at least a remnant there. In Daniel all is changed. There is no message to Israel at all; and the first and very comprehensive prophecy contained in the book was not at first given to the prophet himself, but rather a dream of the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, though Daniel was the only one who could meal it or furnish the interpretation. The other visions were seen by Daniel only, and to him all the interpretations were given. What is the great lesson to be drawn from this? God was acting on the momentous fact that His people had forfeited their place—at least for the present. They had lost their distinctive standing as a nation—God would no longer own them. The presence of elect persons among them did not, in the least degree, arrest the divine sentence. It was not a question of there being “ten righteous in their midst.” Of a corrupt Canaanitish city like Sodom, that was said as a reason why it should be spared. But does God ever speak so about His people? He may liken them to Sodom for their iniquity, but there can be no such hindrance to judgment in their case. On the contrary, it is expressly said in Ezek. 14, that “though these three risen, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it (the land of Israel), they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness;” and again, “they shall deliver neither son nor daughter.” That is, in His own land, and in the midst of His guilty people, no matter who were there, nor what their righteousness, the righteous only should be delivered, and God's four sore judgments must be sent. And so, at this very crisis of the captivity, there were righteous men, such as the prophets themselves, and others, kindred spirits in their measure. Whatever, then, be His willingness to spare the world, God does not refrain from judging the evil of His own people because of a handful of righteous men in their midst. “Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities. Otherwise, there never could have been a national judgment of Israel at al], for there was always a line of faithful ones in their midst. The entire principle is false. In a book I lately met with, such was the plea why England should come comparatively unscathed out of the terrible judgment about to fall on the nations of the earth. There are so many good men!—such a change for the better in high and low—such benevolent and Christian institutions—the Scriptures not only printed in abundance, but everywhere circulated, read, and expounded. But these are the very grounds which, to my mind, make divine judgment inevitable. For it is quite clear, from scripture, that, if there is to be any difference in the measure, those who know His will and do it not shall be beaten with many stripes.” A more fearful illusion can scarcely be conceived than that the possession of a greater amount of spiritual knowledge and privilege is to be an effectual shield when the earth comes into judgment.

The Lord recalled the memory of Tire and Sidon (Matt. 11), but it was only to show the far greater guilt of the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the night works which were done in you had been done in Tire and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.” But there was another city still more favored (elsewhere called His own city, Matt. 9:1), because it was where He then usually dwelt, and, therefore, was its case so aggravated in guilt. “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted

unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which were done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." In other words, the measure of privilege is ever the measure of responsibility.

We have seen, then, the startling fact that the government which God had set up in Israel (accompanied by the visible sign of His presence, i.e., the Shechinah of glory) was now to subsist no more. God Himself stripped them of their name as His people, Henceforth they were "Lo Ammi," not my people. That was their doom now, as far as He was concerned. Whatever the ultimate designs of His grace might be; for His "gifts and calling are without repentance."

Along with this sad change, and dependent on it, the prophecy of Daniel begins. And in this respect, there is a strong analogy between this book and the grand prophecy of the New Testament. No doubt, in the latter, special messages were sent to the seven churches through John. But the book, as a whole, was addressed and confided to him, however much it was intended that the things should be testified in the churches. Christ sent and signified the revelation, by His angel, unto His servant John, who stands in the same sort of relation to Christendom, that Daniel did to Israel. The failure was so complete that God could no longer address the prophecy directly to His people in either case. Thus there is a very serious moral sentence of God upon the condition of Christendom. It was a ruin as regards practical testimony for God—Ephesus threatened with the removal of its candlestick, if it did not repent, and Laodicea with the certainty of being speed out of the Lord's mouth. Not but what God continued to save souls. That He always did and does. But this has nothing to do with the witness which His people are responsible to render. More than two hundred years after Judah had become Lo-Ammi, Malachi could tell of them that feared the Lord speaking often one to another; "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." All that might be true; yet the solemn sentence of God— "not my people" —remained on them. Circumstances could affect neither His judgment of the nation nor His grace to faithful souls within it. And what was true then remains equally true now. The salvation and blessing of souls go on. But before God, that which bears the name of Christ in the world is as far from satisfying the thoughts of God about us, as the people of Israel were from fulfilling His design in them.

Accordingly, we find that the character of the book perfectly accords with the time and circumstances in which Daniel was called to be a prophet. It was when the last vestiges of God's people were being taken away. In Jer. 25:1, the date of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is reckoned from the first attack. And I would just observe that there is a little difference from what is said in Dan. 2. In Babylon, where the latter wrote, the reckoning was naturally from the time when Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne upon his father's death; whereas, in Jerusalem, where Jeremiah prophesies, it was just as naturally from the time that Nebuchadnezzar, during his father's life, wielded the power of the kingdom, to the ruin of Jerusalem and the Jews. The truth is, the case is not uncommon, both in sacred and profane history. Whatever may be the difficulties in the word of God, they really arise from want of light. Generally the object of the particular portion where they occur is not understood. But speaking of dates, another little thing it is well to bear in mind, which the first verse of our chapter, as compared with Jer. 25:1, gives occasion to: years are sometimes reckoned from their beginning, sometimes from their end, that is, either inclusively or

exclusively. So it is in the well known instances of the days between our Lord's death and resurrection, and of the six or eight days before the transfiguration. Thus in Daniel it was said, “in the third year of Jehoiakim;” but in Jeremiah, “in the fourth year.” The one was the complete, the other the current year.

Looking then at the moral character of Daniel's prophecy, the key to the ways or God at the time it was given, lies in this, that God had no longer had a direct, immediate government upon the earth. He had owned David and his seed as the kings that He had set upon the throne of Jehovah at Jerusalem. (1 Chron. 29:23.) No other kings there were thus recognized of God. They were emphatically His anointed, before whom even the high priest had to walk.

And here was what God intended to set forth by them: a foreshadowing of what He is going to do by and in the Christ, the true Son of David. The same thing is found throughout Scripture. first a position is committed to man's responsibility, and failure is immediate; then, it is taken up by Christ, who establishes it on a foundation which cannot be moved. Thus, God makes man, and sets him sinlessly in paradise, with dominion over the lower creation. Man falls at once. But God never gives up His purpose of having a man in paradise. Where shall we find it now? In the first Adam it broke down utterly. He was turned out of Eden: his race became outcasts from that day to this; and all the efforts and the material progress that man makes in this world, are only so many remedial measures to hide the fact that God has driven him out of paradise. But the last Adam is God's glorious answer to that first trust which was confided to man's keeping—the Second Man exalted in the paradise of God—Again, Noah, as it were, begins the world afresh after the flood, and has the power of life and death first committed to his hand. The sword of magistracy was introduced. “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.” This was the root of civil government, and man was thereby made responsible to restrain or punish the violent hand. This is never reversed. Christianity, wherever received, brings in other and heavenly principles. But the world remains bound by this irreversible statute of God for its guidance. Noah, however, failed in his trust as completely as Adam had in the garden. He did not govern himself nor his family to God's glory. He becomes intoxicated, and his younger son insults him; and the issue is, that, instead of the universal blessing of righteous rule, a curse falls upon a portion of his descendants. So in due time, the principle of a king, responsible, to rule righteously over God's people, was tried in the house of David. And what is found? Even before David died, there was such dreadful sin that the sword was never to depart from that very family which ought to have secured blessing to Israel. Did God therefore abandon His design? In no wise. The Lord Jesus takes up headship, government, and the throne of David's Son. And so with all the other principles that broke down in man's hands; all will be illustrated and established forever in the Person and Glory of the Lord Jesus.

We saw that Jerusalem ceases to be Jehovah's throne. And Jeremiah shows us the holy city counted as one among the other nations; and as most privileged, so the first to drink the cup of God's fury. Babylon must drink it also, but Israel first. It is in the same chapter (xxv.) that you have the distinct prediction of the severity years' captivity, during which Judah was to be carried away to Babylon; and then should come at the end the judgment of the power that led them captive. But while Jeremiah predicts the rising supremacy of Babylon, and its final judgment, and that too not as a matter of history alone, but as the type of the world's overthrow in the day of the Lord, we have not there the details that intervene. So Ezekiel, among the captives at Chebar, brings us up

in the first half of His prophecy to the time of the great struggle for the chief place among the powers of the world. Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt, desired to have it; but as the Assyrian before him, he is destroyed, and Babylon remains the ambitious claimant of universal dominion. There were these three powers. Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon; the latter comparatively young as a great kingdom, though founded probably I upon the oldest associations of all, viz., Babel— “the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom.” They were like fierce animals, held in by an unseen leash till the experiment was fairly tried, whether the daughter of Zion would walk humbly and obediently with the Lord, or whether she would turn from her backsliding and repent at His call. But she did neither. This left room for what had never been seen before—the rise of an universal empire.

After the flood, and the judgment of the Lord at Babel, the great dispersion of nations took place—families, kindreds, tongues, and lands all separate. Israel was the center of this system of independent nations. So it is written in Deut. xxxii. 8 “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance; when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” All was arranged with reference to Israel, for “Jehovah's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” They were the divine center for the earth, and God will yet make good His purpose. Though completely frustrated through the wickedness of the people, Israel must yet be His center of nations in this world, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. This, too, was first tried in the hands of man and failed; then it is turned over into the hands of Christ, who will establish it in due time. Israel's pride, made it to depend at first upon their obedience to God. At Sinai they undertook the responsibility of the law. Whenever a sinner attempts to stand upon that ground with God, he is lost. The only safe and lowly ground is, not what Israel would be for God, but what God would be in faithfulness, and love, and pity toward Israel. And so it is with every soul at all times. Israel accepting that condition, the law became their scourge, and God was compelled to judge them. Death accordingly was certain, spite of God's marvelous patience. People fail, priests fail, and kings at last became the leaders in all evil. God was compelled to give up His people. From that moment all that held in check the nations of the earth was taken away, and the vast rival dynasties struggled for the mastery. God no longer had a people that He owned as the theater of his government. If their heart had only turned to him, like the needle to the pole, spite of quivering to and fro, there would have been long-suffering (as indeed there was to the uttermost), and the intervention of divine power would have established them in blessing for evermore. But when not only the people, but the king anointed of Jehovah, blotted out His very name from the land; when His glory was given to another in His own temple, all was over for the present, and “Lo-Ammi” was the sentence of God. They had become now the most bitter in their idolatry, being apostates from the living God, and if maintained, would have been the active champions of heathen abominations. By God's judgment, therefore, the people and the king at length passed into captivity.

At this crisis Daniel appears at the court of the Babylonish monarch, according to the sure word of Isaiah to King Hezekiah. (Isa. 29) “The times of the Gentiles” (for so runs the remarkable phase in Luke 21) Were begun, and of those times Daniel was the prophet. They are not always to run on; they have a limit assigned by God, when the present interruption of His direct earthly government shall cease, and Israel shall again be acknowledged as the people of God. During this interval, as we saw, their distinctive calling being lost, God allows in His providence a new system of Government, the system of imperial unity, to rise up in the great successive Gentile powers. It is

no longer independent nations, each having their own ruler, but God himself sanctioning, in His providence, the surrender of all nations of the earth to the absorbing authority of a single individual. This is what characterizes “the times of the Gentiles.” Such a thing was unexampled before, though there may have been strong kingdoms encroaching upon weaker ones. Even the infidel historian is compelled to recognize, as all history does, the four great empires of the ancient. World. Israel was now merged in the mass of nations. Hence that expression comes in, “the God of heaven.” he had, as it were, retreated from the immediate control of the earth, in which character, at least in type, He had governed Israel. This had now wholly disappeared, and God, acting sovereignly, and at a distance, so to speak, from the scene— “the God of heaven” —gave certain defined powers of the Gentiles to succeed each other in a world-wide empire.

Before I close these preliminary remarks, a little word on the great moral features of this chapter; for if they are brought out prominently in Daniel, they were not written for his sake only, but for ours, if we desire the same blessing.

The chapter opens with the scene of the complete prostration of the Jews before their conqueror. They were now besieged and overwhelmed in their last stronghold. “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god.” Next we have the fulfillment of the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, already alluded to. Hezekiah had been sick, nigh unto death. At his urgent desire to live, God had added to his days fifteen years, and this was sealed to him by a striking sign; the sun returned ten degrees by which it was gone down. But it had been better to have learned well the lesson of death and resurrection, than to have life prolonged, to fall into a snare and to hear of the sorrows that yet awaited his house, and with it the eclipse of Israel's hopes. Whether a sign so remarkable was what chiefly attracted the notice of a nation, the most celebrated in the ancient world for its astronomical lore, I cannot say. Certain it is that at that time the king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, and this not merely because he was recovered of his sickness, but to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land. (2 Chron. 32:31.) Instead of going softly all his years, Hezekiah displays his treasures to the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan. “There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed. them not.” “Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of Hosts, Behold the days come that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

Here we see this accomplished. “And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the matter of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; (or nobles;) children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” Accordingly “the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank, so nourishing them three years that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Along with this the names of Daniel and of his three companions are changed. It would appear that the desire

was to efface the memory of the true God, by giving them names derived from the idols of Babylon. “The prince of the eunuchs gave to Daniel the name of Belteshazzar and to Hananiah the name of Shadrach, and to Mishael of Meshach, and to Azariah of Abed-nego,” in all probability names derived from Bel and the other false gods then worshipped in Chaldea.

And now let us mark what the Holy Ghost records, as peculiarly showing Daniel's heart for God, that in his moral ways he might. be a vessel to honor and meet for the Master's use. How remarkably is the power of God superior to all circumstances! Daniel and his companions say nothing to the change of names, painful as it must have been. They were slaves, the property of another, who had the authority to call them as he pleased. “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.” Naturally they would have received such fare with thankfulness; faith works, and it is refused. It was connected with the false gods of the country, being a part of the daily food of an idolatrous king. Even in their own land and apart from idols, God insisted upon separating between things clean and unclean, and much that was prized among the Gentiles, was all abomination to a Jew. The law was stringent as to these defilements, and Daniel, as a Jew, was under its obligations. Christianity comes in and delivers the conscience from anxiety as to such things.

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles,” the Apostle Paul says, named the fact and for conscience sake. But for the Jew, there was unqualified separation required. Daniel at once shows himself decided for the true God. It was not to him a question of doing at Babylon what was done there, but of the will of God as enjoined upon Israel. Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. God had meanwhile wrought in His providence that Daniel should find special favor. But this did not lessen the trial of faith. And when difficulties and dangers were pleaded, still he has confidence in God. We are all apt to find good reasons for bad things. But Daniel's eye was single and his whole body full of light, the only means of understanding the mind of God. He did not consider what was pleasing to himself; he did not fear to risk the peril; he looked at the matter in connection with God. He only asks that they may be proved for ten days; “and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon,” &c. Not “pleasant bread,” but that which spoke of humbling themselves before God, was what a true heart felt to be their suited food; such fare as the lowest in that proud and luxurious city might have disdained. What is the result of this trial? Daniel and his companions turn out “fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.” Thus they were spared further trouble on that score.

But that is not all. There was the positive blessing of God, in giving them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And of Daniel, it is said, that he was made to understand all visions and dreams. They were prepared of God, each for what he had afterward to fill. God was their teacher, and the trial of their faith was a needed, essential part of their training in His school. Then when they stood before the king, none was found like them. When the king inquired. of them, he found them, in all matters of wisdom and understanding, ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.”

If we, too, are to understand the scriptures, I believe that we must travel the path of separation from the world. Nothing more destroys spiritual intelligence than merely floating with the stream of men's opinions and ways. The prophetic word is that which shows us the end of all man's projects

and ambition.

And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Doubtless, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But all the plans of men will come to nothing first, though "they shall labor in the very fire, and shall weary themselves for very vanity." Himself shall do it. If there be one scripture truth which stands out more prominently than another, or rather which underlies all truth, it is the total failure of man in everything that pertains to God, before His grace interferes and triumphs. And this is true, not of unconverted men only, but of His people of old and of His Church since. Nor is there any advantage greater for the enemy, short of destroying the foundations, than the mixing up of the saints of God with the world, and the consequent darkening of all spiritual intelligence in those who ought to be its light. God would have us in practical communion with Himself: in His light we see light. If we see the end of all the plots of Satan to thwart the work of God, it separates us from what leads thereto, and joins us with all that is dear to him. Then "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So walking, we shall understand the word of God. It is not a question of intellectual capacity and learning. I am confident that human erudition in the things of God is only so much rubbish, wherever it is made to be anything more than a servant. Unless Christians can keep what they know under their feet, they are incapable of profiting fully by the word of God. Otherwise, whether a man know much or little, he becomes its slave, and it usurps the place of the Spirit of God.

Faith is the sole means and power of spiritual understanding. And faith puts and keeps us in subjection to the Lord, and in separation from this evil age. Daniel was separated from what, to a Jew, dishonored God, and God blessed him with wisdom and understanding.

Chapter 37

Remarks on Daniel 2

Before entering upon my present subject, I would point out all obvious proof that chap. 1. has a prefatory character. The last verse of the chapter informs us that “Daniel continued unto the first year of King Cyrus.” It is not merely an account of certain circumstances before we are introduced to the various revelations or facts that are given in succession in the book; but we have the preparation for the place that Daniel was to keep. And then we are carried, as it were, on to the end. The continuance of Daniel is shown through the whole term of the Babylonish monarchy, and even to the beginning of the Persian. It is not meant that Daniel only lived to the first year of King Cyrus; because the latter part of the book shows us a vision subsequent to that date. The fact is simply stated that he lived at the commencement of a new dynasty. And it will be found that the end of the last chapter is an equally suitable conclusion to the book; answering, as such, to the first chapter as a preface.

But before going further, I would made one remark of a general kind. The book divides itself into two nearly equal volumes, or sections. First, that which refers to the great Gentile powers, and the features that would mark their outward conduct; and, finally, to the judgment of it all. This is continued up to the end of chapter 6. Then, from chapter 7, to the close, we have not the external history of the four Gentile empires, but that, which is of more peculiar interest to God's people. This was, evidently enough, indicated by the circumstance, that the first portion of the book does not consist of visions that Daniel saw; for the only one, properly so called, was seen by Nebuchadnezzar. There is one in chap. 2., and then another of a different character in chap. 4; chains. 3., 5. and 6., being facts that had to do with the moral condition of the two first monarchies, but nothing at all that was made known in the first instance to Daniel, or visions seen by the prophet himself. Whereas, the latter part of the book is occupied exclusively with communications to the prophet himself. And there it is that we find, not merely what ought to strike the natural mind, but the secrets of God that peculiarly affect and interest His people and hence details also. The external proof of this is, that chap. 6, which closes what I have called the first section of Daniel, brings us up to the close again. “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Now this is remarkable, because the next chapter goes back again to Belshazzar. “In the first year of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head,” &c. That was long before Cyrus the Persian. Then in chap. viii., “In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar.” And in chap. 9, “In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus.” So far all is regular, and so we come down to chap. 10. “In the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel,” &c. The first part (1.-6.) brings us down to the close, in a general way; and the second (7.-12.) with equal order; divided, not merely in this outward manner, but having the moral difference already explained, i.e., the one external and the other internal. That this is not an unprecedented thing in the word of God is familiar to the reader of Matt. 13. There, we have an orderly setting forth of the kingdom of heaven under certain parables-the first of these being a prefatory one. Now, taking the other six parables, (for there are exactly seven in all,) you have a division of them into two sets of three, the first of which refers to the exterior of the kingdom, and

the last to more inward and hidden relations.

This exactly answers to what we have in Daniel. First, the external history goes down to the close, and then the internal succeeds, or what was of special interest to those that had understanding of the ways of God. This will suffice to show that the book is characterized by that divine method which we ought to expect in the word of God. There is a profound design which runs through the works of God, and more especially through His word. The finger of God Himself is evident indeed upon what He has made; yet death has come in, and the creature made subject to vanity. Hence, we hear the groans of the lower creation: and as you rise in the scale of animal life, the misery is more intense. Man is more conscious and capable of feeling the wretchedness that his own sin has brought upon the world, and upon that creation of which he is made the lord. But in the word of God, although there may be slips and errors of scribes, they are for the most part but specks. They may obscure its full light: but they are trifling in comparison with the evident brightness of that which God gives, even through the most imperfect version. In passing through the hands of men, we discover more or less of the weakness that attaches to the earthen vessel; but through the great mercy of God, there is ample light for every honest soul.

But turning to this first great scene, we have the entire failure of the wisdom of the world. Unusual care was taken, at the court of Babylon, to have men trained in all wisdom and knowledge. The time was now come when this was to be put to the test. God was pleased, while the great Gentile king was meditating upon his bed, to give him a vision of the future history of the world: on the one hand, gratifying his desire to see the world's course thence onward unveiled; while, on the other hand, he was made to feel the utter powerlessness of all human resources. It was God's opportunity for displaying His own power, and the perfect wisdom of which even a poor captive was made the channel. This is a signal example of God's ways. Here were these Jews; and the proud king might have supposed that, if God was for them, they could not possibly have come under his hand. But if God's people are guilty, there are none whose faults He so much exposes. How do we know the wrong that Abraham did? Or David Only from God. He loves His people too well to hide their faults. It is a part of His moral government, that He is the very last to put or allow a veil over what displeases Him, in those even whom He loves best. Take a well-governed family. It is the way of love to cover over the faults of the child, when the child ought to feel it?-and feel it he must if he is to be happy. So with God's people. Israel had abandoned Him—had denied their relationship to Him, and God shows that He felt their sin, and that they must feel it too. He disowned them as His people for a time—swept them out of the land in which He had planted them; and now they were the slaves of the Gentiles.

But now their conqueror must be taught that, after all, the mind—the heart of God was with the poor captives. The power of God might be with the Gentile for a season, but the affections of God and His secret were with His own, even in the hour of their abasement.

The circumstances, through which this was brought out, strikingly illustrate the ways of God. The king dreams a dream; the thing departs from him. He summons his wise men, and calls upon them to make known the dream and the interpretation of it. But all in vain. They themselves are so struck with the unreasonableness of the demand, that they say, “There is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” It was impossible to meet the king's request. Thus all was allowed to come out in its reality. Their wisdom proved to be

unavailing for what was wanted. Daniel hears of the decree which went forth, that the wise men should be slain. He goes to Arioch, and begs for time to be given him. But mark this—and it is the characteristic of faith—he has confidence in God. He does not wait till God gives Him the answer, before he says that he would show the interpretation of the dream. He proffers it at once. He is confident in God, and that is faith—a conviction founded on the known character of God. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and Daniel feared the Lord. Therefore also he was not alarmed at the decree. He knew the God who gave could recall the dream. At the same time, he does not, in the least degree, pretend to answer it himself. We have thus two great things brought out in Daniel: first, his confidence that God would reveal the thing to the king; secondly, his confession that he could not. He goes to his house, and makes the thing known to his companions. He wishes that they also should “desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret.” He has exceeding value for the prayers of his brethren—the witnesses with himself of the true God in Babylon. He gets them on their knees before God, as well as takes that place himself. But Daniel, having special faith, was the one that God therefore honors, “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision.”

Neither does he go directly to the king, nor even to his companions, to tell them that God has made known the dream to him. The first thing he does is to go to God. The God that has made known the secret is the One that Daniel at once owns. He is in the place of one that worships God. And allow me to say, that this is the grand object of all the revelations of God. Supposing it is a question of making known to me my sin and a Savior, meeting all the need of my soul: yet what God works by His Spirit in This saints, is not merely that they should know they are delivered from hell, or that they should walk as His children. There is a higher thing still. God makes His people worshippers of Himself.

And if there is one thing in which God's children fail more than another, it is in realizing their place as worshippers.

Now, Daniel understood this. Though comparatively young, he was well acquainted with the ways of God. And here we have this beautiful feature. He brings out in his outburst of praise the ways of God; and these, not so much in connection with His power—though it is true that “He changeth the times and seasons; Hit we removeth kings and setteth up kings,” &c. But what his heart specially dwells on is this; “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, mid knowledge to them that know understanding.” I call your attention to that. It is quite true that the Lord looks with compassion on the ignorant, and shows His goodness to those that have no understanding. But Daniel is speaking of His ways with those whose hearts are towards Him; and in their case the Lord's principle is, “To him that hath shall be given; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” Nothing is more dangerous in the things of God than to stop short in the path of learning His ways. What arrests souls is the consciousness that the truth is too practical; and they fear the consequences. For the truth of God is not a thing merely to know, but to live; and the soul instinctively shrinks back because of the serious present results it entails. In Daniel's case the eye was single, and the whole body, therefore full of light. This is the real secret of progress. Let the desire only be towards God, and the progress, is sure and steady.

Daniel then goes in unto Arioch and says, “Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.” Accordingly, Arioch brings, him in

before the king, in haste, and says, “brings found a man of the captives of; Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.” The king asks him whether it is true, that he is able to make known the dream and the interpretation. Daniel's answer is beautiful. Real, deep knowledge of the ways of God is always accompanied by humility. There, is no greater mistake nor one more unfounded in fact, than the supposition, that spiritual intelligence puffs up; knowledge may—mere knowledge. But I speak of that spiritual understanding in the word which flows from the sense of God's love, and seeks to spread itself, if I may so say, just because it is divine love. Daniel then first shows how impossible it was for “the wise siren, astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers,” to show the dream unto the king. “But there is a God in heaven, that revealeth secrets, and maketh known [he does not even say to Daniel, but] to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.” de desired that Nebuchadnezzar should know the interest that God took in him. “As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind, upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.” But he is not satisfied with that: he adds, “As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have, more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.”

Then he enters upon the dream, “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.” He had seen the course of empire, not merely in a fragmentary successional manner, but as a whole. In the latter part of the book, we have the succession more minutely marked, and the detailed ways of the different powers towards Daniel's people: but here it is the general history of Gentile empire.

“This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver. His belly and his thighs of brass.” That, is, there was deterioration as the empires departed from the source of power. It was God who gave imperial rule to Nebuchadnezzar. Consequently, that which is nearest to the source is seen as “this head of gold.” There comes in a certain measure more of what was human in the Persian empire, “the breast and the arms of silver,” an inferior metal; and so on, down to the legs, which are of iron: and the feet, part of iron and part of clay. It is quite plain from this, that as we descend from the original grant of power, there is a gradual debasement.

But it is well, now, to state a principle or two, which I believe to be of importance in looking at prophetic scriptures. One of the commonest maxims, even among Christians, is this: that prophecy is to be interpreted by the event—that history is the proper exponent of prophecy—that when the prophetic visions are realized upon the earth, the facts explain the visions. This is a false principle; it has not one particle of truth in it. People confound, with interpretation of prophecy, the confirmation of its truth. When a prediction is fulfilled, of course its fulfillment confirms its truth, but that is a very different thing from explaining it. The proper understanding of prophecy is just as difficult after the event as before it. For instance, let any one take the seventy weeks of Daniel. That chapter has furnished occasion for immense controversy and dispute, among believers themselves. It is one of their commonest assumptions, that it is all fulfilled (which is not correct), and yet there is no such thing as agreement among them, about its meaning.

Looking again at Ezekiel's prophecy, we find that the difficulty of prophecy arises from a totally different source. The first part of Ezekiel was fulfilled in the then ways of God with Israel, it

extended over the time when Daniel lived. But that does not explain it. It is, in fact, more obscure than the closing chapters, which are future.

What then, does explain prophecy? That which explains all scriptures: the spirit of God alone. His power can unfold any part of the word of God. Do you ask, if I mean to say, that it is of no importance to know languages, understand history, and so on? I am not raising a question about learning: it has its use; but I deny that history is the interpreter of knowledge or learning. Besides, even if men are Christians, it does not necessarily follow that they understand scripture. They know Christ, else they would not be Christians. But real entrance into God's mind, in scripture, supposes that a person watches against self, desires the glory of God, has full confidence in His word and dependence on the Holy Ghost. The understanding of scripture is not a mere intellectual. thing. If a man has no mind at all, he could not understand anything: But the mind is only the vessel—not the power. The power is the Holy Ghost, acting upon and through the vessel; but it must be the Holy Ghost Himself that fills the soul. As it is said, “They shall be all taught of God.”

There is a great difference in the measure of the teaching, because there is much difference in the measure of dependence upon God. The important thing is to bear in mind, that the understanding of scripture depends much more upon what is moral, than what is of the mind—upon a single eye to Christ. The Holy Ghost can never give us anything to save us from the necessity of dependence and waiting upon God.

How, then, are we to interpret prophecy? It is entirely independent of history; it was given to be understood before it becomes history. That this is true must be manifest. The great mass of prophecy is about the terrible judgments that are to fall at the end of this age. What becomes of the people who do not profit by the prophecies, till the facts have taken place? It is a serious thing to despise it. The believer that understands prophecy, has got special help, which he lacks, who neglects it.

Starting, then, with this great principle—that it is the Holy Ghost who gives us to read prophecy, as hearing upon the glory of God, and connected with Christ, who shall yet be exalted, and His glory shall till the earth and heavens, all usurpers and pretenders being put down—let us look at this scene, as that which shows us the course of the world, up to that time. First, consider the position of the parties. Here was the proudest king of the world. He had gone forth at the head of victorious armies, before his father's death before he had properly come into the undivided kingdom of Babylon. And now he has laid open to him a sphere of dominion, perhaps. beyond his ambition. He learns with certainty, that it was God in his providence, who had pitied him in this position. But, more than that: he sees brought before him in a few touches the whole chart of the Gentile world—the leading features of its history from that day to the day of glory and judgment that is coming. He has brought before him the rise of another and neighboring power, that had been already alluded to in prophecy; so that there was therefore no difficulty at all in gathering what was meant by it. The prophet Isaiah, who lived a hundred-and-fifty years before Cyrus was born, had not only referred by the Holy Ghost to the nation and king of the Medes and Persians, but had called him by name.

Again: another empire was foreshown, that was then comparatively in its infancy, or consisting only of so many separate tribes, without any stable bond of cohesion among them—I refer to the Greeks. But more remarkable still, the kingdom which is most dwelt upon by the Spirit of God, was

then one that was in a mere embryo condition, and probably not even known by name to the king of Babylon. For though that kingdom was destined to play the greatest part ever taken by a kingdom in the history of the world, it was then utterly obscure. It was engaged in home and neighboring squabbles, of the pettiest kind, without any thought of extending its dominion. The more marvelous, therefore, it is to look at that great king, and the servant of God that stood before him, unfolding the history of the world.

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.” It was not a question of his own prowess, nor special wisdom, that he possessed. If Nebuchadnezzar had been allowed to carry away these captives—to triumph over the power of Egypt, that had wished to dispute the supremacy of the world, it was the God of heaven who had given it to him. “And Wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.” Clearly the Babylonish monarchy is meant. God had referred to this by Isaiah. And Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Daniel's, had brought before him, not only the length of period, during which the Babylonish monarchy should last, but even the succession. There would be Nebuchadnezzar and his son, and his son's son. This had a remarkable fulfillment. So that we need not go beyond Scripture to understand prophecy. It is the right Spiritual use of what is in the word of God, and I bless God for it. If you find the simplest man who only studies with diligence the Bible in his mother tongue, and is led by the Spirit of God, he has the elements and the power of a true interpretation. But as sure as a man tries to find an interpretation here and there, by the help of history, antiquities, newspapers, and what not, he is only deceiving himself and his hearers. Such is the universal moral sentence of God upon the soul that searches, in what is of man, the proper key to God's secrets. I must find it in God Himself, by a right use of what is in His own word.

An early Jewish writer, whose history is everywhere read and valued, Josephus, I had the curiosity to look at, and finding the common version peculiar, I examined the original Greek of his history, but found the same strange sense still. He makes out that the head of gold means Nebuchadnezzar, and the kings that were before, him Thus, there is an entire want of understanding what the word of God says. The going away from scripture, and allowing one's own thoughts, always leads astray. Babylon was first made an empire of, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, who here includes, as it were, those that were to follow. “Thou art this head of gold.” There is no reference to the kings that were before him. Babylon never was allowed to have the empire of the world till Nebuchadnezzar's day. Therefore it was that he, and not his forefathers, formed the head of gold. He was the one in whom the imperial place of Babylon finds its beginning.

In Jer. 25. we find not only the epoch of seventy years of captivity, but, further on (chap. 27.), the succession is mentioned. “All nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come,” It happened that, after his son, Evil Merodach, was cut off, there was one who took the throne, not in the order of succession, but called to it by the Babylonish people, with a sort of claim, through marriage with Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. This man reigned for a time, and after him, his son, who was, therefore, the son of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, not of his son. It might so far, then, appear that the prophecy had failed. Not at all. A few months after, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson was called to the throne. “Scripture cannot be broken.” It had been

said, “Nebuchadnezzar, his son, and his son's son,” and so it was. In Belshazzar, the grandson, of Nebuchadnezzar, the whole thing terminated. For this, then, scripture furnishes all the main parts. So that prophecy does, in fact, explain history, but history never interprets prophecy. The man who understands prophecy, can open up history; but no understanding of history will enable him to explain prophecy. It may confirm the truth of a prediction, to a doubter, so far as it is clear. Thus, if the history of the taking of Jerusalem, as it is given in the Wars of Josephus, is a true one, it will, of course, coincide with the inspired notice, told us by Luke. But it is quite plain, that if I have confidence in the word of God, there I have a much more certain account of it. In a word, the circumstance of being uttered before the event, has nothing to do with the matter. The eye of God saw all along, and through the streams of Gentle empire; and the language is as plain in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the writings of the Greek and Latin historians. And so true is this that those who have no sympathy with what is of God, even infidels, are obliged to acknowledge, that whatever clearly bears upon the subject, coincides with what Daniel had said hundreds of years before the events.

“And after thee shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee.” Not inferior in territorial extent, but in splendor, and perhaps most of all in the admixture of control outside the ruler. Instead of a man acting in the conviction that God had put him in his place of authority, Darius (chap. 6.) took the advice of unscrupulous subjects, and suffered bitterly for it. Had he felt the sense of immediate responsibility to God, the snare had been avoided. Men naturally shirk from absolute authority chiefly because it is uncontrolled power in the hands of a weak and erring man. But supposing it was one who had all the wisdom and goodness in his own person, nothing could be happier. That is exactly what will be true in the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, when full authority will be put into His hands, and all will be blessed and according to the will of God, and when the contrary will of man would only be rebellion.

What seems to confirm this, is, that when we come down to the third kingdom, the Macedonian, of which Alexander the Great was the founder, there we have a man who not merely acted at the suggestion of his wise Men, but was controlled by his generals. It became, in fact, a kind of military rule—a less respectable thing than the aristocratic interference of the Medes and Persians, and their inflexible laws.

Then we come down much lower still, and have a fourth kingdom, represented by iron. “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” There, strength is the great feature of the kingdom, and the quality of the metal is consistent with it. But it is of the commonest sort—not one of the precious metals; perhaps because the Roman Empire was distinguished by this, that it was nominally the people that governed. However despotic the emperor, he always pretended, in theory at least, to consult the people and senate. Even under the empire, the Romans had still the semblance of their old republican constitution; whilst, in point of fact, it was but an individual who had clothed himself with all the real power.

Here, then, we have sketched before us the whole course of empire. But it may be asked, How do you know these things? It is not said that the second empire represents Medo-Persia, or the third Macedonia, or the fourth Rome. I think it is. It may not be said here; but Scripture does not always hang up the key exactly at the door. It is not often that we find the explanation of one portion in the

very next verse. God wants me to know His word, to be familiar with all that He has written, and to be assured that all is very good. To instruct even the unconverted child in the Scripture is always of great value. It is like laying a fire well, so that a spark alone is needed to kindle it into a flame. It is a good and wholesome thing for Christians to be most particular in training up their children in a thorough knowledge of the word of God.

But returning to consider what light Scripture gives, we need not go further than this book of Daniel to find the names of these empires. In chap. 5. 28, we are told, “Peres: thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” There is the answer at once. We find the Babylonian kingdom just tottering, and about to be destroyed. We were told that the Medes and Persians succeed. Nothing simpler or more certain, The only people I ever heard of that found difficulties, were some learned men who strove to make out that the empire of Babylon extends to Persia as well, so as to make Greece the second, Rome the third, and the fourth a distinct and purely future anti-Christian power. Another class of these scholars have contended that Alexander's kingdom is one thing, and that of his successors another wholly different: in fact, one the third and the other the fourth empire; so as to make even the fifth kingdom (that of “the little stone") a past or present thing. Had Scripture been read and weighed without an object, mistakes like these could never have been made. But the believer, instead of seeing in history things to perplex his mind takes up his Bible, and finds the solution before he leaves the prophecy itself. For it is plain from Dan. 8:20, 21, that the empire of the united Medes and Persians gives place to the Grecian kingdom, with its four-fold division at Alexander's death. This again is succeeded by the fourth or Roman Empire, the peculiar feature of which is, that in its last stage it is seen divided into ten separate kingdoms. (Chap. 7.) Was this ever the case with the successors of Alexander? His kingdom was divided into four, never into ten. Thus we have prophecy explaining history; while the general use that mere learning snakes of history is to obscure the brightness of the word of God. But let us understand the word of God first, and then, if we turn to history, we shall find it comes in as a human witness and confirms, with its feeble voice, the divine testimony. It is obliged to do so. Thus, the man that does not know history, stands upon at least as good ground as those who are learned, but find difficulties. He is not perplexed as others are, who look through the mist of their own speculations.

In the third kingdom a feature is introduced which is not in the second. It was to “bear rule over all the earth.” Now remarkably that was fulfilled in the Macedonian or Grecian kingdom! Because, although Cyrus was a great conqueror, it was altogether in the region where he lived. He overcame the whole of those parts to the north of Media and Persia, and also southward, as well as the west. All that was true; but he never went outside, as far as I know, the bounds of Asia.

But now we see a kingdom marked by extraordinary rapidity of conquest. I could challenge all the world to show me one that fulfills this prophecy, as the kingdom of Alexander did. In the course of a few years, that remarkable man overran almost the whole of the then known world. He even lamented, as we know, that he had not another world to conquer. This is a striking commentary upon what we have here. Do we need to go to history for that? No. We find in this very book the explanation. In chapter 8. 20, 21, the third empire is shown to be the Grecian. “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.” There you have also a confirmation of what I said before, as to the second kingdom. But when this ram was there, a fierce goat came that had a notable horn between his eyes. With this single horn that he has in his head, he butts against the ram, who represented these kings of Media and Persia. Here we have the third

kingdom, that was to “bear rule over all the earth.” What is its name? The 21st verse gives the answer.

“The rough goat is the King of gives the and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” We do not need history to explain prophecy. We have here the distinct, positive answer from the word of God, as to what the third kingdom is; and all real research you may make in history will only confirm this, but you do not need it. If you take your stand upon the word of God, you are upon a ground that no history can touch, for a single instant. God, who gives the only sure account, shows that the Medo-Persian empire is followed by the Grecian. The sole great horn of the latter is broken, and “for it came up four notable ones, towards the four winds of heaven.” The kingdom of Alexander, at his death, was broken up into four great parts, which his generals fought for. You have their comparative littleness in the presence of Alexander. He was the great horn, the first king and representative of the third kingdom. The next question is, What was to follow that? What other great empire was to succeed; and that, the last empire before God should set up His kingdom? The Old Testament history closes before the third empire begins. The last facts historically stated are in the Book of Nehemiah, while the Persian was still the great king: i.e., the second empire was yet supreme. But the New Testament history opens, and what do I find there? I have only to read the beginning of Luke, and I hear of another great empire then ruling. “It came to pass, in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” There I have, at once, the fourth kingdom, without requiring to ask history for it. There is a fourth kingdom, and the word of God shows it to be universal; it summons men throughout the world to be enrolled in its register; and God takes care that there should be a legal acknowledgment even of His own Son's having been then born.

The fourth kingdom, then, was the Roman empire. When I know that from scripture, I can go to history, which tells me that it was the Roman empire winch crushed the power of Greece. They got the Greeks first to join them in beating the Macedonians and then they turned upon the Greeks, and soon put them down.

Afterward, the Romans extended their conquests all over Asia. What does God say about it? “The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” And if people do call in history, can they see things more clearly? Where can they show as just a description of that empire as that which God gives here? One well-known historian, when speaking about the empires, describes them in the liveliest imagery derived from these very symbols of Daniel the prophet. He could find no figures so apt as those which the Spirit of God had consecrated to their use already, though every one knows it was front no lack of imagination, any more than the wish to accredit scripture.

Even this is not all that God gives us. “Forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” Never was a description more exactly to the point. I could quote passages from the old Roman writers, which show that they themselves give an account of their own empire and policy in terms substantially similar.

But there was something they could not tell, and that was beyond what man could foresee. That power that above all other was distinguished for the strength in warring down every one that rose up against it, whatever its kindness to those who stooped to the conqueror—that very power is

described here thus:— “And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided.” The Romans do not tell us that. History is not always a truthful speaker. Those that describe their own country's statecraft are not in general very trustworthy. If there was that which threatened extinction, they are as glad to hide it, as they were ready to boast in whatever evidence their boldness, strength, and glory. But God tells all out, and we find that the same empire which was to be so celebrated for its amazing strength, is to exhibit also the greatest inherent weakness. “There shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: But they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” The iron was the original element; the clay was brought in subsequently, and properly did not belong to the great metal statue: it was a foreign ingredient. When and whence did it come? I believe that the Spirit of God in using the figure of clay refers not to the original Roman element, which had the strength of the iron, but to the barbaric hordes which broke in at a later period, weakening the Roman power, and forming by degrees separate kingdoms. I can, however, only state this as my own judgment founded upon the general use of scripture language and ideas. We have what was not properly and originally Roman, but was brought in from elsewhere: and it is the mixture of the two elements that is productive of the weakness and that finally leads to division. These hordes of barbarians that forced themselves in at first, professed not to be conquerors, but guests of Rome, and finally settled themselves within its limits. This it was that subsequently led to the division of the empire into a number of separate, independent kingdoms, when the power and pride of imperial Rome was broken. Charlemagne, later on cherished the desire of universal empire, and he labored hard to realize it; but it was a failure, and all that he acquired in his life was separated in his death. Another man attempted it in our own days. I mean, of course, the exile of St. Helena. he had at heart the same universal monarchy. What was the issue? His success was still more short-lived. All was completely broken up into its original elements before he had breathed his last. And so it will continue in the main, until the moment spoken of here but more fully entered into in the book of the Revelation. This is, I believe, what scripture lays down about it. There will be, before this age closes, time most remarkable union of two apparently contradictory elements—a universal head of empire, and separate independent kingdoms besides, each of which will have its own king; but that one man will be the emperor, over all these kings. Till that time comes, every effort to unite the different kingdoms together will be a total failure. And then it will he not by fusing them together into one kingdom, but each independent kingdom having its own king, though all subject to one head. God has said they shall be divided. This, then, is what is shown to us. “They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” And if ever there was a portion of the world that has represented this incoherent system of kingdoms, it is modern Europe. As long as the iron predominated, there was one empire, but then came in this clay; the foreign material. In virtue of the iron there will be a universal monarchy, while in virtue of the clay there will be separate kingdoms.

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” Mark those words, “In the days of these kings.” This is a complete answer to those who have tried to make this the birth of Christ, and the

introduction of what they call the kingdom of grace. At the time here spoken of, the empire is broken up and divided. Was that the case when the Lord was born? Could it be said then, “in the days of these kings?” Nothing of the sort. Rome was then in its fullest power: there was not the smallest breach apparent throughout the empire. There was but one ruler, and one will predominant. It was not therefore “in the days of these kings.” What then does the verse refer to I believe to the closing scene of the Roman Empire: not to the time when Christ was born, but when God “bringeth again the first-begotten into the world” —when the Lord Jesus is brought in not as the Nazarene to suffer and to die, but when he comes with divine power to judge. The stone cut without hands,” though in a sense applicable to Him at any time, applies really and fully then. We have the interpretation here. It does not refer to His Person, so much as to the kingdom that the God of heaven shall set up in Him and by Him. No doubt He is the stone; but this is a destructive stone extinguishing the kingdoms of the earth. Can any one deny it? The stone was “cut out of the mountain without hands, and it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold.” There was the crash of all the image. Was that the case when Christ was born? Did Christ attack the Roman Empire? Did He destroy it? On the contrary, Christ was killed, and it was their minister that was the official means of his crucifixion. The image, we may say, smote Him, instead of His smiting the image. Such an interpretation is unworthy of serious attention.

The stone falls upon the feet of the image, the toes of which were part of iron and part of clay; that is the last condition of the Roman Empire. After all the division, the stone smites it. Thus, its action is not grace, but judgment. It is not a sower sowing seed, to produce life; still less is it leaven diffusing itself over certain limits. Its blow falls destructively upon the image and shatters it completely. It is evident then that the first coming of Christ is not the question here. His birth is wholly passed by. It took place during the course of the Roman empire and in no way destroyed it. Whereas what will deal with the Roman empire yet, is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the day that is future.

But some will say, How can that be? There is no Roman empire now. But let use ask, How does that show that there is not to be a Roman empire? Can you prove that the Roman empire is not to revive? What is given me here is that the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold are broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

Further, I am told, in the revelation, that the beast, representing the imperial power of Rome, is remarkably characterized, as “the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” (Rev. 17:8.) The last expression, which in the English version is so obscurely rendered “and yet is,” should be “and shall be present." There is no doubt about this at all. No man that knows the Apocalypse properly, would dispute that. If so, it follows the beast or empire that existed, when the Apostle John was there, was to be in a state of non-existence, and then to appear again, ascending out of the bottomless pit. That is, it will be the power of Satan that will accomplish the re-union of the fragments that make up the Roman Empire. And it is remarkable, that when the beast is seen again, this chapter shows that there will be ten kings that will agree to give their power to the beast, or person then raised up of Satan to organize and govern the empire. He will use this vast power against God and the Lamb; every appearance of Christianity will be destroyed, idolatry will be restored, and antichrist set up. Then God, as it were, will say I will endure this no longer; the hour is come. The Lord Jesus will leave the right hand of God, and will execute judgment upon these vile pretenders.

“In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” The first action of that stone is to destroy. It is not a question of saving souls; it is judgment and destruction: putting down kingdoms, and everything that exalts itself against the true God.

But a difficulty may arise here, as to how it is that, when this destructive blow falls, we have the gold, the silver, and the brass, all jumbled together, with the iron and clay—as if these successive empires existed together at the end. The truth is, that though Babylon for instance, lost its imperial place, it existed subordinately under the powers that succeeded; and so with each following empire till Rome. (Comp. Dan. 8:11, 12.) So that what the final judgment of the fourth empire takes place, there will still be the representatives of its three predecessors, distinct from itself. And this makes evident that by the last empire is meant what is exclusively western, and not that which had belonged to the previous empires.

Thus it is the great seat of modern civilization (i.e., the ten kingdoms of the beast) that will be the scene of this tremendous apostasy. And this will be allowed in the judicial wisdom of God, because men have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; “that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” I have not a question that this is the future history of the world, on the authority of the word of God. This remarkable prophecy brings us down from the first beginning of imperial power, and finally shows us in the last days, before God sets up his kingdom, the judgment of the world as it is, when God will deal with the quick, not with the dead merely. He will judge the habitable world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

Chapter 38

Remarks on Daniel 3

THE chapters which fill up the interval between chaps. 2. and 7. are devoted to the statement of historical facts, and therefore might not seem at first sight to have a prophetical character. But we must bear in mind that Scripture in general has an infinitely larger scope than the bare statement of circumstances, be it ever so instructive and important morally. Indeed, this is true of all the Bible. Take such a book, for instance, as Genesis. Though it is clearly historical, and one of the simplest narratives in the Bible, yet it would be wrong to strip it of an outlook into the most distant future. We have the Spirit of God in the New Testament referring over and over again to its most significant facts. Thus, in that incident of Melchizedec, we see the bearing that is given it by the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the allusion to it in other parts of Scripture. A priest and king, two characters that were often united in those days, meets Abraham on his return from the slaughter of the kings, brings forth suited refreshment for the victors, pronounces blessing in the name of Him whose priest he was, and receives tithes as well from Abraham. Yet we must remember that the word of God reasons on this, as indicative of a vast change which has already come in, and leaves open a good deal more looks onward to the day of Christ, as I conceive. In the Hebrews, where the subject of Christ's priesthood, as now in heaven, is discussed, some important features of the type are barely alluded to, not applied. The primary drift there is to show from the Jewish Scriptures a higher character of priesthood than that of Aaron—a priesthood that was not derived from any predecessor, nor handed down to a successor. I only refer to this to show that Scripture gives a typical (and what is that, in other words, but a prophetical?) value to what might appear to be an authentic account of an historical event. Such a character I claim for these facts in the Book of Daniel. For it is plain that, if in the most unvarnished books of inspired history, such as Genesis or Exodus, where prophecy is not the ostensible object or peculiarly-marked feature, you have incident on incident, clearly used in the New Testament as foreshadowing good things to come, we may still more strongly infer that in a prophecy such as this of Daniel, we are to read not only the visions as directly prophetic, but also the facts connected with them as instinct with a kindred spirit. It were easy to produce analogous examples from elsewhere. Let us look for a moment at the prophecy of Isaiah. There, after a long series of prophetic strains, you have a break. Certain well known historical facts are related—the invasion and destruction of the Assyrian; and as to Hezekiah, his sickness and his recovery, the wonder done in the land, and the visit of the embassy from the King of Babylon. Then you have the prophecy recommencing, and following on its course. It could be readily proved that the facts related of Sennacherib and Hezekiah have a definite and most instructive bearing upon the prophecies in the midst of which they are imbedded. So that merely to regard them as facts introduced historically into such a connection, and, with no further or deeper reason, dividing one half of the book from the other, would be to deprive them of at least half their value. Am I too bold, therefore, in assuming it as a general truth applicable to the word of God as a whole, that Scripture is not to be lowered down to the mere recital of the facts it records; but that those facts were chosen expressly in the wisdom of God, and were given in an orderly manner, for the purpose of representing the awful ways of man and Satan, and the glorious scenes before the mind of God

Himself that are to be re-enacted in the latter day? And if this be the case with the strictly historical portion of God's word, it is only reasonable that it should be emphatically true of a prophetic book such as this.

The evidence, however, of this will much more appear as we follow the facts as they are given here. We shall then see what is the connection, and what the special bearing, of the chapters themselves better than by more labored presumptions that I might gather from other parts of the Word of God. For that is and must be the grandest testimony of all to the real meaning of Scripture. Revealed truth is like the light. It is not that which requires illumination from without in order to let us know what it means; but it displays itself. You do not need a taper or a torch from man to find out the light of day. The sun, as it wants none, entirely eclipses all such artificial helps; it shines for itself, and rules the day. So it is that wherever you find a man capable of seeing, the truth commends itself. He has, what the Evangelist Luke calls, “an honest heart,” and what other Scriptures speak of as “a single eye.” Wherever the truth is really brought to bear upon a man that is open to receive it as the precious light of God in Christ, they answer mutually to each other. The heart is prepared for it—desires it; and when the truth is heard, he bows, receives and enjoys it. When the heart, on the contrary, is occupied with itself, or with the world, there is no truth that can possibly bend it. The will of man is at work; and that is the constant unvarying enemy of God. Therefore it is said (John 3.) that no man can see or enter the kingdom of God without being born again—born of water and of the Spirit. That is, there must be a direct, positive work of the Holy Ghost, dealing with the soul, judging it and giving it a new nature, which has as decided an affinity for the things of God as the old life has for the things of the world. The Spirit acts upon the new creature, and gives intelligence; and the truth, is, we may say, its natural sustenance.

I do not doubt, therefore, that we shall find in this third chapter of Daniel, as in the three which follow that each has its distinctive features; and that these were not merely seen in what was passing in the days of Daniel, but that they were registered by the prophet to indicate the course now past, and the future destiny of the great Gentile powers. We are to view them in the light of the prophecies that surround them—to take them, not as facts put down, as any man might do it, haphazard. In short, God has given them here, linked in the most intimate way with the prophecy where they are found.

In Chap. 2. we saw God's sovereign dealing with a man raised up from among the Gentiles, to be the minister of His authority. This takes a new form, in consequence of the people of Israel and their kings having definitively proved themselves unworthy of God's purpose and calling, Thereon God introduces the imperial system of government in the world. It was not merely allowing a single nation to grow in power, and be the terror of its neighbors; or a blessed example of the ways of God. One ruler is allowed to be the master of the world—one great sovereign, not only a mighty king, but a ruler of kings, who were but subordinates or satellites. That began with Nebuchadnezzar, and it characterizes the Gentile empire. An objection might be raised that we do not find any such power existing now. That is true. There exists no such imperial rule in the world, nor has there been since the fall of Rome; though there have been certain pretenders to it. But it has failed. The book of the Revelation shows us this suspension. There was such a ruler once, while imperial Rome subsisted—one who had kings for his servants. But now there is an interval, when all that is over. Still it is to be revived. And this, I believe, is one great fact that awaits the world at the present time. It will take men by surprise; and when accomplished, will be the means

of concentrating the power of Satan, and of bringing about his plans on the earth. All this has a very serious interest for us. We stand near the crisis in the world's history; and even those who look for signs own that we are drawing near the close of the age, and of the times of the Gentiles. The re-organization of the empire is not far off. And it is solemn to remember that, when revived, it will not be a mere repetition of what has been done before; but the power of Satan will be put forth in a way never yet witnessed. “And God shall send strong delusion that men should believe a lie, because they believed not the truth, and had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Very many of my Christian brethren may cry out that I speak uncharitably. The Word of God, however, is wiser that men. It is not a thought of mine, nor of any other man. None would have gathered such a prospect from their own minds. But God has most clearly revealed it. People may plead the wonderful works of God of late in one distant country and another: and the answer of blessing that is, as it were, echoing back from some quarters near us. But these things in no way contradict what I have stated. We may always see these two things going on together, when men approach the verge of some mighty change. On the one hand, the general power of evil increases and the pride of man swells to an unprecedented height. On the other hand, the spirit of God works energetically, winning souls to Christ, and separating those that are to be saved from the destruction which is the necessary end of sin and pride. So that I believe, when any crisis of evil is at hand, what we ought to expect is this increase of blessing from God, during the rime of suspense that immediately precedes judgment.

But turning to the immediate subject of the chapter, imperial power is in the hands of the Gentiles; and the first thing told of that power is, that it was used to set up idolatry—abused, rather, to give a splendor to idolatry unexampled in the old world. And a most humbling consideration it is: the evident connection between the golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plain of Dura, and that image which he had seen in the visions of the night. It is true that the image he had made was not an exact copy. Still, is it not grave to find that the first thing that Nebuchadnezzar does, as far as Scripture gives it to us, is to command a golden image to be set up, that all the people, the nations, and the languages, might fall down and worship it? One thing, at least, is plain: that whether the golden head of the great image had suggested the thought or not, at any rate it did not binder him. On the contrary, here we find that the authority God had put into his hands is turned to this frightful use. The reason, I believe, was this: Nebuchadnezzar was a man as wise according to the flesh as he was willful. He stood most evidently in a place that no man had ever occupied before. Not only the sovereign of a vast kingdom, but the absolute master of many kingdoms, speaking different tongues, and having all sorts of contrary habits and policies. What then was to be done with then! How were all these various nations to be kept and governed well under one head? There is an influence that is mightier than any other thing, which, if common, binds men closely together; but which, if jarring, on the contrary, more than anything else, arrays people against people, house against house, children against parents, and parents against children, nay, husbands and wives against each other. There is no social dislocation to be compared with that which is produced by a difference of religion. Consequently, to avert so great a peril, union in religion was the measure that the devil insinuated into the mind of the politic Chaldean as the surest bond of his empire. He must have one common religious influence in order to weld together the hearts of his subjects. In all probability, to his mind it was a political necessity. Unite them in worship, unite all hearts in bowing down before one and the same object, and there would be something that would give the hope and opportunity of consolidating all these scattered fragments

into a whole. Accordingly, he projects the idea of the gorgeous image of gold for the plain of Dura, near the capital of the empire: and there it is that he summons all the leading men, the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, all in power and authority, to come together to the dedication. He surrounds it, too, with everything that could attract nature and act upon the senses. All kinds of music must contribute to the scene. When the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, &c., was heard, this was the signal for the representatives of that vast realm to “fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” Man can but make an idol; he cannot even find out the true God. If it is a question of having the world's homage, the only thing that will carry away men on a vast scale must be something of this creation, something adapted to the nature of man as he is. You cannot unite hearts that are true with such as are false. But if the true God is shut out, Satan is there to find something which, if introduced by the authority of man, may command all but universal acquiescence. So it was here. The authority, therefore, of the empire was put forth, and all were commanded to worship the golden image on pain of death. “Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

“Therefore, at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. But there were some apart from that idolatrous throng; very few, alas! though no doubt there were others hidden. We may be bold enough to say there was one not mentioned here—Daniel himself. However that be, his three companions were not there; and this made them obnoxious to others; especially as their position, exalted as it was in the province of Babylon, exposed them to more public notice. Of course they were singled out for the king's displeasure. “Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews.” Then they remind the king of the decree that he had made, and add, “There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego,” &e.”

Now this appears to me a fact of very great importance. The use which the Gentile makes of his power is to set up a religion connected with the politics of the kingdom, a religion for present earthly purposes. Where this is the case, religion cannot be left between God and the conscience. It is no longer a question of having a real conviction as to God and His truth, nor is there liberty to judge the imposture. The worship devised by the Gentile king is bound down upon the subject under penalty of death.

There may be certain things, which hinder for a season, the natural result of the world's will in having its religion condemned. And this has been the case for some time. For the last fifty years and more, every one knows there has been a certain system of opinion, commonly called liberalism. This has got hold of men's minds. In no way does it respect God and his word as such. Its great stock-in-trade is the rights of man. Its cardinal virtue is, that all should be left free to think, act, and worship as they please. As long as this idea of man's rights is allowed to have play, the mercy of God turns it into an occasion for Christians having a conscience towards Himself, to pass quietly through, and worship God according to His will. And as it was always unquestionable that

God claimed the right over This own people; as His revealed will alone can rightly govern them, so as the Father He now seeks his children, that they may worship Him in spirit and in truth. The renewed heart and conscience delight in His will and find the chief blessedness here in exalting Him. To the believer, that will is just as peremptory as the absolutism of the heathen king. Liberalism really dislikes this exclusive claim over the conscience. Still, it has led to a sort of calm in the world; and the full exercise of its authority, as to religion, is in abeyance for the time. For, apart from temporary circumstances, none can deny that, wherever there is a religion introduced by the monarch, for the guidance of his realm, necessarily it does not admit of difference, contradiction, or compromise. This would defeat the purpose for which it is imposed. But it is to fight against God. The monarch himself may have a conscience, and he is, of course, bound to worship God according to His will. But the using the authority of the realm to coerce others is the denial, practically, of God's direct control over the individual conscience.

The lesson, then, that we have here, is that, at the very outset, this was what the Gentile made of the power God gave; to set up its own religion, and bind it upon the whole of its subjects. That is, all its authority from God was turned to deny the true God, and to compel universal obedience to its own idol, with a frightful death held up as the immediate forfeit in case of disobedience. This was the great characteristic of the first of the Gentile empires.

But the evil of man and the craft of Satan only serve to bring the faithful into view. The king commands them to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. He first, no doubt, remonstrates, and gives them the opportunity of yielding. “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, &c.... ye fall down and worship the image that I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” It is solemn to see how evanescent was the impression made upon the king's mind. The last act recorded before this image was set up, was his falling down on his face before Daniel, paying him all but divine honors. He had even said, “Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.” But it was another thing when he finds out his power disputed, and his image despised, spite of the burning fiery furnace.

It was all very well to acknowledge God for a moment when He was revealing a secret to him. That was plainly decided in chapter 2. And Daniel there represents those who have the mind of God and who are found in the place of fearing God. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

But God had delegated power to the head of the Gentiles, Nebuchadnezzar. And now that these men had dared to brave the consequences rather than worship the image, he is filled with fury, which vents itself in scorn of God Himself. “Who is that God,” he says, “that shall deliver you out of my hands?” The consequence was that it was now a question between him whom God had set up and God Himself.

But a most beautiful and blessed feature comes out here. It is not God's way, at the present, to meet power by power. It is not His way to deal with the Gentiles in destruction, even where they may be abusing power against the God who has set them in authority. And I call your attention to this, believing it to be an important thing practically. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego do not in any ways take the ground of resisting Nebuchadnezzar in his wickedness. We know afterward that

his conduct was so evil that God stripped him of all glory, and even intelligence as a moan, for a long time. But, still, these godly Men do not pretend that he is a false king because he sets up and enforces idolatry. For the Christian, the question is not about the king, but how he ought to behave himself It is not his business to meddle with others. He is called to walk, relying on God, in patience and obedience. In the great mass of every day obligations we can obey God, in obeying the laws of the land in which we live. This might be the case in any country. If one were even in a popish country I believe, that in the main, one might obey God without transgressing the laws of the land. It might be necessary, sometimes, to hide oneself. If they were coming, for instance, with their processions, and required a mark of respect to the host, one ought to avoid the appearance of insulting their feelings, while, on the other hand, one could not acquiesce in their false worship. But it is important to remember that government is set up and acknowledged of God; and it has, therefore, claims upon the obedience of the Christian man wherever he may be. One of the New Testament epistles takes up this question, the very one that brings out the foundations, characteristics, and effects of Christianity, as far as regards the individual, more than any other. I allude to the Epistle to the Romans, the most comprehensive of all the Pauline epistles. There we have, first of all, man's condition brought out fully; then the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The first three chapters are devoted to the subject of man's ruin; the next five to with Israel and the Gentiles. After that, we have the practical, or at least the perceptive, part of the epistle. First, in chapter 12, the relations of Christians, one to another, and then, after a gradual transition, to enemies at the close; and, next, their relation to the powers that be. (Chap. 13.) The very expression, “the powers that be,” seems intended to embrace every form of government under which Christians might be placed. They were to be subject, not merely under a king, but where there was another character of sovereign; not only where the government was ancient, but let it be ever so newly established. The business of the Christian is to show respect to all who are in authority; to pay honor to whom honor is due, “owing no man anything save love.” And what makes this so particularly strong is, that the emperor then reigning was one of the worst and most cruel men that ever filled the throne of the Caesars. And yet there is no reserve or qualification, nay, the very reverse of an insinuation that if the emperor ordered what was good, the Christians were to obey but, that if not, they were free from their allegiance. The Christian is always to obey, not always Nero or Nebuchadnezzar, but always to obey God. The consequence is, that this at once delivers from the very smallest real ground for charging a godly person with being a rebel. I am aware that nothing will of necessity bar a Christian from an evil reputation. It is natural for the world to speak evil of one that belongs to Christ—to Him whom they crucified. But from all real ground for such an accusation this principle delivers the soul. Obedience to God remains untouched; but I am to obey the powers that be in whatever is consistent with obeying God, no matter how trying.

The light of these faithful Jews was far short of what the Christian ought to have now; they had only that revelation of God which was the portion of Israel. But faith always understands God: whether there is little light or much, it seeks and finds the guidance of God. And these men were in the exercise of a very simple faith. The emperor had put forth a decree that was inconsistent with the foundation of all truth—the one true God. Israel was called expressly to I maintain that Jehovah was such, and not idols. Here was a king who had commanded them to fall down and worship an image. They dare not sin; they must obey God rather than man. It is nowhere said that we must ever disobey man. God must be obeyed—whatever the channel, God always. If I do a

thing ever so right in itself, on the mere ground that I have a right to disobey man under certain circumstances, I am doing the lesser of two evils. The principle for a Christian man is never to do evil at all. He may fail, as I do not deny; but I do not understand a man quietly settling down that he must accept any evil whatever. It is a heathenish idea. An idolater that had not revealed light of God could know no better. Yet you will find Christian persons using the present confession of the condition of the Church as an excuse for persevering in known evil, and saying, Of two evils, we must choose the lesser! But I maintain that whatever the difficulty may be, there is always the path of God for the godly to walk in. Why then do I find practical difficulty? Because I wish to spare myself. If I compound for even a little evil, the broad way of ease and honor lies open, but I sacrifice God and come under the power of Satan. It was just the advice that Peter gave our Lord when He spoke of being put to death. “Far be it from thee—pity thyself—Lord.” So with the Christian. By doing a little evil, by compromising the conscience by avoiding the trial that obeying God always entails, no doubt a person may thus often avoid a good deal of I the world's enmity, and gain its praise, because he did well to himself. But if the eye is single in this, God always must have His rights, always be owned in the soul as having the first place. If God is compromised by anything required of me, then I must obey God rather than man. Where this is held fast, the path is perfectly plain. There may be danger, possibly even death staring us in the face, as it was on this occasion. The king was incensed that these men should dare to say, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Not careful to answer him! And what were they careful for? It was a question that concerned God. Their care was to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.” They were in the very spirit of that word of Christ before it was given. They had walked dutifully in the place the king had assigned them: there was no charge against them. But now there arose a question that deeply affected their faith, and they felt it. It was God's glory that had been interfered with and they trusted in Him.

Accordingly they say, “If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” How beautiful this is! In the presence of the king who never thought of serving any but himself, and who saw none but himself to serve, they say, “Our Lord, whom we serve.” They had served the king faithfully before, because they had ever served God; and they must serve God still, even if it had the appearance of not serving the king. But they have confidence in God. “He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” This was not the mere abstract truth: it was faith. “He will deliver us.” But mark something better still. “But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Even if God will not put forth His power to deliver us, we serve Himself; we will not serve the gods of this world. Oh! beloved friends, in what a place of dignity faith in the living God puts the man who walks in it. These men were at that moment the object of all the attention of the Babylonish empire. What was the image then? It was forgotten.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was powerless in presence of his captives of Israel. There they were calm and undaunted, when the king himself showed his weakness. For what can be more evident weakness than to yield to a fury that changes the form of his visage, and that utters menaces which utterly failed of their purpose? The furnace was heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. The mighty men, the king's agents to cast them in, were themselves devoured by the flames.

And now when the deed is done, a new marvel passed before the eyes of the king. It was no vision now, but the manifest power of God. When the sword of the king was drawn out against God, how miserably futile it was! In the midst of this burning fiery furnace was a sight which arrested him. Astonished, the king “rose up in his haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O King. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt.” What was to be said of the power of Nebuchadnezzar now? What did it avail to be the mightiest monarch of the world, surrounded too with all that constituted the sinews of his force and the grandeur of his empire? There were these men that were bound and cast into the midst of the, burning fiery furnace, apparently the most pitiable case in his realm. But now he is obliged] to behold their bonds burnt, and themselves only set free by what was to be their destruction. But not this merely. There was another to be seen, and that other he can but say is the Son of God. “Lo, I see four men loose and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” Just as God might use a Balaam or a Caiaphas to speak the truth when they little thought of it and had no communion with Himself in it, so in this expression of the king's, “the Son of God,” there was amazing propriety, We cannot suppose that he entered into its meaning with intelligence. Still there was striking propriety in this respect. There are other titles he might have used. He might have said “Son of man,” or “the God of Israel,” or many more. But “Son of God” seems exactly suited to describe the scene: and therefore, I think, the overruling power of the Spirit of God was manifest in leading the king to use this expression. In the New Testament, where all truth comes out with distinctness, we find our Lord Himself referring to these two titles, both of which occur in Daniel—Son of man and Son of God. Son of man is the title of Christ in His judicial glory. He is Son of man “because all judgment is committed to Him.” As Son of God He gives life: He quickens in the midst of death. As Son of God, He frees those that were bound: and “if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” That verse seems to me a doctrinal commentary upon this very scene. There was the Son, and He was making the prisoners free. Man had bound them, had attempted to execute his threat of vengeance against any who should acknowledge the true God. These three men had jeoparded everything upon the truth of God Himself against all rivals and images, and God had come in for them with delivering power. The proud king not only owns his word changed, but associates their names with the most high God. He was not ashamed to be called their God.

The Gentile dominion is not over yet. And I believe that the close of it will bring in the same thing with as great force as ever. The book of the Revelation shows us that the last great Gentile king will employ all the authority of his government to enforce what will be called the religion” of that day. And then God will put forth His power miraculously to preserve his witnesses for their appointed work. There may be some that will suffer unto death, and differences in the ways in which God will act. But the revelation shows us that there will be persons preserved in the midst of the power that enforces idolatry in the last days.

When this takes place we shall not be upon the scene. Hence the mention of the Jews is emphatic at the time of the last great tribulation. For while men in general will be forced at the end to acknowledge the true God, before that there will be a fiery persecution put forth. There will be such a thing as “glorifying God in the fires:” an expression decidedly used about the remnant of Israel in the last days. The wonderful hand of God will be at work, but it will be with the Jews, not with Christians. As far as we are concerned, tribulation is our constant and proper portion in the world.

The New Testament shows this from beginning to end. Nothing is plainer than that the Holy Ghost never acknowledges the Christian in any way except as separate from the world, the objects of its animosity and persecution, cast out, despised, unknown by the world. That is our place as recognized by the word of God. It is for the Christian to account for the fact that they have lost it; for clearly what I have been describing somehow or another does not apply at the present time. Is it that the world is getting better, or that they themselves have become worse? Conscience ought to answer, and God will use it, if upright, as the means of bringing me back to the place that I ought never to have left. All through the time of the Gentile supremacy, the Christian's place is obedience, For the most part what the power insists upon is that which the Christian can render with a ready mind; but when there comes a collision between the world's authority and God's we must obey God rather than men, let the consequences be what they may. This is the only thing that God owns in His people.

The Chapters that follow have each of them an increasingly marked connection with the course of the Gentile empire. But this is sufficient to bring out the fact that idolatry—worldly religion—a religion that is intended for every one, and bound down upon all, under pain of death is the first great feature recorded of Gentile empire, and will be found, more or less, to run through the whole of it. As this was the first exercise of authority, so it will be at the end of the age. The book of the Revelation shows us the last stage of the last Gentile empire; and there we find that what it began with, it will end with: that the same compulsion used here, to make all its subjects bow down and worship in a way of its own setting up, will re-appear at the close.

But we find another analogy. God at that time had His witnesses. And as the Jews were the persons that then withstood Gentile idolatry, they will come again upon the stage of God's dealings; and will be especially the witnesses that God will put honor upon. This godly remnant of Israel is represented by the disciples in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry. They will be a godly seed, cleaving to Him and love His name; and this, because they will have got hold, with more or less light of the Messiah. These persons will be found waiting for Jesus to come and take his kingdom, after the Church, properly so called, has passed out of the scene of God's dealings on the earth.

Thus, then, as Gentile authority began with this idolatry forced upon all, and the only witnesses for God were among the Jews; so, at the close, idolatry will re-appear, and God will have a faithful remnant again among that poor people—a testimony for Himself in the midst of apostasy.

But I hope, in looking at future chapters, to enter a little more into details. May we remember that what we have been now seeing is not merely for that day, nor does it concern the witnesses of that time only. If God will have a faithful people among the Jews then, may we who are Christians not be found disobedient unto the heavenly vision! We have a brighter prospect than any which Daniel saw. He was not privileged to see Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. He could testify, on the one hand, of the rejection of Messiah, and on the other, of His universal and everlasting dominion. Between the one past and the other future, we know other and higher glories in Him now, and Himself in whom these blessings are treasured up. We know that he is the true God and eternal life, and ourselves blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. We are called out from this world to follow Him and be the sharers of his heavenly glory. It is but “a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,” And if this be so,

how ought we to be apart from this present evil world! How ought we to keep clear of its attempt to put on the appearance of reverence for the name of Jesus! Alas! how often people get perplexed, and ask, Where and what is the world? The truth is, that all this is a lamentable proof that they are so mixed up with the world that they do not know it. The Lord grant that we may have no difficulty in knowing where the world is, and where we are. The Jew was obliged to enter it with the sword in his hand, executing judgment. But that is not the place of the Christian. We began with the sword against Christ, and Himself bowing to it. We began and should go on with the cross, looking for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, All our blessedness is founded on the cross, and all our hopes center in His glory, and His coming again for us.

The Lord grant that we may live thus, in the increasing knowledge of the Blessed One, with whom we have to do, and to whom we belong. Whatever, then, may be the danger and trial, we shall have the Son of God with us in it.

May we know more and more what it is to walk with Christ in liberty and joy. So shall we have Christ with us in every time of need.

Chapter 39

Remarks on Daniel 4

WE have seen, after the vision of the great image, that a chapter followed, presenting at first sight little appearance of connection with the prophecy, but which, I trust, was shown to have a very important bearing upon it. For in chap. 2 we had merely the general history of the Gentile powers, not their moral qualities. Empire after empire rose on, and disappeared from, the scene of God's providence. But what was the character of these empires, how they used the power that was given into their hands by God, we saw not. These historical incidents were introduced purposely between the first grand outline in chap. 2 and the details which follow from chap. 7 to the end of the book. They show the conduct of the empire while in possession of supreme authority from God in the world. The first picture of their moral ways was given in chap. 3. Religion, such as it was, rendered compulsory by the Gentile power, irrespective of the claims of God and the conscience of man.

The principle of this from the first runs through the times of the Gentiles. No doubt it seemed necessary, ill consequence of the immense extent of the empire to have some one controlling religion that would bind together the various lands and subject nations. What a return for the place of honor in which God had put Nebuchadnezzar! Nevertheless, it only gave occasion for God to display His power, even in the Jewish captives now under the control of the Gentiles. In the chapter before it was plain that the wisdom of God was found among them. All the lore of the Babylonish empire was completely at fault. Daniel alone could explain the visions. But although divine wisdom was there, power is another thing, and God took advantage of the terrible punishment, as it seemed, of the three Hebrews, and showed Himself most conspicuously as the Deliverer of the faithful in the hour of their need. The beginning of Gentile empire is only the foreshadowing of what will be the closing scene. And as there was then deliverance by divine power at the beginning, so there will be by and by: and this specially found in connection with the faithful of Israel, the Jews. I do not mean, of course, with the Jews in their present state; because, now, a Jew remaining such is an enemy of God. But that will not always be the case. The time is coming when the seed of Abraham, without ceasing to be a Jew, will be converted to God—will receive the Messiah according to the prophecies. I do not mean that he will enter into the same blessed knowledge and enjoyment that we have now; but that he will be among the faithful to be found in the latter day, as is predicted in many prophecies. Of course, a very important change is supposed, which is to take place in the history of the world; or rather, God will remove from the world that which is not of the world, in order that he may resume his interest in what is taking place upon the earth. Because, at the present time, God's work is not immediately connected with the movements of the world. Its stages of progress and decline are not the expression of His will, although He always exercises a providential control over them. But there was a time in the world's history when God took a direct, immediate interest in what was going on among men. Even their battles were said to be the Lord's battles; and their defeats, famines, &c., were sent as a known infliction from God for some evil that He was dealing with. Now while it remains perfectly true that there is no war or sorrow of any kind that happens without God, and all is decidedly under this

sovereign control, it is not in the way of the same direct government. So that a person cannot now say, this war is at the word of God; or, this famine is a chastening for such and such an evil. That would be indeed both ignorance and presumption. No doubt there are persons quite ready enough to pronounce as to these matters. Their mistake arises from not appreciating the great change that has taken place in God's government of the world. As long as Israel was the nation in whom God was displaying His character for the earth, these things were found directly and immediately from God. But from the time God gave up His people Israel, it has been merely the indirect, providential control of a general kind that God exercises over human affairs.

Another thing has come in. When the true Christ was rejected by Israel, and Israel thereby lost their opportunity of being restored to their place of supremacy, God, we may say, took advantage of this to bring in another thing—the calling of the Church. It was no longer God governing a nation like Israel under His law; nor was it simply an indirect government of the Gentiles; but the revelation of Himself as a Father to His children in Christ, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, not only to act upon their hearts, but to dwell in their midst, and to baptize them, Jew or Gentile, into one body, the body of Christ the Head in heaven. That goes on now. And therefore God has no particular relations with the Jews now. He does not deal with them any more than with others, save that they have a sentence of judicial blindness upon them. They were blind before. God did not make them to refuse Christ. He never makes any person blind in that sense; only sin does that. But when men refuse the light of God, and obstinately reject its every testimony, He may and does give up sometimes to a total darkness, in the sense of its being a judicial one, added to what is natural to the human heart. The nation of Israel is under that judicial blindness now. But while that is the case with the great mass, it is not so with all. There is always to be a remnant of Israel. They are the only nation indeed of which that can be said—the only nation that God has never absolutely given up. Other nations may know God visiting them for a time, and visiting them remarkably in grace. Our own country God has most marvelously blessed—given men His word freely, and many other privileges. But while that is the case, there is no obligation on God's part always to keep England in that position. If this country show a deaf ear, turning away from the truth, and preferring idolatry, which is not at all impossible, it will certainly be given up, and will fall under the delusion which God will send upon the world by and by. But God bound Himself by special promise to Israel, and He will never give them up entirely. In Israel there will always be a holy seed in the very darkest times. And this is connected with a remark that I made before. While God is occupied with the work of gathering out the Church, there cannot be any special relation with Israel in bringing them out as His people, and delivering them out of their distresses, and the like. But when God is pleased to remove the Church out of this present scene, Israel will come forward again; and it is in that day when their hearts are touched by the Spirit of God that there will be the fulfillment of a deliverance, the type of which we see in the end of chap. 3.

Upon that occasion, I may just observe, the king was so far moved, that he commanded, as a sort of ordinance of his realm, that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, should be honored; and that any person who attempted to speak against that God should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. But we do find this: that whether it was the special honor that he paid to Daniel an cloud, it passed away from the mind of the king. He himself records in this chapter how little the ways of God had reached his heart, however he might for the moment have

been struck with the display of His wisdom. It is one thing to show honor to a prophet, and to compel the subjects of his realm to honor the God who delivered as none other could. But how was it with Nebuchadnezzar himself? “I, Nebuchadnezzar,” he says, “was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace.” Thus you see it is plain from his own account, although he gives it to show the mercy manifested towards him, that after all the wondrous transactions of the previous chapters, Nebuchadnezzar was just the same man at bottom still. There was no thorough change in his soul—no such thing as his heart brought to God. He was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace. As the man of the earth, all that God had given into his hands only fed his pride and self-complacency. In this condition God sends him a fresh testimony. “I saw a dream which made me afraid; and the thoughts upon my bed, and the visions of my head, troubled me.” Therefore he makes a decree, commanding to bring in all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known the interpretation of the dream. It was in vain. They came, and he told the dream. But he says, “They did not make known to me the interpretation thereof. But, at the last, Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God,” &c. To him he speaks with confidence. “O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.” He may speak to him in a heathenish style; the wisdom of the Most High God in him he may attribute to his own gods; but still he does acknowledge that there is something special and peculiar in Daniel. He also alludes to the vision in the same style. Daniel, when he hears the dream, and realizes its meaning, was troubled and amazed for one hour. Nor must we confine this to the story of Nebuchadnezzar. Just as we saw in chap. 2 that the king was said to be the head of gold, so in this chapter he was the tree. But in chap. 2 it was not the king personally alone, but his dynasty that was represented by the head of gold. In a certain sense, what was true of Nebuchadnezzar would characterize the Gentile empire to the close. So in the present scene. Daniel had the pain and horror of seeing what awaited Nebuchadnezzar. And this, alas! too plainly foreboded the issue of this new system that the God of heaven had set up.

But following simply the chapter before us, Daniel explains the vision. “My lord,” said he, “let the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. The tree that thou rawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong.” Every one must be familiar with the way in which both the psalms and prophets use the figure of the tree to describe the position assigned by God to Israel, as well as to other people. Thus, the vine in Psa. 80 is clearly what Israel was intended to be in the purpose of God. But there was total failure. And so we see in Jer. 2., Ezek. 15; &c., God's purpose seemed to be broken. But He never gives it up. He may repent of creation. But wherever there is that which is not barely the work of His hand, but the fruit of the action of His heart,—and that His purpose is.—God never abandons. Where he merely calls into being that which did not exist before, a change may come in. But there is no change where God sets His love upon a person, and gives certain suited gifts. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Rom. 11:29.) This is a very important thing, as connected with individual souls. Doubt the faithfulness of God in any one respect, and you weaken it as to everything else. If God could call His people Israel, and afterward give them up absolutely, how could I be sure that God would keep me always as His child? For if ever it was tried, it was in Israel. If I believe in the faithfulness of God to myself, individually, why doubt it as to Israel? The question always is, Is God faithful? Has He departed from His purpose, or withdrawn His gifts? If

not, whatever appearance may say for a time, God will vindicate His truth and mercy in the end.

But to return, the figure of the cedar-tree in Ezek. 31:3, may yet more help to illustrate what we have in Daniel. “Behold the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud and of an high stature; and on his top was among the thick boughs.” Then later on we find “the cedars in the garden of God could not hide him.” Those were the other powers in the world. “The fir-trees were net like his boughs,” &c. And, further still, we find that there is an allusion to Pharaoh, king of Egypt (ver. 18.) But I will not dwell upon it further. My desire has been to prove from these different passages, that it is a common thing in scripture to use the tree, either as a symbol of fruit-bearing or of a place of high dignity and importance. In the New Testament the figure extended to that which for a season supersedes Israel. Matt. 13 shows us that the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven is, in one of its phases, compared to a tree sprouting up from small beginnings. The Lord unfolds the history of professing Christendom. In Matt. 12 he had given His sentence upon Israel. The last state should be worse than the first. Such will be the state of the wicked generation of Israel, that put the Lord Jesus to death, before God judges it. Then the Lord turns to Christendom, and shows, first of all, His own work on earth. He sows seed. In the next parable an enemy appears upon the scene, intrudes into the field, and sows bad seed. It is the inroad of evil into the field of Christian profession. The parable following discloses that what was little in its commencement grows into a vast towering thing in the earth. The little mustard-seed becomes a great tree.

Now, we may see by these passages that in every case, whether it be an individual, as expressive of power, as Nebuchadnezzar, or a nation which takes the ascendant, or a system of religion, as in Matt. 13, the symbol of a tree points to greatness in the earth, unless fruit be the object. Such is its universal teaching. Of course, I am speaking now not so much of those trees that were merely for bearing fruit as of such as were chosen for their size and stateliness also. Earthly power is clearly meant by the tree in Daniel (ver. 21.) “In it was meat for all: under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.” This tree was the admiration of men. There was everything that gratified the heart: its own magnificent proportions, the beauty of its boughs and leaves, the abundance and sweetness of its fruits; the kindly shadow under which all these creatures, the beasts of the field and fowls of heaven, found protection. All this and more was found in it, and such were man's thoughts about it. But what was God's estimate? “And whereas the king saw a watcher, and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, new the tree down and destroy it.” Observe, it is merely a destruction for a time; there is no such thing as annihilation in any one thing in the mind of God. “Yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth.” There must be means used of God to maintain it alive. Leave it, therefore, He says, “With a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him.” “This is the interpretation,” he says, “O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king.” And then he gives its personal application to Nebuchadnezzar. In this case all was perfectly simple. Nebuchadnezzar was warned of what was to come upon him. He was to be driven from men, and his dwelling was to be with the beasts of the field. But more than that, he himself was to be reduced to their condition. “They shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee

with the dew of heaven.” And this for a certain defined time. “And seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” We need not dwell upon this history of Nebuchadnezzar. No simple-minded believer would be disposed to raise difficulties about it. Men have done so, explaining it as a mere delusion in the king's mind. But these are not questions that a Christian ought even to consider, except for the good of another. The word affirms that king Nebuchadnezzar was, by God's power, reduced in appearance to a bestial condition. If we own that God could and did set aside the laws of nature, giving some to walk unhurt in the fiercest of fires, and preserving another intact in a den of lions, we must feel that it is a mere question of His will and word whether Nebuchadnezzar was brought into this terrible debasement; hunted about among the beasts of the field, and made to eat grass like the oxen. The man that believes the one must believe the other. God's power alone could so work, and God's word is the warrant for all.

But while that is plain and simple enough, we have a further image of the Gentile power, its self-exalting character, and the judgment of God upon it. I apprehend that Nebuchadnezzar, personally, only showed what would be the general tendency of the Gentiles as having power given him from God. He would admire and exalt himself; turning all the greatness that God had conferred upon him to his own credit. He was clearly shown the judgments that would come upon him; but the warning was unheeded. Therefore, “all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee.” The sentence was executed. Exactly so have the Gentile powers acted with regard to God. I am not now speaking of individuals who may arise from time to time. Godly persons may have been in the position occupied even by Nebuchadnezzar; but, as a general rule, his successors from that day to this—those that have had the supremacy of the world and the world's glory—have used it in the main for themselves. I do not now speak so as to allow a feeling of disrespect towards these powers for a moment; but am only stating the well-known facts of Gentile rule. They were heathen for many centuries down to Christ, and after Christ; and when Christianity was accepted by Constantine, and its profession was by degrees taken up by the empire, no one can suppose that it was more than a system of religion adopted. But this did not hinder the general course of things. The only difference was: the heathen profession, which was dominant before, was put down, and that Christianity, which was trampled down before, was set up. Heathenism and Christianity changed places. Constantine may have thought it right to put down the heathen and show honor to the Christians; but there was no such question as his taking the Bible and inquiring, What is the will of God about me? How shall I show my obedience to God? That never has been the case since Nebuchadnezzar's time with any one that has swayed the world's destinies. It could not be. I speak of the great masters of the world, when the empire was an unbroken thing. And even since that, though there may have been exceptional cases of kings who have had the fear of God before them, yet even then it has not been in their power to change the substantial course of policy in their kingdoms. Those who have attempted to do so have completely failed. God's authority in the world is one thing, and God's having a soul obedient to Him as His servant is quite another.

This chapter shows us, then, the turning of all the power, and authority, and glory that God gave men into a means of gratifying their own pride. The consequence of this is, that all understanding of God's mind would be taken from them. Nebuchadnezzar had remarkable visions and revelations from God. But what did they avail? He had had this warning, the most personal one of all. But what did it avail? Daniel had counseled him to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. He needed it not. Twelve months passed away, when, in pride of heart, he attributed all the greatness and splendor with which he was surrounded, to himself and the work of his own hands. That great Babylon was what he had built “for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty.” At once the sentence takes effect upon himself; and what was then literally true of him individually, was morally true of the Gentile powers as a whole. The character of the Gentiles all through would be without intelligence of God and without subjection to Him.

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen. and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.” In ver. 16, it had been said, “Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him.” All thought of God was entirely lost. He had no more idea about God than a beast of the field. Even a natural man has a conscience in him. But Nebuchadnezzar lost all thought; was reduced to the non-intelligence of a beast. Mau was formed to be the being on earth that looked up to God, and stood in dependence upon Him. That is his glory. A beast enjoys, so to speak, what is its own sphere of enjoyment, according to the capacity that God has conferred upon it naturally; but it has no idea of the God that made it and all things. Man has. That is, recognition of God is the great essential difference between a man and a beast, if one may speak now in a sort of practical way of the truth intended to be taught by the history. I apprehend that we are shown by this history, if we read it typically, that the Gentile powers would give up the recognition of God in their government. They might use his name outwardly, but as for any owning of God as the source of all they possessed, it would completely pass from their minds; and so it has.

But there was a physical change which was what really took place in Nebuchadnezzar's case. Reduced to the condition of a beast, he lost what characterizes a man—all recognition of God. He had a beast's heart, as it is said here. He had nothing of the character and glory of a man. Man is put here below as the image and glory of God. He is responsible to make God known; and he can only do it because he looks up to God. There are those that have an outward semblance of man, but “man that is in honor abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish.” This received its most remarkable confirmation in the case of Nebuchadnezzar; but the same thing is true in principle of every man that has got self and not God before his eyes. That was exactly true of the Babylonish king. He understood not. He attributed all to himself and not to God; and so by a terrible retribution, he is reduced to the most abject state. Never had a Gentile possessed such glory and majesty as Nebuchadnezzar; but, in a moment, all is changed. In the height of his pride, the sentence of God falls upon him. He was “driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen,” &c, But all this had its limit. It was to be “till seven times had passed over him.” “Times” may have been used rather than years, perhaps, because this judgment of Nebuchadnezzar is the type of the condition to which the Gentile powers are reduced during the whole course of their empire. Hence a symbolic term may have been chosen rather than one of ordinary life. The Gentiles, spite of God's

gift of supreme power, would be without any adequate recognition of him in their government. They would use their power for their own ends and interests. As to really and honestly conforming themselves to the will of God, when was such a thing ever heard of as the great object of any nation's policy since they got their power? I am not aware that it was ever even, thought of. So truly does this figure apply to the whole course of the Gentiles.

Let us look a little at the effect of the judgment on Nebuchadnezzar. The seven times passed over the king. “And the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes to heaven.” Then was the first great sign of returning intelligence. A beast looks downward. He never looks upward, in the moral sense of the expression. Man, acting morally as man, acknowledges in his conscience One from whom he has derived all and One whom he is bound to honor and obey. Nebuchadnezzar, when the term of the judgment was passed, lifted up his eyes unto heaven. He is taking the true place of a man. “And mine understanding returned unto me.” What was the consequence? “And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever.” Mark the difference. On previous occasions, he might have bowed down before the prophet, and commanded sweet odors to be offered to him; he might send out statutes and decrees that the God of the Jews should be honored by all his subjects. But what does he now? He drops all others for the moment, and bows before God. Nebuchadnezzar is not occupied with compelling other people for good or ill, but himself blessing, praising and honoring the Most High. Observe, too, the expression “Most High;” because it is used here with particular emphasis. “I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

When the times of the Gentiles close, the stamp will assert its vitality, which was left in the earth protected by divine providence, and allow still to be a stay in the midst of the anarchy that would otherwise have overspread the earth. We must remember that the world's government is a signal mercy for the earth compared with having no government at all. Yet, while God has controlled it and kept it in His providence for the good of the world, there is a time coming, when it will sprout up again, and will be found really fulfilling the object for which God has established it in the earth. And when will this be? “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” When everything that has come from God will really be accomplished according to His will—when man will be blessed fully, and will no longer be as the beasts that perish—when Israel will not any more be found rejecting their own Messiah, nor the Gentiles arrogating to themselves the power conferred on them by God in His sovereign bounty. That same day will see all these glories shining out; but it can only be when Christ, who is our life shall appear, and when we shall appear with Him in glory. It is reserved for Him to be the head of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. All nations and tribes and tongues shall serve Him. For God can only be known where Christ is known—can only be seen in His goodness and glory where Christ is recognized as the expression and substance of it. And so it will be in that bright day. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will come, and establish, in perfection, everything that has only crumbled under man's hand, and that, at best, only a negative effect in the world, staying the evil here and there, but far short of the full means of blessing that God intends. When that day comes, it will be seen that Gentile government, not in its present corrupt state, but cleared of evil, and expanded according to the

thoughts of God, will flourish in the earth, and be the channel of nothing but blessing. It is only sin which has hindered God's mercy in it hitherto. Thus, when the grand fulfillment will take place of this typical history of Nebuchadnezzar—when the time of the “beast's heart” towards God, caring only for self, gratifying pride and lust of power shall have passed away, God will take the reins into His own hands as the Most High God, and Gentiles shall bow in praise and thankful joy.

When that expression “Most High God” first occurs, there is a very striking scene. And in Scripture we must often recur to the first use, in order to get the full meaning. “Most High God” appears first in the Case of Melchizedec, when Abraham was returning victorious from pursuing the kings who had taken Lot prisoner. So it will be at the close of this dispensation, when there will be not only victory over all the powers that assemble against God's people, but the answer to the blessed scene that followed. Melchizedec meets Abraham, and Abraham gives him tithes of all, and receives his blessing. And Melchizedec is the type of Christ in this, that He unites the kingly glory with the priestly, He was the King of Salem, and His very name was King of righteousness. Then will be the day of peace, founded on righteousness. But he was the priest of the Most High God also. It is not the offering of sacrifice or of incense that characterizes his action.; but the bringing out of bread and wine for the refreshment of the conquerors. He blesses, and pronounces the blessing of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. For in that day, there will be no longer a moral chasm between heaven and earth, but complete union. It will be no confusion or amalgam of the two, but a link of most intimate harmony; and the Lord Jesus will be at that uniting band. The Head of those that belong to heaven, He is also the King of kings, and Lord of lords—the sovereign Disposer of all earthly power. To Him all will bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things infernal too. This will be the full epoch of the restoration of Gentile intelligence and blessing.

If any persons are called to honor the truth of God, and to walk in the intelligence of His ways, it is His own children who enjoy the consciousness of their Father's love. And may we, understanding this our place, be enabled to remember what will be the end of all things as far as man is concerned? That day of judgment approaches which is coming upon the world, and the weight of which will fall upon the Jew and Gentile, both in a state of apostasy. Still, we know that it will see a remnant of both brought out to shine with greater blessedness than ever—the Jews exalted, the Gentiles blessed, in their true places. No longer a poor, mutilated stump, but again sprouting up into its normal strength and majesty, under the dews of heaven. The Lord grant that we may expect good from God, remembering that in the midst of judgment there is mercy that triumphs over judgment in every case, save in that which utterly rejects Christ—which lives, refusing His mercy—which dies, counting itself unworthy of everlasting life. Remember that no soul that hears the gospel is lost simply because it is evil. There is a sure remedy for all we are. Men are lost because they reject and despise eternal life, pardon, peace, everything, in the Son of God.

Chapter 40

Remarks on Daniel 5

Dan. 5 and 6. form a part of the series of, what we may call, “moral” chapters. They are historical, but withal stamped with the character of a foreshadowing of the future, receiving light from and casting light upon the prophecies which precede and follow them. Of these practical illustrations of the Gentile powers we have had already two following the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. We are now to enter upon the first of two more, before we examine the more precise communications made to the prophet himself in chap. 7. Chaps. 5. and 6. have this peculiarity that they bring out, not so much the general characteristics of the Gentiles, as certain particulars to be found in them at the close, the forerunners of speedy destruction. In short, they typify special acts or outbreaks of evil, rather than what pervaded their whole standing and history. Nevertheless, there is a marked difference between each of these chapters, and we must now proceed to look briefly at the first of them.

“Belshazzar made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.” It was a scene of gorgeous, and perhaps unwonted, revelry. The sacrilegious king, “whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels, &c. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and stone.” History may tell us that it was an annual festival, when a loose rein was given to licentiousness; and that thus was furnished a favorable opportunity for the besieger to seize an unguarded moment, and turn his vast preparations to account. Scripture shows us that the king, wrapped in that false security which precedes destruction, used the occasion for insulting the God of Israel. Rash, blinded man! It was the eve of his ruined dynasty, and of his death.

For Belshazzar the past was a profitless blank. For him it was a lesson, unheard and unlearned, that God had in His providence made his forefather to be the instrument of just but terrible judgments. The city, the holy city of God, was taken, the temple burnt, the vessels of the sanctuary, with people, priests, king, carried into the enemy's land. It was an astonishment to men everywhere when Israel thus fell. The importance of the fact was entirely out of proportion to the number of the nation or the extent of their territory. For poor as they might be individually, the halo encircled them of a God who had brought them of yore out of Egypt through the Red Sea—who had fed them with angel's food for many a long year in the dreary desert—and who had shielded them for centuries, spite of sad ingratitude, and a thousand perils, in the land of Canaan. Was it not a strange sight for the world when God gave up His own elect and favored people to be swept out of their land by a Chaldean king, the chief of the idolatry of that day For Babylon was ever famous for the multitude of her idols.

Nebuchadnezzar, in all the pride of successful ambition, had not been so insensate. He had bowed to the wonderful truth that the God of heaven, who had abandoned Israel for their sins, had raised himself in His sovereignty to be the golden head of Gentile empire. He had owned the God

of Daniel to be a God of gods and a Lord of kings; he had confessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to be the Most High God—a deliverer and a revealer of secrets beyond all others. Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of much sin—had been proud and self-complacent, spite of warning, and had been abased as no king nor man ever was because of it; but he had acknowledged throughout his wide realm his own sin, and the mighty wonders of the King of heaven—all whose works are truth and His ways judgment. But before this bright end, even in his most reckless days, (when all trembled before him, and whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down,) never had he proceeded to such an act of contemptuous profanity as that now perpetrated by his grandson.

But the sentence of instant, inevitable judgment at once made itself heard. For the cup of iniquity was full; and long had the mouth of the Lord proclaimed the punishment of Babylon's king. (Isa. 13.; Jer. 25., &c.) Yet, even the stroke does not fall without a solemn sign from God. “In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.”

It was no dream of the night now; but a silent monitor of awful omen in the midst of their wild revelry and impious defiance of the living God. The hour of the execution of wrath was now come. Bel must bow down, Nebo stoop before an indignant but most patient God. The king needed no intimation from another. His conscience, corroded with depravity, trembled before the hand which traced his doom, though he knew not a word that was written. Instinctively he felt that He whose hands none can stay was dealing with him. “Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.” Forgetful of his dignity in his fright, “the king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.” But all was vain. The highest rewards are offered; but the spirit of deep sleep closed all eyes. “They could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.”

In the midst of the still-increasing alarm of the king and astonishment of his lords, the queen (doubtless the queen-mother, if we compare verses 2 and 10,) comes into the banqueting-house. Her sympathies were not in the feast, and she reminds the king of one who was yet more outside and above it all—a total stranger in person to the impious king. “There is a man,” &c. (Vers. 11-14.)

This fact of Daniel's strangership to Belshazzar is one that speaks volumes. Whatever the pride and audacity of the great Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel sat in the gate of the king—ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men. His degraded and degenerate descendant knew Daniel not.

This reminds me, by the way, of a well-known incident in the history of King Saul, the moral force of which is not always seen. When troubled by an evil spirit, a young son of Jesse was sought out, whose music God was pleased to use as a means of quieting the king's mind. “And it came to pass when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” (1 Sam. 16:23.) Not long after, Saul and all Israel were in sore dismay when the giant of Gath challenged them in the valley of Elah. God's providence brought there, in the humble path of unwarlike duty, a youth who heard the vainglorious words of the Philistine with different ears. Instead of terror, his feeling

was rather amazement that the uncircumcised should dare to defy the armies of the living God. The victory was no sooner won, than the king turns to the captain of the host with this question, “Whose son is this youth?” And Abner confesses his ignorance. Here was a strange case: the very youth who had ministered to him in his malady unknown to King Saul The interval was certainly not long; but Saul knew not David. This has perplexed the critics immensely; and one of the most distinguished of Hebraists has tried to make out that the chapters must have been shuffled somehow, and that the close of chap. 16. should follow the end of 17.; so as to remove the difficulty of Saul's ignorance of David after he had stood in his presence, won his love, and become his armor-bearer. But I am convinced that all this arises from not apprehending the very lesson that God teaches in the scene. The truth is, that Saul might have loved David for his services; but there never was a particle of sympathy; and where this is the case, we readily forget. Strangership of heart soon ends in actual distance, when the service of the Lord comes in. It is the very spirit of the world towards the children of God. As the Apostle John says, “Therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” They may be acquainted with many things about Christians, but they never know themselves. And when the Christian passes away from the scene, there may be a passing reminiscence, but he is an unknown man. Saul had been under the greatest obligations to David. But although David had been the channel of comfort to him, yet all knowledge of David completely passed away with the service that he had rendered. So of Daniel the queen could say, “In the days of thy father, light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.” Yet there was no thought about him now. He was comparatively unknown by those at the feast. The only one who thought about him was the queen, and she was only there because of their trouble.

Accordingly Daniel is brought before the king, and the king asks him, “Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?” Then he tells him his difficulty, and speaks of the rewards he is prepared to give to any who should tell the interpretation of the writing. Daniel answers as became the occasion. “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known unto him the interpretation.” But first he administers a most painful word of admonition. He brings before him in a few words the history of Nebuchadnezzar, and of God's dealings with him. He reminds him withal of his own entire indifference; nay, of his reckless insults against God. “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven... and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” He brings before him what that scene was in the eye of God. For this is what sin, what Satan, seeks ever to hide. Before the Babylonish court it was a magnificent feast, enhanced by the memoirs of the success of their arms and the supremacy of their gods. But what was their gorgeous revelry in the eye of God? What was it to Him that the vessels of His service were brought up so proudly to vaunt the triumph of Babylon and her idols? To one who knew Him it must have been a most painful moment, however sure and speedy the issue. Yet there are scenes that take place in the world now that give forebodings of a character at least as grave. The question is, Are we in the secret of God so to read His judgment on all these things for ourselves? We may readily and without cost pronounce, in a measure, on the presumption of Nebuchadnezzar and on the open impiety of Belshazzar; but the great moral criterion for us is this: Are we discerning aright the face of the sky and of the earth in this our day?

Are the lowering aspects of this time lost upon us? Are we identified simply and solely with the Lord's interests at the present time? Do we understand what is going on in the world now? Do we believe what is coming upon it? Clearly the king and his court were but the instruments of Satan; and the contempt they showed for the God of heaven was not the mere working of their own minds, but Satan was their master. And it is a true saying that wherever you get the will of man, you invariably find the service of Satan. Alas! man knows not that the enjoyment of a liberty without God is and must be to do the devil's work. King Belshazzar and his lords might think that it was but celebrating their victories over a nation still prostrate and captive in Babylon; but it was a direct, personal insult offered to the true God, and He answers to the challenge. It was no longer a controversy between Daniel and the astrologers, but between Belshazzar himself and God. The command to bring the vessels of the house of the Lord might seem but a wicked drunken freak of the king's; but the crisis was come, and God must strike a decisive blow. Depend upon it, these tendencies of our day, although not met at once by God, are not forgotten; there is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. The present is not a time when God lets His judgments fall. Rather is it a day when man is building up his sins to heaven, only so much the more terribly to fall when the hand of God is stretched out against him.

But there is even then a warning, solemn, immediate, and before all. And observe, as to this writing seen upon the wall, what was the great difficulty of this? The language was Chaldean, and those who saw the hand and the characters were Chaldeans. We might have judged, then, that the mere letters must be more familiar to the Chaldeans than to Daniel. It is not the way of God when he communicates anything to put. it in an obscure form. It would be a monstrous theory that God in giving a revelation makes it impossible to be understood by those for whom it is intended. What is it that renders all scripture so difficult? It is not its language. A striking proof of it is found in this:—if any one were to ask what part of the New Testament I conceive to be the most profound of all, I should refer to the Epistles of the Apostle John; and yet if there be any part, more than others, couched in language of the greatest simplicity, it is these very Epistles. The words are not those of the scribes of this world. Neither are the thoughts enigmatical or full of foreign, recondite allusions. The difficulty of Scripture lies herein, that it is the revelation of Christ, for the souls that have their hearts opened by grace to receive and to value. Now John was one who was admitted to this pre-eminently. Of all the disciples he was the most favored in intimacy of communion with Christ. So it was, certainly, when Christ was upon earth; and he is used of the Holy Ghost to give us the deepest thoughts of Christ's love and personal glory. The real difficulty of Scripture then consists in its thoughts being so infinitely above our natural mind. We must give up self in order to understand the Bible. We must have a heart and eye for Christ, or Scripture becomes an unintelligible thing for our souls; whereas, when the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. Hence you may find a learned man completely at fault, though he may be a Christian—stopping short at the Epistles of John and the Revelation as being too deep for him to enter into; while, on the other hand, you may find a simple man who, if he cannot altogether understand these Scriptures or explain every portion of them correctly, at any rate he can enjoy them; they convey intelligible thoughts to his soul, and comfort, and guidance, and profit too. Even if it be about coming events, or Babylon and the beast, he finds there great principles of God that, even though they may be found in what is reputed the obscurest of all the books of Scripture, yet have a practical bearing to his soul. The reason is, Christ is before him, and Christ is the wisdom of God in every sense. It is not, of course, because he is ignorant that he can understand it, but in spite of

his ignorance. Nor is it because a man is learned that he is capable of entering into the thoughts of God. Whether ignorant or learned, there is but one way—the eye to see what concerns Christ. And where that is firmly fixed before the soul, I believe that Christ becomes the light of spiritual intelligence as He is the light of salvation. It is the Spirit of God that is the power of apprehending it; but He never gives that light except through Christ. Otherwise man has an object before him that is not Christ, and therefore cannot understand Scripture, which reveals Christ. He is endeavoring to force the Scriptures to bear upon his own objects, whatever they may be, and thus Scripture is perverted. That is the real key to all mistakes of Scripture. Man takes his own thoughts to the Word of God, and builds up a system which has no divine foundation.

To return, then, to the inscription upon the wall, the words were plain enough. All ought to have been intelligible, and would have been had the souls of the Chaldeans been in communion with the Lord. I do not mean that there was not the power of the Spirit of God needed to enable Daniel to understand it; but it is an immense thing for the understanding of the word, that we have communion with the God that is making known His mind to us. Therefore, said the Apostle Paul to the elders, “I command you to God and to the word of His grace.”

Daniel was entirely outside the revelings and such like. He was a stranger to those that were at home there. He was called in from the light of the presence of God to see this scene of impiety and darkness; and coming, therefore, fresh from the light of God, he reads this writing upon the wall, and all was bright as the day. And nothing more solemn. “This is the interpretation of the thing.” (Vers. 25-28.) He at once sees God in the matter. The king had insulted God in what was connected with His worship. “Tekel; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” It was not that anything appeared then; nothing was seen at the time that made it even probable. And I call attention to this, because it is another proof, how utterly false is the maxim, that we must wait till prophecy is fulfilled before we can understand it. If a man is an unbeliever, to see the fulfillment of prophecy in the past, is a powerful argument that nothing can surmount. But is that what God wrote prophecy for? Was it to convince infidels? No doubt God may use it for such. But was that what God intended the writing upon the wall for on that night? Clearly not. It was His last solemn warning before the blow fell, and the interpretation was given before the Persians broke into the city—when there was not a sign of ruin, but all was gaiety and mirth. “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” In short, Babylon was judged.

Chapter 41

Remarks on Daniel 6

WE have now another and final type of the Gentile powers brought upon the scene. But in looking at types we must always bear in mind that the question is not about the personal character of him that affords the type. Thus, Aaron officially was a type of Christ, but we are not therefore to suppose that his ways were like His. In some respects he was a very guilty man. It was he who made the calf of gold and who even sought to deceive about it. But this does not disqualify him from being a type of Christ. He was a type of Christ in spite of all that, not in that. David typified Christ not as a priest but as a king—as a suffering and rejected king first, and then as one reigning and exalted. There are two parts in the life of David. First, the time when he was anointed king but when the power of evil was still allowed, and he was hunted about and persecuted; and secondly, when Saul died, he takes the throne and puts down his enemies. In both respects, David was a type of Christ. But there was manifestly also the contrast of Christ in the failure of King David, and the dreadful sin into which he fell.

But if, on the other hand, we find a type here, as I believe there is, of an awful scene that closes the present dispensation, we are not to suppose that it cannot be its type, because there were good qualities in the king. King Darius, rather than Belshazzar, foreshadows the way in which man will take the place of being God. It was what Darius did, or suffered to be done, that sets this forth in principle. While Belshazzar was one of the most degraded of the human race, Darius was a person who, in his own character and ways, had much that was exceedingly amiable, if not something better. But I am not now raising a question of Darius personally. We have had the type of Babylon's fall, and the judgment of God that will come down upon it, because of its wickedness in insulting and profaning what belongs to the true God, and in mixing up its own idols, and giving its praise and worship to them, in indifference to the sorrows of God's people. This will be verified a great deal more in future history. There is that upon the earth which takes the highest place as being the church of God. There is that which boasts of its unity, of its strength and antiquity; which boasts of its uninterrupted lineage; which takes credit to itself for sanctity and the blood of martyrs. But God is not indifferent to its sins, which have been going on increasing and deepening from generation to generation; and they are only awaiting the day of the Lord to come for judgment to be executed, and to receive the sentence that is due to them. In the Revelation there are two great objects of judgment—Babylon and the beast. The one represents religious corruption, and the other violence; two different forms of human wickedness, In the latter form of it, we see a man urged on by Satan, presuming to take the place of God upon the earth. Now this is what Darius permits to be done. He might not know it himself, but there were others around him that led him to the dreadful deed.

The historical circumstances that led to it were these:—They wanted an occasion against Daniel, and they well knew that it was impossible to find one except they found it against him “concerning the law of his God.” So they put their heads together, and, taking advantage of the usage of the Medes and Persians for the nobles to form the law and for the king to establish and sign it, they devise a decree that it should be lawful for none to ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days,

save of the king. What was this but for a man to take the place of God? That no prayer was to be offered to the true God, and that every prayer that was offered at all was to be offered to the king; if that was not giving the rights of God to man, I know not what is. The king fell into the trap, and signed the decree.

But now we have to mark the beautiful conduct of Daniel. There is no intimation that things were a secret to Daniel. On the contrary, he was perfectly aware (verse 10) of what had passed into law. But, on the other hand, he could not compromise his God. His course, therefore, was taken. He was an old man, and the faith that had burned within him from early days was, at least, as bright as ever. So when he knew that all was signed, and sealed, and settled, as far as man could, and that the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians demanded that no knee of man should bow down to God for thirty days, knowing it all, he goes to his chamber. There is no ostentation, but he does not hide it. With his windows open, as usual, toward Jerusalem, he bows down before His God three times a day, and prays and gives thanks as he had done aforetime. He gives his enemies the occasion that they sought. They at once remind the king of the decree that he had made, and proceed to arraign Daniel before him. “That Daniel,” they say, “which is of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou past signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.” Then Darius, the king, was sore displeased with himself, and labors in vain till the going down of the sun, to deliver the one whom rage of his enemies, to be cast into the lions' den, with the hope, which perhaps he scarcely allowed himself, that his God would deliver him. And God appears for his servant. God does deliver: and the dreadful fate that was intended for the prophet fell upon those who had accused him to the king. “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” Psa. 9:15-16. Nothing can be plainer than the bearing of this on the deliverance of the godly remnant at the close by the outpouring of wrath and destruction upon the traitors within and the oppressors without of the last days. The end will be as here—the acknowledgment on the part of the Gentiles that the living God is the God of delivered Israel, and that His kingdom shall not be destroyed.

Here we have then, in Dan. 5. and 6., the combined types of that which will close the present dispensation. For if you look later on in this book of Daniel, you have a person introduced called “the king.” (Chap. 11 36, &c.) You have there a direct prophecy of similar deeds. “The king shall do according to his own will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods,” &c. Not that Darius personally did these things. I am speaking of what his act or decree meant in the eye of God. The question is, what God thought of the sin Darius had been drawn into, and this as a type of the future.

It is said further of “the king,” in chap. 6., “Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.... for he shall magnify himself above all.” In the New Testament we have this alluded to in more than one place. A person might say to me, That is about the Jews, and does not concern the present dispensation. Well, then, taking up what does refer to it, I would cite in proof 2 Thess. 2:3-4. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (that is the day of the Lord's judgment upon this world) shall not come except there come a falling away first, (strictly, it means the apostasy first,') and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sifted in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Now, it is plain that what Darius did was in effect to exalt himself above all

that is called God, or is worshipped. Because, to forbid prayer to God, and to demand that the prayer that was offered to God usually should be offered to Himself only for a certain space of time, was nothing more nor less than the type of him who would take this place in a far more dreadful and gross and literal way. We have clearly a New Testament proof that these days spoken of in Daniel, and typified then, are yet to come; that this person who is looked forward to by prophecy, is one who is to set himself up as God, not as the vicar of Christ merely, having persons ready to bow before him and kiss his foot. All this is wicked and superstitious; but it is not a man saying that he is God, setting himself up in a temple of God and saying, There is no prayer to be offered except to myself. Whatever be the evil of Popery and the presumption of the Pope, there is a great deal worse to come. And the solemn thing to remember is this, that it will not be merely the issue of Popery, but of Popery AND Protestantism &c. without God. Not even the spread of truth will be an infallible preservative against it. Most guilty and foolish were those who once fancied that, because Israel had the ark of the covenant of the Lord, they were necessarily safe in the conflict with the Philistines! The ark returned in triumph, but where were they?

Beware of the fond conceit that, because of religious zeal, no harm can befall this country. Rather be sure of this: the more light, the more Bibles, the more preaching, the more of everything that is good there is, if men are not conformed to it, and not walking in it, the greater the danger. If they treat it as a light thing and despise it; if they have no conscience about practical bowing to the light of Scripture, they are most sure to fall under one delusion or another. For who is to say what is not of importance in Scripture, or by what means the devil gains power over the soul? Wherever the soul commits itself to a refusal to listen to God, gives itself up to disobedience to God in anything, who is to say where it is to end There is no security except in the path of holy dependence upon God and obedience to His word. We are not to be choosing one part of Scripture above another because we get more comfort from it. There is no security save as we take all Scripture. It is very sweet to be enjoying the presence of the Lord, but, more than that, it is a fearful thing to be found in disobedience to the Lord. Disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft. There is nothing more terrible. To disobey God is virtually to destroy His honor. It was so in Israel, and yet there is much worse to come, arising out of the lax and evil state of Christendom.

We have first, then, the apostasy. Christianity will be given up, and the more light, the more certainly it will come for the mass who refuse that light. There never was a time in Israel that appeared so promising as the day when our Lord was upon earth, never such a time of religious activity; the Scribes and Pharisees compassing sea and land to make one proselyte. The showed zeal, apparently, in the reading of the Scriptures. They had the priests and Levites; there was no idolatry, nothing gross. They were a Bible-reading people, and a Sabbath-keeping people; they called our Lord Himself a Sabbath-breaker, so rigid did they appear outwardly to observe the day. All this was going on, but what did it end in? What did they do? They crucified the Lord of glory, and they rejected the testimony and the gracious working of the Holy Ghost, so that the end was that the king sent forth his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Nor was it that there was no conversion going on. God put forth His power and they were converted by thousands. James says, “Thou seest, brother, how many thousand (rather myriads) of Jews, there are, which believe.” There were, then, thousands and tens of thousands converted after the cross of Jesus, and people might think that all Israel and the world were going to be converted. But what was the fact God was merely gathering out these thousands in His grace to leave the rest to be

destroyed in the judgment that fell upon Jerusalem. That is a little foreshadowing of the judgment which is to fall upon the world by-and-by. And if God is now putting forth His power and gathering out souls everywhere from the world, it is a solemn question for every one whether they are converted or not? And if they are converted, it is a call to them to be walking in the path of obedience, submitting in all things to the word of God, and looking for Christ. The idea that some have of universal conversion is a delusion. Babylon or the beast: these will be the two great snares of the latter day. The one will be the source of corruption coupled with religion and a profaning of all things holy. The other will be characterized by the last degree of pride and violence. It will appear that Christianity has been a complete failure, and men will think they have a new panacea for all the ills and miseries of man, better than the Gospel. And they will praise up their idols of gold, and silver, and brass, glorying in the fact that Christianity, save the outward form, has disappeared from the face of the earth. Then will come the judgment.

Rev. 17. shows us that as with Babylon in Daniel, so it will be with the New Testament Babylon, the corrupted form of religious apostasy. Man will be used as the instrument of the downfall of Babylon, the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. We have men wreaking their vengeance upon her. She is no longer seen riding upon the scarlet-colored beast, but trampled upon, hated, and desolate. And then what do we have? Not Christianity everywhere overspreading the world. On the contrary, the beast fills the scene, and assumes the place of God. Instead of merely having an intoxicating debased Christianity, it will then be man that sets himself up in proud defiance of God. He takes God's place upon the earth. I do not pretend to say what space of time will elapse between the destruction of Babylon and the fall of the beast. Rev. 17. proves that so far from the destruction of Babylon making the world to be an improved scene, we have only bold evil in place of hypocritical evil; and instead of religious corruption, you have irreligious pride and defiance of God. “The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings for one and the same time with the beast. These have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” —not to God.

All is given to the beast for the purpose of exalting man. The hour will have come for man to have the supreme place in the world. But, contrary to the ambition of man generally, there will be the giving up of their own will to the will of another the desire to have some one very high and exalted, to whom all must bow. When this is achieved, “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.” That this follows the destruction of Babylon is plain. For it says afterward, “The ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, (so it ought to be read,) these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked.” This is exactly what answers to the type of Darius. Darius comes in and destroys Babylon and takes the kingdom immediately; and the next thing is, he is led on by his courtiers to take the place of God Himself. He passes a law, or confirms one, that no prayer shall be offered to any save to himself, for thirty days. That is, he assumes, in effect, to be the object of all worship; he arrogates that which is exclusively due to the true God.

These two types are highly instructive, as closing the general history of the Gentiles. They show, not what had characterized them from the beginning and during their progress, but the main features of evil at the close. There will be destruction falling upon Babylon, because of its profaneness in the religious things of God; and then the height of blasphemous pride to which the

head of empire will rise by assuming the honor and glory clue only to God Himself. I was anxious to connect the two things together, because we cannot otherwise get the true force of them so well.

We have now concluded what I may call the first volume of Daniel, because it divides exactly into two portions at the close of this chapter; and that is one reason why it is mentioned that Daniel prospered until the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. In the next chapter we shall find that we come back to the reign of Belshazzar, when Daniel is again brought before us. But this I must leave, only praying that this sample of the great importance of reading Scripture typically, where it is so intended to be read, may stir up the children of God to see that there is much more to be learned from Scripture than what appears on the surface at a first glance. What God says has got a character about it that is infinite. Instead of being exhausted by a draft taken from it here and there, it is the well itself; the constantly-flowing spring of truth. The more we grow in the truth, the less we are satisfied with what we have got, and the more we feel what we have yet to learn. It is not to affect words of humility, but the real, deep feeling of our own total insufficiency, in presence of the greatness and goodness of our God, that has taken such poor worms as we are to set us in His own glory—for such indeed are the mighty ways of His grace.

Chapter 42

Remarks on Daniel 7

WE enter now upon the second great division of the book. The Spirit of God gives us here not merely the history or visions of heathen, such as Nebuchadnezzar or others, but communications from God to the prophet himself. Hence what related to the Jew as the object of God's special favor at that time, and more particularly what was in store for them in a blessed day that is coming, are the uppermost thoughts in the mind of the Spirit. Daniel was the fitting channel for such revelations. Accordingly, the Spirit again goes over the ground of the four great Gentile empires, as well as the fifth empire, the kingdom of heaven, to be introduced by the Lord Jesus. But all is presented, though of course with perfect consistency, from a different point of view. It is not now a great image beginning with that which was gorgeous, the gold and the silver, and descending, with evident deterioration of splendor, to the belly and thighs of brass, and the legs of iron and feet of clay. Here we have ravening wild beasts. The very same powers are meant, but it is another aspect of them. Most fitly was the figure of the image presented to the eye of the great head of Gentile empire, their changes and relations to each other; but it is now God's view of these same powers, and their relation to His people.

Thus we have in this simple consideration the key to the different way in which these powers are depicted. We shall find also in the details that wisdom which we may always look for in what comes from the mind of God.

The prophet, in the vision, sees a mass of waters, agitated by the win& of heaven. Out of this troubled sea four wild beasts emerge, successively I may add; for it is very plain that, as in the empires set forth by the metals, &c., in chap. ii., so in the same powers here, we have to look at empires not contemporaneous, but succeeding each other in rule over the world under the providence of God. “The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings.” There, beyond question, we have the empire of Babylon. Nor is it at all a novelty to find the Holy Spirit applying the figure of a lion to Nebuchadnezzar, nor of an eagle either. Jeremiah had already employed the same. “The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way.” (Jer. 4:7.) Ezekiel, as well as Jeremiah, represented him also under the figure of an eagle. Indeed, he is mentioned both as the lion and the eagle in Jer. 49:19 - 22. In the vision of Daniel the Holy Ghost combines the two figures in one symbol, in order fitly to represent what the Babylonish empire was in the mind of God.

But, besides these symbols of grandeur and rapidity of conquest, we have the sign of a remarkable change that was to pass over this beast, and one of which there was no appearance, humanly speaking, at that time. But all was open to the eye of God, whose object in giving prophecy is, that His people should see beforehand what He sees. God has been pleased, in the perfect wisdom and goodness that belong to His nature, to impart such a measure of knowledge of the future as He sees to be for His own glory; and an obedient child hears and keeps the word of his Father.

Now He brought before the prophet the knowledge that the Babylonish empire was to be humbled. It was not to be absolutely destroyed as a nation, but completely put down as a ruling power in the world. This was what was signified by the wings being plucked, and the animal made to stand upon the feet as a man, which would, of course, destroy its strength. For however proper such an attitude may be to a man, it is plain that to a ravening beast it would be rather a humiliation. In accordance too with this, “a man's heart was given to it.” There may be in this a sort of contrast with what was actually done in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, who had a beast's heart given to him. Nebuchadnezzar was not looking up to God, which clearly is the bounden duty of every soul of man. He is not properly a man who does not recognize the God that brought him into being, and that watches over him and abounds in beneficence towards him every day: the God that claims the allegiance of the conscience and that alone can convert the heart. In unbuchadnezzar's case he was occupied with himself. The very gift of universal dominion from God was perverted by the power of Satan, so as to make self the object of his thoughts, and not God. In the emphatic phrase of Scripture, his was not a man's heart which looks up, owning one above him, but a beast's that looks down in the gratification of itself and the pursuits of its own instincts. This was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore a most solemn and personal judgment was executed upon him. But the mercy of God interposed after a certain time of humiliation and he was restored. This was a token of the condition to which the Gentile powers were to be brought from not recognizing the true God; but there was also the witness of their future blessing and restoration, when they shall own the kingdom of heaven by and by. In the case before us, the lion was reduced from its power as a beast to a position of weakness. This actually took place when Babylon lost its supremacy in the world, which seems clearly the meaning of the latter part of the verse. First, we have Babylon in the plentitude of its power, and then the great change that occurred when it was stripped of the empire of the world.

In the next verse (ver. 5) you have a description given of the Persian empire, which had been represented in the great image as “the beast, &c., of silver.” “And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side,” a remarkable feature, which, at first sight, might not be obvious, but which is explained by this. It was an empire not so uniform as the Babylonish. It consisted of two peoples joined under one head. Another remarkable feature is this: it was the inferior of the two kingdoms that prevailed. The Persian takes the upper hand of the Mede. Thus we saw in chap. v. that Darius the Median took the kingdom; but Cyrus soon followed, and from thence onward it was always the Persian that governed, and not the Median. We have in this circumstance a fresh instance that we do not really need history for the understanding of prophecy. Inattention to this plunges people into uncertainty. We may have recourse to history as a sort of homage paid to prophecy, but the historical confirmation of fulfilled prophecy is a very distinct thing from its interpretation. Prophecy, like all scripture, is explained only by the Spirit of God; and He need not leave the written word for human help to explain what He has inspired: only He who is the author of Scripture is really capable of explaining it. I ought not to have to press this, as it is a first principle of truth; but we have to insist on first principle of truth quite as much now as ever.

There, then, Scripture furnishes us with this evident fact, that while the second empire consisted of two parts and while the Medes were the elder branch of the empire, yet it was Cyrus the Persian that was to be most prominent. That was the side that raised itself up. “It had three ribs in the

mouth of it, between the teeth of it," clearly, I think, the sign of the extraordinary rapacity that would characterize the Persian empire. If we were to see presented to us, in a kind of panorama, different beasts, and if one of the animals were painted with a quantity of prey, and actually devouring it, at once we should have the idea of a singularly voracious appetite. That was the case with the Persians. There were frequent outbreaks which they had to encounter, because of their extortion and cruelty. It is true that God wrought providentially through them in behalf of the Jews; but this only made the contrast with their ordinary ways the more striking. For while the Persians were excessively hard upon others, there was leniency and favor shown towards Israel; but that was only the exception. In general, as depicting their character, a rapacious wild beast sets it forth. Hence the bear is said to have three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was in the very act of showing its ravening propensities. "And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." That was the explanation in words of the vision; it referred evidently to its predatory habits.

In the third case, we have a leopard, with some notable features about it, though we are not to look for the regularity of pictorial consistency. There are certain truths intended by every figure; but if men try to put every figure into a formal harmony, they will not hold together. In the present case there was nothing in nature like this leopard; but God takes from different things that existed in nature features that were necessary to give a combined idea of this new empire. Hence, while the leopard is remarkable for its agility in pursuing its prey, yet, in order to give something beyond nature, we hear that it had "upon the back of it four wings of a fowl." If ever there was a case in which impetuous courage in pursuing great designs, and speed in achieving a succession. of conquests were united, we find it in the history of Alexander the Great. The Macedonian or Grecian kingdom has a character of swiftness attached to it that no other empire over had; and hence the leopard, on the one hand, and the four wings of a fowl on the other. But, besides that, "The beast had also four heads, and dominion was given to it." There you have not merely what was found in Alexander himself, but also in his successors. The four heads refer to the division of his empire into four different parts after his death. It is not, therefore, merely a symbol of what the Greek empire was in its first origin, but it presents thus its future also. It was emphatically the empire that separated into four distinct divisions. Not that there were only four, because it is clear that at one time there was a sort of division amongst his generals, six of whom reigned over different parts, but they gradually subsided into four. This we know from the next chapter: there is no need to go to history for it. All facts, all science must confirm the word of God; but the word of God does not need them to prove that itself is divine. If it did, what would become of those who understand nothing of science and history? Persons who dabble much in either one or other for the purpose of confirming the scriptures, have never reaped anything but the scantiest gleanings as far as the scripture harvest is concerned. It is another thing if a person feeds upon the word, grows in the knowledge of the scripture, and then is called on, in the course of duty, to take up what men say about it: he will find that there is nothing, even down to the most recent discoveries of science, that does not pay unwitting obeisance to scripture. The man that takes his stand upon scripture, looking up to God, and using whatever means are given through the word and Spirit of God, has the real vantage ground; his confidence is in God, and not in the discoveries or the thoughts of men. The man that is searching here below is subject to all the uncertainty and mists of this lower world. He who derives his light from the word of God has a sun brighter than that at noonday; and, therefore, just as far as he is subject to it, he will not, cannot, stray. And the Spirit of God is able and willing to produce this subjection in us. We all do stray, more or less, as a fact; but

the reason is not from any defect in the word of God, or any lack of power to teach on the part of the Holy Ghost. We err because we have not sufficiently simple faith in the perfectness of scripture, and in the blessed guidance which the Spirit loves to exercise in leading us into all truth.

The next verse (ver. 7) is the opening of another vision. For, properly speaking, from the first verse down to the seventh is one section or vision, each being introduced by the words, “I saw in the night-visions.” Daniel first beheld the four beasts in a general way; if any were particularly specified it was the first three. But the fourth beast was evidently that which more peculiarly occupied the mind of the Holy Spirit, and the prophet, therefore, gets a fresh view of it. “After this I saw in the night-visions, and beheld a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth.” Here is, clearly, a prophetic figuration of the fourth or Roman empire. I will not now enter into the many proofs of it. Hardly any person who reads these pages is likely to combat the thought, that in the four well-known empires we have the statue of chap. ii., and the beasts of chap. vii. Some have denied this, but it is such an eccentricity that one need say no more about it.

Admitting this, then, we have in the fourth beast the Roman empire plainly set forth. What marks it politically is all-overcoming strength. It is represented by a monster to which nothing in nature can be found to answer. We have a fuller account of it in the Revelation; because, the Roman empire being then established, and its future destiny carrying its on to the end of the age, it became the exclusive object of attention—the beast. Accordingly we have a description of it in chap. xiii., where we find it represented as a leopard, the “feet as those of a bear, and its mouth as that of a lion.” And this composite creature is further distinguished (ver. 1) by having seven heads and ten horns, and upon its horns ten crowns. That was the power under which the Apostle John was at that very time suffering in the Isle of Patmos; and as greater sufferings were in reserve for God's people, and blasphemy against God, we need not wonder that we have a minute account of it.

Here it is seen as “a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.” That is, there was unexampled power of conquest and aggrandizement, and what it did not incorporate into its own substance is stamped upon and thus spoiled for others. “And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it.” It was an empire that maintained a strong feeling of the will of man—of the people. It combined certain republican elements with as iron a despotism as ever ruled in this world. These two things were brought into distinct, but apparently harmonious play. Besides this, there is another and most distinctive mark “it had ten horns.” In other empires it was not so. The Greek empire gradually devolved, after its founder's death, into four heads; but the peculiarity of the Roman is the possession of ten horns. Yet we are not to look for the actual development of history in this vision. had that been the case, it is clear that the ten horns would not have been seen in the Roman beast, when it first met the eyes of the prophet. Because it was not until hundreds of years after Rome had existed as an empire that it had more than one ruler. The Spirit of God clearly brings into the very first view the features that would be found at the close, and not at the beginning. It was strong and fierce; it was one that devoured; it stamped the residue with its feet; it was diverse from all others. Rome may have been all this during the time of the Caesars; but it had not then ten horns. There can be no possible pretense for such a notion until the empire was broken up; and after that, properly speaking, the Roman empire ceased to exist. There might be the keeping up of the name and title of emperor, but it was the emptiest thing possible. How, then, could this prophecy be accomplished if, as long as there was an undivided

empire, there were no horns; and if, on the other hand, the empire, as such, expired when once broken up into separate kingdoms? How are we to put these two facts together? Because it is clear from what is given us here that the beast is a totally different thing from a horn. The beast represents imperial unity. But in Rome, as long as the empire subsisted, there were no ten horns; and when the divided kingdoms sprang up, there was no such thing then as imperial unity.

How, then, are the two things put together in the prophecy? The Spirit of God was, I believe, looking onward to the last stage of the Roman empire, when both features shall re-appear, and that together. This last stage ends in a divine judgment; as it is written a little after, “I beheld till the thrones were set up;” (for so it ought to be instead of “cast down;” and this is not merely my opinion, but the uniform way in which it is understood by the best ancient and modern translations of scripture;) “I beheld till the thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” There you have evidently a figure of the divine glory in judgment, not some mere providential dealing on the earth, but the process of judgment that God Himself will institute. “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Whatever time this may be supposed to take place, it is manifest that it is a divine judgment. “I beheld them because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” The horn alluded to here is the eleventh one, the one that came up among the ten. And it was this little horn, that began with small beginnings, that, by some means or another, managed to root up three of the first horns, and that subsequently became the guide and governor of the whole beast. “I beheld because of the great words which the horn spake,” not “till the horn was put down,” but “till the beast was slain,” so that it is implied that this little horn had managed to govern the entire beast. This verse shows that there was to be a divine judgment that would deal with this little horn and with the beast, and destroy them. Has that taken place? Clearly not. It is plain, that whatever has fallen upon the Roman empire in past times, has been the ordinary course and decline of a great nation. Barbarian hordes tore it up, and separate kingdoms were formed. But prophecy tells us of another thing altogether. It warns of a judgment that disposes of the beast in a totally different way, and in contrast with the others. “I beheld till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.” That is, the remains of the Chaldeaus, or of the races that were called so, we have still. Persia abides a kingdom, and the Greeks have lately become one. They exist, therefore, though not as imperial powers. We have these races of men, more or less, representing those powers; smaller, it is true, and no longer having dominion as empires. This is the meaning of ver. 12. Their dominion was taken away as rulers of the world, “but their lives were prolonged for a season and time.” In this last empire, when the hour of its judgment comes, it is to be far otherwise. In the case of the three first beasts, they lost their imperial dignity, but themselves lived and existed. But in the case of the fourth empire, the hour when its dominion is destroyed is the same hour in which it is itself destroyed. “The beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” Who can doubt that this is the same scene that we have alluded to in Rev. 19, where we are told, “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army?” The prophet had come to the last beast. Further back in divine

revelation we had the other three beasts; they had had their day, and there only remained the last. Consequently, when it says “the beast,” we are to understand the Roman empire. This beast, then, and the kings of the earth are warring against the Lord. “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that had wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both (mark) were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” Nov, this is very remarkable; because here we have the lake of fire, which answers to the judgment of the burning flame in Daniel, only it is a fuller statement. It was not a mere control of circumstances, but a divine power that casts straight into hell without the necessity of a previous judgment. For it is perfectly plain what they were about. They were found in open antagonism to the Lord of glory, and are cast into the flames. Has that ever been verified in the Roman empire? Clearly not. What then follows? The Roman empire has passed away; for the last thousand years and more it has had no existence, except as an unmeaning title, which has been the object of contention among ambitious men. Simple kingdoms have taken the place of the undivided Roman empire.

But what have we here? The Roman empire reappearing. And this exactly agrees with other parts of the word of God. For there is a remarkable expression in the Revelation, that has been alluded to more than once. It is in Rev. 17:8, &c., “The beast that was, and is not, and shall be present.” I do not know how persons could have used the expression, “and yet is.” It is not even sense, and the word of God is particularly simple. No enigma is meant here. The Roman empire was to have three stages. First, its original imperial form, when John suffered under the last of the Caesars. Next, its condition of non-existence, from about the fifth century, when the Goths, and Vandals, &c., broke it up; in that condition it is now. But then there is a third stage, and it is in that last condition that it is to be found in open opposition to God and the Lamb. This is the future of the Roman empire. It is to be re-organized, it is to come out again as an empire, and in this last phase it will fight against God to its ruin. And mark how this leaves room for the point that I wished to illustrate. We could not in the past have had ten horns as well as the beast; in the future we can, and that is what the scene in Rev. 17 shows. “The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet.” But, it is added, “They shall receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” So that when the beast should make its re-appearance, there would be this singular feature: that while there would be a great head of imperial unity, it would not be to the exclusion of separate kings. There would still be the kings of France, Spain, &c. Let none suppose that to say this is prophesying. The true way to be kept out of that presumption is to study prophecy. In the one case you are learning what God says; in the other you are but giving out your own thoughts. In this passage the point is, not an empire alone without the ten kings, nor the ten kings without an empire, but the union of these two things. There is the imperial unity, which answers to the beast; at the same time there are these separate kings. It is their coexistence which will mark the Roman empire in its last phase. To that everything is tending now.

The prophet saw the last condition of this empire with its ten horns. “I considered the horns, and behold there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.” Men used to apply all this to the pope. No doubt the pope was extremely obnoxious to everyone that valued the word of God. But we must always take care when we read Scripture, not to be too anxious about applying the word of God to what is in our

way, or to what we may think extremely evil—as no doubt the pope and popery are. But we must seek to understand what God means by it. Granted that there is a remarkable analogy between the papacy and the little horn. It may have been intended to be applied by the children of God in different ages, who have been suffering through the papacy, for their help and encouragement. This changing of times and laws, (ver. 25,) as well as his great words and persecution of the saints, may have been accomplished in what popery has been about. But it remains to be inquired, Is that the full meaning and the proper design of the prophecy? Take an example from Matt. 24 There was the beginning of sorrows; then the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place, and a warning to flee from Jerusalem; unexampled tribulation, &c. I can understand all this having a measure of application to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But who will say that this is the end of it, and that the full meaning is realized there? It is impossible that any one can think so who examines it attentively. When God gives a prophecy, He very often allows that there should be a sort of earnest accomplishment of it: but we are never to take that as the full thing. The Roman Empire has fallen, and out of the fall of that empire a new and singular power with divine claims has started up and set itself up against God. But to say that this is the full accomplishment of the prophecy, would be as great a mistake as to suppose that God never alluded to it all. There was to be Mahommedanism in the east, and the papacy in the west: but still the question recurs, Is that all that the Holy Ghost meant? I say, No; for the reason already given—that if the history of the papacy be looked at, the beast was gone, properly, when the pope took his place. More than that. The pope has never acquired three of the ten kingdoms. He might receive Peter's patrimony, but it has always been a petty power politically, of no consequence as to territory. Instead of acquiring three of the ten kingdoms, all its weight has arisen from its spiritual delusion over the souls of men. Clearly, then, a power, small in its beginnings, is to rise, and to put down three of these greater powers, acquiring all their dominion. The pope never has done that. So that, although there has been a measure of likeness, there is enough difference to make it quite plain.

The empire is in full force at the time that those ten horns and this little one appear. This last subsequently aggrandizes itself, and rules the whole beast. Instead of this, the pope has lost almost the half of Europe; and what may be the end of agencies now at work no man can say.

We have here a most vigorous power, that has the ten horns in subjection to itself. The Revelation tells us that all the ten kings conspired to give their power and strength unto the beast. God has given all up, because it is the time when there shall be strong delusion, and men will believe a lie. I gather from that, not that this has no bearing upon the papacy, but that its full accomplishment is in the future. 1 say that the Roman Empire, which has ceased to exist, will be re-organized, and will be the instrument for carrying out the last great effort of Satan against the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Daniel we find that this little horn overthrows three powers. Then we have its moral characteristics. It has eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. He is marked by immense intelligence—not by brute force. The description of him contrasts with that of the Lord. In the Lord's case, He is characterized as having seven horns and seven eyes—that is, the perfection of intelligence and of power. In this case it is not so. The power outwardly looks much greater. It has ten horns instead of seven—a monster instead of perfection. It is a sort of grotesque exaggeration of the power of Christ that this wretched man will arrogate to himself.

Then comes the overthrow, because of its fearful blasphemy against God. And a new vision follows here, in contrast with the powers that were represented by raveling beasts. It is “one like the Son of man.” Just as in the second chapter it was an insignificant stone that struck the great image, and all crumbled to pieces from head to foot. Here the Son of man “came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.” The Ancient of days represents God as such.

In the Revelation, the two glories are both united in the Person of Christ. Rev. 1 shows us one like the Son of Man: but when we find the description of Him, some of the features are exactly the same as are attributed here to the Ancient of days, whose garment is said to be as white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool, &c. The Jewish prophet sees Christ simply as man. The Christian prophet sees Him as man, but as God withal.

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” There will be no such thing as its being taken from him, or as another power succeeding him. It will be everlasting in the sense of as long as the world shall endure. Because this is not an eternal scene. The Jewish prophets show you the millennium; but they do not unfold, as the New Testament does, that when all things are subdued to God, even the Father, God shall be all in all. That was reserved for another day; and the Revelation follows it up in a most blessed manner, in chap. xxi.

Just mark, by the way, a feature of some importance. The latter part of the chapter consists of explanations; but we are never to suppose that the explanations of Scripture merely refer to what has already been given. That is the case in human writings, but in God's explanations there is always further truth brought out. This is of moment. Through not understanding this, the kingdom of Christ has been supposed to be merely the kingdom of His saints. There will be the kingdom of the Son of man and the kingdom of His people, but we are assuredly not to suppose that by this is meant the reigning of the saints in a figurative way to the exclusion of the Son of man. The explanation brings out the saints, which the vision does not. It is no less than denying the personality of the reign of Christ, if you make the explanation merely tantamount to the vision.

In verse 17 the person to whom the prophet appeals tells him, “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth.” Their origin was purely earthly. There is no contradiction at all between this and the fact that we are told in verse 2 that they came up from the sea. The reason why they are said to rise thence is that the sea represents a mass of men in a state of political anarchy. It is out of this troubled state of peoples that empires arise. Take the French Empire, for example. A revolution broke up the old system of government. Then followed a state of confusion, like the sea torn with the winds, and out of this emerged an empire. From such a state of things in the world the four great empires arose. It was, too, very much about the same time that the beginnings of the four great empires were laid. There was an immense difference in the degree of development in the East as compared with the West. The Western powers were comparatively only in the cradle: but the beginning of these various powers were traceable to much the same date and the same state of confusion and anarchy. That seems to be what is meant by their coming up out of the sea. But in verse 17 they are said to arise out of the earth. They have not a heavenly origin. The force of the sea was merely to show that it is out of a

previously troubled state of society that they grew. Such was their providential origin. But here their moral origin is looked at as being purely earthly, in contrast with the Son of man, who comes in the clouds of heaven. What makes this still plainer is that in the next verse (ver. 18) it is said, “But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever.” The margin says, “the saints of the high ones.” It is the origin of the expression in the New Testament, “heavenly places.” It is the same expression whether applied to our blessings, “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” in Eph. 1, or to the “high places” in Eph. 6 The saints of the heavenly places (that is, probably, of God in connection with the heavenly places) “shall take the kingdom.” This gives the contrast. As for these four great powers, the best that could be said of them, if you look at their political origin, was that they arose out of a confused and tumultuous state of things in the world, or at their moral origin—it was not from heaven. If, on the other hand, you look at the saints of the heavenly places, they are those destined to take the kingdom, which they possess for evermore. This adds an important truth to the fact of the Son of man's getting the kingdom. When He takes the kingdom, He will not take it alone. All that have ever waited for this kingdom, in all ages, will come along with Him. It will be the time when He will manifest His Church, when Abraham, Enoch, David, no matter who they may be that have known Him by faith, will be there in their changed and glorified bodies, and will reign along with Him. “Know ye not,” the Apostle says, “that we shall judge the world?” That clearly must mean in this kingdom of the Son of man. Because if it were merely a question of going to heaven to be with Christ, that is not judging the world. So that while it is true that we are to go up to heaven, it is not all. “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?” If we have not known that, how comes it? Some truth has been let slip, if we have not looked for this. And mark the practical importance of it. The very fact that you do not know it proves that you want something that God makes a great deal of. And how does God use it in the Epistle to Corinthians? It was to reproach the Corinthians for carrying their questions before the world. Do you not know, he reasons with them, that you are called to this place of dignity? It is not merely that you will have it by and by; but God makes it known and true now. Just as the heir to the kingdom is instructed and fitted for the throne that he is to occupy, so God is educating His saints now to take the kingdom of the world which is to belong to Christ. It is a revealed truth of God that the kingdom of the world shall become that of our Lord and of His Christ: but when He does reign, the saints will reign also. The saints of the heavenly places—who are they? Those whose hearts are with Christ above—those who will be converted before Christ comes and will have a people gathered upon the earth—those who have ever in past ages died in Christ, or who are now waiting for Christ—those too who will pass through the great tribulation. All these are saints of the Most High. They are in contrast with others. Because there will be saints when Christ comes to reign, who will be blessed upon the earth. There will be a great harvest there. The Lord will bring those saints into all the promised blessings of His kingdom. But we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and shall reign over the earth. That is distinguished from the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven. There are certain saints that are in the heavens; but there is another class spoken of that are here below. This kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Those are some of the persons that the saints will reign over. “Know ye not,” urges the Apostle Paul, “that the saints shall judge the world?” Accordingly here we have “the people of the saints of the Most High,” as a distinct class.

There are many details in this chapter that I have not entered into. But there is a description of the evil conduct of the little horn that I must say a few words upon, although a little out of order. It is

said (ver. 20,) that “it had eyes and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Then, in the further account, it is said, (ver. 25,) that this little horn “shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, (referring to his persecutions), and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hands, until a time and times and the dividing of time.” It is necessary to understand what this little horn will do. The meaning is, that He will destroy the Jewish worship, at that time carried on upon the earth. By the “times” are meant their festivals or feast-days. He will interfere with that as Jeroboam did— “And they shall be given into his hand,” &c. It has been often supposed that “they” means the saints. But that is a total mistake. It is “the times and laws” that are to be given into his hand, for a certain limited period of time. God will allow him to have his way. He shall think, to do it. And the fact that they are to be given into his hands shows that he succeeds for a time in carrying out his desires. But God will never give His saints into the hands of His enemies, even for a time ever so short. He always keeps them in His own hands. Job was never more in the hands of God than when Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat. The sheep are in the hands of the Father and the Son, and none shall ever be able to pluck them thence. There is no such thought in the Word as God leaving or forsaking them. Here it is simply the outward arrangements of worship, of which the Jews will be the representatives on the earth, and they will be allowed for a time to fall under his power. For it is plain that at that time there will be Jewish saints owning God, and Jesus, too, in a measure: as it is said, (Rev. 14,) “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

These saints will be in a very peculiar position. There will be a sort of combination of the law, with a recognition of Jesus to a certain extent. During this state of things, they will come under the power of the little horn, “for a time, times, and the dividing of time” —that is, for three years and a half, closed by the coming of Christ in judgment.

Chapter 43

Remarks on Daniel 8

THERE is a remarkable change which takes place at the point to which we are now arrived, and it may not be known to all readers of the Book of Daniel. The language in which the Spirit of God reveals this vision, and all that follow, is a different one from that in which He had conveyed the previous portions of the Book. From all early part of chap. ii. up to the end of chap. vii. the language was that of the Babylonian monarch—Chaldee: whereas from chap. viii. to the close it is Hebrew—the ordinary language of the Old Testament. Now this was not without purpose. And I think the clear inference that we are to gather from it is this: that what particularly concerned the Gentile monarchies was given in the language of the first great Gentile Empire. They were immediately concerned in it: and, in fact, as we know, the first vision (of the image) was seen by the Gentile king himself—Nebuchadnezzar. From that to the end of chap. vii. is in his own tongue. But now we are about to enter upon visions which specially concern the Jews—e.g., chap. viii. alludes to the sanctuary, to the holy people, to the daily sacrifice, and a number of other particulars; which would hardly have been intelligible to a Gentile, and which had—no sort of interest for him. But although they may even be little in our eyes now—though it may be only something of the past, concerning a people broken to atoms, scattered over the face of the earth, yet, nevertheless, it has a real and enduring interest in the mind of the Spirit. For the Jews are not done with yet. Far from it. The Jews have known throughout their whole history the misery of attempting to deserve the promises that were given to the fathers; and they have been allowed to work out the terrible experiment of the folly and ruin that necessarily follow man's attempting to earn what the grace of God alone can bestow. That has been, and is, the whole secret of their past and present history. They were brought out from Egypt by the power of God; but at Sinai they undertook to do all that the Lord spoke unto them. They did not say one word about what God had promised. The Lord alluded to it. But in no way did they remind Him that they were a stiffnecked people—a rebellious, unbelieving people. And when God proposed that they should obey Him, instead of acknowledging their utter incapacity, instead of throwing themselves only on His mercy, their answer betrayed, on the contrary, that boldness which always characterizes man in his natural state. “All that the Lord hath spoken,” say they, “will we do, and be obedient.” The result was that they did nothing that the Lord had said. They were disobedient at every turn, and God was obliged to deal with them as they deserved. No doubt there was divine goodness in it all; and every. step even of their failure only brought out, through God's grace, some type or shadow of the blessings that God will give them by and by, when, cured by His mercy of this sad mistake of the flesh, and having learned it in suffering and trial, and in that fearful tribulation through which they are destined yet to pass, they will then fall back upon that Blessed One whom their fathers despised and crucified, and will own that the mercy of God alone can give them any blessing, and that it is His mercy which will accomplish all that He had spoken to their fathers. It is this that begins to dawn in a particular way in the prophecies of Daniel. For although in the previous parts there had been types of it, (Daniel himself in the den of lions—or as interpreter to the king—the three Hebrew children who refused to worship idols,) all these things were types of what God will work in the latter day for Israel, in a little seed that He will reserve for Himself. But they are not

types so clear, but that many Christians now would think it fanciful to consider them as such at all. We are now about to find what none ought to gainsay for a moment. Yet there are many true Christians who take these prophecies as finding their only answer in what concerns the Christian Church. They are apt to suppose that the little horn is the papacy. And in this chapter many have been disposed to find Islamism, the scourge of the eastern world, as the papacy is of the west. Whatever may be the analogies that would readily occur to any thoughtful mind, and that I by no means denied as to the little horn in chap. vii., I admit there are the same with regard to Mahommedanism in the east. But what I would desire to bring out clearly is the direct intention of the Spirit of God in these scriptures. It is all very well to find that there are seeds of evil germanating in the world, and that the horrors of the last days have their heralds—admonitory signs that arise ever and anon over the surface of the world, to show us what is coming. But in looking at the word of God, it is of importance to be divested of any desire to find the answer to prophecy in the past or present. The great thing is to go to it with an unbiassed mind, desiring nothing but to understand what God is teaching us. Therefore, whether it be about the past or the future, just as about the present, the chief requisite is, that we should be subject to God and to the word of His grace. I desire in this spirit, to endeavor, as far as the Lord enables me, to explain the meaning of this chapter.

As in chap. vii., so here, the vision was during the reign of Belshazzar; whereas the subsequent visions were after the power of Babylon was overthrown. But up to this time there was no judgment of Babylon. Notwithstanding this, the very place where the vision was seen prepares us for a certain change. It was in the east—still further east—at Shusan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam. Elam is the Hebrew name for Persia, or one of the names, at any rate. “And I saw in a vision, and was by the river of Ulai.” I only mention this to show that we have certain clues as to the bearing of the prophecy that follows. He lifts up his eyes and sees a ram—a well-known symbol, used in Persia itself, and very familiar in its monuments and public documents. “Behold there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.” Clearly the allusion is to the composite character of the Persian Empire. There were two elements in that empire, as distinguished from others—the Medish, which was the first, and the Persian, which was the younger element of the two. But the younger becomes in course of time the greater. Therefore it says that one horn was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. Although Darius the Mede takes the kingdom on the fall of Babylon, yet Cyrus the Persian is the one who acquires the supremacy in due time, and after that it is always the Persian that is more particularly mentioned, But still, even in the language of the nobles to Darius, we find them saying, “the law of the Medes and Persians.” The ram had two horns.

“I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward” —that is, the direction of the various conquests of the Persian empire— “so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand: but he did according to his will and became great.” We find as to this how entirely all profane history is obliged to bow to the word of God. But we need not go further than Scripture itself. Let any one read the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, &c., and he will see how wide and undisputed was that dominion. Even in profane history there was the term used about them— “the great king” —emphatically so about the Persian monarchy. How entirely this goes along with the prophetical account given of them here is manifest. “He did according to his

will and became great."

"And as I was considering, behold an he-goat came from the west." Now this was the first inroad that the west had ever made upon the eastern world. And nothing seemed more improbable, because the east was the cradle of the human race. It was in the east that man was put when he was first made. It was in the east that he began his second history in the world—I mean in the world after the flood. It was from this center that the various races of men, after the Lord had confounded their language at Babel, spread themselves all over the world. It was also in the east that there was any considerable development of civilization, for hundreds of years before the west had emerged from barbarism. Yet here we find from this striking prophetical figure that when the Persian kingdom was still without a rival, not declining, but in the very plenitude of its power, there suddenly comes from quite another quarter a power represented in the vision as an he-goat—a western adversary. And this power advances with the greatest possible swiftness; as it is said here, "he touched not the ground." No person of the least openness to conviction could question for a moment what is meant, even supposing he had not a divine interpretation of it in the chapter. There was but one ancient empire that it could be conceived to set forth—the Grecian empire—and the I great horn in its head was clearly its first chief, Alexander. "And he came to the ram that had two horns which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram and brake his two horns." Here we have the Spirit of God giving in a few words what all history confirms. A new empire should rise after the fall of the Babylonian, symbolized by the ram, peculiar in this that it had two different peoples which composed its strength. This empire might go on in fullness of power for a certain time; but then, from another quarter, where there had been no kingdom of any note known before, comes a power of amazing swiftness in its progress, led on by a king of extraordinary courage and ambition. And this personage smites the Persian empire so completely that "there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." "Moved with choler" is said more particularly about the Greek empire and Alexander. The Greeks had a ground of hatred against the Persians, which was not the case with the other empires. There was much of personal feeling in it, and this is admirably expressed by the word choler here. Why so? We do not read of that in the attacks of the Persians on the Babylonians, ferocious as they might be, or in those of the Romans upon the Greeks; but it was peculiarly true of this Greek inroad upon the Persian empire. The Persians had before invaded Greece, and thus had roused the strongest feeling against themselves. This traditional resentment descended from father to son, so that the Greeks considered themselves the natural enemies of the Persians. Such was the provocation that the Persians had given to the Greeks, who were but a petty nation at that time, and who had not at all sought to extend their bounds beyond their own native country. Now the moment was come that this blow should be returned and the Persians attacked in their own land: and the he-goat with this notable horn in its head comes, moved with choler, and smites the ram and breaks his two horns, casts him. down to the ground and stamps upon him. Nothing can be clearer, nothing more exactly descriptive as giving an idea of the relative position of these two powers to one another. If you were to read history all your life, you could not have a more vivid picture of the Persian downfall than what the Spirit of God has furnished in a few lines.

In this case it was rather less than three hundred years from the time of Daniel till these great events took place—a long enough time to show the wonder of God's perfect wisdom and the way in which He unveils the future to His people, but a comparatively short space in the history of the world; yet this is not His great object. The Spirit always looks forward to the close. He may introduce what is to be fulfilled in a comparatively brief time, but His main attention is directed to the end. of this age and not to those events that actually surround the parties of the world. God has a people that His heart is set upon: a people, it is true, who, through their own folly and want of leaning upon God, have been most feeble and failing, and who are to this day the scorn and by-word of the nations according to the word of God. But whatever might be the apparent might of Persia if not of Greece, and the importance of their controversies as filling up the history of the world, God thinks but little of them. He disposes of the records of centuries in a few words. The point to which God hastens on, might be small then in the eyes of the world, but being connected with the interests of His king and His people, He goes on to the great events connected with them in the last days. This gives the key to the verses that follow. Their importance is because of their.connection with Jewish history and because they reflect what is to take place another day.

“Therefore the he-goat waxed very great; and when he was strong, the great horn was broken.” This was exactly the case with Alexander. He was cut off while quite a young man, in the midst of his victories. “And for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven.” There was a certain time that elapsed after the death of Alexander, when his generals were squabbling together and trying to set up a number of kingdoms; but the end of all was that there were four kingdoms formed out of the proper dominions of Greece. So that I do not question that the allusion here is to the well-known division into four kingdoms of Alexander's empire, which took place about three hundred years before Christ.

“And out of one of them came forth a little horn,” otherwise called in Scripture the King of the North. Being in the north, he pushes his dominions down “toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.” My reason for so thinking, beyond that of the direction of his conquests, (which shows where his own power lay, and the point from which he started,) will more particularly appear when we come to verse 11. What we have here is the succession of these two empires—Persia first, and then Greece. For out of one of the fragments of the Grecian empire there sprang a king that was afterward to play a most important part in connection with the land and people of the Jews. This is the great point of the chapter.

Here then we find that this little horn “waxed great even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.” By this is meant, I apprehend, those that were in a position of honor and glory before the Jewish people. Thus, stars are used, in the New Testament, as the symbol of those who are set in a place of authority in the Church; just so I conceive, the “host of heaven” here alludes to persons that held a place of authority in the Jewish polity. It is the key-note to all this part of the prophecy. It is the importance of all that affects Israel that is now coming into view. Hence you find an expression used that may seem strong— “the host of heaven.” But we must not be surprised at this. God takes the utmost interest in His people. Bear in mind that this does not imply that His people were in a good state. On the contrary, in judging of failure, we must take into consideration the position that people occupied, and for which they are responsible. If you look at Christendom you must remember that all who profess the name of Christ, whether truly or falsely—every baptized person—every person

that has come under the outward recognition of the name of Christ, is in the house of God. People fancy that it is only those who are really converted that have any moral obligations. This is a total mistake. A new kind of responsibility flows from the fact of conversion and the relationships of grace.

But there is a responsibility that involves a vast accession of guilt when men are in any place of privilege. This is a very solemn truth, and God attaches importance to it. Look at the Second Epistle to Timothy. God's house is there compared to a great house among men, and in it there are vessels to dishonor as well as to honor. The former are not converted at all; they might be altogether bad people, but still they are said to be vessels in the house of God. The church, that which bears the name of Christ upon the earth, is always responsible to walk as the bride of Christ. Yet you cannot allude to such a privilege and responsibility as that without seeing the utter ruin, and failure, and declension of what bears His name. And this is the practical importance of keeping in view the position which God has assigned us. We never can judge how low we have got till we see the place in which God has put us. Supposing I have to examine my ways as a Christian, I must bear in mind that a Christian is a man whose sins are blotted out; that he is a member of the body of Christ, and loved with the same love wherewith the Father loved the Son. Some are accustomed to think that if a man is not a Jew, or a Turk, or a heathen, he must be a Christian. But when a believer hears that a Christian is one who is made a king and a priest to God, a purged worshipper having no more conscience of sin, he becomes anxious and feels that he has not one right or full idea of his own calling and responsibility. He then begins to have a different standard of judgment, to measure how he ought to feel and work, and walk for God.

The same thing applies to Israel here. Those that held this place of responsible authority in Israel, were alluded to here as the host and stars of heaven. They were put in a place of authority by God. For we must remember, in connection with Israel, that they are the people that, in the mind of God, have the first place upon the earth. They are the head, and the Gentiles the tail. This, I am aware, is a new thought to persons who are wont to look at Jews with an air of contemptuous pity, only judging of them by their present degraded condition. But in order to judge rightly we must look at things with God, we must feel with God; and God uses this strong language in regard to persons put of old in a position of outward authority among the Jews. Persons have supposed that because certain were spoken of in such exalted terms, Christians must be meant. But as God's nation, Israel held the first place in His mind in the government of the world. This is their calling, and “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” God will never give up that great thought that He has called Israel into this place, and they are judged according to it. This vision is while the power of Babylon is not yet judged. It gives you a view of what will be realized in the last days with regard to Israel, before the power that began with Babylon has been completely set aside.

This little horn waxed great, and cast down some of the hosts and stars of heaven and stamped upon them. That is, he overthrew certain Jewish rulers that were in this place of great authority; treated them with the utmost cruelty, and degraded them. “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host,” which, I suppose, means the Lord himself. The marginal note is right in the next clause. “From him the daily sacrifice was taken away,” This at once makes it all plain, because it introduces the utmost confusion to take “by him,” to mean the little horn; and then “the place of his sanctuary,” to mean that of the prince of the host. The person that was represented by this little horn is to magnify himself even to the prince of the host. “And from him the daily sacrifice

was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression." And then we go back to the little horn again. "And it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered." In other words, the 11th verse and the first half of the 12th form a parenthesis; and then in the latter part of verse 12 we again have "it," which designates the little horn in verse 10. The "it" takes up the horn that was to appear and deal in a cruel way with the Jewish people, and with their rulers in an aggravated form.

Then we have, as the prophet says, "one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary he cleansed." I strongly suspect that, in the main what we have here, save the portion which is marked parenthetically, has had a partial accomplishment in the past. We shall read of a personage in chap. xi. where the characteristics alluded to here as marking this little horn, are still more minutely stated. He is called in profane history, Antiochus Epiphanes, and was a particularly bad man. If you have read the books of the Maccabees, (which, though not scripture, are in the main historically true, at least two of them,) you will know that they describe this King of Syro-Macedona, and show the dreadful feeling that he had against Israel. he attempts to force heathen worship upon them, especially that of Jupiter Olympus; and he put to death all the Jews who resisted his designs, till at last, partly by the Romans and partly by the force and courage of the Maccabees themselves, he was repressed and defeated, and the temple once more cleansed again and the Jewish worship resumed. No doubt, this was the person meant historically by the little horn. But he shows the same kind of features that will re-appear in another great leader of the last days, and I think that this will plainly appear from the last part of this chapter. For when the prophet is spoken to by the angel Gabriel, he says, "Understand, O son of man; for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

I think this denotes that what he is going to explain more particularly looks onward to that time. But it gives me the opportunity to repeat a remark that has before been made—that we are never to suppose that the explanations of a vision in Scripture are merely a repetition of what has gone before. They allude to the past, but they add fresh features not given before. This is particularly clear in the present case. And the past part of the vision (that which had already been seen by the Prophet) has been in the main accomplished; whereas the explanatory part adds fresh information that looks onward to the last days. Nevertheless, there is an explanation in measure of what has gone before. But you will observe how frequently in the explanations of the angel the last days are brought before us. He said, Behold I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be." There can be no question, if I am at all familiar with the prophets, what that means. Take the first of them. There I find this very expression, "the indignation." In the end of Isa. 5, and then in chap. ix. x., this word "indignation" is repeated over and over again. The prophet shows, that, in consequence of the idolatry of Israel, and specially of their kings, God's indignation was roused against His people. He sends a chastening upon them. But whatever the first effects of the chastening might be, the evil burst out again with fresh fury, as evil always does, unless it is put away. Therefore comes in that terrible word, "For all this his anger is not turned away; but his hand is stretched out still." his anger did not cease. Then in chap. x. 25, we find that He says that His indignation shall Cease. But wherein?

There is a personage brought forward there called the Assyrian; and this Assyrian was one set forth then by Sennacherib, who was latterly the King of Assyria. He was the first who was particularly mixed up with the affairs of Israel, or rather of Judah. And what do we find? The Assyrian there is to be used as the rod of God's anger; but when God has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem—when he has allowed, as it were, the indignation to burn out, it will cease in the destruction of the Assyrian himself, because he forgot that he was merely a rod in the hands of the Lord. He considered that he was acting by his own wisdom and might, and the Lord says that He will deal with the rod itself and destroy it. Accordingly, that very chapter shows us the indignation of the Lord ceasing in his destruction. That indignation is solely connected with His people Israel. So that this confirms what I before said—that here we are upon Jewish ground. It is not about what popes or Moslems may do, nor about the inroads of the eastern or western apostacy. It concerns Israel—the last indignation of God against Israel. But it may be asked, Why is not the fourth empire introduced here? The reason is this; that while the dominion of these empires is taken away, upon which we have the successive rise of a new empire, yet the body remains and exists. Because it is out of the third empire, and not out of the fourth, was to rise this power that plays so important a part in the last days. So that we must remember that the little horn of chap. viii. is an entirely distinct power from the little horn of chap. vii. That of chap. vii. is the last leader of the Roman Empire. It arises out of the fourth Empire, when it is divided into ten kingdoms: whereas this power rises from the third empire, and when there was a division into four parts—not into ten. Nothing can be more distinct. Although the great dominion of the world has passed away from the third to the fourth empire; and although we have in Sennacherib the representative of the third empire, yet in the last days there will also be an inheritor of the third empire, who will meddle with Israel in a particular way. As there will be a grand leader in the west, so there will be also one in the east, springing out of the Greek empire. Because we must remember, that although, being the Grecian empire, it was west in comparison with Babylon and Palestine, it was east in comparison with Rome. This little horn we shall see more of afterward.

In verse 20, the ram with two horns is explained to represent the kings of Media and Persia; and in verse 21, “the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” Then, in verse 22, we have the breaking up of the Grecian empire; and, in verse 23, it is added, “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.” This, I think, does not refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, but to the person that Antiochus typified. Mark the expression again, “In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full.” “And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.” A remarkable word, which is not said at all about the little horn of chap. vii. There, I apprehend, it was by his own power. Satan might give him power, too; but in his own person he wielded the force of the Roman empire. But in the case of this ruler, though his power will be mighty, it will not be by his own power. He depends upon the strength given him by others. He will be the instrument of foreign policy and power, not his own. “And he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice and destroy the mighty and the holy people.”

That is, we find that he is principally and expressly mentioned in connection with the Jews as a people. It is not here that you have the saints of the Most High. Where that is used it is not merely

a figurative expression of the great men of the Jewish people, but here it is, as contrasted with Gentiles. It is not at all speaking about their character personally; that does not come into view in this chapter.

He shall meddle with them, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many.” That is, he will take advantage of their being in a state of ease and unprepared for his encroachments. “He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.” He will. be utterly helpless in this last struggle. In another scripture it is said, (Dan. 11:45,) “He shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

I would desire to hint at scriptures that will make the importance of this more clear than by merely taking it as given in Dan. 8. Is there light from other scriptures as to who this personage is, and what he will do? I answer, yes. He is the same person that is spoken of in various parts of the word of God as the Assyrian, or king of the north. He is the person that will be the great foe of the Jews in the last days. The Jews at that time will be exposed to two evils. They will have an evil within in their own land—an antichrist setting himself up as God in God's temple; and they will have another evil from without—this king. He comes up as an enemy against them; and He is one also that will have great policy. It is not merely by warlike power that he is distinguished. He is not only of fierce countenance, but understands Clark sentences. He will take the place of a great teacher, which would naturally have much influence over the Jewish mind, for they have always been a people given to research and intellectual speculations of all kinds. Of late years, the mass of them have been too much occupied with money—getting to pay much attention to these things; but there have been always representatives of the intellectual class among the Jewish people. And over such the influence of this king will be immense, when they are re-established in their own land, and are becoming important again, and the objects of the dealings of God in the way of judgment. Still the indignation will not have ceased. Thus it is that these two evils will afflict the Jews. The antichrist or the willful king will take the place of the true Messiah in the land of Israel. For it is plain, that if he takes the place of Messiah, it must be in the midst of the Jewish people and in the land of the Jews; whereas this personage is one who is opposed to them as an open enemy. This I take to be the king alluded to by the other prophets as the king of the north. I would now refer to a few of these scriptures.. The Assyrian and. Antichrist are totally distinct and opposed powers. The Assyrian will be the enemy of the Antichrist: the one will be the great self-exalting man inside, and the other the leader of the enemies outside. Isa. 10 gives us the first plain intimation that we have of him in the prophets. “Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” But persons will tell me, the Assyrians are all gone; there is no such nation existing. Now, I ask, has the Lord performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem.? No. Then the Assyrian is not all gone. The Lord tells me here, that when he shall have performed this whole work, He will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria. But the Jews are not in their land, and Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles. I know that. But does it prove that the Jews are not to be in their land again, and Jerusalem to be delivered from Gentile bondage.? When the power of God gathers the Jews back into their own land, that same Providence will bring out the representative of the Assyrian in the last days. And as the Assyrian was the first great enemy of Israel, so he is the chief one at the last. He is the one

that will come up for his judgment when the Lord shall have performed His whole work upon Zion and Jerusalem. He has not performed the whole. He has performed a part of it, but His indignation still continues against Israel. This is the reason why they are not in their land. Even when they do get back, the indignation will still be burning. There will be a return of the Jews in unbelief.: and then will come that great crisis, and God will gather the scattered ones that remain and put them in their own land, and the Assyrian will be judged. There is a certain great personage typified in the Assyrian in the past, that will re-appear in the last days. He is spoken of as this king of Assyria. He will govern in the very quarter where this little horn had its power—Turkey in Asia. Whether the Sultan will be the then possessor of these dominions I do not pretend to say; but, whoever he may be, he is the person referred to by the prophets as the king of the north. He will come down towards the pleasant land and will attack the Jews; but will afterward be broken to pieces. He will come to his end and none shall help him.

Look again at Isa. 14 And what makes it remarkable is this: that in the beginning of that chapter you have the King of Babylon spoken of. (Ver. 4.) “Take up this proverb against the King of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!” The King of Babylon does not represent the Assyrian. Babylon and Assyria were two distinct powers. Babylon was only a little province when Assyria was a great empire. And when the Assyrian was in ruins, Babylon was an altogether new thing, as an imperial power.

Isa. 14 opens by showing that “the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined to it and them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them and bring them to their place,” &c.—showing the intense interest that God will give the people of the world in putting them back into their place. “And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids.” The Gentiles, instead of being masters, will be glad to be servants in those days.” “And they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the King of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the scepter of the rulers.” There evidently you have what has never yet been accomplished. No person with knowledge of Scripture can suppose that ever, from the time of Babylon's supremacy, Israel had been in a position to take up such a proverb as that. The “times of the Gentiles” begin with the Chaldean power being established over the Jews. And Jerusalem is to this day trodden down by the Gentiles. One power after another has taken possession of the city. Now, in these last days spoken of here, we have the Jews putting the Gentiles under them—making them their servants. And when that time comes, and not till theu, they will take up this proverb, “How hath the oppressor ceased!” &c. And that prophetic strain looks at the King of Babylon, of whom Nebuchadnezzar was the type—the last holder of that same power that came in with Babylon. Who is that? It is the beast—the last inheritor of the power that commenced with the King of Babylon. And it is his destruction that calls forth the joy and triumph of Israel. When the King of Babylon got this power, where was the Assyrian? Gone—broken. The King of Babylon, that had been a little power, rose upon the ruins of the Assyrian. But mark in this chapter, ver. 24, “The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand, that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread

him under foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth." There, evidently, we have this fact, that when that day of Israel's restoration comes, not only will they triumph in the fate of the King of Babylon, but the Lord will put down the Assyrian. That cannot refer to the mere historical Assyrian of the past. He was already gone when Babylon came into power: so that it can only be a type of a power yet to come. It shows that there will be two great powers in the latter day—the beast, represented by the King of Babylon, who at that time will be the enemy of the true-hearted Jews, though he purported to be the friend of the nation, that is, of the ungodly mass; as the Assyrian, on the contrary, will be the leader of the openly adverse coalition of the Gentiles against Israel. Other Scriptures proves this. In Isa. 30 you will find the same two powers coming into view again. In verse 27 it is said, "Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger. . . And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm. . . For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod" —(evidently alluding to his being the instrument of the Lord's chastening His people, as in Isa. 10:5;) "And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it" —showing that it is not merely a judgment of the earth, but a deeper thing. Tophet, or the pit, is ordained of old. "For the king also" is the true meaning of the next clause. This Tophet is not merely for the Assyrian, but also for the king. There are two distinct persons referred to, as we saw also in chap. xiv. "The king" will be in the land of Israel. The king will be there, under the auspices of the inheritor of the power of Babylon of that day. He will be there assuming to be the true Messiah. Tophet is prepared for him—but also for the Assyrian. They will be both consigned to Tophet. I need not refer to all the passages that refer to them; but you will find a great deal that is deeply interesting to Isaiah and other prophets as to "the king."

But so far is it from being true that antichrist or "the king" is the one who most occupies the mind of God, that the prophets far more speak of the Assyrian. Christians are not generally aware of the large extent of prophecy. One of the most important powers in it is hardly thought of by them. If you look at the minor prophets, for instance Mic. 5, you will find an allusion to the same power; it is very plain. The chapter opens with a call. "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." There is the rejection of the Messiah. Then the 2nd verse is a parenthesis which shows us who this Judge of Israel was. "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel." They may smite Him upon the cheek; but after all, not only is He to be the ruler, but He is the everlasting God, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Then he resumes, in connection with verse I, "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth:" that is, till the great purpose of God comes to pass about His people. "Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." Mark that—"when the Assrian shall come, and when he shall tread in our palaces:" a thing that never has been accomplished yet. When the Assyrian came of old into the land of old, it is clear there was no such thing as the Judge of Israel there. Israel had not been given up at that time, but the Assyrian

of that day was only the type of the great heir of the same name and power of the last days. And then there will be the Judge of Israel on behalf of His people. The Judge that was once smitten upon the cheek will be received by His people when God's great purposes are accomplished. “This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land.” Then we find, verse 6, Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord.... and the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces and none can deliver.” So that it is very plain that we have the encroachment of the Assyrian and his final putting down in connection with the final deliverance of Israel.

I have endeavored to show that while Antiochus Epiphanes was the type of this Assyrian, yet that after all it was only in a very small part indeed that he meets the requirements of the prophecy, which while it makes use of him as a type, looks onward to the latter times of the indignation of God against Israel, when he comes up to receive his judgment from the hands of God. You will see how important it is to keep clearly in mind that God has these great purposes about Israel; that what man makes so much of—the episode of Papacy now or of Mohammedism passed over very slightly indeed. I acknowledge that we find a certain measure of accomplishment in both, but the Church is never allowed by God to be an earthly people. When the Jews again come into view, then we have the importance of what touches them, and this Assyrian will come down from without, at the same time that there will be “the king” within: and both will be the objects of the judgments of God. God will put them both down. And his people, purged by their trials, and looking to Jehovah Jesus, will be thus made meet for the purposes of God in mercy, and goodness, and glory, throughout the world to come.

The Lord grant that we may know His purposes about us. We have nothing to do with this world. We are strangers in it. We are entitled to read all these things in the light of heaven. It is not said that Daniel did not understand them: the others did not. But whatever was the case with them, we, by the Holy Ghost are entitled to understand these things now. And the Lord grant that our minds may be kept clear as to what God puts before us as to our own path.

Remarks on Daniel 9

Chap. 9.

THE fall of Babylon was connected in the prophecies of Isaiah, as well as Jeremiah, with brighter hopes for the Jew. The partial restoration that took place in consequence furnishes the type of the final ingathering of Israel. This accounts for the notion which has prevailed among some Christians, that what took place then is all that we are to look for in behalf of Israel, as such, and that their subsequent sin in rejecting their Messiah, and the mercy of the gospel to the Gentiles, has involved them in irreparable national ruin.

Although there are true elements in such thoughts, they are very far indeed from being the whole truth. God does not abandon the people that He called. Never does He give a gift of grace and then withdraw it utterly. For the same grace which promised deals with the person and heart of the believer, and works till it is brought home morally by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, along with the mercy, whether to an individual or to a people that He calls, there is also the longsuffering faithfulness and power, which in the end always triumphs.

The history of the past, no doubt, has been a total failure. The reason of that was because Israel chose to stand upon their own strength with God, and not upon the goodness of God towards them. This is always and necessarily fatal for a time. “This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.” That is, all that was threatened and predicted must yet befall the generation of Israel which presumed upon its own righteousness, and which finally showed its real character by rejecting Christ and the gospel. A real sense of moral ruin (that is, repentance towards God) ever accompanies real living faith. Israel have gone through this phase of self-confidence, or are still going through it. “That generation” has not yet passed away: all things are not fulfilled. They have not yet suffered the full results of their own folly and hatred of God's Son. They have yet to stiffer the severest chastening for it: for, although the past has been bitter enough, still there are more terrible things in the future. But when all has taken place, they will begin the new scene, when it will be not the Christ rejecting generation going on, but what Scripture speaks of as “the generation to come:” a new stock of the same Israel, who will be children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus—children, not in word only, but in spirit. Then it will be the history, not of man's failure, but of a people whom the Lord blesses in His grace; when they will joyfully own that same Savior whom their fathers with wicked hands crucified and slew.

This chapter is especially occupied with Jerusalem and the Jews. It is a sort of episode in the general history of Daniel, but by no means an unconnected one. Because we shall find that the closing history of Israel peculiarly connects them with these personages that are yet to figure against God and His people, as we have read in previous chapters. It must be evident to any person who reads this chapter intelligently, that the main object is the destiny of Jerusalem, and the future place of God's people. Now Daniel was exceedingly interested in this. He was one that loved them, not merely because they were his people, but because they were God's people. He resembles Moses in this—that even when the moral condition of the people hindered God from

being able to speak of them as His people (He might care for them secretly; but I speak now of God's publicly owning them) Daniel still continues to plead that they were His people. Be never gives up the truth that Jerusalem was God's city and Israel His people. The angel might say, Daniel's people and city—that was all quite true; but Daniel still holds to that precious truth that faith ought never to give up:—Let the people be what they may, they are God's people. For that very reason they might be chastened more and more sorely. Because nothing brings more chastening upon a soul that belongs to God and that has fallen into sin, than that he does belong to God. It is not merely a question of what is good for the child. God acts for Himself and from Himself, and that is the very hinge and pivot of all our blessing. What would it be to us if it were merely that God was working for our glory? We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We shall have something far better, because it will be God blessing us according to what is worthy of Himself.

Now Daniel was one that emphatically entered into this thought. It is the prominent feature of faith. For faith never views a thing barely in connection with oneself, but with God. It is always thus. If it is a question of peace, is it merely that I want peace? No doubt I do want it, as a poor sinner that has been at war with God all my life. But how infinitely more blessed when we come to find that it is “peace with God:” not merely a peace with one's own heart and conscience, but with God? It is a peace that stands in His sight. All This own character comes out in giving it to me, and in putting it upon such a basis that Satan shall never be able to touch. It is to deliver me, to break the very neck of sin; and nothing does it so completely as this—that God met me when I deserved nothing but death and eternal judgment, and spent His beloved Son in giving me a peace worthy of Himself. And He has done it: He has given it; and all Christian practice flows from the assurance that I have found this blessing in Christ.

Here, then, we have Daniel deeply interested in Israel, because they were God's people. He consequently seeks in God's word what He has revealed about His people. This took place “in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes.” It was not some new communication. “In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

Besides being a prophet, Daniel understood that Israel were to be restored to their land, before the event took place. He did not wait to see it accomplished, and then merely say, The prophecy is fulfilled. But he understood “by books,” not by circumstances. No doubt there were the circumstances in the fall of Babylon; but he understood by what God had said, and not merely by what man had done. This is the true way of understanding prophecy. So that it is remarkable that when we are about to enter upon a very distinct prophecy, occupied almost exclusively with the narrow sphere of Israel, God shows us the true key to the understanding of prophecy. Daniel read the prophet Jeremiah; and he saw from that clearly, that Babylon once overthrown, Israel would be allowed to return. And what is the effect of this on his soul? He draws near to God. He does not go to the people whom the prophecy so intimately concerned, telling them the good news; but he draws near to God. This is another feature of faith. It always tends to draw into the presence of God him who thereby understands the mind of God in anything. He has communion with God about that which he receives from God, before he even makes it known to those who are the objects of the blessing. We have seen the same thing in Daniel before in chap. 2. Now, we may

observe, it is not with thanksgiving, but with confession. We could understand readily that if the people of Israel were just going into captivity, he must feel it as a deep chastening, and would draw near to God to acknowledge the sin and bow under His rod. But now God had judged the oppressor of Israel, and was about to deliver his people. Nevertheless, Daniel draws near, and what does he say When he does speak to God, it is not merely about their deliverance. It is a prayer, full of confession to God. And I would make, as to this, another remark of a general kind. If the study of prophecy does not tend to give us a deeper sense of the failure of God's people upon the earth, I am persuaded we lose one of its most important practical uses. It is because of the absence of this feeling that prophetic study is generally so unprofitable. It is made more a question of dates and countries, of popes and kings; whereas God did not give it to exercise people's wits, but to be the expression of His own mind touching their moral condition: so that whatever trials and judgments are portrayed there, they should be taken up by the heart, and felt to be the hand of God upon His people, because of their sins. That was the effect on Daniel. He was one of the most esteemed prophets—as the Lord Jesus Himself said, “Daniel the prophet.” And the effect upon him was, that he never lost the moral design in the bare circumstances of the prophecy. He saw the great aim of God. He heard His voice speaking to the heart of His people in all these communications. And here he spreads all before God. For, having read of the deliverance of Israel, that was coming on the occasion of the downfall of Babylon, he sets his face unto the Lord God, “to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord may God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly,” &c. Another thing I would observe here. If there was one man in Babylon who, from his own conduct and state of soul, might be supposed to have been outside the need of confession of sin, it was Daniel. He was a holy and devoted man. More than that: he was carried away at so tender an age from Jerusalem, that, it is clear, it was not because of anything he had taken part in, that the blow had fallen. But not the less he says, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity.” Nay, I am even bold to say that the more separate you are from evil, the more you feel it: just as a person emerging into light feels so much the more the darkness that he has left. So Daniel, being one whose soul was with God, and who entered into God's thoughts about His people—knowing the great love of God, and seeing what God had done for Israel, for he does not keep that back in his prayer,) he does not merely notice the great things that God had done for Israel, but also the judgments that He had inflicted upon them. Did he, therefore, think that God did not love Israel? On the contrary, no man had a deeper sense of the tie of affection that existed between God and His people: and for that reason it was he estimated so deeply the ruin in which the people of God were. he measured their sin by the depth of God's love, and the fearful degradation that had passed upon them. It was all from God. He did not impute the judgments which had fallen upon them to the wickedness of the Babylonians or the martial skill of Nebuchadnezzar. It was God he sees in it all. He acknowledges that it was their sin—their extreme iniquity; and he includes all in this. It was not merely the small people imputing their sorrows to the great, and the great to the small, as is so often the case among men. He does not plead simply the ignorance and badness of a few; but he takes in the whole—rulers, priests, people. There was not one that was not guilty. “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity.” And this is another effect wherever prophecy is studied with God. It always brings in the hope of God's standing up in behalf of his people—a hope of the bright and blessed day when evil shall

disappear, and good shall be established by divine power. Daniel does not leave that out. We find it put as a kind of frontispiece to this chapter. The details of the seventy weeks show you the continued sin and suffering of the people of God. But before this, the end, the blessing is brought before the soul. How good that is of God! God takes occasion to give me, first of all, the certainty of final blessing, and then He shows me the painful pathway that leads to it.

I need not enter now upon the thoughts suggested by this beautiful prayer of Daniel, save one thing of practical importance. It is this: that the prophecy came from God as the answer to the state of soul in which Daniel was found. he took the place of humble confession before God, became the expression of the people, the representative of the people, in spreading out their sins before God. Perhaps there was not another soul that did so, certainly there were not many. It is rare, indeed, to find many souls taking the place of real confession before God. How few now have an adequate sense of the ruin of the church of God! How Few feel the dishonor done even by the faithful to the Lord! In Babylon, those who were the most guilty felt it the least; whilst the man who was the most free from guilt, was he who spread it out the most honestly before God.

In answer to his genuine and deep feeling of Israel's state, God sends the prophecy. The soul that refuses to examine such words of God as these, knows not the loss it thus sustains. And wherever the child of God is kept from what God communicates as to the future, (I speak not now of mere speculations, which are worthless, but of the grand moral lessons contained in it.) there is always feebleness and want of ability to judge of the present.

But there is another thing to notice before passing to the seventy weeks. Although Daniel spreads out before God their great failure, and falls back upon His great mercies, yet he never pleads the promises that were given to Abraham. He does not go beyond what was said to Moses. This is of interest and importance. It is the true answer to any who suppose that the restoration of Israel, which took place at that time, was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. Daniel did not take that ground. There was no such thing then as the presence of Christ, among His people as their king. Now, the promises made to the fathers suppose the presence of Christ, because Christ is, in the only full and proper sense, the seed of Abraham. Without Him what were the promises? Accordingly, with divine wisdom, Daniel was led to take the true ground. Whatever restoration was to take place then was not the complete one. This prophecy does bring us to the final blessing of Israel when the seventy weeks are consummated. But the return, after the fall of Babylon, was merely the accomplishment of what was partial and conditional, not the fulfillment of the promises to the fathers. This is worthy of observation. The promises that were then made were absolute, because they depended upon Christ, who is the true seed in the mind of God, though Israel were the seed after the letter. So that until Christ came, and His work was done, there could not be the full restoration of the people of Israel. When Israel took the ground of the law, in the time of Moses, they soon broke it and were broken. Even before it was put into their hands, on the tables of stone, they were worshipping the golden calf. The consequence was, that Moses from that time took a new place—the place of a mediator. He goes up again into the mount, and pleads with God for the people. God would not call them his people. He says to Moses, “thy people,” and would not own them as His. Moses, however, will not let God go, but pleads with Him that, let the people have done what they may, they are “Thy people;” rather let me be blotted out than Israel lose their inheritance. This was what God delighted in the reflex of His own love to them. You may have got some fault to find with one whom you love, but you would not like to hear another person finding it.

So Moses, pleading in behalf of Israel, was what met the heart of God. No doubt they had sinned a great sin, and Moses felt and confessed it, but he pleads withal that they are God's people.

God draws out the heart of Moses more and more; puts grand things before him, offers to exterminate the people and make of him a great nation. No, says Moses; I would rather lose everything than that they should be lost. This was the answer of grace to the grace that was in God's heart about people. Consequently, when God gave the law a second time, it was not given as before; but the Lord proclaimed His name as One that was abundant in goodness and truth, while He showed at the same time that He would by no means clear the guilty. In other words, the first time it was pure law, pure righteousness, which terminated in the golden calf, i.e., pure unrighteousness on the part of the people. And they must have been destroyed, but, on the pleading of Moses, God brings in a mingled system, partly law and partly grace.

That was the ground Daniel takes here. He pleads that, although they had broken the law, God had pronounced His name as “abundant in goodness and truth.” He believes that. He does not go back to the promises made to Abraham; on this ground the restoration would have been full and final, whereas this was not. And if you take a man now who is partly standing upon what Christ has done for him, and partly upon what he does for Christ, will you ever find such an one happy? Never. That was the ground the Israelites were on. Daniel, therefore, does not go beyond that. Christ was not yet come. On the other hand, when Christ is born you will find, if you look at the song of Zacharias, (Luke 1.) or of the angels, (Luke 2.) that the ground taken was not what God had said to Moses, but the promises made to the fathers. Up to the moment appointed of God, Zacharias had been dumb, a sign of the condition of Israel. But now that the forerunner is named on the eve of the coming of Christ, his mouth is opened.

Before we enter upon the prophecy of the seventy weeks more fully, as the Lord may enable us, I would first call your attention to this— “Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel.” Observe, all his thoughts are about Israel and about Jerusalem. The prophecy is not about Christianity, but about Israel. There is no understanding it unless we hold that fast. “Whiles I was speaking... and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” Then, in verse 24, the prophecy begins. It has to do with Daniel's people— “upon my people.” It speaks of a special period that was defined in connection with Israel's full deliverance. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Any one must see that the Jews and Jerusalem are meant. “... To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy, or Holy of holies.” From first to last this was a period that was marked out in the mind of God, and revealed to Daniel, touching the future destiny of the city and the people of God here below. A person at once is startled, and asks, Have we, then, nothing to do with “reconciliation for iniquity” and “everlasting righteousness?” I ask, of whom does the verse speak? You will find other scriptures which reveal our interest in the blotting out of sin, and the righteousness which we are made in Christ. But we must adhere to this golden rule in reading the word of God—never to force scripture in order to make it bear upon ourselves or others. When a person is converted, but not yet in peace, if he sees something about “an end of sins,” he at once applies that to himself. Feeling his need, he

grasps, like a drowning man, at what cannot bear his weight, or at least is not said about him. If directed to the declarations of the grace of God to us poor sinners of the Gentiles, instead of loss great would be his gain; he would have far more definite scripture to meet his need, and, if assailed by Satan, he would feel no weakness, or fear, or uncertainty. Whereas, if he were taking passages that applied to the Jews, Satan might touch him as to the ground of his confidence, and he would be obliged to say, This is not literally and certainly about me at all. The “seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city,” But I do not belong to them. There is the importance of understanding scripture, and seeing what God is speaking about. If this had been borne in mind the greater part of the controversy that has arisen about the passage never could have taken place. People were hasty and anxious to introduce something about themselves as Gentiles or Christians; whereas the attitude of the prophet, the circumstances of the people, and the words of the prophecy itself, exclude all thought, save of what concerns the Jews and their city. We must look elsewhere to find what relates to the Gentiles. Allow me, however, to remark, that the end of sins for that city and people rests upon exactly the same foundation as our own. Thus the Apostle John tells us, Jesus died “not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” (John 11:52.) There I find two distinct purposes in the death of Christ. This prophecy only takes in the first. He died for that nation—the Jewish nation. But He also, in the very same act of death, made provision, not only for the salvation that God has brought in for us, but also for gathering together “the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

So that if we take the Bible as it is, without being too anxious to find ourselves here or there, instead of losing, we shall always be gainers in extent, depth, and, above all, in clear firm hold of the blessing, and we shall not feel that we have been taking other people's property, and claiming goods upon a tenure that can be disputed, but that what we have is what God has freely and assuredly given us. That will never be the case, if I take up prophecies about Israel and found my title to blessing upon them; they are neither the gospel for the sinner nor the revelation of the truth about the Church.

This, then, is the proper bearing of the closing verses of the chapter before us. The details of the weeks follow the first general statement. “Seventy weeks,” he says, “are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” Then, in verse 25, the first particular comes in, after defining the starting point.

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks.” Now, in the book of Ezra, we have a commandment from the king Artaxerxes, called in profane history Artaxerxes Longimanus, one of the monarchs of the Persian empire. The first commandment was given to Ezra, the scribe, “In the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.” In the twentieth year of the same monarch's reign, another commandment was given to Nehemiah. Now, it is important for us to decide which of these two is referred to by Daniel. The first of them is recorded in Ezra 7, the second in Nehemiah ch. 2. A careful examination of the two will show which is meant. Many excellent persons have interpreted it in a way which differs from that which I believe to be correct. But scripture alone can decide the questions that arise out of scripture.

Foreign elements will lead to perplexity. Remark, that it is not merely a general order to the Jews, like that of Cyrus, permitting their return, but a special one to restore their polity. Now, what is the difference between the two in the reign of Artaxerxes? The one to Ezra was mainly with a view to the rebuilding of the temple; the other to Nehemiah, with a view to the city. Which is it here? “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” Evidently the city is intended; and if so, then we must see which of the two concerns the city. There can be little doubt it was the second, not the first. It was the commission given to Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, not that to Ezra, thirteen years before. A comparison with Nehemiah will confirm this.

What led certain persons to take the first of them as the one meant here, was the idea that the seventy weeks were to terminate with the coming of the Messiah. But that is not said. Verse 24 gives us much more than the coming of the Messiah. “Seventy weeks are determined to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity.” There you have at least His work. His suffering and death, we know, are implied. But more than that: “to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of holies,” by which last every Israelite would understand the sanctuary of God. It is plain that all this did not take place when the Messiah came, nor even when He died. For though the foundation of the blessing was laid in His blood, yet the bringing it in was not yet realized for Israel; and these seventy weeks suppose that Israel will then be fully blessed. This shows us the great importance of attending to the prophecy itself; not merely looking at the events, but interpreting the events by the prophecy. “From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince, (without defining what time,) shall be” —not seventy weeks—but “seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks;” that is sixty-nine weeks. There at once I learn that, for a reason unexplained at the beginning of the prophecy, sixty-nine weeks out of the seventy are rent from the last week. The chain is broken: one week is severed from the rest, I am told that, from the word to restore and build Jerusalem, (which is here made the starting point, or the time from which we begin to reckon the seventy weeks,) there are seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks: somewhat separate periods, but making in all sixty-nine weeks to the Messiah, the Prince. There evidently we have a very notable fact. And why, we may ask, are the seven weeks separated from the sixty-two weeks? The next words show: “The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” The seven weeks, I apprehend, were to be occupied with reconstituting the city of Jerusalem. In the lapse of seven weeks, or forty-nine years (for I suppose no reader will doubt that they are weeks of years) from the point of departure, the building that was begun would be finished. The street was to be built again, and the walls even in troublous times. Now the accounts of these times of difficulty and strait we have in the book of Nehemiah, who gives us the latest date that Old-Testament history records. Then, taking up the other period, after not only the seven weeks, but the sixty-two weeks, “shall Messiah be cut off.”

Before proceeding, I may observe that there are several little inaccuracies. It is “after the threescore and two weeks.” The article is left out here where it ought to be inserted, and put in, where it ought not to appear, in verse 27. “After the threescore and two weeks” —that is, in addition to the seven weeks spent in building the city of Jerusalem— “shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.” The proper meaning of that last expression, no one can doubt, is “and shall have nothing.” The margin is here more correct than the text and gives it so. The idea is that Messiah,

instead of being received by his people, and bringing in the blessing promised at the end of the seventy weeks, should, after sixty-nine weeks, be cut off, and have nothing. The entire rejection of the Messiah by His own people is intimated in these words. And here is the consequence. The key comes in now and explains the difficulty stated at the beginning—why the sixty-nine weeks are severed from the seventieth. The death of Christ rent the chain and broke off the relations of the people of Israel with God. Hence, Israel having rejected their own Messiah, the last week is for a time set aside. This week terminates in full blessing; but Israel are themselves rejected for their sin against their own Messiah. This is the reason why we read, after this, “and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; cud the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” He had said before that seventy weeks were determined to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, &c; that is, at the end of this appointed time, full blessing should be brought in. Whereas now we find that, so far from the blessing coming in, they have cut off their Messiah. He has nothing, and the consequence is that the city and sanctuary are not blessed, but on the contrary, “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary,” &c. There will be nothing but wars and desolations upon the Jewish people. The interruption of the seventy weeks takes place after the death of Christ, and the next events related are no accomplishment of that series at all. None can deny that a long period elapsed between the death of Christ and the taking of Jerusalem. Until Christ are sixty-nine weeks, and then events occur which the prophecy clearly reveals, but as clearly reveals that they are after the sixty-nine weeks, and before the seventieth. We have another people belonging to a prince, quite different from the already rejected Messiah, and this people come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. It was the Romans who came, spite of the dreadful expedient of Caiaphas nay, because of it. They came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary. But thus it was the accomplishment of this very prophecy. The Messiah was cut off, and the Romans, whom they had so desired to propitiate, swept them away from off the face of the earth, and there has been nothing but misery in that spot up to the present time. Jerusalem was thenceforward to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. There is a period still going on. Since then Jerusalem has only been changing one master for another. In our day we have seen a war undertaken about that very city and sanctuary, and none can say how soon there may be another. The objects of that war have been anything but gained and at rest. The same elements of strife and combustion still exist. It is an unsettled question. Like Jonah in the ship, such will Israel prove to the Gentiles by and by. There will be no rest for them—nothing but storms if they meddle with that people with whom the Lord has a controversy. The Jewish people are in a miserable state: they are suffering the consequences of their own sin. But those Gentiles will find their danger who meddle with that city and sanctuary, which God does destine yet to be cleansed. If we are not arrived at that period of blessing yet, it must be granted that the seventieth week is not yet accomplished. On the arrival of that week, full blessing comes in for Israel and Jerusalem. But no such blessing is realized; and therefore we may be quite sure that the last of the seventy weeks has not been fulfilled. The prophecy itself ought to prepare us for this. There is a regular chain up to the close of the sixty-ninth week, and then comes a great gap. The death of Christ broke the bond of connection between God and His people, and there was now no living link between them. They cut off their own Messiah and have since lost, for a time, their national place. A deluge of trouble broke upon them. “The king sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.” The last part of this verse shows us the

continuous desolation which has befallen their city and race, and this subsequent to the cross of the Messiah: and as none can pretend that anything like this occurred within the seven years subsequent to the crucifixion, a gap more or less extended must necessarily be allowed between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks.

Mark the accuracy of Scripture. It is not said that the coming prince was to destroy the city and sanctuary, but that his people should. Messiah the Prince had already come and been cut off. Now we hear of another and future prince, a Roman prince: for all know that it was the Romans who came and took away both the place and nation of the Jews. It is simply said, “The people of the prince that shall come,” implying that the people should come before a certain prince who was yet in the future. This I bold to be very important. No doubt there was a prince that led the Roman people to the conquest of Jerusalem, but Titus Vespasianus is not the personage alluded to here. If the people came first and the prince here intended was to follow at some future epoch, nothing more simple. “The end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” There is a long period of enmity and desolation. This is exactly where Israel are now. They have been turned out of that city and sanctuary, and have never had it since. It is true they have made a remarkable footing for themselves in most countries of the earth; their influence extends into every court and cabinet of the world; but they have never obtained the smallest power in their own land and city—they are of all persons the most proscribed there. Here we have these desolations going on.

In verse 27 comes the closing scene. “And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.” The margin gives it correctly. It is not “the” covenant.

The little “the” has misled many. It is “a,” or rather the idea is general. It means “to confirm covenant.” If you read it “the covenant” the reader is at once apt to infer that “the prince” means the Messiah, and that He was to confirm His covenant. But the passage runs, “He shall confirm covenant (or a covenant) with the many for one week.” No doubt the Messiah brought in the blood of the new covenant; but is that meant here? It supposes the desolations going on all this while, after which comes the end of the age, which includes, or occurs in, the seventieth week. The death of the Messiah took place long ago; the destruction of Jerusalem thirty or forty years after. After that a long period followed of desolations and wars in connection with Jerusalem. After all these we have a covenant spoken of, so that we must examine the passage to see who it is that makes this covenant. There are two persons mentioned. In verse 25 there is Messiah the Prince; but He has come and been cut off. In verse 26 there is “the people of the prince that shall come.” It is to this future Roman prince that verse 27 alludes. He it is that shall confirm covenant with many, or rather with “the many;” i.e., the mass or majority. The remnant will not have any part in it. Observe that now it is for the first time that the seventieth week comes forward. “And he shall confirm covenant with the mass for one week.” Now I ask, on the supposition that Christ was meant, what sense is there here? One week can mean nothing but a period of seven years. Was the new covenant ever made for seven years? There is no sense in such a thought. Is it not quite plain that the idea of interpreting this to be the covenant of Christ carries absurdity upon the face of it? For Christ's is an everlasting covenant—this is only made for seven years. When and how did Christ make a covenant for seven years? “And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” I am aware that persons apply that to the death of Christ. But we have had Christ's death long ago—before the

seventy weeks began; and all the desolations of Israel coming in after that; and subsequently another prince coming, who confirms a covenant for one week. He, not Christ, makes it with them for seven years. But in the midst of the term he puts an end to their worship. They have got sacrifice and oblation again at this time, and he causes it to cease.

But have we not other light upon this passage? Is it only here that we read of such a covenant, and of the sudden termination of Jewish rites and ceremonies by a certain foreign prince? As to the covenant, if we refer to Isa. 28., it is said in ver. 15, “Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us.” And in verse 18, “And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.” I have no question that this is the covenant referred to here. And the meaning of it is confirmed by another thing: that is to say, that in consequence of this Roman prince having made a wicked covenant with the Jewish people, and then interrupted their sacrifices and brought in idolatry—or what is called in scripture, “the abomination of desolation” —he will stop the Jewish ritual and set up an idol, and himself to be worshipped there. When open idolatry is in connection with the sanctuary, God sends a dreadful scourge upon them. They had hoped to escape it by making a covenant with this prince: they fondly thought, as it is said in Isaiah, to be thus delivered from the overflowing scourge. The latter is the one that becomes the great head of the eastern powers of the world arrayed against the western. The mass of the Jews will make a covenant with the great prince of the west, who will then be nominally their friend. And when the half of the time is expired, this very person will introduce idolatry, and force it upon them. Then will come the final catastrophe of Israel. The stopping of the Jewish ceremonies does not depend upon this scripture only. In Dan. 7. the little horn is the emperor of the west, or “the prince that shall come.” Of him it is said that “he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of times.” Mark the analogy between that statement and what we have here. What is meant by “a time and times, and the dividing of time?” Three and a half years, to be sure. And what is meant by a half a week? Exactly the same period. In the midst of the term for which the covenant was made with Israel, he will stop their worship, and will take all their Jewish ceremonials into his own hands. Nor will he allow them to keep their feasts. “They shall be given into his hands” —that is, the Jewish times and laws. God will not own Jewish worship then; and therefore He will not preserve them in it. He will let this man have his own way; who, although he has made a covenant with Israel as a friend, will break it and substitute idolatry. Then will come the overflowing scourge. “In the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” But I am obliged to refer to another and more correct representation of the words that follow. The English translators were very doubtful of its true meaning. There are different ways of taking it, but the literal version is this: “And for (or, on account of) the wing of abominations, a desolator.” That is, because of his taking idols under his protection, there shall be a desolator, namely, the overflowing scourge, or the Assyrian. “The prince that shall come” does not desolate Jerusalem. At this time he has made a covenant with them; and although he breaks his covenant, still, being their head and patron, and having his minion, the false prophet, who will have his seat there as the great arch-priest of that day, he will carry on, with the aid of this false prophet, the worship of his image in the temple of God. In consequence of this, the king of the north shall come

down as a desolator. There will thus be two enemies at that time for the righteous Jews. The desolator, or the Assyrian, is the enemy from without. The enemy from within is the Antichrist, or their willful king, that corrupts them in connection with the Roman prince. So that the true meaning of this is: “Because of the protection of abominations, [there shall be] a desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.” Jerusalem is meant by “the desolate.” And the whole consummation, or what God has decreed against them, must take its course. “That generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.” These will be the last representatives of the Christ rejecting portion of Israel. God will allow all His judgments to come down upon them. They will be swept away, and then will remain the holy seed, the godly remnant, whom God will constitute the great nucleus of blessing to the whole world under the reign of the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 45

Remarks on Daniel 10-11

IT is plain that chaps. 10. 11. and 12. are one continuous subject, and show us the circumstances in which Daniel received this last, and, in some respects, most remarkable of all his prophecies. For, in the whole compass of divine writ, there is no such circumstantial and minute statement of historical facts, and that, too, running down from the Persian monarchy, under which Daniel saw the vision, till the time when all the powers of this world shall be obliged to bow to the name of the Lord. Not that the prophecy runs on from the time of the Persian empire to the reign of Christ without a single break: that would indeed be contrary to the analogy of all the rest of God's word. But we have, first of all, a concise, and, at the same time, clear, statement of the facts, until we come to a remarkable personage, who was the type of the great and notorious leader of the opposition to God's people at the close of the present age. Having brought us up to this, the prophecy breaks off, and then at once spans over the interval, and gives us “the time of the end:” so that we can understand how it is that there is that gap. For the present I must close where the break comes in. Upon a future occasion, I hope, the Lord willing, to take up the antitypical crisis at the close, which begins with chap. 11:36. We shall find that it is not confined to any particular evil one; but that in the end of the chapter we have the conflicts of the leaders of that day in and round the Holy Land. And then chap. xii. shows us the dealings of God with His own people, until they and Daniel himself shall stand in their lot at the end of the days: this last, that is to say, the blessing of God's people, or at least of the godly remnant, being the great object of the close.

“In the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar,” &c. Daniel, we find, had not taken advantage of the decree of Cyrus, that went out two years before, leaving the Israelites at liberty to return to their own land, according to prophecy. Daniel was still in the scene of the captivity pf the Jews. But more than that, the Spirit of God draws attention to the state of the prophet's soul. He was not enjoying himself in a stranger-land; but mourning and fasting—and this, in circumstances where he had all, of course, at his command. He was found, as it is said, eating no pleasant bread, “neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” Now surely it is not for nothing that the Spirit of God has shown us Daniel, not only before the decree of Cyrus went forth, but afterward, in such an attitude before the Lord. We can all understand, when the moment approached for the little remnant to leave Babylon, and return to the land of their fathers, that he should be found chastening his own soul before God, and passing in review the sin that had occasioned so fearful a chastening upon the people from the Lord—although he was even then doing exactly the contrary of what the flesh would have done under these circumstances. For when some great outward mercy is to be enjoyed is the time when man naturally is apt to give rather a loose rein to his enjoyment. In Daniel we see the contrary of this. He took the place of confession; and of confessing, not merely the sins of Israel, but his own. All was before him. None but a holy man could have so deep a sense of sin. But the same energy of the Holy Spirit which gives real self-abasement, enables one also in love to take in the sad and abject condition of God's people. Such thoughts as these seem to have filled the soul of Daniel

when he found out by the prophecy of Jeremiah that deliverance was just at hand for Israel. There was no kind of exultation over a fallen enemy—he shouts of triumph because the people were to go free; although Cyrus himself considered it a high honor that God had made him to be the instrument of both. Well might a man of God ponder over what sin had wrought when the Lord could not even speak of Israel as His people, although faith in Daniel only the more led him to plead that they were.

Here the decree has gone forth according to his expectation. The Persian Emperor had opened the door for the prisoners of hope to leave Babylon, and those who pleased had gone back into their land. Daniel was not among these. Instead of anticipating nothing but bright visions of immediate glory, he is still found, and found more than ever, in a posture of humiliation before God. When the reason of this prolonged term of fasting comes out, we are let into the connection of the world that is seen with that which is unseen. The veil is not merely raised from the future, for all prophecy does that; but the statement of the vision here given us discloses, in an interesting light which is around us now, but unseen. Daniel was permitted to hear it, in order that we might know it, and might also have the consciousness for ourselves, that, besides the things that are seen, there are things invisible, far more important than what is seen.

If there are conflicts upon earth, they flow from higher conflicts—the angels contending with these evil beings, the instruments of Satan, who constantly seek to thwart the counsels of God with regard to the earth. This comes out remarkably here. We know that angels have to do with the saints of God; but we may not have discerned so clearly that they have to do also with the outward events of this world. The light of God here shines upon this subject, so that we are enabled to understand that there is not a movement of the world but what is connected with the providential dealings of God. And angels are the instruments of executing His will they are expressly said to do His pleasure. On the other hand, there are those that thwart God constantly: evil angels are not found wanting. Those who are not alive to this certainly lose something, because it gives us a far stronger view of the necessity of having God as our strength. Were it a mere question between man and man, we could understand that one person, in the consciousness of his strength or his wisdom, or other resources, might not fear another. But if it be a fact that we have to contend with powers that are immensely superior to us in everything of outward intelligence and might (for angels excel in strength, as we are told) it is clear that we are thrown, if we are to be conquerors, upon the support of Another that is mightier than all that can be against us. The faith that thus counts on God is a deliverance from anxiety about all that is taking place in the world. For although there are wicked spirits, and men are only as the pieces that are moved by them in the game of this life, yet, in fact, there is a supreme hand and mind that leads to the moves behind the scene, and unknown to the persons acting. This gives a much more solemn character to our thoughts of all that occurs here below.

Besides these angels, another appears on the scene: “a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz.” he, of whom we have so magnificent a description in ver. 6, and whom Daniel alone sees, does not appear to have been a mere angel. He may have been seen in some features of angelic glory: but I conceive this is one who often appears both in New and Old Testament history—the Lord of glory Himself. He appears now as a man—as One who had the deepest sympathy with His servant upon the earth. All others had fled to hide themselves, Daniel abode: nevertheless, there remained no strength in him—his comeliness was turned into

corruption. Even a beloved man and faithful saint of God must prove that all his past wisdom was unavailing; for he was now a very aged man, and had been singularly faithful to the Lord. At this very time he was the one that best realized the true condition of Israel. For he saw well that a long time must elapse before the Messiah must come, and the revealing angel had announced that the Messiah should be cut off and have nothing. No wonder, then, that he was mourning. Others might be full of their bright hopes that the Messiah would soon come and exalt them as a nation in the world. But Daniel was found mourning and fasting; and now this vision passes before him, this blessed person reveals Himself to him. Yet, spite of all the love that rested upon him—spite of his familiar knowledge of God's ways, and the favor that had been shown him in previous visions, Daniel is made thoroughly conscious of his own utter weakness. All his strength crumbled into dust before the Lord of glory. And this has a moral for us of no little moment. However much may be the value of what a saint has learned, the past alone does not enable us to understand the new lesson of God. God Himself is necessary for this—not merely what we have learned already. I think that this is a weighty truth and most practical. We all know the tendency there is in men to lay up a store for the time to come. I do not deny the value of spiritual knowledge in various ways—whether in helping others, or in forming ourselves a right and holy opinion of circumstances that are passing around. But where the Lord brings out something not previously learned, then Daniel, spite of all that he had known before, is utterly powerless. He is most of all prostrated in this last vision, and realizes more than ever the nothingness of everything within him. He is thrown entirely upon God for power to stand up and enter into what the Lord was about to make known to him. The same thing appears in the Apostle John, who had lain in the Savior's bosom while on earth, and of all the disciples had most entered into His thoughts. Yet, let that Savior stand before him in His glory, to make known to him His mind about the future, and what was even the Apostle John? The Lord has to lay His hand upon him, bidding him fear not. He has to encourage him by what He was Himself—the Living One who had died but was alive again, and had the keys of death and hides. Therefore it was that he was to listen with the most perfect confidence, because that was what Christ was. There was no power but must fail before Him.

Daniel, in his measure, enters into this here. The death of the flesh must always be realized before the life of God can be enjoyed. This is important, practically. In the grace that brings salvation, it is not that death must be learned first, and life afterward. Life in Christ comes to me as a sinner, and that life exposes the death in which I lay. If I must realize my death in order for that life to come to me, it would be evidently man set into his true place, as a preparation for his blessing from God. That is not grace. “That which was from the beginning,.... which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life.” That is to say, it is the person of Christ Himself, who comes and gives the blessing. After that the soul learns that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” It learns that if we say that we have light—fellowship with Him who is light—and yet walk in darkness, we he and do not the truth. All the practical learning of what God is, and what we are, follows the manifestation of life to us in the person of Christ. If you speak of the order as to a sinner, it is sovereign grace which gives life in Another; but if of the order of progress in the believer, it is not so. The believer having already got life, must mortify all that pertains to him, merely in nature, in order that that life should be manifested and strengthened. That is all-important for the saint, as the other is for the sinner. Man in his natural state does not believe that he is dead, but he is laboring to get life. He wants life: he has none. It is Another alone that brings and gives it to him in perfect grace—seeing only evil in him, but coming with nothing but

good, and bringing it in love. This is Christ. But in the believer's case, having already found life in Him, there must be the judgment of the evil, in order that that new and divine life should be developed and grow. So that, while to the one it is life exposing the death and meeting the man in death and delivering him from it, to the other it is the practical putting to death everything that has already existence naturally in him. All that must have the sentence of death put upon it, in order that the life be unhindered in its growth and manifestation.

Daniel was proving this as the practical means of entering into, and being made the suited witness of the wonders that the Spirit of God was about to bring before him. Hence, whatever might have been the favor in which he stood,—and he was, “a man greatly beloved,” —nevertheless, death must be realized by his soul. “And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.” And then we have an intimation brought out to him how it was that there had been such a delay. “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one-and-twenty days; but lo I Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the Kings of Persia.” Here, I apprehend, we have another person speaking. Not the first and glorious one that Daniel had seen, but used as a servant—an angel, in fact, that the other employed. The last chapter will prove clearly that there was more than one person sent: and it is plain from the language of the speaker that he is subordinate. Daniel is encouraged by learning that from the first day that he had set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before God, his words were heard. He did not receive the answer the first day nor the second. Not until one-and-twenty days after did the answer arrive, and yet it was sent from God the very first day. Of course, he could at once have given it. But what then? First of all, the terrible struggle that is always raging between the instruments of God and the emissaries of Satan would not have been so dearly understood. Then, again, faith and patience would not have had their perfect work.

I am not forgetting that the Holy Ghost is sent down now to dwell in the hearts of believers in a way not known then. For, although the Spirit of God was always at work in the holy prophets and in holy men, yet the abiding indwelling of the Holy Ghost was that which was not and could not be until Jesus was glorified, and the great work of redemption was wrought, in virtue of which the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven; to take his abode in the hearts of those that believe, the seal of the blessing which is theirs in Christ. So that, besides this outward, providential care of God, so beautifully brought out here, we have this blessed, divine person constituting our bodies the temple of God. Yet the outward struggles go on. The same thing that hindered Daniel from having the manifest answer to his prayer, may hinder us from having the answer of circumstances. The answer of faith we ought always to reckon on at once; the answer of circumstances, governed of God, so as to bring out a manifest answer, we may have to wait for. Daniel had, and the reason is given us. From verse 13 we learn, that although God had sent the answer from the very first day, the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood for twenty-one days exactly the time that Daniel was kept in mourning and fasting before God. “But lo! Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the Kings of Persia.” Plainly it is an angel that speaks. It would be derogatory to the Lord to suppose that He was the One who needed help from one of His own angels. But Michael was mentioned here, because he was well-known to be the archangel, who took a special guardian care over the nation of Israel. So that, however people may make a mock

at the truth of the interposition and guardianship of angels, yet scripture is quite clear about it. Romanism, as we know, has made them objects of adoration. But the truth itself is of special interest. That angels are employed of God in particular services is plain from the word of God. Nor was this merely a new truth. We find that Jude mentions as a well-known circumstance the contention of Michael the archangel with the devil about the body of Moses. The same truth comes out again in this. It was Michael's care over the Jewish people. He knew their tendency to idolatry, and that the man whom they had rebelled against during life, they would make an idol of after his death. And thus, Michael, as the instrument of blessing on God's part to Israel, contends with Satan, so that the body of Moses was not found—the Lord being said to have buried it; though the instrument that the Lord employed was Michael. Now here we have this interesting ray of light cast upon earthly circumstances. The powers of this world may be governing, but angels have not given up their functions. There are the devil and his angels, and Michael and the holy angels with him, brought forward again in the last book of the Bible. The facts of Christ having come, and of the Holy Ghost having been given, do not supersede this. On the contrary, we know that there will be one most tremendous conflict at the close between the holy angels and the wicked ones, when the heavens shall be forever cleared of those evil powers that had for so long defiled them. This is most interesting, as showing the perfect patience of God. Because we know that with a word He could put down the devil and all his host. But He does not. He allows Satan even to venture into the lower heavens—nay, still to have possession of them. Therefore it is that he is called “the prince of the power of the air,” as he is called elsewhere “the prince” and “the god of this world.” But I believe it is only there that he is prince. We never read of such a thing as Satan being prince in hell. It is a favorite dream of great poets, and of small ones too, but we never read of it in Scripture. What it shows us is, that his real power now is either in the heavens or on the earth; but that when he is broken, both in his heavenly usurpation first, and then in his earthly power, he is east down to hell; and that instead of being a king in hell, he will be the most miserable object of the vengeance of God. The solemn thing is, that he is reigning here now, and people do not feel it. His worst reign is that which he acquired—not that which he had before. The death of Christ, although it is the ground on which he will eventually lose all his power, was, nevertheless, the means by which he became the great usurping power, opposing God in all his thoughts about this world. But here is a thought that is of importance for us. If God permits such a thing as this—if He allows the presence of this evil one, the enemy of His Son in heaven itself—if, instead of the crucifixion of Christ leading God to deprive Satan of all his power, we find Him after this displaying His greatest longsuffering, what a lesson this is for us not to trouble ourselves about circumstances! No man has ever trodden these unknown regions: there has been none to tell us about them except the word of Ged, which lays it bare before us. We do not know all of course; but we know enough to see that there is this tremendous power of evil opposed to God, and that the power of God is always and infinitely mightier than the power of evil. Evil is but an accident which has got into the world through the rebellion of the creature against God. By “accident,” I mean that it was only the creature's interrupting for a time the purposes of God; while in truth it but served to bring them out with brighter luster. To bless heaven and earth was the plan of God, and that will stand. Evil will be banished from the scene, and evil men will suffer the awful consequences of having rejected the only good and blessed One.

But while the certainty of all this has been made known to faith before the execution of the thoughts of God, we have the view opened to us of the grave conflict that is unseen. This puts faith

to the test. Daniel had to go on waiting, mourning, praying, spreading out all before God. We see in him the perseverance of faith—praying always. And how was his faith not rewarded! For when the angel does come, he makes known this at the bidding of the glorious One who had first appeared to Daniel. It was the prince of the kingdom of Persia who had withstood him one-and-twenty days; but Michael had come to his help.

I may also observe that we have all important hint in the next verse, of the main objects that God had an eye to in this prophecy. Only persons that have read much know the torture the chapter has suffered by men's own thoughts brought to explain it by. The pope, of course, has been very prominently introduced into it. And then the daring soldier of the early days of this century is found in it too: I allude, of course, to Napoleon. In short, whatever has been going on in the world of extraordinary interest, persons have tried to find it in Dan. 11. The 14th verse of chap. 10. puts to the rout all such thoughts. “I am come,” says the angel, “to make thee know what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.”

Nothing can be plainer. It is put as a sort of frontispiece to the prophecy to show that the great thought of God for the earth is the Jewish people, and the main design of this prophecy is what must befall them in the latter days. We have the series of the history almost from the day in which Daniel lived, but the latter days are the point of it. Prophecy in general may afford to give a little earnest close at hand, but we never see the full drift of it, save in the latter day; and then the thoughts and plans of God always have, as their earthly center, the Jews and their Messiah. I do not mean to deny that the Church is a far higher thing than the Jews, and the relations of Christ to the Church nearer and deeper than His relations to the Jews. But you do not lose Christ and the Church, because you believe in His link with Israel. Nay, if you believe not this, you confound them with your own relations to Christ, and both are lost, as far as definite knowledge and full enjoyment go. This is for want of looking at Scripture as a whole. If chap. 10. had been read as an introduction to chap. 11., such a mistake might not have been made. But some read Scripture very much as others preach it. A few words are taken and are made the motto of a discourse, which perhaps has no real connection with the scope of that passage—perhaps not with any other in the Bible. The thoughts may be true enough abstractedly, but what we want is a help to understand the word of God as a whole, as well as the details. If you were to take a letter from a friend and were merely to fasten upon a sentence or a part of one, in the middle of it, and dislocate it from the rest, how could you understand it? And yet Scripture has infinitely larger connections than anything that could be written on our part; and therefore there ought to be far stronger reasons for taking Scripture in its connection than the little effusions of our own mind. This is a great key to the mistakes which many estimable people make in the interpretation of Scripture. They may be men of faith too; but still it is difficult to rise above their ordinary habits. The prophecy before us shows the importance of the principle I have been insisting on. Take the ordinary books on this prophecy—no matter when, where, or by whom written; and you will find that the great effort is to make a center of their own days, &c. Here is the answer to all. Neither Rome, nor the papacy, nor Napoleon is the object of the prophecy, but “what shall befall thy people (Daniel's people, the Jews) in the latter days.”

We then find Daniel expressing in humbleness of mind his unfitness for receiving such communications. First, one like the similitude of the sons of men touches his lips and he is instructed to speak unto the Lord. He confesses his weakness—that there was no strength left in

him. But “there came again and touched him one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong.” Men, until they are thoroughly established in peace, until their hearts know the real source of strength, are not capable of profiting by prophecy.

Here we find Daniel set upon his feet, his mouth opened, his fears hushed, before the Lord can open out the future to him. His heart must be in perfect peace in the strength of the Lord and in the presence of his God. Anxiety of spirit, the want of settled peace has more to do than people think with the little progress that they make in understanding many parts of God's word. It is not enough that a man have life and the Spirit of God; but there must be the breaking down of the flesh and the simple, peaceful resting in the Lord. Daniel must go through this scene in order to fit him for what he is to learn, and so must we in our measure. We must realize that same peace and strength in the Lord. If I am in terror of the Lord's coming, because I am not sure of how I shall stand before Him, how can I honestly rejoice that it is so near? There will be a hindrance in my spirit to the clear understanding of the mind of God on that subject. The reason of that lack of competence is not want of learning, but of being thoroughly established in grace—the want of knowing what we are in Christ Jesus. No matter what other things there may be—nothing will repair that sad deficiency. I speak now of Christian men. As for mere scholars dabbling in these things, it is as completely out of their sphere as a horse would be in pretending to judge of the mechanism of a watch. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It is only a scribe of this age meddling with what belongs to another world.

We have a rapid survey of what was about to befall Israel in the latter days. It is the same speaker here as in chap. 10. “Also I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia.” There we have the succession of Persian monarchs from Cyrus. Scripture does show us who these were, although their names are not mentioned here. I would refer you to Ezra 4., where you will find these very three kings mentioned. In Ezra 4. the occasion arose out of the attempt of the enemies of Israel to stop the building of the temple: and these hired “counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” Now in order to understand that chapter, you must bear in mind that, from the sixth verse down to the end of verse 23, is a parenthesis. The beginning and end of the chapter refer to events during the reign of Darius. But the Spirit of God goes back to show that these adversaries had been working from the days of Cyrus till the days of Darius. Consequently, in the parenthesis from verse 6-23 inclusively, you have the various monarchs that had come between Cyrus and Darius, whose minds the adversaries had been trying to work upon. “In the reign of Ahasuerus,” i.e., the successor of Cyrus, called in profane history Cambyses, “in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.” Then we have the next king. “And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam,” &c. This is a different person from the Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah, who lived at a later epoch, and is called in profane history Smerdis the magician, who by wicked means acquired the crown for a time, and lent an ear to the accusations against the Jews. This usurper was put to death through a conspiracy headed by Darius, not the Mede of Daniel, but the Persian spoken of in the book of Ezra. Darius Hystaspes was his historical name. He follows immediately: so that we have these three kings mentioned in

Ezra 4. exactly answering to the three in Dan. 11:2. Thus we find one part of Scripture throwing light upon another, without the need of going into the territories of man at all. “Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia.” These came after Cyrus and were called in Scripture, as we have seen, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius: and in profane history Cambyses, Smerdis the magician, and Darius Hystaspes. “And the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” That is the celebrated Xerxes, who stirred up all against Greece. This confirms an idea thrown out on a former occasion that the reason of the he-goat's coming with such fury against Persia, was in return for the Persian assault upon Greece. Xerxes was the man who made that great attempt. His riches are proverbially known, and no event made so profound an impression on the world then as that expedition against Greece and its consequences. Then, in verse 3, Persia, the ram of chap. 8., is dropped, and we find the he-goat of that chapter, or rather its horn. “A mighty king shall stand up that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.” That is Alexander. “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven.” That was true at his death: the Greek empire was then broken into fragments. “And not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up even for others besides those.” It was not to be a single head getting rid of the family of Alexander and taking possession of his kingdom. This was to be divided into a number of parts, four more particularly; and out of these four divisions two acquire an immense importance. But what constitutes their chief importance here? When God speaks of things upon the earth, He always measures from Israel; because Israel is His earthly center.

Hence it is that the powers which meddle with Israel are those that in God's view are important. This is the reason why the other kingdoms are not noticed: only those of the north and of the south. And why are they so described? Palestine is the place from which God reckons. The king of the north means north of the land that His eyes were upon; and the southern power means south of that same land. These are the countries commonly called Syria and Egypt. These two are referred to throughout the chapter, the other divisions of Alexander's empire being put aside. Only those are looked at which had to do with Israel. Now we are told that “the king of the south shall be strong” —he is the person well known as one of the Ptolemies or Lagidae— “and one of his princes” (i.e., of the chiefs of Alexander); “and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.” This is another person, the first king of the north, who rises in strength above Ptolemy. In profane history he is called Seleucus. The descendants of both these and their strife is often spoken of in the history of the Maccabees. There minute accounts are given of the transactions predicted in this chapter: and of the two, what God says in few words is infinitely more to the point than man's long tale.

But let us look a little at some of these events. “And in the end of years they (i.e., the kings of the north and of the south) shall join themselves together. For the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.” One remark before going further. In this chapter it is not the same king of the north, nor the same king of the south, that we have all the way through, but a great many different ones. The same official title runs all through. As people say in law, The king, or the queen, never dies. That is just the way we are to look at it here. This sixth verse is an instance. “In the end of years they shall join themselves together.” They are not the same kings of the north and south who had been spoken of in verse 5, but their descendants.

“In the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.” They made, not only an alliance, but a marriage between their families. “But she shall not retain the power of the arm.” The attempt to make a cordial understanding between Syria and Egypt, by marriage, would be a failure. Of course, this was exactly verified in history. There was such a marriage, and the king of the north even got rid of his former wife in order to marry the daughter of the king of the south. But it only made matters a great deal worse. They had hoped to terminate their bloody wars, but it really laid the foundation of an incomparably deeper grudge between them. As it is said here, “Neither shall he stand nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them and prevail.” It was not her seed, but her brother—out of the same parental stock. She was one branch and he another. The brother of this Berenice, daughter of the Egyptian king, comes up to avenge the murder of his sister, and prevails against the king of the north. Here we have the explanation confirmed of what the kingdom of the south is. “He shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.” “So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.” There you have Egypt triumphant for a time; but the tide was soon to turn. “His sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces. And one shall certainly come, (the other disappeared,) and overflowed and pass through; then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler.” Now comes another war at a subsequent date: and this time it is the south returning the blow of the north. “The king of the south shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.” There the Spirit of God refers to several notable facts. The two principal actors are the kings of Syria and Egypt. There was the hand that lay between them—a sort of burdensome stone to these kings who made it their battle-field, which ever went to the conqueror. If the king of the north was victorious, Palestine fell under Syria; and in the same way if the king of Egypt got the better. But God never allowed rest to those who took His land. They might intermarry and contract alliances; but it only proved the prelude to graver outbreaks—brothers, sons, grandsons, &c., taking up the quarrels of their kindred. “The Scripture cannot be broken.” All was distinctly laid down there beforehand.

“And when he hath taken away the multitude his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands; but he shall not be strengthened by it.” Then we find that the king of the north returns and “sets forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army, and with much riches. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south; also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision.” Allow me to call attention to these words. It at once settles the question that might be asked. How do you know that Daniel's people do not mean God's people in a spiritual sense? The answer is given here— “the robbers of thy people.” It at once puts aside the plea for a spiritual sense. We could hardly talk about “robbers” in that case. This confirms what ought not to have needed further evidence—that Daniel's people mean the Jewish people and nothing else. Here we find that some of the Jews form a connection with one of these contending monarchs of the north. These are called here “the robbers of thy people,” and take the part of Antiochus, the king of the

north, against Ptolemy Philopator, or rather his son, but all came to naught. The Syrian king might hope that by bringing in this new element, by getting the countenance of the Jews, perhaps God would be with him. But no. They were the robbers of the people—unfaithful to God, and not holding fast their separation front the Gentiles. They, too, might think to establish the vision, “but they shall fall.”

“So the king of the north shall come and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities; and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, (that is the king of the north,) and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.” Another remarkable thing that we see here is that the Spirit of God still holds to the importance of that little strip of land—the territory of Palestine. It was God's gift to God's people. Whatever might be its deplorable condition, it is the glorious land still. God repents not of His purposes: “He will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land.” And if, when it is a question of God's earthly purposes, He thus holds to them, spite of every hindrance, what will He not do for His heavenly people? Who can doubt that he will bring them to heavenly glory?

“He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her; but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.” This is another attempt at marriage; only it is the converse. It is not now the king's daughter of the south coming to the king of the north; but the king of the north gives his daughter Cleopatra to the king of the south, hoping that she will maintain Syrian influence in the court of Egypt. That is what is called here “corrupting her;” because it was plainly contrary to the very essence of the marriage-tie: it was an attempt to use her in order to serve his political purposes. “But she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.” All the pleas—the innermost secret of their hearts, come out here. There is another disgrace, which is not only known to God, but is made known to His servants.

“After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many; but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.” That is, Antiochus meddles with Greece, and takes many of the isles; but this other prince, for his own behalf, takes up the contest against the king of the north. Here we have the entrance upon the scene of a new power—the first allusion to the Romans. A Roman consul is meant by the prince that comes on his own behalf against the king of the north. He will not allow Greece to be touched. It was one of the Scipios who interfered. “Then he shall turn his face towards the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall and not be found.” He is obliged to return to Syria, but he shall stumble and fall.

“Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes, in the glory of the kingdom.” The Romans, who defeated the father, obliged his son to raise a heavy annual tribute. That was all that the poor man did during his life. “Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle.” He was killed by one of his own sons. “And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overthrown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also, the princes of the covenant.

And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up and shall become strong with a small people." This is the man who typifies the last king of the north; called in profane history Antiochus Epiphanes; morally abominable, but most notorious for his interference with the Jews, first by flattery and corruption, and afterward by violence. This is the man the Spirit of God dwells most on, because he most meddled with Israel, the glorious land and the sanctuary. He it was who enforced idolatry in the temple itself, setting up an image to be worshipped even in the holy of holies. Therefore it is that he acquires importance. Otherwise he was a man little known, except for daring wickedness. Nothing can be more simple. His history consists of intrigues, first against the king of the south, and then against the Jews; and of various expeditions, in some of which he was successful at first, but afterward entirely defeated. "He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his father's fathers..... And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand." These kings try to plan against each other, but all is defeated. "Both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land (i.e., in the north.) At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter." Then we have further details.

"For the ships of Chittim shall come against him." There are these indefatigable Romans that come in again. They had dealt with his father when he had made an attack upon Greece; and now that the son had his hand over the throat of his prey, the Roman consul came, and at once forbad his doing anything further. He even drew a circle round him, as is well known, when the artful king wished to gain time to evade. The answer was demanded before he stepped out of the circle, and he was obliged to give it. This was a death-blow to all his policy. He went home a miserable defeated man, with a heart utterly infuriate, though putting on a humble appearance before the Romans. He goes, therefore, to wreak out all the anger of his heart upon the Jews. As it is said here "Therefore shall he be grieved, and return and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." Poor as the Jews were, they were the only witnesses for God upon the earth, and he hastens to pour out his fury upon whatever bore a testimony to God among them. This was his ruin, and brought God's vengeance upon him. "He shall even return and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant," i.e., with the apostates of the Jews. "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." He will put an end to the Jewish service and will set up an idol, "the abomination that maketh desolate," in the temple of Jerusalem. It is a mistake to suppose that this refers to the last days. It is only a type of what will take place then. The latter part of the chapter, and the next chapter, do refer to the latter day in the full sense of the word. But here is the step of transition from what is past to the future. You come down in regular historical order to Antiochus Epiphanes, and then we meet with a great break. Scripture itself intimates as much. But Antiochus did on a small scale what the great northern king of the latter day will do on a larger one. It is said, (v. 35,).... "even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." There God stops. He says, as it were, I have come to the man that shows you in

type what is to befall you in the latter days; and so He dwells emphatically upon this king, laying before them the extreme wickedness of his heart and conduct. The Spirit then stops the course of the history, and plunges at once into the last scene. This, however, must be reserved for another occasion. What we have seen shows us that whatever may be the general outline of events elsewhere, God can be, and sometimes is, singularly minute in the details of a prophecy, and no where more so than in this very chapter. And what is the great objection raised by infidels against it? That it must have been written after the events had taken place? Certain it is, that there is no one historian of these times who gives us such an admirable account as we have in these few verses. If I want to know the history of these two contending monarchies, Syria and Egypt, I must look here. How entirely we can confide in the word of God about everything! It may be an exception to His general rule to dwell upon the kings of the north and of the south, but He does so at times. The great thing on which He bestows care is the souls of His people. May our hearts answer to the interest that He takes in us!

Chapter 46

Remarks on Daniel 11:36-45

FROM the twenty-first verse we have had the account of the king of the north, known in profane history as Antiochus Epiphanes. The Spirit of God has entered into much fuller detail in speaking of his history, because his conduct, specially at the close, in meddling with the Jews, and their city, and their sanctuary, furnished the occasion for a type of the last king of the north, who will be found following in his predecessors' wake, save that his guilt will be incomparably graver in the sight of God—so flagrant, indeed, that His judgment can tarry no longer. This accounts for a circumstance that has often perplexed the students of Daniel's prophecy. We read of an abomination of desolation in the predicted account of Antiochus; (11: 31); and it has been commonly supposed that our Lord refers to this in Matt. 24:15. Those who looked for the future fulfillment of this abomination have sought to reconcile it with the facts, by the assumption that the Spirit of God must have branched out into the future personage that Antiochus represented. But in my judgment there is no need for anything so unnatural. Antiochus Epiphanes was only a type, and verse 31 does not go beyond his history, save as a foreshadowing.

In other words, to the end of verse 31 all is strictly historical—typical, of course, of the future, but nothing more. And therefore the answer to the difficulty that some find in our Lord's quoting, as they suppose Dan. 11:31, is really as plain as possible. He does not quote this verse. The passage he refers to is in chap. 12. In chap. 12:11, you will find an expression similar to this. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” There we have a defined date, which connects this last setting up of the desolating abomination with the deliverance our Lord predicts in Matt. 24., and Jacob's most fiery trial is that which just precedes his deliverance. Now there are more reasons than one for believing this passage in Dan. 12. to be what our Lord cites. Some of them depend upon considerations more fit for the study than for public ministry. But the sum of the matter is, that the expressions the Holy Ghost employs in chap. 11:31, and in chap. 12: 11, differ. In chap. 11: 31, it means the abomination of him that desolates, or of the desolater. Whereas, in chap. 12: 11 the true meaning is that which is given in our Lord's words—not the abomination of him that maketh desolate, but “the abomination of desolation;” which is, I suppose, what is meant in the English version by the words, “that maketh desolate.” Thus the two phrases are distinct. Although there is a resemblance between them, there is also a difference; and that difference is enough to show that our Lord spoke not of the abomination set up by Antiochus, but of that mentioned in chap. 12. Consequently, there is, in fact, no difficulty to be removed; because the desolation spoken of in chap. 11. is past—the desolation (chap. 12.) that our Lord draws attention to is future. That this is so will appear from other considerations also. Thus, in the verses that follow, we have a state of things distinct from what will be in the future tribulation of Israel. “Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” Now we find from the Revelation, and other parts of Scripture that speak about the future of Israel, that the godly remnant could hardly be said to do exploits. They will suffer; but I do not think that deeds of power thus characterize the blessed ones

who are to pass through the dreadful crisis of the future. In the days of Antiochus, it was not so much suffering, but “being strong, and doing exploits” —exactly what was true of the Maccabees and others, who undoubtedly were not so much a baud of martyrs as a set of men who roused the spirit of Israel, and resisted the cruel and profane scourge of that day. Again, we read, “And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.” There is a long period, observe, of sorrow and trouble, that follows the outburst of courage and prowess against the desolater, and this is still continued in further verses. “Now, when they shall fall, they shalt be holpen with a little help; but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed” —clearly showing that this is before the time of the end. The Spirit of God is here referring to what has already taken place. And then we have a picture of terrible desolation that goes on, as it is said, “to the time of the end.” I infer, then, that the Spirit of God singles out the desolation that then befell the people of Israel, and the defiling of the sanctuary under Antiochus or his generals. This brought vividly out the circumstances of the last days; but along with them certain other circumstances were added, that ought not to be expected in those days. In other words, we arrive at what may be called the long and dreary blank that severs the past history of Israel, and the struggles in their land against neighboring aggressors, from the great crisis of the last days. This is where the true break occurs. Certain disasters were to go on “to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed.” There is no place in the chapter where the interruption of the history: so well fits in as after verse 35.

But now, in verse 36, at once we have a person abruptly introduced into the scene. We are not told who he was, or where he came from; but the character that is given of him, the scene that he occupies, the history that the Spirit of God enters into in connection with him, all declare too plainly that it is the terrible king who will set himself up in the land of Israel in personal antagonism to the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus. He it was of whom our Lord spoke when he said that if they refused Him who had come in His Father's name, they would receive another coming in his own name, Nor is this the only passage of Scripture, where this same false Christ, or rather Antichrist (for there is a difference between the terms), is described as “the king.” Not only have we different references to him under other epithets, but in the first great and comprehensive prophecy of Scripture, Isaiah, we have him introduced in an equally abrupt manner. In Isa. 30 we have an enemy of Israel, called the Assyrian. Doubtless, looking at past history, Sennacherib was their great head in that day. But he only furnished the opportunity to the Spirit of God to bring out the future and final adversary of Israel. His fall is here brought before us. “For through the voice of the Lord, shall the Assyrian be beaten down who smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps, and in battles of shaking will He fight with it.” After the end of that victory there will be exceeding joy for Israel; instead of the train of sorrow which most victories bring, there follows unfeigned gladness before the Lord. “It shall be with tabrets and harps.” For the enemy there will be proportionate misery. Sometimes still more awful and unending than temporal destruction falls upon the proud foe. “For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared: He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” In our version there is a singular obscurity, remarked by another, in this verse. At first sight it might appear that the Assyrian and “the king” were the same person. The true rendering is

“For the king also it is prepared” —that is, Tophet is prepared for the Assyrian, but besides, for THE KING also. Just as in our passage in Daniel, we have the Assyrian or king of the north on the one hand, and “the king” on the other. The same frightful end awaits them both. But I only refer to this now for the purpose of showing that the expression “the king” is not unprecedented in Scripture, and that it applies to a notorious person that the Jews were taught in prophecy to expect. God, in judicial retribution for their rejection of the true Christ, would give them up to receive the Antichrist. This is “the king.” He would arrogate to himself the royal rights of the true king, the Anointed of God. Tophet was prepared for the king of the north, and also for “the king.”

But this is not all. In Isa. 57 we have him introduced with similar abruptness. In chap. 55. are shown the moral qualities that God will produce in His people. In chapter 57. He shows us the fearfully iniquitous state then also found in Israel. And in that day God will no longer endure anything but reality. Forms of piety, covering uncleanness and ungodliness, will have passed away. There “the king” is suddenly introduced to us (v. 9). “Thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.” To have to do with him was to debase oneself unto hell. No wonder that for “the king also” Tophet was prepared. This shows that before the mind of Israel from the first there was one that the Spirit of God led them to expect to reign over the land in the last days, who is Called “the king.”

This at once furnishes a most important clue to Dan. 11. We are come to the time of the end. The bank is closed—the long dark night of Israel's dispersion is well-nigh over. The Jews are in the land. In what condition? Are they under Christ? Alas I there is another and a terrible scene that must first be enacted there. “The king” that we have read of is there, and the course he pursues is just what we might expect from the landmarks of the Holy Ghost. “The king shall do according to his will.” Ah! are any of us sufficiently aware what a fearful thing it is to be the doers of our own will? Here is the end of it. It was the first great characteristic of sin from the beginning. It is what Adam did, and the fall of the world was the immediate result. Here is one who at that day may seem to be the loftiest and most influential of Adam's sons. But he does according to his will.” And nothing worse. Are we to read such a history as this without moral profit to our own souls? To forget what an evil thing it is ever to be the doers of our own will? Let none suppose that, because they may be in a position to rule, they are therefore outside the danger. Alas! it is not so—no one thing so unfits a person for righteous rule as the inability to obey. It is good first to know what it is to be subject. Oh! may it strike deep into all our hearts, that “the king,” the Antichrist, is first stamped as one doing his own will. May it test us how far we are seeking ours! How far, under any circumstances, we are doing or allowing anything, that we could not wish every soul in this world to see—perhaps even those that are nearest to us. Alas! one knows the difficulty and danger in these things from one's own heart, from experience and observation. Yet there is no one thing more contrary to that Christ that we have learned. We are sanctified “unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” It is not only to the blessing, the sprinkling of the blood—but to the obedience of Jesus Christ—to the same spirit and principle of obedience; for that is the meaning of the expression. We are not like the Jews who were put under the law, and whose obedience had this character—bound to do such and such things under penalty of death. We are already alive unto God, conscious of the blessedness in which we stand, and awakened to see the beauty of the will of God, for His will it is which has saved and sanctified us. This is our

calling, and our practical work here below. Christians have no other business, properly speaking, than to do the will of another. We have to do God's will according to the character of the obedience of Christ—as sons delighting in the will of our Father. It does not matter what we may have to do. It may be one's natural daily occupation. But do not make two individuals of yourselves—with one principle in your business or family, and another for the church and worship of God. Never allow such a thought. We have Christ for everything and every day. Christ is not a blessing for us merely when we meet together or are called to die: but if we have Christ, we have Him forever, and from the first moment we are emancipated from doing our own will. That we learn is death; but it is gone now in Christ's death. We are delivered, for we are alive in Him risen. But what are we delivered for? To do the will of God. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ.

As for “the king,” you have in him the awful principle of sin that has always been at work, but which here exceeds all bounds. The moment has come when God will remove the providential checks which up to that time, He will have put upon men, when Satan will be allowed to bring about all his plans; and that, too, in the very land whereon the eyes of God rest continually.

“The king shall do according to his own will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself” —not only above every man, but “above every god.” And it is not only that he takes his place above these so-called gods, but “he shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods.” And, strange to say, (if one did not know the perfect wisdom of God, and could not wait for His counsels to be matured,) in spite of his fearful profanity, “he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.” There at once is a word that gives us the key to the passage. For some have found immense difficulties in this portion of the word of God. Many have transported into this verse the Pope of Rome, others Mahomet or Bonaparte. But here we find that this king is to prosper till the indignation be accomplished. What, or about whom? Has God indignation against His Church? Never. This is the time of the perfect patience of God—not of His indignation. With whom, then, is it connected? The word of God is perfectly plain. It is when dealing with Israel that God speaks of indignation I have already shown that fully from Isa. 5; 10; 14, and other passages, as it is entirely confirmed by the whole nature of the revelation here. For we read of one that would be the king of Israel—not in Constantinople or Rome, but in Palestine. And the time is a future outburst of indignation against Israel in the promised land. He (the false king) shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women. The expression, “the desire of women,” clearly, to my mind, refers to Christ—the one to whom all Jews were looking forward, and whose birth must have been above all things desired by Jewish women. It is plain from the connection that such is the true meaning. For it occurs between “the God of his fathers” (Jehovah) and any god.” Nothing is less likely than, if it had merely referred to natural relationships, that it would have been thus placed. It was, probably, from the wish to apply this to the pope that such an interpretation has found currency. But let us only understand that the prophecy concerns Israel and their land, and all is plain. “He shall not regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women.” Christ is distinguished from the God of his fathers, perhaps, because the Son was to become incarnate. But Christ is regarded no more than the God of his fathers—an expression, by the way, which implies that he himself is a Jew. It is “the God of his fathers.” “For he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces.” It is not that he goes forward as Antiochus did, trying to force Jupiter Olympius upon the Jews; but he adopts a new superstition. This also disproves the

reference to Antiochus, who was a Gentile. Here it is a Jew, who will take the place of the Christ, and who, of course, regards neither the true Christ nor Jehovah.

It is a self-exalting personage who opposes the true God, i.e., who equally sets aside the superstitions of men and the faith of God's people. Self-exaltation is his marked feature.

But that is not all. The antichrist will be infidel, but not merely infidel. He will have rejected the God of Israel, and the Messiah. Nor will he honor any of the gods of the Gentiles. But even this man, although he sets himself up as the true God upon the earth, will, for all that, have some one to whom he bows and causes others to bow along with himself. The human heart, even in antichrist, cannot do without an object of Idolatry. So, in ver. 38, there is this apparent inconsistency that comes out in the antichrist. “But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces.” He makes a god, as well as setting himself up to be God. “A god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.” It is entirely an invention of his own. More than that. He will divide the land among his adherents. “He shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” There we have God's account of this king that will be found in Palestine in the last days. And it is plain that this last verse is a most conclusive proof that he is in Palestine reigning, It is “the land.” The Spirit of God never so speaks of any other country. It was that land which was nearest to God—a sort of center for all others.

Here we have a change in the history. “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him.” This confirms what was said before—that “the king” is found “at the time of the end.” Then “shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen, and with many ships.” The Spirit of God had long before spoken about the kings of the north and of the south. It was important to show that at the time of the end these powers will have successors, who will make their push at “the king” in the holy land. “The king of the south” —that is, Egypt—and “the king of the north” —that is, the holder of the present Syrian possessions of the Sultan. These two persons shall make a movement against “the king.” Not that they have a common policy: on the contrary, they seem bitter enemies one of another. But “the king” so exalts himself, arrogating to himself such pretensions in the holy land, that God permits the final catastrophe to arrive. The king of the south comes first, and then the king of the north, who appears to be the great military and naval leader of the east in those days. “The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.” “shall enter also into the glorious land.” This can be no other land than that of Israel. The king is there. The northern king is a totally different person, an antagonist of “the king,” as well as the king of the south. The Spirit of God having introduced “the king,”

without telling us whence he came, now drops that personage without telling us what became of him. His frightful destiny shown us fully in other scriptures. But it was important to introduce him as an episode in chap. 11., for the purpose of showing the last great conflict between the kings of the north and of the south. Accordingly he drops “the king,” and the rest of the chapter is occupied with the king of the north. He not only enters the glorious land, but he goes on with conquests elsewhere. “Many countries shall be overthrown, but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon.” We find from Isa. 11 that this is a very notable fact. These borderers lived on the outskirts of the holy land. God so orders that if they

escape the king of the north, they are to be ravaged by the triumphant Israelites. God will not permit that the early and bitter enemies of Israel should meet with their righteous retribution from the hands of any but the people whom they had so sought to oppose and injure. Accordingly, it would appear from Isaiah, that, a very little after, the Israelites execute God's judgment on them.

“He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.” From this we learn that the king of the north is not acting as a colleague with the king of the south. He proceeds down to the south, where, it would appear, (ver. 43,) there will be a great development of material prosperity, whether from the resources of the land itself, or more probably from its becoming the great emporium of western and eastern commerce in that part of the world. “But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him.” It is when he is down in the south, beyond Palestine, that he hears these rumors of perplexity in the north and east. He had come himself from the north, and was the conqueror over the east also; and now he has tidings from these quarters that agitate him. He hastens back from the land of Egypt and reaches Palestine. “And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas (that is between the Mediterranean and the Dead seas) in the glorious holy mountain: yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him.” This is the doom of the once victorious king of the north not of “the king” who was introduced by the way to show us the occasion of the final struggle between the north and south.

I would now desire to inquire whether there be not other scriptures of interest to connect with what we have just been looking at. In the close of Zechariah, we shall find information of great interest. Just a word or two first on the end of chap. 11. The Spirit of God there says, “Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock.” This I conceive is clearly the Antichrist— “the king.” For, looking at verse 16, we learn that this idol shepherd is in the land. “Lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit them that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.” This utter selfishness, and self-exaltation, and spoiling the flock, instead of feeding it and carrying the lambs in his bosom, is in frightful contrast with Christ, the Good Shepherd. Then the false shepherd, Antichrist, is to be raised up in the land of Israel, and there he does not spare the flock of God. In chap. 12. we have another power. It is said, in verse 2, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.” There are nations gathering against Jerusalem. Just as in Dan. 11., the king of the north comes down and the king of the south. Nations assemble against Jerusalem while this idol shepherd is there. Jerusalem and the Jews are the object of attack. “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.” Victory seems to incline to the assailants of Israel. But none can then harden themselves against them and prosper, because the Lord will have identified Himself with them in that day. “In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah;” and then we have the way in which the Lord will defend His people in that day. But what will make it still plainer is that which we read in chap. 14:2, “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into

captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." Here we have additional disclosures that you would not have gathered from chap. 12. Thus we learn that "the city shall be taken and half of the city shall go forth into captivity;" evidently distinguishing this future siege from the past. When the Chaldeans took the city, they carried all away captive. When the Romans took it, all they spared were made prisoners of. Were we have another siege, in which half will be taken and the other half not. And if anything can more clearly mark off the future from the past, it is that the nations, having taken half of the city, will not pursue their victory further. Why? "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." Who can pretend that that has ever been accomplished? Who can say that the Lord has thus come and stood upon the Mount of Olives? How can you reconcile the past with such a statement as this? The Lord has never been on Jerusalem's soil as a conqueror since that day. Was it thus when Titus besieged it? Do you try to explain it away as merely a providential deliverance? But, I ask, were they delivered then? They were taken captive. Jerusalem to this day remains trodden down to the Gentiles, and must, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But the passage indicates the times of the Gentiles closing in; the end of Gentile oppression. When this day is verified, and the Lord goes forth to fight against those nations, His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. And as a mark that this is not to be allegorized, we find that the Spirit adds that the Mount of Olives is to split in twain—an outward physical proof that the Lord God has planted His feet there. "The Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountain," —that is, it will form a valley between the two— "for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal.... and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Now, then, there we find a most clear proof that there is a future siege of Jerusalem, and that this siege will be characterized by two attacks. The first attack will be successful against Israel; half the city will be taken, and all the miseries of a frightful siege will follow, as far as half the city is concerned; but the other half is reserved for the Lord, who will bring the third part through the fire. He will put Himself at their head, and crush all the nations of the earth that come together against Jerusalem. Thus the second attack will be to the ruin of those that make it. If we connect this with Daniel, how plain is the additional light that we get! The king of the north first comes down when the king of the south is pushing at "the king" in the holy land. There is a simultaneous assault made upon Israel, to destroy the people in the land, who, alas! deserve it. But in the midst of evil there will be a godly seed. God will employ these assailants to do the work of the executioner. The wicked will be taken away, and when God has purged those that are there, there will come another scene. The king of the north having been successful in his first attack, pursues his way towards Egypt, against the king of the south. He comes there, but tidings from the north and east trouble him.

Meanwhile, we may ask, what is become of "the king?" Has he been destroyed in the collision between the kings of the north and of the south, that had taken place in the land? No. What then is become of him How does he fall? By the brightness of the appearing of the Lord from heaven. He is reserved for the hand of God himself. He will be cast alive into a Lake of fire burning with brimstone. "For the king also it is prepared." Thus we have the Old Testament and the New giving us one concurrent testimony. It will be by no ordinary doom of ruined man that he will perish. It is God departing from all His ordinary ways of dealing with the wicked. Men have been from time to

time taken up in the grace of God from this world without passing through death; and there are men for whom it is destined of God to be sent down alive into hell—the terrible contrast of those who are alive when Christ comes, waiting to be taken up to heaven. It will be so with that wicked one, the idol shepherd—the king—and not with him only. The king of the north is a bolder enemy still. “The king” has set himself up in the land, corrupting and apostatizing the people of Israel. He has met with his doom. If only the slightest word of the judgment that had been executed in that land were to reach the king of the north, we can understand how he would be troubled. Whether that is the cause of his hasty return against Israel., or because the ten tribes were in movement, I do not pretend to say. We are not told. But he comes up to the holy land again; and this time, it is to fall under the immediate hand of God—not with the sword of a mighty man, nor with the sword of a mean man. No man, but God, will execute the vengeance upon him. Here we find the reason why there were two attacks. He has gone down, after his first assault on Jerusalem into the south and has pursued certain conquests there. Excited by the tidings referred to, he hastens to return, hoping now to have it all his own way. “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.”

But I must also ask you to look, before closing, at one or two other passages. Take Isa. 28 and 29., where you will find abundant confirmation of all that I have touched upon in this closing scene. In Isa. 28. you will observe that there are two great powers of evil connected with the land of that day—one “the king,” who is in relation with the people, and in the land; the other the king of the north, who comes down as an antagonistic power. We shall find both these in this chapter. First, Ephraim is mentioned, and the Lord pronounces woe upon “the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.” There, I apprehend, you have the Assyrian threatened, as this dreadful storm from the north, that would break forth upon Ephraim. If we look at the middle of the chapter, we shall find another thing. We have seen what was the condition of Ephraim, who dwelt in the outskirts of the country. But what was the destiny of Jerusalem, the capital “Because ye have said, (ver. 15,) We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement.” There we have evidently what is connected with “the king” who will be in Jerusalem, and who will form a compact with “the beast,” the great imperial power of that day, to whom Satan will have given his throne. There is harmony between what we have in Isaiah and in Revelation and in Daniel. “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us.” Mark that. The over flowing scourge is the king of the north, the outside power that is coming down upon them. They of Jerusalem have made a covenant with death and with hell, that is, with instruments of Satan in that day: and they hope by this means to escape the king of the north. I have already shown that the beast, the great power of the west, will be in connection with the “king” at Jerusalem—that the western parts will be the great seat of the beast—that he will command all Europe, that properly belonged to the Roman Empire. When that empire is re-organized, he will be the great instrument of using its strength. “The king” will have made a covenant with him; or, as it is said in chap. ix., he, that is, the Roman prince, will make a covenant with the mass of the Jews. At the close, both are found in Jerusalem, fighting against the Lord and His saints coming from heaven. They will find their supposed strength in this covenant, but it will not stand. The overflowing scourge (the Assyrian) sweeps on, and half the city of Jerusalem is taken. How marvelously does Scripture hang together! Then (Isa. 28:16)

comes in the reference to the Lord's laying a foundation-stone in Zion, which is evidently a word for the faithful remnant of that day, however true for us who believe now.

Isa. 24 is the last portion to which I wish to refer. There we have the closing desolation of the city. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt. . . Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow; and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.” That is the siege spoken of in Zechariah. “And thou shalt be brought down and shalt speak out of the ground,” &c. That is their condition when they are desolated. But mark, in verse 5: Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust..... Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with thunder and with earthquake And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision.” The Lord has gone forth and fought with those nations as He fought in the day of battle. I have brought sufficient evidence from various parts of the word of God, which entirely falls in with, and throws light upon, the very interesting portion of Daniel now before us. All concur in showing most clearly that there is a terrible future for apostate Israel and their western associates; and no less terrible for their confederate eastern adversaries. The covenant with hell will not stand. When the great powers of the world will have, apparently, swept all before them, and have gathered for the last great struggle before Jerusalem, God will take that opportunity for dealing with them after His long term of patience. It will be the closing scene. They will think that universal monarchy is to be in their hands; but it will be God's day for summoning them to judgment. Here I speak of a judgment of nations and of kings—not of the dead before the great white throne.

God is about to deal with the earth—with men in the midst of all their plans. The regeneration of the world will be the great day when the Lord, having weeded out of Israel the transgressors, and used “the king” himself, and the judgment that fell upon him, to separate the true ones of Judah from the wicked, will cause the hour to chime when the account must be settled with the nations. This appears to me to be the simple, straight-forward statement of the truth of God that we have here. We are not to suppose it is merely a question of one great power only. There will be different principles at work. And it is an awful thing to think that these lands where we enjoy such privileges are to be then overspread with the deepest darkness. The covenant with death and with hell will be because of an alliance made with the highly civilized western world. What a humbling thing for the pride of man! Civilization in a day that is past did not keep the mightiest minds from degrading idolatry and filthiness. Alas! we shall have a still worse scene at the close. Christendom will end in restored idolatry, in novel false gods,—in man himself worshipped as God. Such I believe, is the predicted future of this age. But one can keep the heart the same from being entangled with all that leads to it—Christ Himself. May we be occupied with Him; not building upon men's foundations, not hoping their hope, not trusting to progress, or even to religion, so called. If Christ is my object in everything, there is safety there, and nowhere else.

Chapter 47

Remarks on Daniel 12

THE trouble of which the prophet speaks, at the beginning of this chapter, is not a thing long after and distinct from the conflicts described at the end of the preceding one, but, as he says himself, “at that time.” So that we have now really come, in looking at the closing events of chap. 11., to the latest period that Daniel brings before us. For it has been often remarked that Daniel never enters upon the reign of glory, but just brings us up to that point. He shows us that which will introduce it, gives us the execution of judgment previous to it, without furnishing many details, and tells us of the kingdom of heaven, that is to fill the whole earth, but he does not describe it. The people of the saints, as he calls the Jews, shall have the whole kingdom under heaven. The truth is, that the Spirit of God had already by others most fully entered into the reign of the Messiah over Israel and the blessedness of their portion; and He was about to predict the same subject by others subsequent to the captivity. And this last was of importance. Because He well knew that many would suppose that the return of the Jews to the Babylonish captivity was the accomplishment of the prophecy. Therefore great pains were taken in some of the latest prophecies, to show that nothing was farther from the fact and that the blessing of Israel was yet future. They are described as being in a miserable condition after they return from Babylon; and the Spirit of God launches out into a distant future as the period when Israel are to be really delivered and blessed according to God's mind. The past return was only a pledge of the full restoration which God intended for them. But Daniel does not enter into this time of blessedness. He brings you up to the moment and then closes. His peculiar object was the times of the Gentiles. His accounts for the remarkable character of his prophecy. He is simply a prophet of the captivity.

In chap. 12., we have what takes place between the judgment of the Gentiles and the ushering of the Jews into their blessing. We have seen “the king” and his wickedness in the holy land, and have also heard of the kings from the north and from the south. Whatever may have appeared to be the temporary power of the great leader of the north against the holy land, “yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him.” Such was his miserable close.

But now comes an interesting question—What will be the condition of Israel at that time? The answer is given in these first verses: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” This was the people that Daniel was concerned about. He had no idea of what we call now a Christian people—no notion that there was a time coming, already settled in the counsels of God, when there should no longer be any distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and when both would be formed, by the faith of a crucified Christ, into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. All that was a novelty to Daniel, and the Lord never even gives him to anticipate such a state. Not one prophecy in Daniel, nor in any other, refers to it, though many reveal other particulars which are now realized, as we see in Romans, &c. “Thy people” means, simply and solely, the Jewish people. Daniel was deeply and rightly interested in them, as a Jew, and as a true Israelite of God that felt for the glory of God connected with His people. Accordingly, the Spirit of God communicates to them that at that time there should be a turning-point in Israel's history. Instead of mere providential control—Michael resisting this

prince or that, he will stand up for them, undertaking their case and putting down definitely their adversaries; but even then not without a fearful struggle. Their defense was his habitual task. But now he shall stand up to complete the great earthly purposes of God in the deliverance of the Jews.

“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” There we have the important information that at once distinguishes this standing up of Michael from all times that had ever been. So far from deliverance as yet, the trouble that fell upon the Jews under Titus was more terrible than that winch had befallen them under Nebuchadnezzar. What follows then? That this time of trouble is yet to come. The Spirit of God is describing here that which, having had no answer in the past, must await the future. And, in fact, we have only to look at Jerusalem, and at the present condition of the Jews, to see that this is so. Are they delivered? On the contrary, there is not a country under the sun but what bears its witness, in one way or another, that they are degraded, and out of the land of their glory, where the Lord's eyes rest continually.

There are those who regard what is spoken of here as future, but who say, We must take it spiritually: we must interpret it of the church of God's people now. But, first, it is enough to answer that we have had a long prophecy which was ushered in by the angel to Daniel with the positive announcement that it was what should befall his people in the latter days. This excludes such ideas. Next, observe throughout the prophecy that none but Jews are spoken of as the objects of God's interest up to this time. The holy land was in question, and the conflicts of the north and south around it. Under Christianity, there is no such thing as a holy land. It is mere Judaism or heathenism to regard one place as more sacred than another, now that the full light of Christianity has come in. But if there be a land that is in God's purpose glorious, it is Israel's. Only it loses that character during the Gentile calling. There is the revelation of heavenly things now—not of earthly. And therefore whatever was holy before, in a mere earthly point of view, is passed away for the present, being eclipsed by something brighter. God has other counsels now in view. The ancient people proved themselves to be most unholy in rejecting their own Messiah. And until they are brought as a nation to Jesus, or, in the words of the Revelation, to “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” —until a remnant has got some sort of divine knowledge of Christ, God will not own them. Meanwhile, He has turned to another work, that of forming the Church, which is not referred to here. It is a blessed truth that God has gone out in rich mercy to the Gentiles, but what comfort would this be as to what lay so heavily upon the heart of the prophet? Whereas all is suitable and clear, if we see that his own people are described, and their pas sage through the terrible scene spoke of here, the eve of their deliverance, and that of God. “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered,” &c.

I will show that this is not the testimony of one sacred writer only, but of several. Take the sorrowing prophet Jeremiah, chap. 30. There we have a clear reference to Jacob's great trouble, followed by his mighty deliverance. “These are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.” Who will contest the meaning of that? “Thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth not travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins as a woman in travail

and all faces are turned into paleness?" it is a state of things beyond all that is ordinarily reasonable. Men filled with the deepest anguish, depicted even in their faces, and their courage fled in presence of fearful trouble. The seventh verse explains it. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it." As in Daniel, it is a time unprecedented. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jacob, "that worm Jacob," is the name used for the people regarded in their weakness, as Israel is the name of power. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. So far it is the same train of thought in the mind of the Spirit, as we have in Daniel. We have Israel and Judah in question, called by the name that expresses their weakness, as exposed to every kind of calamity from without. It is a day of unparalleled trouble, and the Israel of that day are to be delivered out of it. If I were to look through Isaiah, I might show from the beginning to the end of it, the same thing, only more diffused. I need not dwell upon passages so well known. (Chaps. 1., 2., 10., 14., 17., 22., 24. - 35., 49. 66.)

But it may be asked, Have you anything from the New Testament to bring forward? You have been producing passages from the Old Testament. Can you show us something from the New giving the increased and full light of God through His beloved Son? The thought might arise, as it has indeed, that Christianity sets aside the Jews altogether; so that we are to read "the people" merely as the type of those whom God is forming for His praise. Our Lord Himself decides that question in Matt. 24. He shows us that there is a destiny of Israel which Daniel brings before us, and which is not to be applied to any other people under the sun. It is their own portion, both in its sorrows and deliverances. The disciples had said, (ver. 3,) "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" Observe here that the end of "the age" is the only proper meaning. It has no reference to the catastrophe of the world as a material system, but to a certain dispensation running out its course in the world, from which the term is totally distinct. The Lord warns them that they were in danger of being deceived: that persons were to come pretending to be Christ; that there were to be outward troubles; that His testimony was in no way to change the ordinary current of human affairs, for nation is to rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and as regarded the physical state of the world, there would be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. He is there only preparing them for a fearful crisis that was coming. "All these are the beginnings of sorrows." "Then shall they deliver you up to the afflicted and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Up to verse 15, we have general statements. Then He at once narrows the scene to Jerusalem, and to the land of Judea. He does not continue the account of the gospel of the kingdom traversing the whole world, but shuts up His view to that strip of ground, where God's people dwelt, and to that city near which He then pronounced this very prophecy. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet. stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand,)" &c. Here we have positive direction to look at the very book that we are examining. The Lord in His discourse was speaking about the same thing that Daniel predicted in his prophecy. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains."

I ask can there be a question as to the meaning of these verses? Does any one doubt what "the holy place" means? Is it ever used in any other sense than the sanctuary of God at Jerusalem? The holy place, as a spot on earth, is invariably in Scripture, the Jewish place of worshipping God. The abomination of desolation means an idol which should bring in desolation upon the Jews. When this, then, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stands in the temple, those who heed Christ are

to flee. There is not a word about Gentiles here—not a hint about the Church of God there. Godly people, but Jews, in their own city, are warned, when they see this idol, to flee to the mountains of Judea in the vicinity. “And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day.” It is not at all a Christian but a Jewish scene. The Lord's day is that which Christians observe. It is the great symbol of our recognition of Christ risen, and of our blessing in Him; but the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Many, I am, aware, apply this to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and to the great calamities that then befell the Jews. But there is one essential point of difference that ought not to be overlooked. The Jewish people were not delivered then. Whereas when Daniel's prophecy is accomplished, they are, and must be, delivered—not at a subsequent epoch, but at that time. If Daniel is a true prophet, it is not that his prophecy failed, but that it remains to be fulfilled. Our Lord distinctly and positively quotes from that prophecy, and from the very chapter we are considering. And what does He connect with Israel's deliverance? His own coming as the Son of Man from Heaven. Who can say that this has been? The Romans, instead of being broken down in the time of Titus, were allowed to enslave the Jews. These were not then delivered, nor up to the present moment, have they ever been the masters of their own temple, nor allowed to be in their own land, even as ordinary men. If there is one race more peculiarly proscribed in the holy land, it is the Jewish. The Turks, the present possessors of it, have held it for many a long year; and all, whether Crusaders or Saracens, have agreed to shut out the Jews. So that there has been nothing like the Son of Man coming to deliver Israel. Michael has not stood up for them in that sense yet.

Thus, what I have shown from the Old Testament is amply confirmed by the new. Prophet after prophet, all distinctly furnish the same outline, i.e., a time of trouble, such as never was before, followed immediately by a deliverance such as Israel has never yet enjoyed. It is perfectly plain, as we all believe that these prophecies are of God, that it is only a question of waiting God's time for Himself to accomplish them to the very letter. As our Lord says in this same chap., 24. of Matthew, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” It is not only that the general strain is true, but not one jot nor one tittle shall pass till all be fulfilled.

If this be so, we have an important key to the prophecy of Daniel. Although the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was so near, yet the Lord distinctly looks on to another time. And what makes it the more remarkable is, that one of the evangelists does give us the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, but also distinguishes it from this future time of trouble. In Luke 21 is the chief reference of a positively prophetic kind to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. And mark the difference of the language: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies.” Not a word about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Luke passes over that entirely, and introduces what Matthew does not mention—Jerusalem encompassed with armies. “When ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out,” &c. That is, the Lord prescribes exactly the same course to be taken by the Jews in Jerusalem, whether at the approaching sack of the city by the Romans (as in Luke), or at the future desolation that should fall upon it (as in Matthew). So far there was an analogy between the two things: they were to flee away; they were not to trust to vain hopes of deliverance through

some pretended Messiah, but were to know from the lips of the Lord Himself, that Jerusalem was to fall under the hand of the Gentiles. If any wanted to escape, it must be outside Jerusalem. “And let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.” No matter what people may tell them about the Passover or any other feasts, their path of safety is to avoid Jerusalem. There is no deliverance for Israel yet. “For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” Luke does not say, This is the time of trouble, such as was not since flee beginning of the world. There is the most singular perfectness of expression—Luke taking up first the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and Matthew nothing but the last siege, before the Jews are delivered. “For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations.” This was not, therefore, the time of Jacob's trouble, when he should be delivered. At the time spoken of by Luke, instead of deliverance, they only fall into the trouble of a captivity, after the trouble of the war. “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” That is accomplishing to the present hour. “The times of the Gentiles” are going on still. The Gentiles have always lorded it as yet. The Jews have not got a land or a city that they can call their own on the face of the earth. Who have their city and their land! The Gentiles. “The times of the Gentiles” are not expired. “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” They are its masters, and, as such, they will tread it down till the allotted times are fulfilled—not forever. Nowhere is it said that this is to go on till the end of time. On the contrary, Gentile dominion over the Jews is soon to close. We have this in the next verse. We have already seen a most regular, orderly setting forth of the troubles that were to befall Jerusalem. And the times of the Gentiles have been running on ever since the days of Titus to the present moment. But in verse 25 begins the closing scene, which is the only thing mentioned in Matt. 24., from verse 15 and onwards—and this, because of the question put by the disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?” But in Luke they simply ask, “What sign will there be when these things (i.e., the overthrow of the temple) come to pass?” Accordingly, the Lord gives them the coming up of the Romans; and then He goes on, down the Gentile stream of time, to the end. But Matthew confines himself to the close in answer to the question which he records. That is the simple reason, and nothing can be more beautiful than the way in which the truth comes out. Here in Luke we have the great events when the times of the Gentiles close. “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.”

People who apply Matt. 24. in a topical way to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, are obliged to make out that the coming of the Son of man from heaven is a mere figure, representing the providential acting of God through Titus to put down the Jews. But Luke 21 gives a complete refutation to this idea. For here the Spirit of God shows that Jerusalem has been taken, and the Gentile times run on: when they are about to expire, the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory—hundreds of years after Titus. The closing scene is brought in as finishing up, or consequent on, the times of the Gentiles. “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.” And then, a little further on, (ver. 32,) we find this remarkable expression, “Verily I say unto you, This generation

shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." It is a misuse of that term which has led to a good deal of the confusion on the subject. When does the phrase "this generation" come in! After the Son of man has already come in power and glory—not when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies. That is an important point to help in determining its true meaning. If "this generation" merely meant a man's life-time, such a place in the prophecy would be incongruous. The vulgar notion might have been reasonable, if the phrase occurred just at the compassing of Jerusalem with armies. But it has no sense if put in after the times of the Gentiles are accomplished. So that "this generation," taken temporally, must plainly embrace a scope of eighteen centuries at the least. What, then, is its true force? It means—what it does very often in Scripture—this Christ-rejecting race of Israel, and not a mere period of time. It is used in a moral sense to describe a race acting after a particular way, good or evil. Moses, reproaching them, says, "They have corrupted themselves, they are a perverse and crooked generation.... And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very froward generation." Here, most clearly, their moral condition as a people is meant, and not the time in which this was manifested. In the Psalms we have a further key to the proper meaning. Thus, in Psa. 12, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord; thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever." If by "generation" were merely meant a term of thirty or forty years, what sense would there be in the words, "forever?" It refers, not at all to a, course of a few years, but to the moral state of a people, and that of the people of Israel. In like manner, the force of the words in the Gospel of Luke is quite plain. "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." The race of Israel still going on in unbelief and rejection of Christ is what the Lord means. He is saying, as it were, I will prepare you for the terrible truth, that this Christ-rejecting generation is to continue till all these things are fulfilled. Apart from prophecy, that never could have been anticipated. For it might have been supposed that, while Christianity was going over the whole earth, and making conquests everywhere, if one nation more than another was to be brought under the power of Christ, it must be Israel, loved for the father's sake. But no. The Jews are to proceed in the same unbelief. There might be a line of faithful ones among them, but the wicked generation that Christ then warned us of shall not pass away till all is fulfilled. And what will follow? Even as the Psalms say, the generation to come. Israel will be born again—will have a new heart given them. Then are they to be the people that shall praise the Lord. This entirely falls in with the rest of Scripture. For the Lord, under the figure of a fruitless fig-tree, had set forth Israel. On that tree He consequently pronounced a curse. When it is said in one of the Gospels, that the time of figs was not yet, it means the season of their ripeness or of their ingathering was not yet arrived. hence the rigs could not have been taken from the tree. Had it borne any, they must have been there. It was merely when the figs were still unripe, that our Lord came to seek fruit; but there was not one. There was plentiful profession—leaves, but no fruit. Therefore said He, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever!" Such, in figure, is "this generation." But how is that to be reconciled with Israel's being to the praise of the Lord by and by? Israel must be born again. "That generation" will never produce fruit for the Lord. It is to be destroyed under the judgment of God, and a new race will be born. The type of the past gives us a striking figure of the future.

From these prophecies that we have looked at, two out of the Old and two out of the New Testament, it is clear that the time of trouble, of which Daniel speaks, is entirely future; and that Luke distinguishes expressly a time of great distress just about to fall, and which, in fact, has fallen on Jerusalem, from a closing time of far more intense trouble which is yet to come. We now return

to Daniel, with the clear light of other Scriptures from both Testaments, showing God's word to be positive and precise, that Israel must pass through an unheard-of sea of trouble, but out of that they are to be delivered. It is, in fact, the precursor of their great salvation from God. Still there was another question unanswered. However important Daniel might feel it to know that his countrymen would infallibly be delivered, yet there was another question:—What will be the condition of the Jews who are not in the land? What will become of those not in Jerusalem or in Judea, who consequently are not the immediate objects of the great deliverance wrought there? The second verse of this chapter answers it. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake—some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The verse is constantly applied to the resurrection of the body; and it is true that the Spirit founds the figure upon that resurrection. But it can be shown that it has not the least reference to a bodily resurrection, either of us or of Israel. As this may seem difficult to some, I am bound to produce evidence from Scripture that the Holy Spirit uses resurrection as a figure of a blessed restoration from ruin. In Isa. 26 you have what I suppose will not be questioned: an account of Israel's trouble—their trouble under Gentile lords. In verse 13, it is said, “O Lord, our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.” That is not about the Church, though it may be applied to us ever so frequently. We have not got other lords over us—the Jews have. They have had masters over them for hundreds of years, and they have still. “But by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise.” These lords that had dominion over them are gone: they are dead—they shall not rise. Can that be spoken about literal resurrection? If it were, they must rise like others. It is clearly said of their perishing in this world. That is, the figure of the resurrection is applied. They are gone and shall not be lords over Israel any more” Therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord; thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified.” Who can doubt that the passage speaks of Israel only? Thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.” Could that be said about the Church? When the gospel extends itself all over the world, it is the power of love in men—the activity of God's grace going out everywhere. Not so with Israel. They have a central city, where, had they been faithful, God would have maintained them;—so that their removal to the ends of the earth was a divine judgment upon them, not a mission of love. “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.” That was the effect of it. Israel humbles himself. he that had waxed fat and kicked, was now penitent; and the Lord listens to his confession, and looks on his anguish. “To be as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord.” And then in verse 19, the Lord answers, “Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise.” He claims them as his own, even though they had so sinned and were in that deplorable, degraded condition. “My dead body shall they arise.” Mark that expression as connected with Daniel. “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” Can it be questioned by any one who has followed the reasons already advanced, that the Spirit is not speaking about the Church here, but about Israel, in contrast with their Gentile lords now prostrate, never to domineer again. Israel, on the contrary, though in the most dismal condition, was only as the dead body which the Lord claims as His own, and as pertaining to Him they shall arise.

Turning to Daniel, now, see what a light is thrown upon the passage. Not only will there be deliverance for the Jews in the holy land, who have witnessed all the conflicts between Antichrist and the king of the north; but for many that sleep; (that is, many who had not yet come forward, who had been apart from the troubles of their nation, who had been in total obscurity, as it were sleeping in the dust of the earth.) “Many of them shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” This shows plainly that it is not the resurrection of the just; because when that takes place, nobody rises to shame and everlasting contempt. The passage has no reference whatever to a bodily resurrection, which simply furnishes a figure for the national revival of Israel, who are described as sleeping in the dust to express the greatness of their degradation. Now they were to awake and sing, according to Isaiah.

But we must turn to another passage—the clearest, perhaps, of any upon the subject. It is in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where, in a most plain prediction of the restoration of Israel, the same figure is used. Isaiah called them a dead body, and spoke of them as dwelling in the dust, from which they were to awake. Daniel also called it an awaking out of their sleep in the dust. Ezekiel goes yet farther, and speaks of them as not only dead, but buried in their graves. Now, if it can be proved that this does not refer to a literal bodily resurrection, but to a national restoration of Israel, the chain of evidence will be complete. That it is so is plain: for in this prophecy we are not left to gather from the context what the meaning is, but there is a divine interpretation. We have not only the prophecy, but the prophecy explained. And the explanation of the prophecy given to and by Ezekiel shuts out every other thought save the one I have been endeavoring to set before you. In the beginning of chapter 37. we find an open valley full of dry bones. “And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.” Can any one seriously think that is the way in which the Church will rise from the dead? Is there a soul so deluded as to take this for a description of the way in which our bodies are to be raised? Bones coming together first; then the flesh and skin covering; and then breath put into them? Can it be with sobriety maintained that this is primarily intended as a figure of the work of the gospel in giving life to souls? If so, what is the meaning of the bones first, &c.?

“Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.” What more simple than the explanation God gives of the vision? He applies it to the whole house of Israel, though, no doubt, it was the vision of a resurrection. Ezekiel saw the bones live, and the men stand on their feet. But, then, we have God giving us the real meaning and proper application of it. The resurrection of the body we have most fully elsewhere, as, e.g., in the New Testament, and in Job also. In the Gospels, the Epistles, and

the Revelation, we have the resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust—a blessed resurrection for the one, and a resurrection that will have awful consequences of sorrow for those that are in it. But here we have the same God, using the figure of resurrection to describe the blessing that He is to confer upon the people of Israel. Similarly He applies the figure in Luke 15 to the conversion of the prodigal son: “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” Paul gives us the blessing that will result to the world by and by through the restoration of Israel under the same figure. “What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom. 11:15.) I maintain, then, that no other interpretation of this passage bears the stamp of the Spirit of God. People may preach the gospel from it, or apply it figuratively. I am not objecting to such an employment of it. But the word of God gives us both the vision and the interpretation. And I have no more reason to believe the one than the other. God says it means the house of Israel; therefore it does not mean the resurrections of the body. When men are raised from the dead in a proper physical sense, there will be no such thing as the house of Israel among those so raised. Resurrection terminates all relations of time and the world. Hence, what we have here is merely a figure taken from it, and applied to the future restoration of Israel—then to be a holy nation, but still a nation.

“These bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” Nothing can be plainer. All the evidence of the chapter confirms the same thing. But more than that: “And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” The next portion throws yet more light upon it. We have another vision connected with this. Two sticks are taken and joined in one, presenting another aspect of the blessing in store for Israel. If all Israel were to be brought out of their graves, the twelve tribes might still have formed two separate parties, as in earlier days. But now comes in a new condition, to show that, when the resuscitation of Israel takes place, their once-divided interests will coalesce. That does not refer to the Church, nor to our condition when raised from the dead. We shall not be planted in the land of Israel under David as our king. Even if we take David as a type of Christ, yet this is not our relationship. We are Christ's body and bride—not a people merely, reigned over by a king.

Thus, by comparing these different portions of the word of God, we have strong proof that the passage in Daniel refers solely to Israel. And as the first verse shows us the deliverance of the Jews in their land at the time of their sorest trouble; the second verse shows us that which is the key to so many of the prophecies—the coming out of the race of the Jews from their hiding-places and deep degradation, set forth under the figure of sleeping in the dust, and being raised up out of it. But whether it be those in the land or those who come out of the dust of the earth, and from among the Gentiles, none will be delivered except those that are the objects of the counsels of God, i.e., “found written in the book.” Some of them may awake, as the figure expresses it, to take their part in the great struggle of the close, but not being registered in God's book, they shall be abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt. For the rest, it is not a mere national deliverance, but much more. Those that are delivered will be truly born of God. A spiritual character will attach

to their rise, as well as a national one.

But let us pursue the rest of the chapter briefly. The Spirit of God shows us that some among them will have a remarkable maturity. They are those., who are said to be “wise.” “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.” These have been distinguished in a time of trouble among the Jews. “And they that instruct the many in righteousness as the stars forever and ever.” We are obliged thus to change the version, because the expression that is used here— “turn many for righteousness” —is unhappy. The real sense is “they that teach righteousness to the many.” It is not a question of their success;—whether they actually turn them to righteousness, or not, is not the point; but “they that instruct the many,” or the mass of the Jews, are thus promised the blessing. They might, perhaps, have scanty results, but the question is, whether they are laboring for God, and maintaining the authority of His truth. The same Hebrew word is used in other parts of the Scripture, where it no doubt means to justify. The English translators—judging, with good reason, that “justify” would not suit in a clause which describes the action of men, whereas justification certainly belongs to God,—have changed it into “turn to righteousness.” But I take the liberty of preferring the version already mentioned— “instructing in righteousness.” Thus it would appear, that there are certain of the Jews that have shown comparatively a great degree of intelligence in the mind of God. They are called “the wise.” But besides the intelligent, others go out in spiritual energy, as we have seen, to teach the mass of the Jews, who then were, or afterward fell, under the power of Antichrist. “The many” is a technical phrase in Daniel for the faithless mass or those that are lost. They that instruct the many in righteousness, are to shine as the stars forever and ever. And I take the opportunity of saying, that this is the true meaning of a verse in Isa. 53, that has amazingly perplexed the critics: “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” No doubt many Christians have connected it with “by his obedience shall many be made righteous.” But there is no connection whatever between the two thoughts. Take it as has been suggested in the passage before us, and all is plain. Nor have I the least doubt that such is its true meaning. It is to instruct in righteousness; justification is not the point there. In the Lord's case the instruction, of course, will be perfect; but even there the object is “many,” not “the many,” as in Daniel. Here we find that these godly souls among the Jews have a certain knowledge of divine truth, and they instruct the mass in righteousness. It will not be a question of showing and preaching grace at that day. They will instruct them in righteousness. They may bring out the blessed thoughts of God in connection with Israel, but it will be instruction in righteousness. The sense of “justify” would not be true, if we look either at the subjects or the objects of the action. We could understand, perhaps, that of the Lord in Isa. 53 But even so; ask any person, what is the meaning of His justifying many through His knowledge, and he will have to travel far enough for a probable answer. Some advocates for it may try to understand, “by the knowledge of him,” but that will not stand. The true meaning is that the Lord would use His knowledge as the means of instructing many. In Isaiah and Daniel, it refers to instructing in righteousness, not justifying nor turning to righteousness.

In the next verse comes an important principle, upon which a few words must be said, “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Daniel is here informed that the things which he had seen, and the communications which he had heard, though they were, no doubt, of God, were not to be turned to use for the present. All was to be a sealed book until a distant day; in a word, until the

time of the end. In a later verse, Daniel puts the question, “What shall be the end of these things?” And the answer is, “Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” Thus clearly are we shown that the understanding of the words of God is a spiritual thing, and not a matter of mere intellect. If it were so, then the wicked might understand as much as the righteous. It is expressly said, that “none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” That is, these intelligent ones, of whom we have heard before. Mark the importance of this. In the last chapter of the Apocalypse, we have the prophet John addressed at the close of his prophecy. The contrast is most striking. In the last of Daniel, he is told that all is to be closed up and sealed till the time of the end. In the last chapter of the Revelation, John is told not to seal “the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” In other words, there is an exact contrast between the injunction given to the two prophets. To the Jewish prophet all is sealed till the time of the end. To the Christian prophet nothing is sealed: all is open. How comes this? The answer is, that the Church—the Christian—is always supposed to be at the time of the end. The gift of the Holy Ghost has changed everything. From that time nothing has been sealed to the Christian. All the mind, the affections, the counsels of God, yea, and His secrets about the world, in the Scriptures of truth, are opened to him by the power of God. The Christian, even if you take the weak and ignorant, has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. Therefore, in writing to the babes, does the Apostle John say, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” All the learning in the world can never make a man understand the Bible; whereas, if a soul is born of God, he is capable of understanding anything that God reveals: he only requires to be led on, and more perfectly instructed. The apostle is not speaking of the actual acquirements of the babe, which might be very slight. In whom, then, do we boast, and ought we to boast? In God, who has given us such an amazing privilege. Whoever has the Spirit of God, has therein a divine capacity of entering into the things of God. He only wants to be in proper circumstances, dependent on God, and valuing His word, and what is of God will be manifest and proved to be divine. This is connected with the fact, that the Spirit of God is given to the Church, in a special sense, which not even the prophets knew. For although they had the Spirit to inspire them, as we, of course, have not, yet we have the Holy Ghost always dwelling in us; one consequence of which is, that we have spiritual intelligence, “the mind of Christ,” which they had not. And therefore, as you may remember, the Spirit of God in 1 Peter 1 contrasts the condition of the Christian now with that of the rains, yea, of the prophets themselves, under the Old Testament. He shows us that they were “searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that, not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” That is, we stand in the present knowledge and enjoyment of things which, they were told, did not concern them but us of the New Testament. This is very important. They had the promise, and it was salvation to them. But we have much more: we have positive accomplished blessing—redemption not merely promised, but effected. And the Christian now, relieved by grace from all question about his sins, is free to enter into the blessed things of God. God accordingly says now, You are not to seal the book. The time of the end is that in which we are contemplated; the end morally being come. And therefore we are waiting for the Lord to come at any time. Where the Jewish thought prevails, people are always

looking out for an antecedent time of great trouble. They do not see that God has a purpose about Israel, as well as about the Church; that when He has removed us to our own proper place in heavenly glory, He will again take up the Jews: and that they, not we, must go through the great tribulation, and see the appointed signs Which herald the approach of the Son of man to the earth.

This also serves to explain how it is that we can understand these prophecies. Daniel could not: as he says here, “And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Then comes in Christianity, and not one of them is sealed—not one shut up. They are all open. To us the end is always nigh; we are said to be in the end of the world: as it is written in 1 Cor. 10:11, “These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come.” And it is always so. “Christ is said to have appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” The Church is ever supposed to be in the end, and, by virtue of the Spirit, anticipating the godly, intelligent remnant. Indeed, the Church began with a remnant of Jews that had faith in their Messiah. Thus Pentecost began with that which will be true again after we are removed to heaven. For when God has translated the saints, and the time of the end is literally come, there will once more be a remnant of faithful Jews. “But the wise shall understand.” The Church is always supposed to be standing in these privileges, and is essentially above the mere discoveries or progress of the age.

As to the “days” spoken of in the close of the chapter, what is their meaning? In verse 11 it is said, “From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred, and ninety days.” It had been previously said in verse 7, by the man clothed in linen, that it should be “for a time, times, and a half” —that is, for 1260 days. Verse 16 adds thirty days, or one month more, to the 1260 days. Then, in verse 12, we find a further epoch:— “Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, and five-and-thirty days.” That is, a month and a half are added still. So that we have, first of all, 1260 days; then 1290 days; then 1335 days. What, we may ask, is the meaning of this? and from what time are we to reckon these days? The answer is, “From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up.”

And now I would make a remark of some importance, as linking all which has been said together, and yielding a conclusive proof of the true interpretation of this prophecy. It is the very verse that our Lord quoted in Matt. 24.: “When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand!) then let them which are in Judea flee into the mountains.” The question is, Where does Daniel speak of this? I answer, in verse 11 of this chapter. It is the only verse that properly answers to the one in Matthew.

We are told that from that time there are to be 1290 days; next, a further period of 45 days, and then full blessing. Has that been the case? If you apply it to anything past, as for instance, to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; if you reckon 1335 days from the time when the Romans took Jerusalem, is the blessing really come? It matters little how you take the days. Let them be conceived to be 1335 years from that destruction of Jerusalem: still have you got the blessing of the Jews and the saint's blessing according to the word of God here? Nothing of the sort. What then follows? That you have dated it from a wrong epoch. The abomination that maketh desolate

is not yet come; when it does come, in the sense in which our Lord speaks, 1335 days follow, and then will be the full blessing.

But now another word as to those differences: first the 1260 days, then the 1290, and then, lastly, 1335. I think the reason is, because the blessing of Israel will not be brought in at once. The first great turning point will be the destruction of “the king.” That takes place when the 1260 days expire.

But as we saw in chapter 11, the king of the north has to be disposed of, after “the king.” Accordingly, there is another period of delay. But whether that Will coincide with the thirty days more (or 1290), or with the subsequent 45 days (1335), 1 am not prepared to say. Of this, however, we may be assured, that the 1335 days bring us down to the accomplishment of the whole work: and I am inclined to think that the destruction of the king of the north is rather one of the latest, if not the last, of these acts of judgment before the epoch of blessing begins. In Isa. 10:12, it is said, “When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.” That seems to me to indicate that it is the last act of the Lord in judgment connected with the blessing of Israel. Thus we have a brief interval or two after the destruction of Antichrist, during which the Lord is still putting down His and Israel's enemies. “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, and five and thirty days.”

I now close this book, praying the Lord to make it of real profit as well as interest. One of the most important points of profit will have been this—to deliver God's children from the idea that the Church is everything. That is not a true system. It is to fall into the same sort of mistake that the old astronomers used to make when they viewed the world as the center of the solar system, because it was the place where they were living. That is what spoils man. He makes himself the center of everything. The same error is made in theology. The Church, because we are in it, has been made the center of Scripture, whereas Christ is the center. He is the center of heavenly blessedness, and the Church circles around Him; He is the center of Jewish blessing and the Jews circle around Him. Therefore, whether in heaven or earth, Christ is the Kernel of all God's thoughts of blessing. And when we get our hearts fixed in that, there is peace, progress, and blessing. The reason why souls very often have not peace, is because they are occupied with themselves, and they do not find what they think ought to be in a Christian. Whereas if I am looking at Christ, there is no difficulty. The question then becomes: Does Christ deserve that such an one as 1 am should be saved? Can I deny it? The effect of this is that I am happy. and God can use me in His service. But if I am troubled about the salvation of my own soul, how can I be occupied in the service of others? The great question of self never will be settled till Christ is the center of everything to us. May it be so He is the center for all God's thoughts of love and righteousness, as well as of glory.

Chapter 48

Scripture Query and Answer: Die With Jesus or With Lazarus?

Q. John 11:16. Did Thomas mean die with Jesus or Lazarus?

A. I think the comparison of verse 8 with 16 makes it plain that Thomas expected nothing but death for the Lord from the enmity of the Jews; and proposed, as He was decided to go into Judea, that the disciples should share their Master's fate. No doubt there was love in such a resolve; but how blind is unbelief to look for the Savior's death at the very moment when He was about to be marked out Son of God in power by raising a dead man from the grave! How blessed, on the other hand, to hear our Lord say, in the midst of the sufferance of evil, “Let us go to him!” It was in the power of One who is the Resurrection and the Life. “Let us also go, that we may die with him” is the best that affection can do, short of the faith of resurrection-power.

Chapter 49

Discipline: 6. Moses—Part 1

MOSES.

MOSES being in a special sense the type of Him who is the servant of all, we should be prepared to find in his history the most peculiar discipline, in order to suppress his nature, and. make room for the expression of that grace and service, which was exemplified in perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Born at the period when Pharaoh's interdict against the male children of Israel is raging, no exception is made in favor of him: he enters on the earth to find that earthly place is denied him. There was no room for the Lord of glory in the inn, and Egypt's king enacts that his type, Moses., should die the moment he is born! By faith only his parents rescued him. “They saw he was a goodly child, and were not afraid of the king's commandment.” They knew by the deep and peculiar conviction which the Holy Ghost effects, that God was to be trusted for this child. Faith in God thus bears him into life. How must he in riper years have derived strength from this godly acting of his parents and have been indebted to them for this their first training him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! The commencement of our course gives a color to the whole of it; and the earliest tuition we receive in the divine school gives a mold and a tone to our characters, which after years can never obliterate. Moses' first breath on earth was secured to him only through the faith of his parents. He was hid three months. Sorely must their faith have been exercised during these ninety days, but they endured; and then, in the ark of bulrushes, they consign him to the waters. All place on earth being denied him, the older he grew, the more difficult it became to screen him from the ruthless edict.

When we act in faith, and have endured sufficiently so as to establish our souls in the assurance that it is faith, then the Spirit which gives us the faith gives us also wisdom how to act. In this wisdom the parents of Moses now act. Faith is no hindrance to the affections; but it loves to sustain those affections, which, acting alone, would be too anxious and distracted; it supports the heart in quiet, unfailing persistence of the conviction and purpose which it inculcates.

From his perilous position in the ark of bulrushes, Moses, the weeping babe, is taken by no less a person than the daughter of him who would have been its destroyer, but not before the impression of the coldness and desolation of this world had been made upon his tender spirit. We read, “the babe wept.” Thus, in earliest age, before the mind could be intelligently impressed, is he made to taste of that sorrow and pressure to which he must be no stranger throughout his course. The mind of the babe could not recall it, but the soul, nevertheless, consciously entered on that line in which it was afterward to be so exercised, and his tears were no doubt the firstfruits of a sorrow with which, in after life, he was so deeply conversant. But the answer to this is the Lord's tender care and consideration for him; and this we see exemplified in the most touching and interesting way. Not only is the daughter of his enemy made the instrument of his deliverance, but he is consigned to the care of his own mother and then installed in Pharaoh's house in ease and honor. The desolation of the world and the unfailing compassions of God are the first lessons of discipline

traced on his unconscious mind, and which are never to be erased; for God teaches early, decidedly, and enduringly.

The interval which intervenes between this first notice and the next, when Moses is “full forty years,” is briefly but significantly summed up as the time during which he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and in deed. He was introduced into all the attractions of Egypt, that in relinquishing them, he might have sympathy with any extent of surrender which the people of God might be called to. Many might have much to surrender, but not so much as he had and did. If the people felt it hard to relinquish the leeks and the onions, how much more should Moses, who had moved in all the luxuries and honors of Pharaoh's court! In God's discipline and education he was being prepared for the leadership he was to be invested with by and by. The great magnitude of his own surrender qualified him to ask others to follow him; the renunciation of all Egypt's attractions entitled him to take the lead out of Egypt; for if he “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin,” he did so, after having participated in their greatest magnificence. And more than this—by this education, he was made conversant with everything that was delectable in nature, and had experiences of what nature could yield, in a way which none of the previous characters which we have been considering could have known. Neither Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or even Joseph, had such a training as this, and justly so, for none of them was intended for such a mission as Moses; and God's education and discipline with His people is always suitable and preparative to its peculiar end. Solomon tested the vanity of everything on earth; the Lord Jesus at once felt it in His own moral perfection; Moses is surrounded by it to mature age, and then refuses it.

And now it comes into his heart to visit his brethren. A right impulse moves him in a right direction; but we are not always morally prepared for the expression of our impulses, even though they be right ones. Our humanity being the vessel through which they must be expressed, it is often unequal to the trials which the impulse may expose us to. But, if the impulse be right, we may rest assured that the vessel will be prepared for its expression, sooner or later. It may he postponed, and necessarily so, while the vessel is preparing; but this being done, the right and true desire will be owned and gratified.

When Peter first proposed to the Lord to follow Him (John 13.), the Lord warned him that he could not do so then; and, on the contrary, that he would deny Him. But when Peter was fully restored, and had his soul strengthened in the love of Christ, the Lord lets him know that he is to follow Him; and that the desire which he once so fearlessly and ignorantly avowed, he should yet distinctly substantiate. Thus with Moses here. He has got the right idea and desire, but he has not learned from God the right way of sustaining and establishing it. He knows not the trials which beset his path; and, consequently he has no provision to meet them when they occur. His attempt only proves how insufficient are his resources for the work he had entered on; and he has at last to abandon it, and relinquish that on which his heart was set: the inevitable consequence of attempting to carry out a right purpose in our own resources. I think a servant of God is generally acting in his own resources when he engages opponents on a level with himself; he thus aims at the tail instead of the head. Moses now directs his vengeance against an Egyptian, but when he returns in the power of the Lord, it is leveled against Pharaoh; even as Christ, who, in accomplishing eternal deliverance for us, first encountered Satan.

Moses fails, as he might he expected; and not only so, but his own life is in jeopardy, and for very personal safety he must fly. “Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.” What an accumulation of distressful feelings must have oppressed this zealous servant of God! What anguish to a faithful heart to be thus baffled in its sincere attempts to serve his brethren! May not all his sacrifices and surrender of the glories of Egypt have appeared to him now as useless to others and unprofitable to himself as he sat there, a wanderer and exile, like a blighted, fruitless tree in the desert. But if such were Moses' thoughts, they were not God's. The mission was not forfeited, but only postponed. The vessel was not yet “meet for the Master's rise.” Nature was not sufficiently purged from it. On the other hand, God's time to deliver His people had not come; neither were the people themselves prepared for the deliverance. But one subject is Moses himself; and he, as God's instrument and servant for the work, need forty years' more preparation ere he can be thus used. And already, sitting by the well in the land of Midian, is he under that discipline which will form for the great service designed for him in the counsel of God.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 50

Discipline: 7. Moses—Part 2

MOSES.

(Continued.)

FORTY years of exiledom are appointed for Moses; but whether those years should be one uninterrupted season of sorrow and gloom, or whether they should be mitigated by sources of solace and cheer, depends on the manner in which the disciplined one receives the discipline.

Will he bow himself and accept the will of the Lord? Will he prove himself hem a deliverer of the distressed, in principle and heart, as well as for his own people? If he will, he accepts God's discipline; and, therefore, his lot may be less trying and oppressive. The moment subjection is established discipline becomes effective, and may be relaxed. Though not removed, the scene may be brightened. And thus was it with Moses. He acts the part of a deliverer to the women at the well, who were driven away by the shepherds. Although he has been denied to declare himself as such in a large circle, he does not refuse it in a very insignificant one; he does not brood in listless sorrow over his own reverses, like the fool eating his own flesh, but he submits to his circumstances, and rises above his own feelings, in his interest to serve others. Until I am superior to a trial I must be under it; and, while under it, not free to serve with whole-heartedness, or cheerfulness of spirit, which latter is always the mainspring of service. Nothing proves more the divinity of our mission than ease and readiness to accord it in the most retired and unknown quarters, as well as the most attractive and congenial. And when we fully surrender ourselves to the position the Lord has ordered for us, serving Him therein, He makes the desert land (the place of discipline), to brighten up, and provides rest and solace in that on which we entered in sorrow and desolation of heart.

At first Moses' service to those Midianitish women meets no requital, even as Joseph's to the chief butler; but it must not remain so. Reuel, their father, sends for him in virtue of his service to his daughters, provides a home for him, and gives him his daughter Zipporah to wife: and we read, “she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershon; for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

This name reveals to us the secret sorrow of Moses. Though provided with a home, he still felt himself a stranger in a strange land; therefore, his son, who linked him to the scene, must bear a name which will perpetuate before him his exiled condition, which no present mercies could exclude. They could not obliterate the deep and earnest purpose of his soul, to deliver his people. Nor SHOULD they; for, as we have said before, the purpose was right, yea, divine; but the vessel was denied its expression until further preparation. Paul does not adequately express what he receives and exults in for more than fourteen years afterward; and thus, in prison at Rome, he was peculiarly prepared and fitted for doing so.

For forty years, then, does Moses fulfill his daily toil, perfecting subjection to the will of God. Useful and exemplary in the common duties of life, the qualifications which he demonstrated as a servant

were a sure indication of those of a master, for which he was being educated; for none can rule well who have not learned to serve. His occupation was evidently a toilsome one—seeking pasturage for the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro.

In the natural routine of it, he leads the flock to the back-side of the desert, and comes to the mountain of God, even to Horeb, little thinking, no doubt, that the days of his exile were about to close. The moment had come when God could use him, according to the desire which had induced him so many years previously to attempt the deliverance of his brethren from the yoke of Egypt; and now we have to consider the closing scene of that long period of preparation, which the Lord in His wisdom saw fit to order for His servant, and which He is now about to insure by the revelation of Himself. “The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” Moses' attention is arrested. Though occupied with his natural duties, they did not incapacitate him from recognizing the manifestations of the Lord. Nor need they ever. On the contrary, if rightly entered on, they guarantee assiduity to higher duties. The shepherds, watching their flocks by night, are the witnesses, chosen of God, for recording the greatest manifestation ever made to earth. It is one of the greatest proofs of subjection to God, to fulfill our daily toil patiently and perfectly; and yet to have the eye ever ready to observe the ways of God; which I apprehend is the force of that exhortation connected with prayer— “Watching thereunto with all perseverance,” &c. And this is the effect of a single eye, one that has the Lord's glory simply and wholly as its object.

“And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight; and when the Lord saw that he turned,” when it was evident that he desired to know the meaning of the Divine doings, “God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.” The revelation of the Lord here is in grace; in a flame of fire, but consuming nothing; the glory of God coming near to man, and man finding nothing but mercy and loving kindness flowing from it. And yet, it was holy ground; and only unshod worshippers could draw near to it. It was, moreover, an expression of God drawing near to man, and not of man drawing near to God. It was to unfold, that from God's side there was nothing to perpetuate the distance and alienation which existed between man and God. And this was a great and precious and needed lesson for Moses. He must, in his own experience, learn God in His love for His people; and also, how man can be brought nigh to Him.

Thus the Lord presents Himself in a flame of fire in a bush, and reveals His tender feelings and interest for Israel. How grateful must such communications have been to Moses. After the long and dreary interval in winch it seemed that God had forgotten His people, he is instructed of the infinite love and interest with which He had regarded them all through, and of His gracious purpose of delivering them. And now, Moses is conscious of his own inability for such a service. He sees that it is not his own feelings that he is to act on and to gratify, but Jehovah's; the One who, though before him in a flame of fire, will consume nothing; and the immensity of whose eternal love and mercy must have contrasted strongly with the impulsive and erring impetuosity with which be demonstrated his own, forty years before. He is now deeply sensible of his incompetency, and says, “Who am I to go before Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God will reassure, instruct, and prepare him; and we read in the following verses how this is done. He first communicates His intention and purpose to His servant. This must reassure him; not only in the proof of confidence which it evinces; but the soul, entering into the mind of God, is more ready and eager to undertake when the process and issue are before it. But more than this

(for the teaching of God is perfect), Moses is taught to feel in himself the power of God; and this is grace and life. The link must be established between his own soul and God before he can fully enter into that between the people and God; and this soul-assuring lesson he is taught in three different ways. First, He is made to feel his possession of power, superior to that before which his nature would succumb. His rod having turned into a serpent (the symbolical form of Satan), Moses flees from it; but the Lord causes him to grasp it, and it again becomes the rod of power in his hand. Secondly, He learns that if his hand be leprous God can present it sound again; and, thirdly, he is instructed that the water of the river (the great source of blessing) if poured on the dry land by him should become blood; showing that God had the power of life. In all these three points he is taught in order that he might be qualified for the mission entrusted to him, and also feel himself equal to it. Moses still demurs. Though strengthened in soul he is deficient in utterance; but God is gracious and considerate in preparing his servants for the work in small things as well as great. He will relieve whatever embarrasses them. Aaron is provided as a mouthpiece, and all being arranged, “he took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass and returned to the land of Egypt, with the rod of God in his hand.” How different from the manner in which he had left it, and how indicative is the contrast of what those 40 years of discipline must have wrought in and for him. Instead of an ignominious flight, fearing for his own life, the result of previous self-confidence and acting FOR God and independently of God, he now comes, small and weak in his own eyes, but invested with the power of God, in the calm easy dignity of one who feels that his only strength is in dependence on the Lord whose work he is about to enter on.

But ere this is entered on fully, there is one more question which must be settled between the Lord and Moses. And this gives us a remarkable instance of the exactitude of God's discipline. Either compromising to the habits of the Midianites, or despairing of ever again associating with his own nation, Moses had neglected to circumcise his son; and now, without repairing his error, which was a great one (considering his wife was a Gentile), he proceeds to enter on the Lord's service as if it were a matter of indifference. But, no; he must learn that nothing will be overlooked in one appointed to so high a post. His responsibilities must be equal to his calling. The Lord seeks to kill him: so inflexible is His holiness, and so strict is He in demanding obedience to His laws from one who fills the post of a servant, more than in any other. His wife repairs the inconsistency, but she does so reproachfully, and returns into her own country, while Moses pursues his way in company with Aaron.

What a finishing lesson this was just on the very scene of his long wished-for service. What an impression it must have made upon his soul, as the long desired morning, with all its interests, was breaking in upon him. No eminence in service, no amount of knowledge in the deepest things of God, will excuse his overlooking any of God's commandments. Nay, he must feel that, as to him much had been committed, of him much would be required. Implicit obedience to the word must mark the life and ways of the most eminent, and best instructed of servants. And with this, Moses' last lesson in this stage of his history, (one, moreover, which had been severely instilled into him), he passes on to the field of his labors. Emerging from the solitudes of Midian, he is to stand as God's witness before Pharaoh. Being prepared and made ready in a private school, as it were, he is now to demonstrate in a large and honorable sphere the result of his tuition. We shall here leave him for the present, as the varied activities of his service, fully considered, would lead us beyond the limits of this paper.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 51

Discipline: 8. Moses—Part 3

WE shall now look at the varied exercises which Moses passes through in fulfilling his service. We have looked at those which qualified him for service; but the servant of God needs a continuance of discipline to keep him ever and anon in dependence on God. With Moses this new order of discipline commences very early, indeed, we may say immediately on his entrance into the path of service.

Accompanied by Aaron he presents himself to Pharaoh, and announces God's summons to let His people go; but not only does Pharaoh refuse to comply, but he increases the burdens of the people in consequence of the demand. Here, then, was a disheartening commencement to a servant in his novitiate, after making a just appeal, and conscious that his message was from God. All it seems to effect is an open disavowal of God's rights, and an augmentation of the people's sorrows. Nor was this all. The people themselves do not hesitate to reproach him, as the cause of their increased troubles; the more sad and severe to him, doubtless, were these upbraidings, because they came from the very people whom he desired to serve. What can he do in such a strait? He returns to the Lord, and in bitterness or spirit refers the difficulty and discouragement to Him, the consequence of which is, that another page of instruction is opened to him. This was a moment for that peculiar discipline in a servant's life which, when effective, enables him to pursue his service independent of results. The general tendency is to judge service efficient if the results are satisfactory, and vice versa; but the real servant must keep his eye only on his Master's word and leave the result to Him. Our Lord, when He felt that his word and works were in vain, so that He reproached the cities where most of His mighty works were done, turns to the Father and says, “Father, I thank Thee, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

Moses must learn this self-same spirit, or his service will be characteristic of his own state, i.e., weak and unstable. A man without faith is double-minded, and a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

The Lord's instructions to him on this point are detailed in Ex. 6. He is there brought into an enlarged knowledge of God, as a preliminary to all further instructions. The more we know of God the easier is it to depend on Him. “Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace;” and the deeper our acquaintance with him, the greater is our calm and steady dependence on Him.

God, as Jehovah, the covenant God, here reveals Himself to Moses, a revelation not made to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, for none of them were called into the same line of service, or conflict with adverse powers. With them God had established his covenant to give Israel the land of Canaan, &c.; and this covenant He now brings forward in addition to the fresh revelation of Himself, in order to confirm the soul of Moses and enable him to bear up against casual reverses, assured that the result would be satisfactory, because it rested on God's word and covenant.

In a measure reassured, Moses presents himself to the children of Israel, but they hearken not to him for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage; and, still unequal to the service, he replies, when the Lord tells him to go again to Pharaoh, “Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, and how shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips.” He had suffered so much from his own attempts to deliver in the energy of nature forty years before, that he is now more prone to despond, and the further he enters upon service the more does he find out its difficulties, and his own lack of qualifications for it. But the Lord will make His servant perfect and happy in His work; and accordingly He now gives Moses and Aaron a “CHARGE unto the people of Israel, and unto Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.” The CHARGE is the first thing to service. No certainty of character or purpose will do without it. “That which is committed unto thee,” (as Paul wrote to Timothy), is that which gives distinctiveness and point to our service. A man who knows not what his line of service is can never expect to fulfill it, or adequately to pursue it; but when he knows that he has received from the Lord a distinct charge or line of work, there is a sense of trust as well as the responsibility of trust. This charge is now given to Moses, verse 13, but still he feels his own insufficiency; and, mark! according as he is made to feel it, is he supplied from God with that which will counteract it.

First, He is made to rely on Jehovah, the covenant God, who had bound himself to bring this people unto the land of Canaan.

Second, a distinct charge is given to him, and if he believes that he is acting for Jehovah, he has now the prescribed result and effect of his mission, his appointed work marked out for him; and, Third, To silence every hesitation, and sense of unfitness, he is invested with power. The Lord says to him, “See, I have made thee a god unto Pharaoh;” and still more, he is commanded to repeat unto Pharaoh the miracle which had before re-assured his own soul at the burning bush—that of transforming his rod into a serpent. There, however, (i.e., at the burning bush,) he was made to take the serpent in his hand in order that his own individual faith might be established; here, the object is more to exhibit Moses before Pharaoh as invested with the power of God, so that this part of the miracle is not repeated.

This gracious instruction of the Lord perfects the discipline necessary for Moses' soul, in order to enter on his service so fully and fixedly that nothing can divert him from it, or make him doubt as to the result according to God; and after this he fulfills it with faithful and unflinching labor, strong in the power of God before Pharaoh, and without reproach from his brethren, until he reaches the grand result of this first stage of his service—viz., the deliverance of the people out of Egypt. From the time that his soul was thus really established in service until the night of the Passover, when he, with the people, marched out of the land of their captivity, was an interval highly honorable to Moses. But we don't dwell on it, as he was then acting uninterruptedly as God's instrument, the effect of the previous discipline which we have noticed, but no fresh phases of individual exercise are brought out.

Behold, then, the Israelites, having left Egypt with a high hand, encamped between Migdol and the sea; but what a testing there awaits them. What a crisis for Moses, at the moment of the successful issue of all his toil and anxiety! Success was all but attained when apparently insurmountable obstacles present themselves: Pharaoh and his host at one side, the sea with its raging waters on the other; and once more he is challenged by the unbelieving multitude for

having brought them there to die because there were no graves in Egypt. But how calm and strong in faith is Moses at this critical moment. How different from the timorous notices we have had of him before! “Fear not,” says he, “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” This was what he himself had learned during his forty years of discipline. Nature was to “stand still,” and faith to wait for God's salvation. He first calms the people, and then cries unto God himself. This scene describes one of the most important exercises in which a faithful guide to God's people is schooled—viz., to maintain unswerving confidence in God's succor in moments of embarrassment, and at the same time to receive from God the power and mode by which this succor can be successfully directed. He does both; he calms the people and honors the Lord by expressing the fullest confidence in Him; and then, looking to Him to realize his faith, he is directed by Him as to how the succor is to be afforded. How fully and blessedly is this direction given. “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward; but lift thou up thy rod and stretch out thine hand over the sea,” &c. What a strength and elevation this event must have afforded Moses; and how must such an extremity have taught him afresh the wisdom and magnitude of God's resources; and what a result! We read, “the people believed the Lord and his servant Moses.”

In chap. 15: 23-26, we see him passing through another exercise, and of a different order. Scarcely had the last echoes of the song of triumph died away, when the people murmur against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” The servant of God must be prepared for every shade of trial and disappointment. No matter what the amount of his services, he must expect no appreciation of them from the congregation, or at best be prepared to do without it, and look to the Lord alone. Moses must have felt this deeply, after the song of praise that had just passed their lips; but by such means and discipline the faithful servant is led into fellowship in spirit and in power, too, with man's best and greatest servant. He cries unto the Lord, and again is he instructed in the amplitude and perfection of God's resources for every variety of man's need. What a distinguished place, to be the medium through, which all these mercies flow! The exercise and the pressure may be very great for a moment. It may be Marah; sowing indeed with tears, but it is only “to reap with joy.” If the servant finds that there is not a moment in which he may rest from service on account of the need of the people of God, he is, on the other hand, made acquainted, in the deepest and truest way, with the resources of God; and is also made the channel of those resources himself. Thus was it with Moses here; he is told to cast the tree into the waters and they are made sweet.

In chap. 16 we are presented with another order of service which this well-tried servant learns and records. The trials of the people become a school to him for learning and attaining that service which was to meet their need, and while so doing his own soul was necessarily enlarged in the wisdom of which he was the minister. It is interesting and important for us to see, that for each need and trial Moses is taught a distinct and suited lesson, so that his own soul is growing in God while his service is affording the needed relief to the people.

In this chapter they felt the dearth of the wilderness so intensely (and this we must bear in mind was on the second month after leaving Egypt) that they murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and said, “Would to God that we had died in the land of Egypt where we did eat bread to the full.” Moses was the one who, under God, had led them into these circumstances; and must he not have felt how critical was the position? Yes, truly; for human help there was none. But so much the more must his soul have depended upon God, who thus exercised him, to cast him upon

Himself and His own resources. And again the Lord communicates to him instruction suited to the occasion. “Behold I will rain down bread from heaven for you,” &c. This is the revelation to Moses. But the way in which he evangelizes it (if I may say so) is also recorded, and worthy of notice, in connection with our subject, as showing the nearness to God, and consequent searching and humbling of heart, which revelations of God's mercy effect. He desires the people to “come near” before the Lord who had heard their murmurings. He had known the effect in himself; and, as a wise master-builder, he would lead his brethren into the same, though it be by a different path. The glory of the Lord, and the resources of the Lord, had already instructed him; and now he seeks that the people may receive the same blessed instruction, though it be drawn forth by their discontent and murmurings. “And they looked toward the wilderness, and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud,” &c. And they then hear His gracious provision for their need.

Let us note that a servant's discipline must always be in advance of the service required of him. He cannot lead beyond that point to which he himself has been led. But when the depth and reality of the truth has been established in his own soul, he is made the channel of it by various modes; sometimes by an unexpected revelation sometimes as an answer to his own prayer—sometimes, as we shall see in subsequent instances, by the manifestation of gift. Of the two latter we find a record in chap. 17.

At Rephidim he again suffers from the congregation, who are ready to stone him; but the Lord, even a very present help to him in time of trouble, invests him with peculiar power to effect relief for the rebellious people. Since he has been personally assailed, he must be personally honored—and by those, too, who had reproached and threatened him. The elders of Israel are called to see the water gush forth from the rock as Moses strikes it. Thus the Lord approves His servant before the heads of the people: and the servant's own soul is confirmed and enlarged in apprehension and appreciation of the power which God had given him for service.

At Rephidim, too, was it that the children of Israel first encountered mortal strife with any of the human family. Amalek comes against them. Moses is now placed in new and untried difficulties; and he determines that Joshua must encounter man, but he, in spirit, must be engaged with God. He will betake himself to the top of the hill, with the rod of God in his hand.

What a season of blessing to him, thus separated unto God—storing his heart and filling his soul with the assurances and evidences of God's might and mercy for His people. But at this very moment the sense of his own feebleness is made more convincing than ever. If he held up his hand, (an expression of dependence on God,) victory was secured to Israel; but if he let it fall, Amalek prevailed. A place of eminent service this, without doubt. But how humbling to Moses to know and to feel that he was too weak in nature to accomplish what the spirit of his mind so desired. His hands were heavy, and would have dropped but for the help and intervention of others. In the primary sense, we learn by this, as has often been before remarked, that the priesthood is necessary to sustain any service, however devoted; but in a secondary sense, and regarding the scene in its individual relation to Moses, we are taught that, when contending with man, the greater the eminence with regard to God, the more must our own insufficiency in nature be made to appear. No wonder Moses should have built an altar there, and called it, “Jehovah-nissi.” The conflict was with man—an unnatural contest. “Love not the world, because of offenses: and woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh.” But when it does come, there is

no banner to shield against it but Jehovah. And at that stage of the soul's experience, Jehovah-nissi is its altar, or, in other words, the character of its worship.

The next incident recorded in Moses' history brings him before us in a lower point of view. He is influenced, and, in a measure, perverted by man. He had reached great eminence in service; he had just erected an altar in record of what God had been to him in his conflict with hostile man; but now he has to encounter the voice of nature, in the well-intentioned but pernicious advice of his father-in-law; and yielding to it, he morally sinks. In converse with Jethro, he seems to forget the lesson just taught him by the conflict with Amalek! and surrenders the service to which he was called, or part of it, without any counsel or even sanction from God. The assistance which he sought here from the heads of the people was of a very different order to that which he rightly accepted from Aaron and Hur in the conflict with Amalek. The latter was a help to himself personally; whereas the former was a transference of the duties imposed by the Lord on himself to others. Jethro had heard of all that the Lord had done for Moses and for Israel; and he comes to re-engage Moses with his wife and children, who it appears he had sent back. Jethro, I think, here morally represents the association amongst men which a servant of God may be enticed into by relationship; and who, while owning in common with him the work of the Lord, assumes an undue importance; for it was an assumption for an uncircumcised Gentile to arrogate to himself leadership of the people of God, by inducing Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel to join in fellowship with him. When the soul gets into a clouded position before God, it is comparatively easy to divert it from its responsibilities on the plea of inability. Moses is here induced to consider himself unequal to what God did not consider him unequal for. And though the arrangement is permitted, it must have been with loss to him. He is now at the mount of God, experiencing the fulfillment of God's promises to him at the burning bush, after having traversed a strange and wondrous path. But here, now at the end of it, after all the Lord's dealings and communications to him, he appears before us as susceptible of the influence of nature, even as other men—proving how little, in any position, is man to be accounted of.

Now, however, on the Mount of God, Moses is to enter on a new office, and fulfill a different mission.

Up to this he had been a deliverer and a ruler; now, he is to be a lawgiver and a prophet—one who, as revealing the mind of God to the people, is thus, in a sense, a mediator between God and them. Moses, as a highly favored servant, must be instructed in this blessed line. God had met His people in their need and delivered them, but as yet, like many a delivered one, they do not apprehend the nature of God. The pressure of impending ruin had been removed, but they have yet to learn God, and how utterly ruined they are in His sight, and Moses, the instructed of God, is now to instruct them in this.

He is, therefore, called up into the mount, and brought into a nearness to the Lord, and given a revelation of Him different from what he had previously seen in the burning bush. There it was all grace. Though “holy ground,” the aspect of the Lord was one of grace and compassion; here, it is God's terrible majesty, the claims of a holy God on man, and how great must His distance be from a man. Both these lessons were necessary for Moses in order to fit him for the place assigned him towards the people of God; and it is always that manner of God's discipline to make His servants practically pass through and learn in a fuller and more vivid way that particular line of truth of which

He designs them to be the channel. Stephen saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, before he made his announcement that heaven was open, and that he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God—that is, he saw a greater and a fuller truth than he communicated; but the greater only qualified him the more for communicating the lesser, which last was the suited measure for his audience. So Moses, now in the mount, divinely instructed in the nature and mind of God, is thus qualified for revealing Him to the people. He sees Him in His righteousness making a demand on man on earth and still in the flesh.

Having pronounced the law, and in type and figure sprinkled the blood of purgation, he is called (Ex. 24) to receive not only the law, engraven on stones, but also a much fuller revelation of God's interest for His people; the provision of grace based on the Lord's foreknowledge of their inability to keep the law. In these interesting scenes it is not the subject of them which must engage us here, but the blessed way in which Moses is prepared and qualified for the fulfillment of the task entrusted to him. He is called up into the mount, on which the glory of God rested. Six days the cloud covered the mount, and on the seventh day God called unto Moses out of the midst of that glory which was like devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

A fit preparation, truly, for one who is to be commissioned to set forth on earth a pattern of the things which he saw. Thoroughly detached from earth, and enwrapped in the cloud which surrounded the glory of God, his soul was impressed with the wondrous subject and detail of his commission. Then it was that the Lord said unto him, “Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them, according to all that I show thee.” Thus we have an insight into God's manner of educating His servant for His own purposes; and let us here especially note two things; First, That Moses is near God while learning the truth, and knows in himself the effect of being near Him; and, second, he learns the truth consciously from God; he is not only near Him while learning it, but he knows that he has learned it from Himself. If we be not near God while we are learning our knowledge will be profitless; and if it be not from Him that we learn we may rejoice in the truth for a moment, but, like the disciples, it will require to be recalled to our remembrance by the Holy Ghost, which we know is very commonly the case.

But before Moses has entered on this new mission, the people of Israel have made an idolatrous calf, and he is summoned from his exalted position in the mount to witness the departure of the people from the covenant just made; and here he gives expression to sentiments which testify to us how deeply he had learned to care for the glory of God. (Ex. 32:11-13.) In this point of view, it is an utterance hardly equaled in the whole of Scripture; but the previous forty days and forty nights enabled him thus to appreciate it, and every step he takes in this trying moment declares how fully he had entered into the mind of God.

He breaks the tables of the covenant, for they had already been broken on man's side, and this is no time to publish them. Then he took the idol which they had made and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it on the water, and made the people drink of it. Their sin must not only be put away, but they must taste in themselves the reality of it. Then, he insists on separation from evil, and requires every one who is on the Lord's side to slay the recreants. In a day of universal failure, the witnesses of repentance and returning allegiance cannot too strongly enunciate their severance from their former associations, annihilating every trace of them, even

unto death, and Moses, the well-prepared vessel, leads the way in this.

Thus having, so to speak, prepared them for God, as repentant and separate, he returns to God for them to make an atonement. The Lord refuses to go up with them, and desires them to strip themselves of their ornaments, that He may know what to do with them. In this moment of great suspense, while the people are waiting under the hand of God, Moses, learned in the holiness of the mind of God, knows what to do for the people, and how to restore relations.

He pitches the tabernacle afar off from the guilty camp, in order that every one who, humbled under a sense of sin, desires to seek the Lord, may seek Him there, apart from the defilement. This act met the mind of the Lord, and restored His presence to Israel; the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord speaks to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, and not only promises that His presence shall go with him, but also accedes to his request that He will resume His place in the midst of Israel. How blessedly Moses is enlarged in the mind of God! Difficulties the most serious, are only unfolding to him the more the resources of God; but he only reaches those resources by first responding to the holiness of God.

At this conjuncture, he learns both God and man; the latter as unreliable and failing in every circumstance, and the Lord, as the resource of his heart and his portion forever. And hence, when God had acceded to all his desires, he breaks forth in the earnest entreaty, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” “I have seen enough of humanity to recoil from it. I have seen enough of the blessed God to desire to see Him in consummated glory.” This desire was partially answered here; but still more distinctly when, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he, with Elijah, talked with the Lord about his decease, for, and on account of, this very stiff-necked Israel, as well as for all the redeemed.

We have now followed Moses in his ascent to the highest point, which was ever accorded to man. To the Apostle Paul, a man in Christ, greater, and clearer, and peculiar glories were revealed, but “there arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” Paul (though unconscious of being in the body) must needs have a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find Moses ere long demonstrating that he is not able, through a sense of his own infirmity, to maintain the great position assigned him.

He who had seen so much of God's power, forgets and ignores it, when pressed by the evil and unbelief of the people, (Num. 11) and exclaims, “I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.” Man cannot sustain the high position God calls him to, without notices now and then of his own weakness. If we have not the sentence of death in ourselves, we shall trust in ourselves. Had Moses, who had been in the glory, known this, he would not have looked to himself either in strength or weakness, but to “God who raiseth the dead.”

He is now humbled before the seventy elders of Israel, before who in he had previously been exalted. The spirit which was upon him is put upon them. We have seen that at the suggestion of his father-in-law he had before allowed this leaven to enter in a milder form, but now, as is ever the case when yielded to, it has worked to a fuller development. This is a time of humbling for Moses, but no less interesting to us than the time of his exaltation, as illustrating the nature of the divine school in which he is. His submission and acknowledgment of the hand of the Lord is very instructive, and his interest in the work nothing abated by being in a measure supplanted. He

rebukes Joshua for envying for his sake. But though the Lord had thus dealt with the unbelief of His servant, He will not allow man to undervalue or slight him. The cause of reproach appeared just, for he had married an Ethiopian woman, and it appears that Aaron and Miriam were encouraged by the late humbling which Moses had undergone; but the Lord in a most signal and terrific manner avenges him and makes him the intercessor for the guilty parties. The Lord may rebuke him Himself, but man must not; and the way in which Moses bore these taunts evinces how deeply learned he was in God's interest for himself and how humbled in spirit. We have seen his righteous anger burst forth when the glory of God was at stake; but when personally assailed, he is silent.

Another instance of this we find in the case of Korah. (Num. 16.) Instead of vindicating himself and his office, Moses refers the decision to the Lord, who pronounces it by terrible judgment on the offenders, and then instructed in the mind of God, he knows what will stay the plague among the people, and he makes use of the priesthood here, as before in the case of the golden calf and the unbelief at Kadeshbarnea. He had himself mediated on their behalf before God.

We now come to the last scene which we shall notice in the history of Moses, and that is his forfeiture of his right to enter Canaan, because he failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people. This occurred in the thirty-ninth year of their wanderings, just as he was about to see the happy termination of all his labors and the fulfillment of God's promises. Moses seems here to have failed in those very points in which he has before appeared most eminent. He speaks “unadvisedly with his lips” and fails to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people, (that Lord whose glory was so dear to his heart,) and thus disqualifies himself from planting the people in the land of their inheritance, when on its very borders. When the congregation murmured for water, God tells him “to take the rod and gather the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water.” But instead of this, Moses, carried away by his irritation, first upbraids the people, and says, “Must WE fetch you water out of this rock?” and then he lifts up his hand and smites the rock twice. The Lord was now acting in grace, and through the priesthood towards the people. The rock was not to be smitten again, Moses is not at this moment in fellowship with the mind and ways of the Lord—he has failed in his mission and he must forfeit his leadership. Such is the manner of God's discipline! No amount of faithful service will mitigate or divert the penalty of assumption in that service. Paul, contrary to the warning of the Spirit, would go to Jerusalem, and a prison was his penalty for many a day afterward.

God may and will, no doubt, use His servants in the place which their own failure has entailed on them: (Paul was thus used in a new and special service—as his Epistles were to him, Deuteronomy was to Moses:) but He must subdue the willfulness of their nature which has led them to act independently of Him. Moses began his course by attempting a right work in his own strength, and endured many a day of exile on account of it; and now he lays himself down on Pisgah, after beholding the glorious land, from which he is excluded because in acting for the Lord he acted independently of the Lord, whose servant he was. His first failure bears a close analogy to his last. But though thus chastened as to his service and mission, he loses nothing of his personal nearness to the Lord, and, indeed, gains in this way, for the Lord Himself shows him the land. So was it with Paul; while suffering the penalty of his failure in prison, he found more than ever that Christ was everything to him, and more than service; and, no doubt, Moses on Pisgah

must have felt that God was greater to him than even the promised land, or than leadership thereto. At any rate, his submission to the Lord's will is very beautiful, and his transference of his own dignity and office to Joshua.

But, nevertheless, this transference WAS a chastisement to Moses as a servant, and while his very eye feeds on the inheritance, he is suffering crucifixion in his vile body. But, for that body Satan may contend in vain. Michael rescues it from his grasp, for the Lord claims all of him. The body is the Lord's, to whom be honor and glory now and forever. Amen.

Chapter 52

Discipline: 9. Joshua

JOSHUA.

THE first notice which we get of Joshua is in Ex. 17:9, where he is introduced to us as appointed by Moses to lead the choice men of Israel against Amalek. From the appointment we must conclude that he was the best qualified for the post; but what interests us most in studying the history of any of God's servants, is the peculiar aspect or condition in which they are first presented to us; for in these first presentations we may behold the grand characteristics which will distinguish their course.

So with Joshua-type, as well as servant, of Christ, he is presented to us on the outset as a warrior chief, prepared to encounter the adversaries of Israel, a fitting expression for one so eminently typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation. His first recorded engagement is against Amalek, who represents to us the flesh or the natural man in active opposition to the progress of the people of God. Egypt is more properly the world, Amalek is the flesh personated, Assyria is nature in its attractions and influences. The conflict with Amalek was the first intuition of warfare to Israel and characteristically Joshua, for the first time, appears on the scene as leader. He discomfits the enemy by the edge of the sword; but while thus victorious he is made to know on what his success depends, even on Moses who is on the hill top with the rod of God in his hand. He learns to lead the people to victory by being himself subject to the vicissitudes of conflict while depending on an unseen agency for success. Success wanes, not uncertainly, but still wanes; and in the very alternations of the conflict he learns to depend on God, and succeeds because he depends. This illustrates to us very pointedly the true manner of conflict, and how needful it is for us to be disciplined in order to ensure success. It exemplifies to us practically that word, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worked in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” The conflict is a real one, literally a hand-to-hand engagement, and success oscillates alternately in favor of each of the combatants. God is the energizer in us both to will and to do. Faith sustains Joshua. He knows that Moses is on the hill-top with the rod of God in his hand, and thus is he taught at the outset of his history to endure the vicissitudes of actual warfare in dependence and to be wondrously victorious. It gives great vigor to the soul to have grappled with the actual difficulties of our onward march, and in the strength of the Lord to have conquered: to be able to say, “I know how to be abased and how to abound.... I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

This Joshua learns and expresses in this his first essay as captain-general of Israel; and as it was his first achievement and indicative of all which should follow, even as David in slaying Goliath, the Lord directs that it should not only be written in a book, but rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, “for the Lord will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” What an encouragement such a memorial must have been to him in his many subsequent engagements! Well might he fall back upon it, if tempted to be discouraged. If the Lord had sworn to annihilate this his first enemy, would He not be equally faithful as to the rest?

We next hear of Joshua in Ex. 24, and he there appears before us as minister to Moses, when the latter is called to the Mount to receive the tables of testimony. This notice, though scanty, is very important, for it shows us that the man of action down here was no stranger to the solemn and wondrous manifestation of the invisible God. He not only learned how to war against the enemies of God's people, but he learned also the realities of God's glory, for which in His people he continued down here. In secret he was (even as was the Lord Jesus more perfectly) in communion with God's glory, but outwardly a warrior from his youth; and in both aspects was God forming him for subsequent service. Communion with glory on the Mount was as necessary as the uncertainties of conflict on the battle-field. There are what we may call circles, or distinct forms in the school of God. The warfare with Amalek was one circle, or one class of service already passed by Joshua; and in the Mount he is in another, that of communion with God, an enlarging of his acquaintance with the mind of God—a most blessed season of instruction; but even in this high association, Joshua retains his peculiar characteristic. When Moses turned and went down from the Mount, and the sound of Israel's apostasy reaches their ears, Joshua's comment on it is, “there is a noise of war in the camp.” His mind, evidently imbued with warlike scenes, interprets the shootings of idolatry, according to its leading impression. But when the idolatrous scene is unfolded before him, and Moses pitched the tabernacle outside the camp, Joshua evinces the value that the blessed season of instruction in the Mount had been to him, by taking the place of separation and refusing to mix himself with the defiled camp. We read, “Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.” He had learned what it was to abide in the secret of the Almighty, and though the service of Moses might call him to go to and fro, this young man whom God was instructing, knew it better for him to remain with God in the separated tabernacle. Service did not call him to the camp, and therefore he remained entirely set apart unto God from it. If there be not a distinct call for service, it is better not to associate with the defiled thing at all. Moses has a service to render, and he can enter and tarry in the camp without damage; but if we go like Peter “to see the end,” we are sure to suffer loss, because we thus gratify a true desire, in a human way. As a rule, if there be no room for service, let us be as separate as possible, for the separation will prepare us for good and effectual service by and by; and even if we be not introduced into this, our souls have drunk in more deeply of the mind of God.

Mere expressible knowledge of God's will and counsel is not the full effect of nearness to Him; but rather the sense of what suits Him and meets His mind: in fact, holiness, the highest attainment, and the great end of the Father's discipline.

But Joshua is still a learner. The next notice that we get of him (Num. 11) is in the self-same tabernacle; but here he openly exhibits a misapprehension of the mind of God. That very truth which had before saved him from defiled association, and preserved him in unison with God's mind, here contracts his spiritual vision when he makes use of it to circumscribe God, instead of regarding it as only in part a revelation of His mind. This is a very important connection, for it is God Himself, and not any single line of His truth which is to counsel me, or determine my walk and judgment. To remain in the separated tabernacle was plainly the truth and way of blessing, when Israel was in apostasy; but when Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp, God's Spirit must be acknowledged, though they do not come to the separated tabernacle.

Hence Moses rebukes Joshua, as really caring for the things of men, and not for the things of God. But a rebuke of this kind is not intended to dishearten, for mistakes, in personal attachment, never

bebar us from the highest and closest confidence the very next moment. The heart is right, but it has taken counsel from the flesh and must be rebuked; but this being done, it is set free for God. Peter expressed the mind of Satan as to the Lord's death and was sharply rebuked for his misapprehension, but he is not disqualified from accompanying the Lord to the holy mount, nor is Joshua here disqualified for the special service of a spy. Error is dealt with very much according to what it springs from. It may be from natural, and therefore unacceptable, affection, or from indifference or from malice. The ignorance of Mary Magdalene is met and counteracted with a tenderness very different to that which the seven apostles who went d fishing, are corrected and enlightened.

Joshua, then, in spite of his late error, is appointed to go and search the land, and Moses distinguishes him by the name Jehoshua instead of Oshea. This intimates to us that he was now, according to his new name, entering on a new lime of service. He had hitherto been only Moses' minister or servant, to carry out his instructions. Now, he with eleven other heads of the people, is sent on a special mission to inspect the land, and report accordingly. Caleb and Joshua alone report favorably, and bear witness for God and for the goodness of that which He had sworn to give them, in the midst of the unbelief of their associates. What a trial they had to pass through, and how deeply they felt the sin of the people is evinced by their action. They rent their clothes, and while beautifully bearing witness to the good land, they declare that their entrance therein depended not on their own strength, but on the Lord's delight in His people. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones, when the glory of the Lord, bursting on the tabernacle, “in sight of all Israel,” arrests their evil intention. Let us state here, the peculiarity of the education to which Joshua was subjected. He had already been associated with God as the Deliverer, but this was his first acquaintance with the place which God had promised His people, and to which he himself was eventually to lead them.

Moses and Joshua, as servants, had a different mission. Moses was to lead the people out of the world—out of Egypt; Joshua, to lead them into Canaan. Moses, typifies the Lord combating the devil down here; Joshua, as leading us into all the blessed results of life and rest: and to fit him for the high mission Joshua must be disciplined. He must simultaneously see the land and see and feel the nature of the people he has to lead thither. And not only so, but having seen the land, proved in his soul, and confessed with his mouth, his faith in God's purpose and power to bring them in, and endured the opposition and persecution of this very people on account of it, he must wait the lapse of 40 years before he can behold and realize the works which his faith reckoned on.

What a trial of faith! what a prolonged education must this have been! A break seems now to occur in his history a break in the narrative, but surely not in the moral of it. Failing to animate the people to a sense of their calling, he retires, as it were, from public life; but only to resume his place and function there the moment it would be acceptable, and consequently we do not hear of him again till he is commissioned to lead the people into Canaan.

These forty years must have been a time of great deepening of his faith. As he saw the unbelievers, one after another, die off, until he with Caleb was left alone of the former generation; each death must have confirmed to him how blessed is faith, and how fatal to all blessing and service is unbelief. Like Moses in Midian, but far more honorably, he had to be by for forty years, waiting to be the champion of a faith which the people would not receive, though nothing else

could bless them.

He would not be employed on any lower occasion, and therefore he remains for this lengthened period waiting until the time should come when an opportunity would be afforded him for proving, that “holding fast the beginning of our confidence” has great recompense of reward. No number of years can wear out faith. The wilderness had to be traversed all that time, not that faith should lose its origin, but that it should sustain him until the moment came for its fulfillment.

There never was a faith without a corresponding work, sooner or later, and this explains that passage in James, “the scripture was justified when it said Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” The faith must not be surrendered until the work declares it. It sustains the soul in the interval, in the blessing of the work, according to the strength and vividness of it.

The thread of Joshua's history is resumed where it broke off. he had assured Israel that they were well able to go up and possess the land; and at the end of the wilderness journey, when Moses is disqualified for leading them into it, Joshua appears on the scene again; the time is come; he is ordained for this special service. (Num. 27:18- 22.) He might often have wondered to what end was the faith which forty years before had lighted up his soul, and enabled him to proclaim the glories of the inheritance, but every germ of the Spirit produces its fruit. Faith must always verify itself. The less prospect there is of a declaration, the more is the soul thrown back on the convictions which faith produces; and this action necessarily increases faith, because it confirms its reality unsupported by anything outward. If held at all, it must be held from God. The visions presented to one's soul by the Holy Ghost, are not dreams, merely affecting us for the moment, but if of the Spirit they must be realized sooner or later.

Very fully was Joshua's faith realized; and now, “full of the spirit of wisdom,” and prepared by all these years of discipline, he is not only ordained by Moses, who laid hands on him, but personally commissioned and encouraged by the Lord for this high and honorable mission. “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread on, that have I given you,” was now the Lord's word to Joshua.

Traverse any of the endless domains of glory, and that will be yours forever; traverse it, and the verity and value of it will be ensured in testimony down here, even as the sight of Jesus and the glory was to Stephen.

We must remember that Joshua, properly speaking, is the continuation of Moses, both typifying the Lord Jesus in different aspects. Moses conducts me unto the death of Christ; Joshua conducts me victoriously out of it, carrying his spoils with him; and therefore when the Lord commissions Joshua, the son of Nun, “Moses' minister,” He says, “Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them.... Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.” According to the terms of this commission, he was not only to lead them into possession, but, by dividing the inheritance, to invest them with assured occupation; and this typified the closing act of our Lord, which He intimated on earth when He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Joshua's service is not consummated until this is accomplished, and therefore we should be prepared to find in the second part of his history the trials and difficulties which occur to hinder this settlement; and how interesting to us to have these

hindrances. He encounters and overcomes them, and herein instructs us; for though we encounter them, it is often very slowly that we overcome them.

Joshua, years before, had believed that God could and would bring them in. This was his foundation, for “,without faith it is impossible to please God.” But he is now realizing that faith which he had so long enjoyed, and he is not indolent therein. He announces to the officers, “Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in and possess the land.” There is neither dilatoriness or imprudent haste in entering on what God had called him to. “Prepare you victuals,” he says; the onward path was to be entered on calmly, preparedly, but heartily, and we may add, “Sanctify yourselves, (says Joshua) for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders for you.” I pass over the wondrous scene of the passage of Jordan as to its import, which has been fully dwelt on elsewhere; the relation to Joshua is what we have to do with here. The Lord's object in it with regard to him may be seen in chap. 3:7; 4:14. “This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel,” &c. Almost singly had he forty years before stood firm for God's purpose and power amid the opposition and unbelief of the people. Now he was to be magnified before all Israel, and the Lord's presence with him proved to be as veritable as it was with Moses. It was a glorious passage in his history, and corresponding to the strong and elevated character of his faith. Joshua, while typifying the Lord Jesus in his success, is, on the other hand, a sample for us in the struggles and conflicts which he passes through ere he arrives at success. The difficulties, our difficulties, are there; but our Joshua has surmounted them for us; and, blessed be God, the practical success may be ours too, for “it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

I do not undertake to write the life of Joshua, and must therefore confine myself (after first merely enumerating his great achievements) to the exercises which his soul passes through.

His first rehearsement in leadership is passing the Jordan; 2nd, the rolling off of Egypt's reproach at Gilgal; 3rd, the fall of Jericho, or taking possession of the land; 4th, chap. 15, dividing the inheritance. These comprise his great successes. His exercises we shall now consider in detail. Foremost of these is the discomfiture at Ai. This was the first check in his bright career. Jordan passed—the reproach of Egypt rolled off—the walls of Jericho fallen to the earth, through faith—the possession of the land entered on in the most distinguished way,—what must have been his distress and disappointment when he saw Israel flee before the men of Ai! Joshua is little prepared for any reverse. Blessing and success had followed him like a swelling tide; and he is now in agony. He rends his clothes and falls to the earth. He must now learn for the first time how much man may fail in scenes of the fullest blessing. He had seen their failure in the wilderness; but here is failure and discomfiture in Canaan. And this brings strange and peculiar distress on the soul. How well can the heart understand the cry, “O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their back before their enemies?” The greater the blessing and truth known and enjoyed, the greater the dismay does discomfiture cause to the heart most true to the glory of God. But Joshua, like many of ourselves, had to learn an important lesson in this stage of his history. It was this—that no amount of previous acquisition or enjoyment can secure us against defeat and overthrow, if in spirit we have connived at, or become associated with, principles or practices contrary to God. In ignorance of the cause, he prays, mourns, and even remonstrates with the Lord. His faith wavers in the intensity of his distress. But it appears from the Lord's rebuke to him that he lacked spiritual wisdom in so doing; for such would have concluded from a previous knowledge of God that he would not have permitted defeat to have overtaken His people, had there not been some grievous

departure from Him. He ought thus to have searched for the concealed evil, instead of upbraiding the Lord. Prayer will never compensate for neglected action; it leads to action—seeks light and strength for action. But if I use not the light I already possess, no amount of prayer will obtain more for me; for if I believe not the lesser revelation, I am not prepared to receive the greater.

The Lord chides Joshua for lying before Him in ignorant, inactive mourning. He says, “Get thee up. Wherefore liest thou before me? Israel had sinned,” &c. And goes on to announce what must be done in order to retain His presence among them, and consequent success.

Let us note here that Israel was now entering on the inheritance—representing to us God's kingdom and the heavenly portion of His saints. They were as one people. The sin of one affected the whole; not spiritually, but nationally. With us it is spiritually; and we should be warned, that if such manifest disaster was occasioned on account of the sin of one man, among those who were only united nationally and in the flesh, how much more is it so in the Church, where each one is a member of the one body in Christ, and united in spirit, and not merely in nature.

It was new to Joshua to hear that the secret departure from God of one man in the army could so disastrously interrupt the progress and blessing of all Israel. And he is crushed by it, and almost loses hold for the moment of the faith that so characterized him. But in his deepest distress mark how true to his sense of God's greatness, and how anxiously God's glory is before him! “What wilt thou do with thy great name?” is his first anxiety.

The first line of action prescribed by the Lord is inquiry. There must be a full presentation of all the congregation before God. Great scrutiny, patient and anxious investigation, is necessary. The lot is cast; but the whole decision is of the Lord. And the guilty party, being convicted and exposed, confesses—after Joshua's touching appeal to give glory to that Lord whose glory was so dear to his own heart, confesses how and when and where he had taken of the accursed thing.

Joshua, after his deep exercise, has proved himself equal to the emergency. Having “risen up early” to discover the cause, he is prompt and decided in judging and executing judgment on the transgressor. Summary and unrelenting must it be! Not an article belonging to the originator escaped the flame of extirpation. Joshua now expounds and witnesses to the principle, that the nearer a man is to God, the more he is within the circle of His greatest blessings, the more distinctly and entirely must he denounce everyone and everything derogatory to His glory. The Joshua who fears not the external foe—who has seen all creation bow to His conquering tread, is the same as he who is valiant and faithful and effective in subduing and purging out the internal evil. The two are inseparable. Power is power, in whatever form it may be exercised. Power over the Canaanite—the opponent to our realization of our heavenly inheritance—insures power over internal evil. If Joshua had learned the one gloriously, and with a high hand, he now learns the other deeply and sorrowfully, in secret counsel with God, and no less wondrous intervention of His power. Let us remember that the greater victors we are as to the inheritance, the stricter separatists shall we be from everything unsuited to the mind of God, which pervades and reigns in those holy places.

The sin of Achan was no common sin. It had a two-fold enormity. It was a double transgression against God, and of a character which, when successful, insures the fall of the heavenly warrior.

Achan had taken a garment accursed of God, and gold and silver, which were devoted to God's treasury; thus, in symbol and essence, disclosing the corruption of the heart, which, while advancing into the fairest displays of grace, has the treachery to seek its own gratification at God's expense. It was the selfsame spirit of those who “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies;” and, at the same time, by fair speeches (by a respectable outward walk) deceive the hearts of the simple: thus embarrassing the congregation of God by departing from the truth declared to them for their own private ends.

Joshua, having graduated through this great exercise and its results, is now taught how he is to succeed against Ai: no longer in an open and distinguished way, as at Jericho, for failure entails results even after the breach is healed. The conquest, however, is no less effective, and faith can discern the same amount of spiritual power, although the army is less distinguished. But Joshua had yet more to learn; and chap. ix. unfolds another, and a difficult, order of trial, which harasses and besets him. And one brought on, too, by a temporary lack of dependence on and reference to God on his part and that of the princes. The snare is not now from inside, from false allegiance or unfaithfulness, but from outside. The Gibeonites “did work wilily,” and Joshua deceived by them made peace with them, neglecting to ask counsel of the Lord. Here was the real cause of the snare proving efficacious, for whenever dependence on God is lost sight of for a single moment, even in the very flush of victory, failure must ensue. This was Joshua's first lesson, as we have seen in his past conflict with Amalek; and even now, after so many years of discipline and victory, it causes a flaw in his onward course.

Achan's sin was against God; that of the Gibeonites more against Israel. Man assuming before man to be what he is not, in order to be accepted. The sin being different the punishment is different; the former was total and unsparing condemnation; the latter perpetual and public infliction. The deceiving party are the most severely dealt with; they are made subservient to the interests of Israel; but the deceived, i.e., Israel, also suffer, for had they followed the Lord's way and mind, the subjugation would have been much more perfect.

No doubt, Joshua learned much of God's mind in all these peculiar trials, and immediately after he enters on a glorious and unbroken career of victory, in which no check occurs to the remainder of his course. Highly honored and owned of God, foe after foe is subdued, and the Lord even stops the course of creation (the sun and moon stand still) “at the voice of a man.” What a moment that must have been, when, after treading on the necks of all their enemies, Joshua and his host smote and utterly destroyed them from Kadeshbarnea to Gaza—Kadesh, the scene of the people's former unbelief, and of Joshua's firm and enduring faith!

The next important era in this history is the allotment of the inheritance to each, chap. 13. - 19., according to the special commandment of the Lord; and this being done by Joshua, he himself is given a personal inheritance, (verse 50,) in which he builds a city and dwells therein. It was in perfect keeping, the possessions being marked out and plans prepared, the leader properly rests; even as did the Lord Jesus Christ, who, having perfected His work, sat down until His enemies be made His footstool. The heavens received Him, though earth rejected Him, and He now rests until the whole universe shall how to His own.

Joshua, in practical achievement, presents to us four distinct blessings connected with this new and heavenly inheritance:-1st, the triumph of the waters of Jordan; 2nd, the rolling off the reproach

of Egypt consequent on which was eating of the old corn of the land, the produce of the heavenlies; 3rd, taking possession from Jericho onward; 4th, dividing the inheritance to each tribe, and assuring each of his own; which exemplifies to us that acquaintance with the inheritance which God only reveals by His Spirit, “for it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him.”

On the other hand, he had three great conflicts and painful pages of instruction in connection with his leadership into Canaan.

He had to learn how the whole army could be enfeebled and shorn of strength by the defilement of one man.

How he himself could be deceived and ensnared by neglect of asking counsel of the Lord.

3. (And this is his last). How little he could depend on the congregation of Israel, adhering to the place and path of blessing to which they had been called. This trial is presented to us (chap. 23., 24.) as the closing scene of his service. He had, through God's goodness, led them to wondrous blessing. God had been faithful, but they will not be faithful or a witness to His mercy to them. What a sorrow to Joshua after all had been accomplished according to God's promise and his own faith fully answered, to know of a certainty that no reliance can be placed on the congregation! Its conviction must have been early and deeply instilled into him from the time that he had heard the idolatrous sounds emanating from the camp as he descended the holy Mount with Moses; so that, as we often see, the trials of the commencement and end of his course closely correspond to one another. How afflicting to the spirit after being used largely to make known the blessing of God, and after seeing souls in the enjoyment of them, to forsee that ere long there will be few or none to appreciate them! This trial the Apostle Paul was enduring when he laments that all Asia had turned from him, and the same now awaited Joshua.

But what was his resource? He took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord, and said unto all the people, “Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words which he spoke unto us; it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.” This stone typified Christ, and looking to Him as the only sure Witness, “the faithful and true,” Joshua closes his career. His heart earnest to maintain the works and truth of God, hopeless as to man, but assured and at rest because of the one great and chief Corner-stone the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, to whom be glory forever and ever.

John 1:17. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The law told man what he ought to be. It did not tell him what he was. It told him of life if he obeyed, of a curse if he disobeyed; but it did not tell him that God was love. It spoke of responsibility; it said, “Do this, and live.” All this was perfect in its place; but it told neither what man was nor what God was: that remained concealed, but that is the truth. The truth is not what ought to be, but what is—the reality of all relationships as they are, and the revelation of Him who, if there are any, must be the center of them. Now that could not be told without grace; for man was a ruined sinner, and God is love. And how tell, moreover, that all relationship was gone, morally? For judgment is not a relationship, but the consequence of the breach of one. Hence, Christ is the truth. For sin, grace, God Himself, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even, are revealed as they are; what man is in perfection in relationship with God; what man's alienation from God; what obedience, what disobedience; what

sin, what God, what man, what heaven, what earth—nothing but finds itself placed where it is in reference to God, and with the fullest revelation of Himself—while His counsels even are brought out, of which Christ is the center,.

Chapter 53

Discipline: 10. Gideon

In order to understand and appreciate Gideon's history and line of service, we must survey the condition of God's people when he was called out to be a witness and a servant among them.

Israel had been under the oppressive rule of Midian for seven years. For a perfect period they were ruled over by their enemies, because they had rebelled against the rule of God, and are thus taught in the land of blessing and privilege the contrast between the rule of God and that of man. We are always ruled by some one or some thing; and, if not by God, by that power which is inimical to God and his people; and to this power we are often brought into subjection, in order that we may learn how much better is the sway of God where our passions are controlled, than that under which our very nature is worn out and harassed. This is a discipline to which all the people of God are liable, and of which the Church has had bitter experience; for instead of enjoying her privileges and blessings, she has brought herself under the power of the world, to be harassed and disquieted, searching here and there in the dens of the mountains and the caves and strongholds, how to enjoy a momentary respite from the grinding oppression which has judicially been inflicted, because of her rejection of the Lordship of Christ.

The servant and the witness must always be equal to the state of things on which he is to act. He must have suffered with the people from the circumstances of trial; he must have known the depths of misery to winch they have been reduced; he must know what he is to emerge from, and reach unto, or he cannot witness or serve the people according to their need. He must have endured himself, and know the sorrow of the judgment, or he could not appreciate the deliverance which he is appointed to conduct. Paul was the most bigoted Pharisee, and of all. men knew most of the evil effect of their prejudices. Hence he was able, when taught of God, most effectually and accurately to expose and confute them. In nature he had gone into the depths of prejudices, that in grace he might leave none of them uncorrected or undisclosed; for the very evil our own nature has led us into, the Lord will use to make His servants skillful in denouncing and repudiating it. “When thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

Gideon was thus prepared; not, as yet, by a knowledge of his own evil nature, but by a practical identification, in the circumstances in which the people of Israel were plunged through their own failure. He suffered with them, and no doubt had joined in their cry to the Lord on account of the Midianites. But before he, as the deliverer, is introduced on the scene, the Lord answers that cry by exposing to the people (by the mouth of a prophet) how they had departed from Him. (Judg. 6:8-10.) The first great dealing of the Lord with the soul is to show it its dereliction and failure. The word of God pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Its great action is to reveal to the soul its condition, and in the former dispensation the prophets acted the part which the word does now. By them the secrets of hearts were made known and convicted. So when the Lord has disclosed to the woman of Samaria her moral condition, she immediately pronounced Him a prophet.

Here, then, we find the people prepared for approaching deliverance by the conviction of their consciences; and this being done, the angel of the Lord immediately opens communications with the appointed deliverer, whose fitness for the work is evidenced by the position and occupation in which he is found. Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites." This was characteristic of the man. The iron had entered into his soul, but his strength had not failed him in the day of adversity, and real strength is that which is equal to the demand for it, and the emergency tests an otherwise dormant ability. Gideon's energy eats equal to the emergency; he was strengthening the things that remain that were ready to die, and while evincing his faithfulness in that which is least, the angel of the Lord, after silently watching him, reveals Himself and addresses him thus, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." A strange address apparently to a poor thresher of wheat! But the Lord estimates not as man; He knows the vessel which He can use, and what it is able to perform, as the apostle says, "He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." He designates Gideon "a mighty man of valor," because He appreciated the efforts which Gideon used to maintain the residue of blessing's; and while thus employed, calls him to enter on a higher mission and a greater service.

Gideon was evidently a man who had pondered over the ways of the Lord, for his reply is, "Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us, and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt, but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites?" In this rejoinder we see that he not only knew how the Lord had dealt with Israel. in time past, but also the judicial position in which they now were. He saw God alone on either side. Consequently the angel "looked upon him," or was turned towards him, and commissioned him to "go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee!" The servant of God must know and believe that God is the power winch alone can set up or pull down; it is the foundation-stone in the soul for any deliverance. "Twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God."

Gideon knew this; but there is a great difference between owning all power as belonging to God, and seeing it acting on our behalf; and often the consequence of the former conviction is to make us feel our own powerlessness the more; which, unless we can rest on God's acting for and through us, will produce despondency. Gideon cannot see how the link can be established between God and man, so that man can be made the administrator of God's power and will, and pleads his own insignificance and insufficiency. And the Lord, in order to establish this link in his soul, gives a promise: "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Great as was this promise, Gideon could not yet appropriate it; however wonderful and suited, he could not embrace it, until he feels in his own soul the link between himself and God, and is assured of his own acceptance, and therefore he exclaims, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, show me a sign that thou talkest with me." And then having brought his offering and set it forth according to the angel's directions, as we read in verses 18-22, the Lord accepts the offering, causes it to be consumed by miracle and disappears from Gideon's sight, thus giving him an unquestionable proof not only of His own presence and power, but of His servant's acceptance with Him. he had sought a sign to enable his soul to trust in the promised succor of God; in a word, in order that he ought to depend on Him in the great service appointed to him. For as a fallen man estranged from God, he could see no ground for dependence, and the acceptance of the sign is almost too much for him. The Lord's manifestation of Himself convinces Gideon of His nearness to

him which naturally must be death to him, and of which he has the sense; so that he exclaims, “Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.” The word of the Lord now calms and settles his soul. “Peace be unto thee, thou shalt not die;” and thereon Gideon builds an altar, which denotes the relation in which he now stands with God, and which is the groundwork of his soul before he enters on his service. The altar or place of access is Jehovah-Shalom.

Thus is Gideon prepared for the work unto which he had been called, and it is profitable for every servant, in moral power to ascertain how far he has been prepared in like manner for service. I have dwelt thus minutely on the preparation, because, if the soul has not found an assured acceptance and rest with God, it cannot be free, because unembarrassed by its own interests, to engage in the interests of the service unto which it is called.

Many attempt to serve the Lord, hoping thereby to acquire rest and peace for their own souls. Consequently they continue, and value the service, according as it contributes the desired relief; for it is true that every true soul, acting for God, must establish the sense of relationship with Him; but when. this is the object, the service is diverted from its true aim, and the proper spring of it is lost. Service must be undertaken by one happy in God, and therefore happy to be a fellow-worker with Him; and it must be pursued and executed quite independently of its effects on myself, and entirely with respect to the will of God. Again, others do not attempt to serve, because they allege they have no ability, and their minds when engaged in divine things are invariably engaged about themselves. They either do not know where to find rest and peace, or having found it, they do not believe in it; that is, they do not walk in the power of it—that power which faith confers.

Gideon having learned to worship God at Jehovah Shalom, (for the name of the altar indicates the worship,) he is directed as to his line of action “the same night.” Mark, blessing is never deferred when we are ready for it. Night is not the time for action; and man might say, “To-morrow thou shalt have it;” but with God the very moment we are ready for it, that moment we receive it. As with Isaac, as soon as ever he had reached Beersheba, the true place of separation, the Lord appeared to him “that same night;” or as with Jacob, when he went on his way from Padanaram, “the angels of God met him.” The moment we get on God's line, that moment we find ourselves in the light and strength of God. “In the same night” Gideon is directed to be a witness of the grace he had learned, and after this manner:— “Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it.” His own home is the first circle in which the true servant will testify the great realities of his heart and service, and the power and distinctness with which this is done defines and prefigures his future course and ability. The Lord Jesus opened the divine record of His mission in “Nazareth, where he was brought up.” Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus. So here now, Gideon in a bold, determined manner is to declare to his father's house, and through it to all his city, the light which had dawned in his soul, at once demanding from him, and empowering him to bear the testimony. The false worship in his father's house he was utterly to abrogate and abolish.

Gideon obeys; but he does it by night, fearing to do it by day. Here is an inroad of nature. His faith was as yet not such as to enable him to testify openly and boldly; but what his faith did enable him to do, that he did.

Even where the word of God is received and obeyed, there is often a deficiency in the testimony. Many a true soul is not prepared to testify as openly as he might. It is better when obedience and testimony go together; but though the flesh may hinder testimony, it cannot prevent, obedience, if there be faith. Paul was both a minister and a witness. It is the highest privilege for a servant, not only to obey, or minister, but to be able to testify of his identity with the ministry. If flesh works—if our own nature is allowed a voice—our testimony is compromised; we have lost our self-possession, and the personal control which is necessary for a witness. But faith insists on obedience; even in secret. In our patience we must possess our souls. Practically, our hearts and minds must be kept in peace, or we cannot, without loss of testimony, perform the very acts of faith. The emotions of the flesh are no excuse for not obeying what we have faith to do. We may submit, on account of them, to lose the higher place of testimony, but nothing must hinder obedience to God's word. Moreover, if we are faithful, without affection, our acts will declare themselves, and thus testimony will follow, though it did not accompany them. Thus was it with Gideon. And, on the outset, he learns the hostility of his own people to faithfulness for the truth. But how little the world knows that its evil opposition always evokes from God's witness an amount of power more than sufficient to suppress it! The cry of the populace for the execution of Gideon is met by the challenge of Joash to let Baal plead for himself, if he be a god; and Gideon is surnamed Jerubbabel, in consequence of this challenge.

How graciously and wisely the Lord was preparing His servant for the work in His counsel assigned to him! And how identical are his dealings with ourselves! His purpose is to assure the soul that, as surely as Christ hath triumphed over every power of evil, so surely may we conclude that every expression or manifestation of evil is properly only a guarantee to us that there is a power at hand for us more than superior to it. And, furthermore, the greater the amount of the evil opposition, the more marked and manifest will be the power which will overcome and silence it. We should comfort ourselves in every circumstance of life, that “when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raiseth up a standard against him” —a branch of truth most important to the faithful servant in times of difficulty, and, therefore, implanted by the divine hand in the soul of Gideon, and now to be declared when all the Midianites and the children of the east were gathered together, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. “Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Eliezer was gathered unto him.” He had already passed through the two great experiences of soul which qualified and prepared him for his work—the first his own relation to God established at the altar, Jehovah-Shalom; and the other in his faithfulness to the truth of God, in the utter annihilation of all false worship. Thus qualified, he enters his public service. But here again, although he has gathered by divine energy the men of Abiezer, Asher, Zebulon, and Naphtali around him, and prepares for acting in sight of the foe, he has to learn that, unless he be assured of God's support, he cannot proceed.

How vacillating and humbling is the secret history of the soul, so graciously detailed for us with reference to this faithful servant; though, outwardly, naught can be discerned but boldness and energy, as is true often with ourselves! And well it is for us that we have to do with a God as gracious and considerate of our weakness as had Gideon. By peculiar signs and intimatious the gracious Lord confirms His servant's mind in the verity of those promises which he ought to have rested in at once, in mercy giving and repeating every proof or evidence required. It is a very different thing to seek for a sign to establish belief in God, and to seek for one to confirm us in the

rightness of the path on which we have entered, and of God's support in it. The former the Lord will not grant or allow.” There shall no sign be given you,” He says to the Jews, when they asked for a sign as a ground of belief. The divine path must be begun and entered on in faith, and without signs; bat the Lord continually vouchsafes evidences to confirm the soul that is in the right path, and that it will succeed therein. The soul, when really depending on God, and entering on any signal work, seeks not to be conscious of its own ability, but of God’s—God's, if I may so say, in the abstract, i.e., that it has to do with One whose power, and ability to apply that power, is equal to any demand. This is the discipline which establishes the soul, and fully places it in the line appointed. In different ways it is granted to every servant; but the sense communicated to the soul is this—that God's power is versatile according to the requirement of it, and able and ready to interrupt any established order of things to manifest His will. This, I repeat is learned in many ways—sometimes practically, sometimes didactically. It may be learned by a soul realizing the wonders of prophecy. One walking in faith, and following out in spirit the great actions there foretold, roust be impressed with the majesty and disposability of the power of God; and when thus impressed and confirmed, as by a light shining in a dark place, it will be prepared to confront the hostilities in the path. Or it may be learned in a humbler way, and through the weakness of our faith, as, no doubt, it was with Gideon. Flaws in our faith become more apparent as the strain on us is greater. And how many break down in their course, because they have not learned the universality and ready applicability of God's power.

Gideon finds what we shall all find—that God is gracious enough to instruct him in this point, in any way that he may suggest, or which will establish it most clearly to his own satisfaction. Whether it be dew on the fleece only, and dry on all the earth beside, or dry on the fleece only, and dew on all the earth, God vouchsafes it, and Gideon is confirmed.

Thus ready, “he rose up early, and all the people that were with him, and pitched beside the well of Harod.” Here the Lord interposes, in order to declare the work as His own. Israel must have no room to vaunt against God, and say, “Mine own hand hath saved me.” Consequently Gideon must proclaim in the ears of the people, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead.” It must have been a trial to Gideon's faith to see 22,000 of the people retire from his standard: but this is ever the demand where there is faith. If he have believed, he must not be confounded because he sees the means, which he had expected to secure the desired end, almost entirely melt away, But Gideon is now strong in God, and through God's gracious dealing and education, and he is not discouraged; nor need he be, for it is better for a man of faith to be in company with a few faithful, than with many who are weak and wavering. But though less than a third of the original number remained, even that number the Lord pronounces “too many;” and He orders that the whole remaining company be put to the test, in order to sift it, and prove who was really fit to war and testify for Himself. This test is a simple and unimportant one to man's eye, but searching in its spiritual application. Like all the arrows in the divine bow, which by one cast made sure aim, and effect what all man's efforts and discernment could not, it discerned the thoughts and intents of the heart. It proved whether they were wholly set on the one object—the one mission; or whether they could be distracted from it for a moment in order to take natural refreshment. This was the meaning of the test of the water. And what a result! 9070 were found not whole-hearted: they went on their knees to drink. Though doubtless most anxious for success, that purpose and anxiety did not entirely overrule the desire for personal refreshment. And 300

only are found so single-hearted, that they will but take what is necessary to sustain them, and hurry on! Alas! if such a test were put to us, how few of us would be numbered in Gideon's band! Many of us might rank with the 32,000 who set out with him, or even the 10,000 who have stood the first sifting; but how few have that abnegation of nature which would enable us, regardless of personal need and refreshment, to hurry on, and fight the good fight of faith. It may be but taking a little more of nature than what is necessary for us. There was but a little difference in those who lapped and those who went on their knees to drink. And surely water was a necessary refreshment for thirsty warriors. But the manner of taking it laid bare the condition of the heart; and it teaches us this great lesson, that unless we make the Lord and the Lord's glory our sole object and aim, He cannot use us as deliverers, though He may graciously allow us to share in, and benefit by, the deliverance which He has wrought by more faithful hearts.

To Gideon also, as well as his followers, must this sifting have been a test of faith, for the decrease of numbers must have cast him still more in dependence on God; and many would be confounded by such searching education: but the untaught one is never equal to the trials of warfare. “The same night,” (for now that the company is prepared, there must be no delay,) the Lord tells him, “Get thee down into the host,” &c., but with peculiar graciousness and willingness to meet and invigorate any wavering in Gideon's faith, he adds, “If thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah, thy servant, and thou shalt hear what they say,” &c. How manifold are the ways of the Lord on behalf of His servants! In the enemy's camp the interpretation of a dream announces Gideon's success, and he hears how they already reckon on their own overthrow. And, surely, with ourselves these evidences of coming confusion in our daily foes might often be gathered if we would but hearken to them. If we did, we should perceive that these intimations are afforded us not without an object, and that object is to encourage us in a bolder perseverance. Gideon was greatly encouraged by this. The God of the dew was again brought nigh to him, and he worshipped, and returned in full assurance of victory ere the conflict had begun. The details of that conflict (or rather conquest, for it was a pursuit rather than a fight) I need not dwell on, except to say, that it. was truly strength made perfect in weakness. Lamps within the pitchers—treasures in earthen vessels, and trumpets to announce that their cause was the Lord's—were the only weapons of the little band until the enemy's swords were all turned against themselves. Gideon's success was complete, and he was proved a ready instrument in God's hand to effect deliverance for His people. But what varied discipline he required before he was so! How little does one know of the antagonism of our nature to the will of God, who thinks that service can be undertaken without that self renunciation, which can only be learned by experimental knowledge of the superiority of God's ways and counsels! We never surrender what we value until we find a better; and man is so full of himself and his own will, that until he finds the superiority of God's, and this, through slow, painful and varied processes, he can be neither an obedient nor a suitable servant; i.e., one who carries out the mind and intentions of his Master. Jonah was taught obedience in the whale's belly, because he learned there to be reliant on God solely: but the gourd taught him the mind and nature of God. The true and disciplined servant always finds a way to do his work, however difficult it may appear. The greater the difficulties, the greater must be the evidence that our resources are of a different order and character from those arrayed against us, and this will be found true in very small matters as well as great ones.

The Midianites being overcome, Gideon was to meet with another difficulty and one of a different order; i.e., to encounter the opposition of those who rank as his friends, an order of opposition which it requires more wisdom to surmount than even that of acknowledged foes. The manner in which he deals with the two classes of his contending brethren is instructive to us to notice. With the men of Ephraim, (chap. viii.,) who chide him for not calling them to the battle, he takes the lower place—that of grace, the true, wise and godly position to hold towards those who seek to be conspicuous. Gideon might have replied that himself and the 300 were specially called and chosen of God; but he does not, and leaves the Ephraimites to the satisfaction of that measure of honor which God had put upon them. But towards the men of Succoth and Penuel, who refused to supply bread to the "faint yet pursuing," he acts very differently. They must receive no quarter. Their conduct in refusing sustenance to the 300, when contending with the enemy, was antagonistic to the cause of God and taking the part of traitors to His name and glory. The principle is the same in both dispensations. There are cases which we must meet and deal with in grace; but we are, on the other hand, earnestly to contend for the faith. "I would, (says the apostle) they were even cut off who trouble you." "If any man bring not this doctrine, (i.e., of Christ,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

In chap. viii. 22, once more and for the last time, Gideon is presented to us in a new and peculiar line of discipline. Great services often engender self satisfaction and desire for an exaltation which the unspiritual are too ready to accord to us. The multitude solicit Gideon to rule over them, but he replies, "will not rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." How could he take the place of that God who had so blessed and honored him." So far he spoke in the wisdom of the Spirit, but his request for the errings of his prey evinces a covert desire to commemorate his services, though he had refused the place of power and dignity. What could such a desire produce but a snare, whether in the form of an ephod or anything else? And such it was to Gideon and to his house.

What a lesson and warning for us to see a servant of God after such protracted teaching and forming for the work, in a moment as it were, lose himself; and after attaining so high and distinguished a place through service, sink from human gaze behind a cloud; It teaches us that, though we may refuse a public place of exaltation, still we may not be proof against the most subtle and more dangerous snare of supposing that the memorials of our service can in any way contribute to the worship of God; for this is using service as a medium for self-exaltation, which thing must "become a snare to us and to our house."

Chapter 54

Discipline: 11. Samson

Samson was the last of the judges; the last of that dynasty, as we say, during which the Lord was proving Israel as to their ability to trust in Him for government without the intervention of any established order.

They had continually failed, and in consequence had become tributaries to those who ought to have been tributary to them. There is no neutral place for the people of God. They must either be above the world, testifying against it for God's glory, or they must be servants to it. If Israel be not sustained by God above the nations, they are led away captive by the nations: they can never exist as equals; they must be either masters or slaves. Slavery was their chastening for not retaining their rights, as masters, which could only be done by having the Lord on their side. When they departed from the Lord, they were weaker than the nations. A Christian is always weaker than the world, if he be out of communion, simply because he has lost his strength, that strength which his conscience approves of; and therefore he is easily baffled by that of the world, which assails him with all its reckless violence.

Judges were raised up by the Lord to deliver the people from their enemies, when they felt their sin in departing from Him, according as he required them to feel it.

The people of Israel, at the time of the birth of Samson, had been under the hand of the Philistines for forty years, the longest term of captivity which they endured during the time of the Judges. To deliver them from this protracted captivity, Samson is raised up; and because it was the last and the severest during this eventful period, (this period of testing the national faith and conscience, as to how far God's people would accept the government of God, as Lord and King, without the intervention of any one, whose power could be only derivative like the nations around,) it is necessary to introduce to us (as the word here does) not only the manner of the birth of the deliverer, but the mind and expectations of his parents previous to his birth.

Samson must be a “Nazarite to God from the womb.” In order to be the deliverer of the people of God from the unholy subjugation in which they are involved, he must be entirely separate from all enjoyments among them. His mother is taught this, and trains him in accordance thereto. Our early training. has a peculiar and continuous effect on us in after life, i.e., the associations which surround us. Samson was a Nazarite, but he grew up in intimacy and acquaintance with the Philistines; consequently, he never seems to be aware of the great moral contrast which should exist between a Nazarite and a Philistine. Much of this sort of ignorance or non-perception we see among Christians in our own day. There is an admission for individual Nazariteship, while there is habitual intercourse and association with the world.

Thus Samson's first act recorded is an attempt to establish a union where there could be no union. His father and mother cannot understand how, nor that this proposition “was of the Lord,” that he sought an occasion against the Philistine.

Mark! it was not the union that was of the Lord, but the intended antagonism to the Philistines—not the means, but the end. Union there could have been none. On the contrary, in any attempted union where the elements are positively antagonistic, the revulsion and intrinsic differences are the more manifestly evinced. The means Samson proposed was no divine way for the neutralization of evil forces; but the intention was divine while the means were manifestly human; and consequently the marriage never takes place; while the intention and divine desire is perfectly declared and answered. It is a great thing to start with a right intention; for if it be of God, sooner or later it must be accomplished, though necessarily at the expense of all that self which we have mixed up with it.

Moses desired to deliver his people from Egypt, but when he first attempted to ratify it, he trusted to resources of his own, and he failed, though eventually he gloriously succeeded, through the help of God. In like manner Peter was ready to die for the Lord, which he did eventually; but how much humbling and cowardice had he to pass through before he reached the realization of his desire!

The Lord teaches in such a way, and after such a manner, that the human element is eliminated and ills own power fully vindicated in us. This truth is beautifully exemplified in the page of Samson's history, which we are about to consider. “Samson went down to Timnath and came to the vineyards of Timnath, and behold a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand.” Here the Lord teaches him that it is not by an unholy alliance with evil, but by downright opposition to it that he must overcome; and to this at length he practically comes in the long run.

The truth which grows out of this lesson (a “riddle” to the world) breaks up the union and sends Samson forth in open and violent hostility against the Philistines. Let us consider this discipline a little more minutely. Samson, as we have seen, starts with a right intention; but, in consequence of natural association with the Philistines, from which he judicially suffered, he attempts to marry a daughter of these uncircumcised people; but just as he reaches the place where he is to consummate his plan, a young lion roars against him. And God in this way appears to teach him that God's Spirit can enable him to overcome the direct foe, without any intervention, for he had “nothing in his hand,” much more without any human plan of unsanctified union. Unaided, Samson confronts this terrible foe and succeeds so completely, that through God he “rent him as he would have rent a kid.” What a moment that was! A moment when the soul is in the balance—in the struggle for life or death! How necessary for the heart to be educated in the power of the life-giving God in the dark valley of death to know His power in delivering us from the jaws of the lion! Such a scene and such education ought to have been to Samson a vision of the character and nature of his mission, as the vision of Damascus was to Paul all his life long; fir he was to be a minister and a witness of the things which he had seen. The nature of our first acquaintance with God properly indicates the line He desires to sustain us in, in our course down here; therefore it is well worthy of consideration.

But Samson was slow to learn; and untaught by this marvelous instruction, he pursues his own plan, enters into a contract, and in due time returns for the purpose of ratifying it. But in doing so, he must re-pass the spot where he had known such signal deliverance, and which was to yield still further instruction for him, if he would but give heed to it. Turning aside to contemplate his

conquered foe, he finds honey in the carcass of the lion and shares it with his parents who knew not from whence it came. This gives rise to the riddle which Samson knew, but could not apply to his own circumstances. Alas! how often is this the case with us, and how much sorrow and willfulness do we entail on ourselves because we do not receive it in faith, so as to grasp it in its entire adaptability to ourselves; for it is evident that we never adopt any truth we know practically, unless we are convinced of its suitability to our own circumstances; nor, I believe, does the Lord intend us to use it until we are thus convinced. And this explains why we are so often permitted to persist in our own plans, after we have learned truth which, if properly applied, would supersede dim altogether by casting us more consciously and distinctly on God. The secret of our strength with God must ever be a riddle to nature, for it is in a state of hostility to the new nature, as much as the Philistine was to Israel, or to Samson, as representative of that people.

Samson propounding his riddle, showed that there was a great interval and uncongeniality of mind between the Philistine and himself, and his intended wife is in the same moral distance. A union attempted under such circumstances must issue, as it does here, in the cause of the Philistine being preferred to her acknowledged lord. Her devotion to him dissolves before the fear of her own people, who threaten her with ruin unless she betrays him. Had she but clung to him as she ought to have done in true devotion, he would inevitably have saved her from the catastrophe she dreaded; but failing to do this, she betrays and compromises the one she ought to have suffered for. A sad and true picture of Christendom, and with a moral voice to each of us! Samson is betrayed by the one whom he most trusted, and where he naturally expected least treachery; but the Lord turns it into blessing, and the projected union is broken off. He must relinquish it in order to pay the penalty to which he had subjected himself by revealing his secret to the Philistine. Thus the conflict with the lion in the way had at last worked out what God had purposed it should, with regard to Samson, who had been so slow to learn it, when he ought to have done so. The riddle of the eater producing meat—i.e., the truth revealed to Samson through that conflict—was the eventual cause of his unholy alliance being broken off, while the divine intention which he had thereby proposed to himself was ratified, the rupture of the union becoming an occasion for its exercise. The Philistines now use the knowledge they have acquired through Samson's betrayal of God's secret, in contravention to all that is sacred between man and man. And their violent injustice authorizes him, as invested with the Spirit of the Lord, to render a righteous recompense to them. Before grace came, righteousness was God's rule of action for His people toward man in general; though He Himself was ever in grace toward any soul that owned His righteousness in blood-shedding. But the Philistines were no subjects for grace; and he wreaks on them a double vengeance. First, he goes down to Ashkelon, slays thirty of them, takes the spoil, and gives the promised change of garments to those who had expounded the riddle. And afterward, in consequence of their unjust disposal of his wife, he lets loose three hundred foxes with firebrands in their tails, and burns up all the standing corn, the vineyards, and the olives. The first of these exploits unfolds gracious discipline on God's part to Samson. His mistakes are mercifully counteracted, and true service vouchsafed to him. The debt, which the Philistines had made him liable to by unrighteous means, is paid by retribution on themselves. So should it be now with the servant of Christ. If Christendom has unrighteously acquired his divine secret, and asserts a claim on him therefrom, he should avenge, in true, spiritual, uncompromising conflict, all false acquisitions in position or doctrine which the worldly mind seeks to make use of in a carnal sense. I feel that this is very peculiar and mysterious discipline. The servant finds himself in association

with Christendom outwardly, but in possession of God's truth and power, which, to the natural man, is a riddle, but sought by him for carnal purposes, and used as a claim on those who possess the reality. But by means of this very truth, the true servant not only discharges his debt to his oppressors, but works a way of deliverance out of them, and involves them in signal confusion.

The second exploit, occasioned by Samson's wife being given to his friend, excites the Philistines to greater violence, and they wreak their vengeance, not on Samson, but on the one who had betrayed him and her father's house, which they burn with fire—the very fate which she had so feared, and the threat of which had caused her to act unfaithfully to Samson; teaching us that whatever we seek to escape from, through unbelief and unrighteousness, is sure to be our eventual doom. We may escape from it for a moment, but our escape is, after all, the sure road to it. This act, however, increases Samson's right of vengeance, and we read, he “smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.”

Samson had now, after varied exercises and trying services, risen to such eminence as a determined foe to the Philistines, that they muster their forces and demand his life. When the servant of God will give no quarter to the world, and they can in nowise circumvent him, then their open hostility will burst forth. The same spirit that in all its malignity cried against the Lord, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” now in the Philistines seeks the life of Samson: and Judah, that tribe from which Shiloh should come, manifests toward him the same feebleness of godly principle which afterward characterized them when they delivered the Lord Jesus to Pilate. Three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, “Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us, and what is this thou hast done unto us?” “And they said unto him, we are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines.” What a trying moment to Samson I His purposes and acts so little appreciated by his own people on whose behalf he had fought. How similar (only in untold moral distance) to Him of whom it is said, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not!” What peculiar sorrow must the true servant endure from those he is serving in the most earnest and perfect manner! To be disowned and condemned as useless after having wrought the most distinguished service, is a bitter trial; but Samson is equal to it. And still further, in the power of the strength and the gentleness of God, he will not touch his own people, however ungracious to him, and therefore he engages them solemnly that they will not fall upon him themselves. Notwithstanding this, they bind him and bring him down from the rock. And the Philistines shouted against him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and he took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

Now, mark! Samson had been delivered from both association with, and subjection to, the Philistines, and had retreated to the rock Etam in Judah, as at once Israel's deliverer, and the Philistines' terror; but Judah is unbelieving, and delivers him over to the enemy. This leads to the manifestation of Samson's power, and his right or title to judge Israel, which is noted in the last verse of this chapter. He has now reached the position which he was appointed to fill, and which the Spirit in him was leading him through many exercises to occupy. We must not omit to notice the conclusion of the above manifestation and victory. After he had, by means of a jawbone, laid heaps upon heaps, and sung in ecstasy of soul after his work, he threw away the jawbone, and then his own personal wants afflict him. “He was sore athirst.” Great services for others will not

supply the soul's necessities, which can only be supplied from the Lord. However brilliant our services, our own souls will famish unless directly sustained by the Lord, for mere service never sustains. On the contrary, the fresher the service, the more shall we be conscious of our own necessity and dependence on God for personal support. No great deliverance vouchsafed will supply one drop of relief to the weary soul. From God alone must that come. And thus, in answer to Samson's cry, God relieves him, and he calls the name of the place En-hakkore, “the well of him that called.” He commemorates, not his service, but his dependence on God; and established now in this dependence, as well as practical ability, it is recorded that Samson judged Israel twenty years.

We may now pause in the narrative to review this early stage of Samson's history in the double light which it appears to me to bear. We have said that his projected union with a Philistine was an unholy alliance, and that God had to discipline him, in order to teach him its unsuitability; and we have traced the discipline. This is true regarding him as a Israelite and a Nazarite; but I think the action also bears another aspect, which appears in the words “they knew not that it was of the Lord,” that is, that it was almost a necessary consequence of the judicial position to which he was born liable, even that of subjection to, and association with, the uncircumcised. Though a Nazarite, and a separate man, he was, on account of the condition of the nation, exposed to this corrupt association, and was responsible for it; and while, on the one hand, he is taught to deliver himself therefrom, on the other, he is allowed to propose a union which was an admission of the liability entailed on him, but which he personally had no manner of part in creating. This union was not allowed to be consummated, because in itself unholy; but the proposition answers the double purpose in the instruction of God, on the one hand, being an admission of the consequences of the nation's sin, and on the other, an opportunity for Samson, through God's power and training, to extricate himself therefrom, and to become the deliverer of His people. In the same sense, a man is born into the world liable to the penalty of Adam's sin before he has committed any act of sin. So in Israel. So in the church. A unit of each, in entering into membership, was necessarily liable to all the forfeitures and penalties as well as the privileges attaching thereto, and he cannot assume the privileges without discharging the liabilities which are the real impediments to the enjoyment of the privileges. Cain is an example of this, assuming by a meat offering the position of a man acceptable to God, before he had answered to the penalties due to him because of sin. So in the church. We must own its ruin before we can assume its privileges and dignities. But the man of strength must not he under these consequences without an effort to retrieve his position and extricate himself, his kindred, and his people. He repudiates nothing to which he is justly liable, but neither does he increase the embarrassments by contributing personally to the moral debts of his people. Consequently, Samson was a Nazarite from his birth, and for that very reason was the only one suited to undertake the place of liquidator and deliverer. In a word, while personally separate, he admitted the pernicious and judicial alliance between Israel and the Philistines, by proposing affinity with one of their nation. Incongruous it was, but so much is first allowed in order that Samson, the man of strength, might avow Israel's humiliated position, and no more is necessary or sanctioned in the counsels of God. A righteous ground is soon found for preventing the alliance and emancipating the people from the bondage of their oppressors. By fair conflict he reaches the rock Etam, and there established as deliverer of the people, he judges them twenty years.

This is the first point or epoch in Samson's history. The second is, how he again became mixed up with the Philistines on a lower level, and how he suffered for it. In the first, we have seen how he sought an alliance only for an occasion, and how wondrously he was helped, and raised up to be judge of the people; but now, seeking for association from mere natural desire, although his strength acts when he repents, yet he never afterward resumes his position at Etam, as judge of Israel; and this has a distinct voice to us. If we own the ruin of the Church, in order to set ourselves to the discharge of the liabilities thereby saddled on us, we shall be helped righteously to exonerate ourselves from them; but if we return to the association of “the great house,” for which we have felt irresponsible, and for which we have answered, we are sure to be involved therein, and however we may do individual acts of valor, yet we never again shall be able to resume the position of witness for God or deliverer of His people.

Samson went down to Gaza, (chap. xvi.) and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. Here he renews his unholy association, and yet he is made aware of the Philistines' machinations against him, and is enabled, in a marvelous way, to defeat them, for “he arose at midnight, and took the doors and gate of the city, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the hill which is before Hebron.” Surely this was a warning to Samson, though with a marked deliverance. How often does the soul recover from the first step backwards in a very remarkable manner, with great evidence of strength, though it be only a midnight; this is, there may not be so much testimony as manifest power and a glorious deliverance. Paul's going to Jerusalem, is an example of such a retrograde step; and at midnight, too, escorted by Roman soldiers, he outwits and escapes his enemies. Blessed indeed when such discipline leads the soul (as it did with Paul) to avoid such association again! But Samson refused to learn; and we next read, “he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, and her name was Delilah.” This introduces us to the most pitiable and humiliating incident in the life of any of God's servants. No amount of treachery on the part of Delilah (who is the world in type—a combination of allurement and malice) can awaken Samson to the real character of her to whom he has allied himself. Where must have been his sensibilities when he could keep up the closest intimacy with one who plied his confidence in order to work his ruin? At first he does not confide in her, and while he retains his reserve and keeps his divine secret, he is safe; however humbling his position as a mighty man, to be in the hands of a false woman. Truly, when we thus see how the strongest may be deceived, and so far that the most palpable proofs will not disabuse their minds of the fearful spell, we may say, “let no man glory in his strength.” Great is the mercy of our God, who, even in a downward course, guards us to the furthest possible point. Samson is always victorious until he communicates the secret of his strength—the mark of his Nazariteship and separation to God; but the moment he betrays this he has relinquished the source of his strength, he has lost his mark as God's servant—one that it was not for uncircumcised ears to know of. If he loses this, this owning of God demonstratively, there is no outward evidence of any distinction between him and other men. As long as this mark remained, God succored and honored him. Often do we find that God supports his servant who retains the mark of separation. Even though he, in the spirit of his mind, engrossed by natural attractions, may have very grievously departed from Him; but when the mark is relinquished, He can succor no longer. There is but a small step between the allurements of the world and its deadly wrong. And so was it with Samson. Yielding first to allurement, he next surrenders the mark of separation, and is finally delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and his eyes put out. What a picture of every servant of God who pursues a like

course, and thus becomes a “withered branch,” and a prey to the ungodly world! What bitter, painful discipline Samson must now undergo! Bound in fetters of brass, he “grinds in the prison house” —the effects of his own self will, and surrender of his true place of dignity. In the prison his hair begins to grow again; the mark of separation is renewed, but his eyes are gone! Morally, the sight is never restored, when the light once given is lost. A solemn truth for us! The mark is restored and strength is active, but only in death is its power seen.

Even as practically by the death of Christ, all foes of every shade were overcome, so the death-scene alone remains as a place of testimony for a strong servant who has taken the high place of Nazariteship like Samson, but who has sunk with eyes open, as we may say, into the unholy association which he, once in the zenith of his history, so much opposed and renounced. Samson died with the wicked, but in the last fearful struggle that terrible judgment laid on man because of sin—Samson glorified God, for he “slew more in his death than in his life.” A true epitome this of every soul which has learned the power of Christ's death; for the one who conquers therein overcomes every foe, even him who has the power of death, to the praise and glory of God; and teaches us that death alone can deliver the strongest man from the place of temptation and failure.

Such is the end of Samson. A man unequaled in strength and most valiant in using it: an end, humbling indeed to the flesh, but glorifying to God as vindicating His unerring wisdom and discipline with His servants. May we all learn to walk more separate; to preserve our Nazariteship, if we would be witnesses for our Lord, and preserved from the oppression of the world! And may we learn from Samson's history, on the one hand, how easily we are led to surrender it when we once fall into moral declension and association with the world; and, on the other, how, though our testimony may be marred, we may yet glorify God in the calmness and assurance by which we rise above every tie here, and plainly avow, “to depart and be with Christ is far better!” Amen.

Chapter 55

Discipline: 12. Ruth

To trace the history by which a woman is fitted to fill a place of testimony for God on earth must be a study both interesting and important to us, and one specially needed in these days, whether as applied to the individual or the church.

Woman was first formed to be a “help suited to man.” (Βοηθον,. LXX.) At the fall she seems to have forfeited this high position, and after it, to be regarded more in the place of subjection and inferiority than of equality and help. Grace is the great manifestation of God's love, and the principle of grace is, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” When failure and weakness have most appeared, there the grace of God acting and declares the more exalted restoration. But this exalted restoration is never without a sense of the failure and weakness which it triumphs over; and our blessed Lord God, in leading a soul into the blessings of His grace, must necessarily educate it in the righteousness of His actings, as well as in the goodness of them. According as we learn the Lord Jesus Christ do we in perfection and conscience comprehend both, and the means and stages of this acquirement detail to us the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He leads us to see, step by step, how we need His grace, and He prepares us for it by that peculiar self-renunciation which will make room for His gift. Flesh and spirit cannot dwell together. God in His discipline teaches us the flesh which hinders-teaches us what it is, and treats it so that it may be suppressed; and on its suppression we find that which thus presses it, in order to supplant it, is no less than the energy of the life of Christ.

How gracious of the Lord, then, to instruct us as He does, by presenting to us in His word examples of the principles of the discipline which adapts us, according to His own purpose, for service and glory!

This is what we find in Ruth, and herein consists the interest of her history, in which we learn how God led and enabled a woman, who was a member of the most despised family—a Moabite, to fill the most honored position in the legal tribe of Israel; nay, to concentrate in herself the blessings of Rachel and of Leah. We cannot too carefully note the manner and spirit by which this fine result was attained.

Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons had emigrated from Bethlehem-Judah into the land of Moab, because of the famine in their own land. It was an evidence of decline and judicial suffering when a man of Israel had to desert his own country, because it lacked those natural blessings which were granted to the land of a Gentile; and the necessary consequence of this decline and association is, that Elimelech's two sons took them wives of the women of Moab. A son of the promised seed, by marrying a woman of Moab, raised her from her low moral position, though, in doing so, he concluded his own, i. e., he comprised it by his sojourn in the land of Moab. So that Ruth, who was one of these wives, was raised by her marriage from her low national position into one of the tribes of Israel; and on the death of her husband, she, a widow with only a widowed mother-in-law, must either, like Orpah, fall back into her former low estate, or she must seek to maintain that position to which she had been raised. This could only be done by holding fast her

link with Israel, and that even at personal cost; in other words, by cleaving to Naomi, though all natural expectation in connection with her is gone. This latter is Ruth's course, not intelligently, indeed, as to the positional gain such adherence would bring to her, but animated with the still finer motive of personal devotion to the one through whom she had been already raised so far from her low estate. How she acted and succeeded in this course is detailed to us in this interesting book, and is recorded with great minuteness, as a subject of deep importance to ourselves; for, whether we regard Ruth as a type of the church, or of any Gentile believer, or of a believing woman in particular, her history supplies a link in God's dealings which is very instructive to us.

The first characteristic of either must be simple devotion to know truth; and this characteristic is finely developed in Ruth. She sacrifices all hope of natural alteration of her widowhood, for the sake of adhering to Naomi, come what will, for she says, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” What an utterance is this! That of one steadfastly devoted to one object. What an expression of a soul firmly resolved to abide by all the truth of God, the link with all His purposes and blessings! Even as the first great part of the armor of God (Eph. 6) is to be “girt about with truth;” so the first great requisite of a servant of Christ, above all when in the unobtrusive sphere of a woman, be it intelligently or unintelligently, is to be simply and unequivocally devoted to the truth of God.

Naomi, as we have seen, was the link to Israel. Ruth may not have known much about it, but that only makes her devotion the more admirable, for had she known more, she must have had more reason and incentive for it, instead of the pure affection and appreciation with which she was thus animated.

When the soul lays hold of truth, even though it knows not why, with that inflexible tenacity which will buy it and sell it not, we may rest assured the communication will be enlarged, and “to him that hath shall more be given.” Devotion to a true object ennobles the woman and suits her. If she has it not, she is destitute of the first quality of her condition; when she fails in it, and thinks of herself as Eve did towards Adam, or the church towards Christ, then every disorder will ensue; and strength in a wrong line is more damaging that weakness. Devotion to truth, to what is known by us as the really true and good, is the first great characteristic of a soul prepared and qualified for service and testimony. If we have not this quality, how imperfect must be all our movements and expression, for we can have no definite center! To be God's witness among men who have believed a lie of Him and have walked in it, glorifying themselves while they walked in hostility to Him, we must, first and foremost, be valiant for the truth. If we be deficient in this quality, it is evident our ability for testimony is deficient; nay, more: in attempting to be a witness, we are compromising the very name we assume to serve. We have not a heart thoroughly set on maintaining the first requisite of service. We may have a certain amount of affection, like that expressed by Orpah's kiss, but, like her, our affection rests not on that which is alone true, and we shall soon turn aside to our own ways. We cannot too earnestly press on our souls the importance of this simple devotion to truth. Affection will not stand unless it be based on appreciation, or something known to be estimable; and therefore a faithful soul not only loves the Lord, but so appreciates Him that it must adhere inflexibly to Him, as identified with Him, and nothing else will

satisfy a truly devoted soul. What is true of Him can on no account be relinquished, and anything false is abhorrently shrunk from. I dwell on this point because so much of the character of a true servant of the church, and a woman in particular, depends on the place and strength which it holds in the soul. Ruth, we see, was simple and unwavering in her purpose of heart, and she presents to us an imposing type of this essential and ennobling quality, which we shall find meets its full reward.

But before we trace this reward, we may note another characteristic prominently presented, and fully exemplified, in Ruth's history, and that is, simple obedience, in the most servile and inconspicuous toil.

She enters the land of Israel, inseparable from the once Naomi (pleasant) now reduced to Mara (bitter); but resigned to her circumstances, nay, content in them, she addresses herself to the smallest opening which is presented to her, which is always an evidence of a healthy and vigorous soul, and without hesitation or demur embraces it. She says, “Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.”

It is the most unequivocal proof of the energy of soul when, in any strait, we are not only resigned, but ready to embrace any little opening offered to us, able to humble ourselves thereto, and testify to every one, even to our own souls, that God has not forgotten us, and that what is directly before us is quite sufficient to meet our necessities. We only require to be humbled to find it so. If we were to say or feel otherwise, we should impugn His care and interest on our behalf. Ruth sees that there is no opening for her but in gleaning, and to gleaning she addresses herself; and this was the Lord's opening for her. Very humble, inconspicuous labor, no doubt, but He sees not as man seeth, and He led her by the right way; for “the meek shall He teach His way,” and therefore “her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.” “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” When we are docile we are led to fullness of blessing. Unless we embrace the humble opening presented to us, we shall never reach the domain of satisfaction. Ruth was the humble, laborious servant, and as such, she receives her reward for her devotedness to Naomi. Mark! it is for her devotion she is rewarded, more than for her service. Boaz said to her, “It hath fully been shown me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore: the Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”

Boaz blessed her—a blessing which he afterward (like all blessers) shared in himself—and he also commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean among the sheaves, and reproach her not; and let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.” Thus we see Ruth receives more on account of her devotion to Naomi, than she obtains by her honest and continual toil; and this is always the case morally. However great the recompense for faithful service, that of devotion, when superadded to it, immeasurably exceeds it. The fruit is only commensurate to the actual labor expended, unless the labor has sprung from a true devotion. Had Ruth gone to the field to glean as did the other handmaidens, she would have obtained her due, what her labor merited, but no more. But it was far otherwise with her: devotedness to one object was the spring of all her action, and the result was to her, as

we shall find it to ourselves when animated with a like spirit the ingathering is swollen with ample acknowledgments. And not only so, the devoted one is led on step by step until she attains full rest, honor, and, finally, relationship with what should be the consummation of all her rewards and blessings. The sequel of her history shows us this. She ultimately becomes the wife of Boaz, the true kinsman, who redeems the inheritance; and according to the blessing pronounced on her, she builds up the royal house of David, even as Rachel and Leah built up the house of Israel. The poor Moabitess is brought into close proximity to the throne of Judah, and she makes the name of her kinsman-redeemer “famous” in Bethlehem-Ephratah, the place of death and resurrection! A wondrous result this from so humble a beginning: but one in full moral order and keeping with God's ways, discipline, and training.

And now that we have reached this result in Ruth's history, let us pause, for our soul's profit, to mark the discipline by which the Lord led her, (in fact, that by which He leads every soul who attains the same end,) to this place of rest and honor; for well it is for us to note how He empties before He fills—how He humbles before He exalts. First, she is a widow. Deprived of all human hope in that life which was most honorable to her, and which her alliance with a son of Israel had elevated her to. She next surrenders country, kindred, and the natural expectations which she might have had, by falling back on her former low estate as a Moabitess, for the company of one linked with her condition of widowhood, but who had been reduced from pleasantness to bitterness, and this association entailing on her constant, humble, unremitting toil. Refusing or despising no opening, however humble, she pursues her lowly, toilsome, unobtrusive course from day to day, and daily finds how gracious and merciful the Lord is to her; so much so that it fills her with wonder and amazement, for on the first day of it, she says to Boaz, falling on her face, and bowing herself to the ground, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger.” The soul is little prepared for God's unexpected mercies; yet what were those to what followed? What was her former condition previous to widowhood, in comparison to that so full of honor and dignity in which the Lord now places her! Blessed widowhood, to have prepared her for such a place! Blessed process, which led her on to it in the paths of single-eyed devotedness and humility! Blessed God, to have thus dealt with her!

It will be remembered that Ruth came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest, which commenced immediately after the feast of the Passover, and continues her services during the seven weeks of harvest, (a perfect period according to the symbolical numeration of Scripture,) to the end of the wheat harvest, i.e., unto Pentecost; and after Pentecost it is that Boaz claims her as his own. I mention this as significant, whether we regard Ruth as typifying the Church in a practical or in a positional aspect; for Pentecost typified that full fruition of blessing which the Church realized when, after the seven weeks which elapsed between the Lord's death and Acts 2, that great day of Pentecost, to which all other days had pointed, “had fully come,” and which installed her in the place of privilege and bride-ship to the true Boaz. On the other hand, though the Church be now in the blessings of Pentecost, yet if she walks not in faithfulness to the truth committed to her, and in patient dutiful service, she cannot realize the high privileges conferred on her, the reason of which is very simple. If I am not true to the Lord, as far as I know, I am not led by His Spirit; and if I am not walking in the Spirit, I cannot by any possibility realize the privileges of nearness and bride-ship into which the Holy Ghost is commissioned to lead us. Again, what is true of the Church as a whole is true of every individual member. The woman is here given in type,

because, as a unit, she ought to represent the Church, the Bride of the Second Adam, as redeemed from the ruin and shame into which the first woman plunged her. But, whether man or woman, if we walk not in devotion to the truth, and in patient, humble, inconspicuous service as strangers, and non-expectants on the earth, we cannot enter into the relationship and place of rest which our Boaz vouchsafes to each of his faithful Ruths even in spirit now. And the more we comprehend His ways with us, the better shall we understand how He is teaching each of us after this manner: teaching us, as faithful to our light, to walk therein, to the full fruition of His love; as widows in this world, devoted to Him, and serving patiently and obscurely, but satisfied if we realize what is already ours even here—even our union with Him in all that His love can share with us.

May we learn, O Lord, to follow thee!

Chapter 56

Ephesians

In Ephesians, though the Holy Ghost is about to enter upon the subject of the church, He does not touch upon it until, individually, the saints are apprized of the astonishing depth of their privileges. He never enters upon our future privileges until our present standing is settled. What is “the inheritance?” It is that which we shall be set over. But blessed as this is, it is far better to be set right as to that which is above us. The Lord will take care that we shall know where we are to he set; but God himself is better than all the glory. To know God—to be consciously near God—to be set at rest in the presence of God—to be happy with God—to know how much he loves and cares for us, is infinitely better than knowing all about Jews or gentiles, or earth or heaven. We shall have a blessed place with Christ—we shall reign with him; but the kingdom itself, with all its blessedness and glory, is an inferior thing to the heart being really at ease and happy and at home with God

Chapter 57

Brief Thoughts on Ephesians 1:15-23

It is always good for our souls to draw near and review the proper starting point and pattern, if I may so say, of the blessing that God has given us. We are all apt to stop short. There are certain blessings that we cannot do without. We cannot go on for a day with the least measure of comfort, if the spring of our confidence in God's mercy is weakened. We need to know the remission of sins as a constant daily thing: but that is not enough. We shall never be able to glorify God, if we only take what we need. And, more than that, where the soul is content merely with what we actually want, we often lose the joy of it, and, by the just retribution of God, we begin to question whether we have, after all, got the remission of sins or whether we may not have been deceiving ourselves. Whereas, where the eye is kept open, though in the midst of so many circumstances in this life that tend to close and darken it; but where it is kept open upon Christ, we shall not be satisfied without knowing what is the extent of the blessing that God has given us. For Christ is the only object of faith, the only One that satisfies us, as indeed He is God's object; and if we have got but one mind with God about Him; our communion is with the lather and with His Son Jesus Christ. In God's ways with Israel, He makes a great deal of two particular points in their history; one was the crossing of the Red Sea, and the other was the Jordan. In Psa. 114 we find these two things brought together, where the sea is referred to, (“ the sea saw it and fled,") and where Jordan is spoken of as having been driven back. Now, we have got our Red Sea and our Jordan too, and we need them both. We need much more than the Passover, in which, as it were, God has not yet come near us. He is only passing by outside. We should want Him near, for it is not best to keep God outside, in the sense of our sin. It is not honoring God to be merely shivering in the thought of a judgment that we cannot meet. The judgment is met, and so greatly has Christ magnified God and brought honor to Him, even about our sins, that God can come in, instead of merely passing over, and can put Himself in our midst, dwell among us, and have us to dwell with Him.

The way in which God has brought about this wonderful height and depth of love towards us, is in our Lord's death and resurrection. As we find here, the apostle prays for the saints “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,” &c.

Not a word is here spoken simply of redemption. He had already brought that in, and they knew it. But he desired them to enter into much more “into the hope of his calling:” and what have we there? The whole extent of our privileges. It is God who looks at His Son, and who calls us out to be fellows of His Son, to be partakers with Christ, to have the same place in His love that His own Son has. Now there is nothing so hard for the heart really to icy hold of as this. It is so entirely beyond every thought or feeling that can issue from us. And how does God give our hearts to enter into it? By dwelling upon Christ; by having the word of God that brings His work in Christ before us, mixed with faith in them that hear it. And, as in the unconverted, it is by the word preached that the Holy Ghost acts to bring them to God, so with the Christian to bless him all the

way through. We do need to be taught of God, to enter, more deeply than we have done, into what God has given us in His Son. if we do not, some difficulties will arise which will demand the knowledge of that which we have not got, and there will be weakness, there will be the consulting of flesh and blood, instead of going forward in the strength of God, with the eye fixed upon Christ. We need not use the death and resurrection of Christ merely in a selfish way for our own need, without going further, without the desire of seeing what it is that His sacrifice already offered, capacitates us for. Christ Himself is beyond His own sacrifice, infinitely blessed as it is. He that died is better than anything He has brought me in His death. We are prone to take His death only, because it touches the question of our sins; and most precious this is: it is quite right; and we cannot value it too much. But it is quite wrong to stop there: we must push on. The apostle was always laboring for this with the saints. If, as in the case of the Galatians, they had got away from Christ, and were putting themselves under the law, they required, of course that Christ should be formed in them again. But where the soul has found peace and rest with Christ, God desires, and we should desire, the opening of our eyes, that we should. enter into the hope of God's calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. These are the two great parts of the ways of God. The one embraces the knowledge of Himself and of His love, and our privilege who are by grace called to the enjoyment of it. It takes in past and present, and looks on to the future. For the hope of His calling reaches out to what we shall be in His presence. It is a question between God and His children what He is to us and what we are in Christ; not of the glory which will be conferred upon us and displayed before the world, which is just what is meant by “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” There I get the honor that will be put upon us, and in which we shall shine. But is this the best thing? Far from it. To be saints of God, to be in His presence, at ease and at home in the presence of God, to have the privilege of beholding His beloved Son, and seeing Him in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was: there is the hope of His calling. He has called us there, where no angel can be, no creature, save those who have a divine nature imparted to them, and who, by the Holy Ghost, are capable of entering into the deepest thoughts of God. And this is communicated to us, even hare in this world, that our hearts may rise up to the consciousness of the dignity of our place in Christ. Conscience alone will not keep a person from sin. There must be the affections brought into play, and such an acquaintance with God, such a familiarity with His thoughts and feelings as that they become the meat and drink of the child of God.

This, then, is what the apostle desired for the saints. First, he sought they should understand the hope of His calling, the full extent of the privileges of Grace, from before the foundation of the world till the world is no more. Then, he presses the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, which is rather the scene of display that will come out before the world in the scene of creation. The hope of His calling goes beyond that. It is the working out of the counsels of God's own heart and purposes—the communication of His own divine nature, making us one with Christ. This is far beyond any inheritance that we can enjoy, and will last when the inheritance, in the sense of the kingdom, is over.

But there is more than this. The Apostle goes on: “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” There is what I just referred to passingly as our Jordan. In the Romans we get our Red

Sea—the death and resurrection of Christ as that which ushers us into this world as a wilderness, or place of trial, where our heart has to be proved, and where God is testing us how far we, who were the servants of sin, are willing now to be the servants of righteousness. But in Ephesians we get a deeper thing still than that—the enjoyment of Christ as taking possession of our heavenly privileges. It is not, therefore, the death and resurrection of Christ as bringing us into the wilderness; but the death and resurrection of Christ as bringing us into heaven now. Are not our souls too often satisfied short of this? Content with what is more simply suited to our need, or with what would be considered more practical. Why is it so, that we rest short of entering into what God gives us in His beloved Son as he is in His own presence now? it is because we are not spiritual: it is the power of nature coming in that hinders us. Nature always clings to something present—something that touches our wants as we see them; whereas, where the heart is more in the presence Of God and the enjoyment of Christ, while we are still more sensitive as to what glorifies God, yet we learn a power in Christ, and not merely in the fact of certain things being right or wrong. it ceases to be a mere question of habit. It is God unfolding His Son to us—His own thoughts and feelings as revealed in His Son: and this is what gives us power. Because if I see that God has really wrought in Christ this wonderful work; far beyond that of creation—the raising up of Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own light hand in heaven; if we read that act in the light of God, we see what sin was—what Satan was what the judgment of God was, who now, in grace, passes over all. All is gone now—all is passed over for us, that God might magnify Himself. While we are in the world, over which judgment is hanging, we are raised above it all—we have the liberty of heaven while we are on the earth. This is passing the Jordan. We have passed in the person of Christ outside this world; we have taken our place in heaven, have been made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is, we have been put at ease there, which the thought of sitting gives. All thought of pilgrimage is lost sight of in this range of truth. Our being pilgrims and strangers, thought most true and blessed, is not so blessed a place as being seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

And if a person were to say, This is a higher region of truth outside my reach, I answer, God is jealous over us. He has called us out from the many things that once hindered us—has showed us the present state of the Church and what He is going to do for us by and by. We are not come to set up the Church again, but are resolved to commit our souls to nothing but that which is his will about the Church. We may fail ever so munch—We may mourn the many difficulties on every side, through lack of wisdom, grace, righteousness, &c.; but the place that God has given us in His grade abides unchangeable wherever there is faith to own it. Our business is to leave room for God, and not to hinder the Holy Ghost. It is not enough to have been brought into this blessed place. It is but a means, and not an end. There is often great danger of resting complacently in the fact, that we are meeting together in the Lord's name. But let us not think that we have done anything. It is time mercy of God that has brought us where He can deal with us, and where He will deal with us, where He will not suffer one single thing that is contrary to His name; who will work in private, and work in public, so that His name be honored. This is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe. Why should we distrust Him in anything? We might see everything crumbling around us, difficulties that we cannot surmount, sorrows in seeing hearts turned away from the truth. But if it is the power that wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead which now works in us, why should we doubt? The power that raised Christ from the grave is necessarily above everything else. And it is the way of God to allow timings to come to the worst

before He interferes. There may, perhaps have been a leaning upon others, more likely upon our own understanding, which is a shade worse than leaning upon the understanding of another; but the grand thing that God brings out is, the blessedness of having Himself, the certainty that He will appear and deliver, that He will work according to the mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. If, when we think of the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, we may feel, ashamed to think of our failure and shortcoming, yet what, comfort to think that the power which wrought in Christ is the same that has to do with us, whether it be power for us or in us! The Lord grant we may enter into this which He brings before our souls! It was God that led His people through the Jordan, God that caused His own ark to stand there in the midst of it; and not a single Israelite's foot was wet. Well might Israel trust Him about everything! For if God had wrought such a work as this before they entered into the conflict with their enemies, would He not be with them all through? Could there have been one doubt of victory, if they had thought of the Jordan? It is when we forget what God has done for us, that we show self in one form or another. But where even the sense of failure drives us back to God, then comes this bright comfort before our souls—the exceeding greatness of the power to us-ward who believe. Therefore let us not in anywise look to the right hand or to the left; but let us look upward, where Jesus is. Let us think of Him, rest upon Him, who has so wrought toward us, and who will so work in us. The Lord grant that our faith may be very simple!

Errata in No. 44

Page I, col. 1. for “Ephesians” read, Ep.

Page 3, col. 1, for “cling,” read, clung. Page 3, col. 2, for “their,” read, there.

Page 11, col, 1, read, “not merely communion.”

Chapter 59

The Faithfulness of God Seen in His Ways With Balaam: Part 1

Num. 22

It was the object of the enemy to hinder God's people from the enjoyment of the land God had promised to bring them into. It was not now a question of getting out of Egypt. They were brought out and nearly at the end of the way. Could they be prevented entering into the land? if it depended on what they were, of course they could be; and Satan, the accuser of the brethren, could hinder our getting to heaven because of our sins, if it were on the ground of our worthiness that we must go there. Israel had been stiff-necked and rebellious all the way along, though God had been bringing them water out of the rock for their thirst, and manna from heaven for their food; and now the solemn question has to be settled, whether they are to be prevented entering on account of it. It is the power of the enemy here exerted, not his wiles; they come after in the history of Salaam. But this was the point, whether, by force or by wiles, the enemy could keep Israel out of Canaan. We shall see how God announces His thoughts about the people; and then the enemy was utterly powerless when He took up the question.

Moab is in the place of this world's power—at his ease from his youth—settled on his lees—not emptied from vessel to vessel, &c. (Jer. 48:11.) Besides being in the place of the world, the prophet is called with the reward of divination in his hand to act for Moab. Balak had civil authority; but he was conscious that he needed, in this case, a superior power to help him. The “powers that be are ordained of God.” Therefore there is really no need of this kind of power to gain men's minds, when all is right. But Balak, having no sense of God's authority and power, seeks it from another. The Israelites are pitched just on the border of the land when this attempt is made to prevent their entering. This is very practical for us; because many, knowing redemption, and feeling their inconsistencies and failures, begin to doubt whether after all they can reach heaven. It is right to judge ourselves for what is evil in us, but the heart owes it to Christ to trust to in the mercy of God to the end.

When the people had crossed the Red Sea, they sung, in the confidence of the power of God to bring them right through, “Thou hast guided us by thy strength to thy holy habitation.” Moab, and all their enemies were nothing to them then; for they were conscious of the power of God for them, though the wilderness was all before them. They knew they had got safely out of Egypt, and they took all the rest for granted; but they did not know themselves. Therefore God led them forty years in the wilderness, to humble and to prove them and to know what was in their heart. (Deut. 8.) In the next chapter we see it was also to show what the goodness of God to them in all this discipline was.

The people are now at the edge of the land, near Jericho. Is the promise as available, now that they were at Jordan, as at the Red Sea? This was the question as regarded the people as a whole, not individually; and it is all a type of spiritual things to us. Faith takes us thoroughly beyond circumstances. It does not close the eye, running blind-folded to heaven, but taking God's judgment about sin, it knows God's grace also about salvation, and can see that the trials in the

way are for the purpose of humbling us, proving us, and doing us good in our latter end. Faith never slights God's judgment about our sin, but trusts in God's grace in spite of it. God will never accuse, though He will chasten His people; nor will He let Satan do it.

Moab really had no need to be afraid, for Israel had strict injunctions not to touch them. Israel would even buy their water of them as they passed through their land, But Moab had no faith in what God said. Satan, with all his cunning, cannot tell what the simplest faith knows—the power of God's grace to save to the end. Moab is just a sample of the entire and total ignorance of God's thoughts in the world. It is well to remember this. They would see this mysterious influence; and yet they are not only ignorant of it, but opposed to it. What had God said to Abram? “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.” And now Balak goes about to take the very means of getting God's curse upon himself. Such is the utter blindness of the flesh; it always takes the road to turn God's judgment on itself. There was not only sin in Balak, and plenty of that too, but he had entirely closed his eye against all God's thoughts. It is a terrible thing to be out of the way of God's light; and that is the case with the poor world. If the outward moral restraints are removed, in the haunts of men, when their passions are let loose, what utter degradation and misery we see! And where there is not this outward wretchedness, how sad to see a person walking through this world without God! Respectable he may be, and well thought of by his fellow-creatures; but how can he get through death and judgment without God? It is dreadful to thing of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. If God judges according to our works, what is to be done with them? God says,” There is none righteous, no not one.” “All the world are become guilty before God.” Men go on their own way, and think they will get through well at the end. Men of the world are just doing what Balak did. They are looking for blessing where God has sent the curse, and the curse where God has sent the blessing. There is as much sense about God's ways in an ass, as in a man walking without Him.

There are two things in Balaam's mind. One is, that he is afraid of God Himself. So the world are frightened at what they see wrought amongst God's people, whilst they cannot perceive the motives that are at work, and they have no power to control them. There is no power in a parent to prevent the conversion of his child all in a moment. The world cannot control God's work. See how God takes Balaam up. Balaam has no time to go to God. (Ver. 20, &c.)

God is always for His people in His own heart. Israel were entirely ignorant of what was going on, but God was not. He has taken up the cause of His people, because of the love in His own heart: and therefore, though He warns them, chastens them, &c., yet He will not let Satan have anything to do with them. It is a sign of Balak being a very wicked man, that he tried to get God's word to Balaam reversed.

In Zech. 3. we have the same thing. Satan there tries to get God's sentence pronounced against the high priest. What could Joshua say for himself? But God says, “I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.” He does not say, I do not mind the filthy garments; but He comes in of His own love and grace as regards Israel. I have clothed thee with change of raiment. God had said to Balaam, “Thou shalt not go.” Thou shalt not curse this people. That ought to have silenced him. He ought to have said, There is an end of it, if God says, No. But he was as perverse as he could be.

What a terrible plague the people of God are to the world! They are, in one sense, a pest to it, if walking faithfully. If they are killed, the only multiply the more; there is no getting rid of them, our

doing anything with them. There are principles and motives and ways in the children of God that the world cannot get rid of. Balaam says to Balak, “if thou wouldest give me thine house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord.” How pious he is become now! If he might have gone he would. But though he cannot do what he would for Balak, he still keeps up his credit as a prophet of the Lord. Just as if he had the secret of the Lord, he says, “I will know what God the Lord will say unto me more,” (Ver. 19.) There has been the money offered, But Baalam speaks as if he was connected with God. This is the way men often act. They claim a connection with God, but disclaim connection with God's people. But that will not do. It is in connection with His people that the cross comes in, and that is the test for a man.

Now God lets Balsam go, and he is delighted at it; but God chose him to go now. And his way was as perverse as ever. God intended him to go, that he might pronounce a blessing upon His people, instead of a curse. Morally, as regarded himself, Balaam's was the most wicked act in going; and yet God brings out all His purposes through it. He is nothing more than a rod in God's hand. He goes, and the Lord by an angel meets him. He rebukes man's ways and man's wisdom, by putting more sense into the mouth of the brute beast than man has; for though he has a mind, he uses it against God, which a brute beast cannot do. Man in one sense is more blind than Satan, because Satan believes and trembles. God could reveal Himself to a beast's eye as well as to a man's, when He pleased. The effect of this on Balaam was that, in his passion, he would have killed the ass (ver. 29) if he could. When the Lord opens his eyes to see his madness and blindness all the way he has been going, he feels he has sinned, and that God has stopped him; (ver. 34;) but it was from mere terror that he thus speaks, and he goes on without seeing that instead of cursing the people, he was to bless them, &c. (Ver. 39.) Balaam goes to the idols of Balak to sacrifice. He liked the name of religion, but his heart was not with God at all: it was set on money and honor in this world. What a picture of the impotency of sin!

Mark from this history the way God takes to deal with His people. Man thinks to thwart God's people of the blessing He has for them, and Satan tries to defeat God in His purposes of love. But in going their own way, He suffers men to do the very things that are for the accomplishment of these purposes. This we see in the crucifixion of Christ. The Jews said, “not on the feast day,” &c.; but Christ, our Passover, was to be sacrificed for us. It was at that very season when the feast was to be kept, and yet they meant nothing less. What a comfort it is to know that God thinks of us and arranges all for us, though we fail to think of Him! There is not a day, not a moment, but God is thinking of us, and He is above all the plottings of Satan. He will take care of His people. Do they want food? He sends them manna. Guidance? there is the pillar going before them. Do they come to Jordan? there is the ark there. Have they enemies in the land? there is Joshua to overcome for them. He deals with them in the way of discipline when they need it, as He did with Jacob. He humbled him, but gave him the blessing in the end. What a thought this ought to give us of the love of God, when we thus see His activity in goodness to us all the way through! What comfort to know He is for us, out of the spring and principle of His own love! He brings His grace and righteousness together in the putting away of sin on the cross. We can never really know God till we know He is love. God so loved the world that He sent his Son. The world did not ask God to send, and they did not ask Christ to come, but God loved them and He sent Him. What a comfort, I say again, to know God is for us, seeing all the enemies—our own hearts, the world, and Satan! Faith gets through all, by looking at what God is.

Chapter 60

The Faithfulness of God Seen in His Ways With Balaam: Part 2

Num. 23

(Concluded.)

WE have seen how God laid hold of Balaam by exposing his wickedness. Having got him in His own hand, He forces him to have to do with Himself about His own people. It is a remarkable fact, that Israel does not appear at all in this scene. It was God and Balaam. So when God beholds His people, He does not allow any check against them, because they are His. If God was walking amongst His people He took account of all their perverseness, (see Deut. ix. 24, which speaks of them as at this very time rebelling against the Lord in the plains of Moab.) God's judgment of us as saints in our walk, is the same thing; and our sins against Him, after we are saints, should grieve us even more than those we felt as sinners. When God judges amongst His people as to their walk, He calls everything to account, for He can “by no means clear the guilty.” Never does He, in the riches of His grace, bear with or allow sin, as people cay. He can cover it in atonement; He can put it away in the cross, instead of imputing it; but never can He bear with it, and so give up any requirements of His holiness.

However, the whole question now was between God and His enemy, and it took place up at the top of the hill, the people knowing nothing at all about it. What could Balaam do with God about the people? Nothing: and when he found he could not avail with God against them, he afterward seduces them into sin, and God has to chasten them.

But now, in having to do with God about His people, it is only the occasion of God's making a new revelation of His grace. God could not curse His people or defy Israel. God has His own thoughts about them, and although He can allow no inconsistency in His people, He will bring to pass His own purposes.

It is of the last importance for us to see how distinct is God's judgment concerning us as in our standing in Christ, and as to our walk as saints in the world. The judgment we form of ourselves is never the same as God's. The Holy Spirit who leads us to judge ourselves takes account of all the evil which is contrary to God's holiness. In judging myself, I ought to be able to see in myself all the evil, and to be ready to say, when I detect myself, That is not charity, that is not holiness. I have to judge my own heart according to what I am; but God's judgment of me is according to what He sees me in Christ. If I did not know this to be God's judgment of me, I should never have courage to judge myself. How could I ever look at the evil within, if I knew God was going to impute to me all the evil, and would condemn me for it?

All the difference between experience and faith is this. The testimony of the Holy Ghost in Heb. 10,

as to what God says of us, has to be laid hold of by faith. “Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.”

Balaam has no faith in God, so he goes to a high place to see what He will say to him. Peradventure the Lord will meet him. In the next chapter we find he did not do this. Here he takes the character of being very religious. Ver. 9. With God in the hill, not Israel in the camp, he sees them. The people as to fact were going on with their foolishness, or their piety, (there were Joshuas and Calebs, no doubt,) but that is not taken account of; God takes all this interest in them out of the springs of his own heart. “The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned,” &c. God is as absolute in taking them for Himself, as in taking them out of the world. So we are “bought with a price,” and are therefore not our own. Taken out of condemnation, sin, and misery, we are brought into blessing, and now we are not to be like those who are in the world. We are redeemed from the world, and the result of this principle is, that we do not belong to ourselves at all. What we do belong to ourselves in, is in the first Adam. But God has taken us out of this world that we should belong to Himself. He brought His people out of Egypt to be made His own habitation. Ex. 15-18. God dwells on earth now in us as His habitation. We shall dwell in heaven by and by. We are a heavenly people, and the life of a person consistent with God's dwelling in him is looked for. It is Satan's unwearied effort to bring a curse against us, as it was with God's enemy, in the history of His people, to curse them. We have to resist him steadfast in the faith. His accusations are made to God, and God answers for us. Faith takes up the answer of God, as in Zech. 3. It is of the greatest importance for our peace and, our holiness too, for us to understand this. What could Joshua say to the filthy garments about which he was charged? and ought he to have our filthy garments? Surely not; he has nothing to say, but God answers for him: This is a brand I have plucked out of the fire, and you want to put it in again. Then He says to the angel, “Take away the filthy garments,” &c.; and then God speaks to Joshua, and tells him that He has done it. “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee,” &c. Thus He makes the poor sinner to know the perfectness of His work, and the love in His heart that has wrought on his behalf. He does not say, I will do it, but “I have caused,” &c.

Ver. 19. Balaam is obliged to bear witness to the character of God. “God is not a man that he should he; neither the son of man, that he should repent,” &c. He is not only a God of truth, but He does not alter it. He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” This speaks the unrepentingness of God. The truth that He tells is truth, eternal truth, and it is now in the mouth of the enemy. “I cannot reverse it.” Not, I will not, but I cannot.

The great need we have, as individual saints in the wilderness, is to see the evil that is in ourselves practically, and judge it perfectly. Then we shall never be judged for it. God cannot allow sin in us. His way of putting it away is the opposite of making allowance for it; but it is the non-imputation of it.

Ver. 23. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, &c.; according to this time it shall be said, what hath God wrought?” If a soul only sees what he has wrought, he stays away from God; but if he sees what God has wrought, he is happy with Him. You can never know how to pronounce judgment upon yourself, without getting into His presence. It must be all uncertainty until you know what God says. You will have Jesus on one side and hopes on the other, light on one hand and clouds on the other. It is in knowing our position in the second Adam, as risen before God, that we have peace, and joy, and confidence.

Num. 24

The attempt of the enemy did not cause God to reiterate the same blessing merely, but drew out His activity, as it were, to bring out all the riches of His blessings. He carries out His own purposes according to His own will and thoughts.

We have seen, 1st, how God claimed them as His own people; 2nd, that they were completely justified by God. “I have seen no iniquity in Jacob or perverseness in Israel.”

God met Balaam, and he found there was no possibility of succeeding against God. Instead, therefore, of going, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, &c., he turns his face to the wilderness.

Ver. 2. “Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel abiding in their tents,” &c. We do not see a picture of the saints here in heavenly glory: for it was not Israel as brought into the final blessing of God in the land, that they are regarded here, but Israel in the wilderness. Thus we get, through Balaam, the knowledge of God's thoughts about His people here below, ver. 3-5. Directly I look at that which is born of God, I find an entirely new order of things. We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The Christian is justified in Christ, and besides that, he is born of the Spirit. Balaam looks upon the people with God's eye. The Spirit of God fills his mind, and he sees what God's thoughts are about His people. Faith enables us to see with God's eyes instead of our own. “How goodly are thy tents,” &c. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,” and “he cannot commit sin because he is born of God,” —not it cannot, but “he cannot.” “He,” the whole man, is of God.

Balaam “saw Israel abiding in their tents.” It was the wilderness. It is not now the justification of His people, but their beauty and loveliness in God's sight, as in the Spirit. They are not only accepted judicially, but they walk in the Spirit. Of Abel it is said, “he obtained witness that he was perfect, God testifying of his gifts,” &c. He was accepted in person first, and then his gifts are well pleasing to God. So Enoch was not only justified, but he had the present enjoyment of favor. “Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” He was, as it were, Walking in the joy of the Father's smile.

Ver. 5. “How goodly are thy tents,” &c. This illustrates the aspect of the Church of God now, through the Spirit. Eph. 2:22. It is more than man was in paradise. There was then no dwelling nor tabernacle of God. By and by His tabernacle will be with men. But as being in the standing of the Church, we are taken, as it were, into God's paradise now. We are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. If the Church is divided and scattered, it is held in God's hand. “The wolf, coming, catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep;” but again it is said, “none shall pluck (or catch, it is the same word) them out of my hand.”

We are God's dwelling, and that is a different thing to God's regenerating us merely. The fact of being regenerate does not reveal things to our soul; but God does reveal things to us by His Spirit which dwelleth in us.

The manifested beauty of spiritual life in an individual, or in the Church is another thing, and depends of course on the faithfulness of walk; but the maintenance of spiritual life is entirely on God's part, and never fails.

“As the valleys are they spread forth.” This, is the refreshing power of the gospel. “How goodly are thy tents.” They are in favor with all the people: and the secret of the loveliness of the aspect was, that they were watered by the river of God— “as gardens by the river side.”

It is impossible but that Christ must meet the need of faith, let the general unbelief be what it may. Often, it is true, though most humbling, that the individual faith shines the brightest when the general unbelief is the darkest. In Paul's case it was so: he went on in spite of all difficulties, when “all were seeking their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.” Faith looks not only at the blessing there is in God, but at the blessing where He has given it—with His people. The people are identified with God on high; therefore they are blessed, and God cannot allow evil in them.

Faith recognizes the place where blessing is and drinks it in. “As the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted,” &c., and then they become the source of blessing to others when so filled. “He shall pour the water out of his buckets.” (Ver. 22.) The bride herself says to her Lord, “Come,” and says to those who are athirst also, let them “take the water of life freely.”

I have not got CHRIST yet, but I have got the living water, and therefore I can say, Come and drink. We are not in glory yet, and we are not with the world; but we have the Spirit, and it is said. “he that believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

Having Christ, we have sap from the tree of life, and there can be no limit in the result. There is no stint, though little power indeed to use it. “His seed shall be in many waters,” signifying the extent of the blessing.

When, besides this, there is strength. “His king shall be higher than Agog, and his kingdom shall be exalted.” Israel will have a king in Zion, but we are in a closer connection with the Bridegroom as His bride. We shall be displayed in the kingdom by and by. Mark the difference, how it is said, “How goodly are thy tents,” &c., but thy “king” &c. The people had not a king yet. Their visible blessing in power had not come yet. Their elevation was to be a future thing in the land.

With us it is not the kingdom we are looking for as our hope; indeed, in a certain sense, we are now in the kingdom. It is for us “the kingdom and patience;” for Christ is rejected and gone. We are being called to share His rejection and afterward his glory. “We shall reign with him.” He is a King and we are kings. He is a Priest and we are priests. If we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together. He is our Head, and in all things He is to have the pre-eminence. There is to be power connected with those who have the kingdom. There is not only such a thing as blessing, but it is connected with the people of God.

Chapter 62

Fragment: All the Saints Are Equally Free

The Editor Agrees

The editor agrees with G. H. L. that the believing gentile can now claim in principle all the benefits of Christ's redemption, though he may not have to be delivered from the law like the Jew, who was in bondage to it. All the saints are equally free. The death of Christ puts all on the same ground, both as to sin and as to grace

Chapter 63

Fragment: Provision of the Word

There is not a maze of falsehood, not an error by which Satan has deluded man, and kept him thus from God, which is not met in the Word.

Chapter 64

Fragment: the Great Question

The great question of the day is, whether God is love, or love is God.

Chapter 65

Fragment: the Testimony of the Church

If the church is only a delivered body, it is weak; it must be a delivering one to be a preserved one; because that is the power of God's presence in Christ. Mark the humblest assembly of saints, or an individual Christian. If there is not energy of positive testimony, which acts on others, there is decline if the church is only a delivered body, it is weak; it must be a delivering one to be a preserved one; because that is the power of God's presence in Christ. Mark the humblest assembly of saints, or an individual Christian. If there is not energy of positive testimony, which acts on others, there is decline.

Chapter 66

Fragment: Walking With God

We cannot walk out of darkness but by walking in the light, that is, with God; and God is love: and were He not, we could not walk there

Chapter 67

Fragments Gathered up: Outside the Camp

Because a Christian has got heaven, he goes outside everything of the world. The Jew was outside the veil, but inside the camp; the Christian is inside the veil, and ought to be outside the camp. The “camp” is the world doing its best to honor God: that is just where a Christian ought not to be.

I desire in Scripture not to explain, but to receive; and in communicating, to say what is there, not to add thoughts. This may seem a slight distinction, but the effect of the difference will soon be seen in the formation of systems, instead of actual profiting upon divine instruction.

Chapter 68

A Few Words on Fruit-Bearing

(John 15.)

There are two ways in which God displays Himself and His character: one is His grace—His grace shining in a dark world where there is nothing like it, nothing that even comprehends it, nothing that has sympathy with it, but on the contrary, where it is always rejected, always despised. And yet, if there be any one thing which has power in the hand of the Holy Ghost, it is the grace of God. It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation; it is by grace also that any are saved. It is the one thing that not only gives comfort, and peace, and pardon, but that enables a soul not to sin; as we see it written in Rom. 6, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

But, then, it is only the Holy Ghost who can enable a soul to bow to the grace of God; and this He does by utterly breaking down everything of man's pride, everything of strength within. The law never did that; it killed, it condemned, it proved the guilt; but there never could be the conviction that there is no strength in man under the law. But when grace undertook, which is the same thing as saying when God undertook, the work, how different! It was an effective thing, when God dealt with the heart; not merely as that which had to be detected, but when God undertook to produce what was according to Himself, when it was to be a new creating, when He was giving eternal life. It is a deeply humbling conviction that I have nothing in myself but sin; that if God deals according to the one thing He finds in me, the whole question is closed. Therefore, if a soul is brought to God, there must of necessity be repentance—the moral judgment of its condition fixed in the soul by the Word of God. This was not the case with Simon Magus: he wanted what would minister to himself. There was no repentance in his case; it was merely a change of mind that was utterly valueless. But the working of God, producing the sense of utter ruin, goes with the faith that the Holy Ghost produces. There may be but feeble testimony—much clouding of truth—but still the sense that it is God acting for Himself and from Himself, God new-creating, God forgiving through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, God justifying, and giving me a new place. This is the only foundation on which a soul can stand before God:—God loving in spite of all that is unloving, loving where there is nothing but what is subject to eternal wrath. Indeed, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In a chapter like the one I have read, all is changed. We find ourselves upon totally different ground. It is a question of fruit, not of life; of communion, not union. Therefore, we are reminded, through exhortation, in the strongest manner, that the Lord expects obedience as well as love; and more, that the love of the Father depends upon our keeping His commandments. How are these two points to be reconciled? The answer is, that here we have the righteous dealings of God with those who bear Christ's name. There is no word here about God going out in love to an unconverted soul, nor of his dealing with evil in us. This is brought out in previous chapters. Chap. xiii. tells how the Lord deals with evil in us; then in chap. 14., He says that, though He is going

away He is coming back again, and that meanwhile we have the Holy Ghost; so that if He goes away, we have the Holy Ghost to abide with us. Chapter 15 shows that He looks for our being witnesses for Himself while He is away, while it also brings out most blessedly His relation to us while He is above. The Father looks for sweet fruits suitable to Christ in those who belong to Christ. It shows the righteous government of God in those who are saved; and what will give them power to walk rightly, producing fruit acceptable to God, and what will stand. To see this clears all the difficulty. God is not speaking here of union with Christ; if you think of the last, it is the very fullness of grace. There is no way in which God has so surpassed in His dealings of grace, as in making us one with Christ. But the very figure by which the Lord illustrates His relation to us in this chapter is suitable for earth, not for heaven: He says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” The figure of a bride, or a body—many members with Christ the head—equally suits earth or heaven. Doubtless all who are spoken of as members in the body are branches of the vine, too; but when the Holy Ghost speaks of the body of Christ, there is no such thing as cutting off a member, while this is said of branches of the vine. The body of Christ never can be broken. We may find disorder in the assembly, and vessels to dishonor in the house of God; but the body is perfect, and nothing can mar it. Those who are made members of the body of Christ are taken clean out of their old state, and united to Him forever. In order to get perfect peace, my soul must rest upon this work of God. Our chapter has not one word which gives this rest of soul, but all is connected with responsibility. Christ Himself takes the place of One upon earth producing fruit for God—Himself the source of fruit, bearing the root and stem to those who are His. There is a constant tendency in Christians to forget how they may draw upon Christ for their daily life; but yet what blessedness that we may have to do with Him for everything; and this not in law, (that is what the Jew had to do with every day), but under the responsibility which flows from grace.

The question is, what is to give us power to do the will of God here below? Christ says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it. that it may bring forth more fruit.” What an exceeding comfort it is that my Father is pruning ME, every day, taking pleasure in seeing how the branch is getting on. The 3rd verse, “Now ye are clear through the word which I have spoken unto you,” refers not to the blood, but to the power of the word in practical separation. This is true from first to last. A man is not a child of God by counsel, but when he believes in Christ. The word of God always deals morally—it deals with sin. There is, then “the washing of regeneration.” The word is afterwards applied to the detail of life. The Lord here speaks of the moral hindrances to fruit bearing, He says, “Abide in me.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.” Here we see most clearly how He cannot be speaking of union. That cannot depend on myself: whereas here is the possibility of my not abiding in Christ. But how is my soul to be strengthened for bringing forth fruit? Then must be the personal dealing with Christ in whatever is put before me, as the only way of walking with God. The one thing essential to anything being right in Christian sense is, that Christ should be the first question in it. This applies to every-day circumstance and difficulties. In service, too, there is not a single feeling that we can trust in ourselves; but if the heart really looks to Christ, all is turned into profit We have got a Blessed One who has been here—gone through all trial and temptation from without (trial from God only to bring out what His beloved Son was), and Him we have to turn to in everything, John 15 takes in not only the sons of God, but those who name the name of Christ. There are branches that never produce fruit. A man shows that he has faith and belongs to God by

bearing fruit. A soul may be in much darkness, and there are many who put themselves under legal obligation; but where there is faith, there must be a measure of fruit. This chapter, then, brings out Christ not for salvation, but for the great business of bearing fruit to God. The expression about being “burned,” if unfruitful, would be quite unintelligible, if the Lord had been speaking of union. It is not what God has wrought, but it is profession that is introduced here. There was a new thing in the earth at the beginning of Christendom, which embraces all that are false as well as all that are true. There are many who name the name of Christ, but have no sense of what is due to Christ. They use His name as a mark of difference, but they do not care for Himself.

Verse 7. Here we have the heart's reference to Christ, whatever comes before it. Is it a question of caring for the sheep? Is it not because they are sheep, but because they belong to Christ. Then the heart will be sustained through the difficulties and disappointments that arise. Is it about trial in circumstances? Take the case of a person in a family, the head of which is unconverted. There may be the temptation to quit the place; but when I think of God's will, there is peace in my soul. It is Christ I belong to, Christ's will that I have to do. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” This is very emphatic. If your first thought is of Myself, “ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done.” It is first Himself, then His words being in our minds and the heart in communion, the prayers put forth are those it is in the heart of God to give. Then follow, “If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.” It would be utterly destructive of truth to apply this to salvation by Christ, or union in grace. But when He has saved us, when He has brought us to God, and given us the certainty that God loves us, then He says, “Think of Me.” If you are in any difficulty, think of Me.” Then the Holy Ghost can present the suitable word to keep and help me. If I look at the difficulty, and do not think of Christ, Satan comes in. But if I turn to Christ, fruit is produced, and the Father is glorified. Some say that Christ's yoke is a hard thing. But is it a hard thing for Christ to say, Now, when you are in trial, think of Me; when you are in joy think of Me, or you will be lifted up; when you are in sorrow think of Me, or it will crush you?

This thinking of Christ is the true path of real holy joy. The sense of responsibility is not to cast us down, nor the presentation of it. “These things,” the Lord says, “have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” It is not only that He wants me to be thoroughly happy as to the question of eternal life, but thoroughly happy in going to Him for all my strength in bearing fruit. The soul never gets full peace till the sacrifice of Christ is seen, nor full of joy by the way till the heart is acquainted with the secret of making Christ the object of life. Think of Me—I am the true vine, the only one from whom the sap flows, by which the fruit can be produced. Christ is here putting Himself forward as the encouragement to the heart. If I look at the fruit I think I ought to produce for God, I shall not bring forth any; but if thinking of Christ, there is as real power in Him to produce fruit as there was to save my soul. But Christ must be personally before my soul. The very confession of difficulties, and telling Him of that which tries and burdens us, is one way in which He would have us to think of Him. It is the way we find Him everything for every-day life, after having found Him for eternal life—find Him not only for heaven, but for earth. The Lord grant that we may search into His words, not as law, yet as words of authority. The child delights in his father's honor; and he loves, too, to know that he himself is an object of delight. If it is the word of authority, it is written for us that our joy may be full. May we then commit our

difficulties to Him, and they will be over. May we refer our souls to Christ in every matter that comes before us day by day.

Chapter 69

Galatians 3

THE way in which the law is placed in contrast with promise and faith in Gal. 3 is very striking. It is not merely that man is a sinner and that there is a judgment, (a truth so solemnly revealed in Scripture) nor is it the operation of the law, experimentally known as spiritually bringing death into the conscience, as we find it opened out in the seventh of Romans. The law and promise in grace are brought before us as two systems, both of God, but contrasted in their nature and opposite in their effects, and absolutely exclusive one of the other; existing at separate times, though the second could not disannul the first, and whose co-existence, as the ground of man's standing with God, is in their very nature impossible. Both are positive dealings and revealed ways of God with man, each of its own kind. Man had been turned out of Paradise for sin, and he is an outcast from God and all intercourse with Him, such as he once had upon earth. This is his state; but it is no special revelation to him in that state. A judgment awaits him, too. This will hereafter show God's righteous way with sin, and natural conscience bears the reflex of it within, in spite of all the sinner's efforts to get rid of it. It is to come, however; not a present dealing with man—a revelation by which he is placed in a special relationship with God according to the terms of that revelation. He has to answer as a fallen sinner for his conduct—terrible but righteous truth; but he is in no present revealed relationship with God. Not so where the promise or the law have come in. Then man has as a present thing to do with God according to the terms revealed by Him. These are of two kinds, as here brought forward—promise and law; only we have to add, that the seed to whom the promise was made is now come, and has accomplished the work of redemption for the heirs according to promise.

The Galatians were not rejecting the promise or Christ; but they were adding the law to Christ as completing God's will. This it is that the apostle resists, and declares the incompatibility of the two. Not that the law was against the promises; (for if a law had been given which could have given life, righteousness would have been by it;) but that the one system was, in fact, opposite in its principle to the other. They were two distinct ways proposed for having life, righteousness, and the inheritance: one bringing a curse and nothing else; the other a blessing after God's own heart, and nothing else: one founded on man's responsibility, the other on God's gift, when man had failed altogether under that responsibility.

The best way I can treat the subject is to follow the contrast the chapter presents, and then unfold, as clearly as I can from Scripture, the positive doctrine on which our present state, as “delivered from the law,” is founded.

First, then, as to the contrast. They did not obey the truth as to the cross if they annexed the law to Christ. The law applied to life in the flesh and its obligations. The cross declares its condemnation and end in death, and death to it. They had not received the Spirit by law, but by faith. They had had the Spirit, had begun in it when they had not the law at all, and they were now looking to be made perfect through the latter, but this was by the flesh; for that the law supposed to be alive and applied to it. He, further, who showed the power of the Spirit and ministered it, did it, not by the

works of the law, but by the report of faith. But it was admitted by the few that the blessing was in Abraham. But he got it by faith, and was counted righteous by it without any law at all—not only without it, but on a contrary principle. They which are of faith, (i.e., who stand on this principle before God) are blessed with faithful i.e., believing Abraham. Now, the law is not on this principle. The law is not of faith, but on the principle of doing—getting the blessing by doing. But that is not faith. And more than this: not only is the blessing by faith, not by law, not on this principle, and the accomplishment by oneself or another of the law, but as many as are on this principle, as many as stand on the ground of their obligation to keep the law, are under the curse. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” The works of the law are not bad works; they are right works, loving God and our neighbor and not breaking the commandments which forbid sin. But they that are of the works of the law, (that are placed or place themselves under the obligation of the law, of doing these works,) are under the curse. He does not say he who has broken the law, he who sins, he who has done evil, but he who is of the works of the law, who goes upon the principle of being under its obligation, and bound to accomplish it, is under the curse. Nor is there a hint of any one's keeping it for us, so that we should not be under the curse when we are under the law.

All that are of the works of the law ARE under the curse. Because, according to its declaration, every one is so that has not kept it. And no man under it has kept it, for he is in flesh. And that is not subject to it nor can be. He must get off this ground to escape its curse. But this can be only by death. The Jew was under it, and all else would have been condemned as lawless had they not come under it then; but, for every one who believed of those who were, Christ took the curse on the cross. It is not pretended that He kept it for them, so that the curse was not needed for their breaking it, because another had kept it for them; for then he had not needed to bear its curse. No: the curse of its head remained there and was borne on the cross; and thus they were redeemed from it, and then the whole system of God under law being closed and the middle wall of partition broken down, the blessing of Abraham (which was of faith) could flow forth on the Gentiles who had faith. It could not till then. While God maintained the obligation of the law as a dispensed system among men, the Gentile must have submitted to it, and become a Jew as to law if not as to race, he must have submitted to its obligation, while God maintained it. But the dispensation of law had now closed by the death of Christ, and the blessing of the promise by faith could flow forth to them who believed. This brings forward another point in the argument; the historical part of it. A subsequent act cannot disannul, even amongst men, a solemnly-confirmed covenant. Now God had given the promise to Abraham without law, and confirmed it to Christ 430 years before the law came. This therefore could not disannul the previously-confirmed promise, nor alter its terms. It could not be disannulled, and it could not be added to. It must be fulfilled as it was given. Now God had given the inheritance to Abraham by promise. But if of law it was not of promise. And mark, this is the truth for us. It is not of law, not on that principle. If it be, it is not of promise. But as given of God it is of promise. The two systems are contradictory in their nature. The inheritance could not be by both; but it was first given by promise, and the law coming after could not make this of none effect. What was then the use of the law? It was added to produce transgressions—not to produce sin, for that was there. But law made sin transgression. It entered that the offense might abound. Sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful. But it could not interfere with the promise to the seed. The promise was prior to and independent of it. It was added, till the seed should come. This is a very distinct and clear statement. Putting man under law was a temporary

expedient, though a most righteous one, and founded on principles of everlasting truth in itself; namely, human responsibility and a perfect rule for it. But it was a principle which with a sinner, (and man was a sinner,) could only bring a curse, and was meant to bring it, not as the final or abiding way of God, but to bring man's position clearly out, by raising the question how righteousness was to be found or obtained. The law was given by Moses. The law was right, essentially right; but it was after the promise, and until the seed. It was never God's way of man's obtaining righteousness. It was addressed to sinners. It convicted of sin and made it exceeding sinful. Righteousness is not by law, nor life, nor the inheritance.

If indeed a law had been given which could have given life, then righteousness would have been by it. But no such law was given. Righteousness could not be and was not by it. Scripture has concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. The doing that man may live, the keeping of the law, is not the way of righteousness. It was used for a time to bring man more fully under the conviction of sin. Righteousness never was, is not, never will be, for sinful man on this principle. He was tried under it for a time, to bring sin clearly out; and then the promise resumed its indefeasible rights in the person to whom the promise was made; and righteousness and the inheritance stood on entirely other ground. Before faith came (i. e., the principle of Christianity and grace) the Jews were kept under law, shut up to the faith to be revealed. After faith came, they are not under the schoolmaster—not under law at all—delivered from it. Hence not held to it as an obligation, for I cannot be obliged by that which I am not under. Nor has another to fulfill therefore the obligation because I have failed to fulfill it, because we are not under it. We are sons, i.e., in direct communion with the Father. If we are taking the pedagogue's orders as between us and Him, we are not.

Such then is the elaborately reasoned out contrast between these two ways of God law, dealing with the responsibility of man, and promise, declaring the gift of God. The one claiming, and founded on the principle of doing on man's part, so as to make out righteousness in man, of which the law was the measure; the other characterized by believing God, and that being the ground of counting a man righteous, not his doing, or responsibility to do, anything. With this the law in its nature could have nothing to do. It is not of faith, but of doing, whoever does it. But we are not righteous on this principle. They are both ways of God, both right, but one brings a curse, the other the blessing. In a word, they are contradictory in nature and in principle. Further, they were mutually exclusive of each other. The promise could not be disannulled nor added to by any after act. The law was merely temporarily added till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. When once the system of faith came, those previously under law were no longer so at all, nor consequently responsible to or under obligation in respect of it. It was no longer at all presented as a ground on which man had to stand with God. If we are not under obligation to it ourselves, no one had to undertake to fulfill it in our stead, to make good our failures under it, for we are not under it. The righteousness of God is come in.

Let us turn now to God's ways in promise. The earliest revelation of God (on the fall) was a declaration that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was not a promise to Adam, but a revelation of another than him, who should destroy the power which he, by his unfaithfulness, had let in to rule on the earth. On this, individual faith could rest, and we know did rest, in the Enochs and the Noahs; we may trust in Adam himself and many others of his posterity. Still the world grew desperate in wickedness, and God determined to destroy what He had

created, and brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. The world began anew, and, alas! it was soon seen, sin with it. But God would not allow that they should be unrestrained, Man built the tower to have his own way, and not be dispersed; and God confounded his language and dispersed the race, forming countries, and tongues, and languages. Mighty hunters there might be, and have been; but a divided world and antagonistic races. But the world had gone away from God and, as we know from Joshua, had begun to worship demons. And now Abraham is called. There was no law, no condition, no righteousness, no requirement of it. He is called to break with and quit the providential order which God Himself had established in the world, his country, and his kindred, and his father's house. Country was that new thing of God's establishment, which his judgment on Babel had formed; God's order in the world. Abraham was to leave it; and act against it, but to be apart from it for God in the world. This was a most important point, and becomes the more so the more we examine it. It takes Abraham up on ground independent of the common responsibility of men. The world lay under it; sin was there, and a judgment to come. Grace here works. Abraham is called out from among them, and separated from them, and positive revealed blessing is deposited there, and entirely and exclusively there.

This was an immense fact. It is not man responsible and liable to judgment. It is not merely grace working, so that a man may have, individually, share in divine life, and divine favor, and Heaven; but one called publicly out from the whole system of God, and made the head of a race, (now a spiritual one,) and all blessing deposited in him, and wholly in him. This was a new thing on the earth. In a general way, one may look at Israel as the natural seed according to the promise, but the details of that part of the history need not detain us here. They were according to flesh, and the seed of promise was definitely to be accounted heir. But it is this principle itself which is important. Grace calls out one to be the head of a new race, in which the blessing of God was to be “the blessing of Abraham.” This had nothing to do with judging on the footing of responsibility; or any rule or measure given on which that judgment was to be founded. This may be a deeper motive for faithfulness and service than any other, but so it is. But it is one called out from a responsible world which is under judgment for its failure, not to give an exact rule by which that failure can be measured, but to set sovereign blessing in him, and by subsequent revelations, in his seed. As Adam was the head of a sinful and condemned race, Abraham was the head of a blessed race, of whom it could be said, “now are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise.” This, by grace, will be true even of Israel in its day; they have sought it by the works of the law and so lost it, but God will, for all that, faithful to Himself, accomplish His promises. But this, for the moment, I pass by. It suffices to point out here the position of Abraham, called to be the deposit and stock of promise and blessing. “Get thee out of thy country and out of thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, to a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing. Blessed is he that blesseth thee and cursed is he that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Blessing characterized his calling. He is blessed and a blessing. Blessing is measured out by dispositions towards him. And he is the one source of blessing to all the families of the earth. This is a very remarkable position and a most blessed, and, in its character, a divine one, which we shall do well to consider as regards ourselves. I will suggest a word or two in a moment. But, remark here how divine a one it is in its nature. God is blessedness in Himself. It characterizes Him. He is the source of it to all who have any. This was, derivatively, just Abraham's place. He was made blessed, in this sense had blessedness on the earth, distinctively and especially so; he was the source of it to all the families

of the earth. If there was a curse, it was only for enmity to this. This is a most precious and, in character, divine place for a creature; a creature blessed, no doubt, and quickened of God; but thence only the more precious because the more real.

Thus the place of blessing is definitively settled as of pure grace, without law—grace abounding over the whole sinful conditions of man, and flowing from and measured by the self-originated fullness of divine love, of which it was the display and revelation. This is what characterized it in Abraham. Grace putting man in a divine place of blessing.

But this comes more distinctly and blessedly out when we proceed to consider the way in which it was accomplished.

It was confirmed to the seed, that is, to Christ; and that as we shall see, by an obedience and in a way far beyond all legal obedience which might have fulfilled the duties incumbent on the first Adam, and contained authoritatively as duties in the law. The promise had been to Abraham in chapter 12. It is confirmed to the seed in 22 after Isaac had been offered up. Abraham was called to surrender all he loved, all the promises where God had deposited them—for in Isaac his seed was to be called. An entire surrender of self— “thine only son, whom thou lovest” —and of all even that God had given him, as founded on life in this world, in the seed he had received of God according to promise. He must reckon on God alone and resurrection, and give up all in life down here. And he does. Isaac is surrendered in devotedness to God, and God trusted for promise which must be in resurrection. This was all out of the very reach and nature of law. It was not the claims of obedience to legal righteousness in man, but absolute surrender of self and righteousness and all to God. All was offered up in sacrifice. Law obeyed is life accomplishing its duties. This was the surrender of self and promises and all to God—the sacrifice of all to God. It was the well-known figure of Christ's offering up Himself (only in Him it was really accomplished) and rising from the dead. Then, not till then, the promise was confirmed to the seed. That is, the promise was confirmed to Christ on the ground of an obedience infinitely above all law, and as having passed through death, (and law has power over a man only as long as he lives,) and as risen from the dead, and to us in Him.

In the meantime, but 430 years after the promise, as we have seen, and hence leaving it in full vigor, the law came in, and required human obedience to the exact rule of righteousness: in a word, declared (under pain of God's curse for failure) all that man ought, as such, to be and to do. It came in, by the by, to bring out transgression, made sin exceeding sinful, and, from the inability of man to establish righteousness for Himself before God, it brought him under the curie. The authority of this righteous claim could not be disregarded, and Christ bore its curse; that while maintaining its authority, the curse brought by it might be removed. His death, which met and satisfied its curse, took from under it all that are in Him. For they died, in Him, in that in which they were held; and rose in the liberty in the which He had made them free: the law having no further claim or dominion over them as risen—for it held it as long as they lived; but they had died and were now risen, to bring forth fruit to God, in connection with their new husband, Christ risen from the dead. Hence, too, sin had not dominion over them, because they were not under law, but under grace.

Thus, man's righteousness, which, if there had been any, would have been under law, was out of the question. The curse had been the fruit of the trial. The Scripture had concluded all under sin.

But the obedience of Christ, spotless and blameless under law as He had been, went infinitely further than law, and indeed was on another principle. It was the voluntary surrender of self and life to glorify God. That self and life, which law would direct, and the love of which became the measure of love to others, was wholly given up. The curse and wrath due under law and to sin were undergone. “Therefore,” could Christ say, “doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” Of this the law knew nothing. It was absolute obedience, in the total surrender and devotedness of self to God's glory and purposes and our salvation. And God was glorified in Him: God was, and hence God has glorified Him in Himself. And man is entered into the glory which the Son had with the Father before the world was, and is entered righteously. God has displayed his righteousness in setting Christ, the man who had glorified Him, at His right hand. Thus divine righteousness is established in giving Christ the glory which He deserved through His work for us. But then we must be in this place of glory, for it was for us He did it, and He must see of the travail of His soul in bringing those whom His Father had given him into His own glory. We wait therefore for the hope of righteousness by faith, the hope that belongs to righteousness; and what that is we see in the glory into which Christ has entered, where the righteousness of God has placed Him as man.

Thus grace could reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It was a glorifying God in the giving up Himself, and that to death, and the curse, and wrath, through the Eternal Spirit offering Himself up without spot to God, and God in righteousness setting Him in glory at His right hand. Thus man took his place in righteousness, according to the purpose of God, we being made sharers therein by grace; and now, having seen the full result in glory founded on righteousness through Christ, let us see what the blessing is.

It is the fruit of God's promise to Christ, the seed. Whatever God's heart could do to show His love, and that, His love to Christ, and according to this claim Christ had on it, that is the blessing. God, in whom is blessedness, was showing how He could bless, as in Eph. 2 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Christ was the One to be blessed. He was the seed to whom the promise was made. He was the One who—sin being come in—had established God's glory in love, majesty, righteousness, truth, inevitable judgment, salvation, as no innocence could have given occasion to; yet at His own cost. Hence, man is in glory. The blessing is the Father's love to Christ and the glory in which He is, in virtue of that and of having glorified His Father. Such is the place into which we are brought by faith. He in himself, in person, the only-begotten, is the Firstborn—as re-entered into glory—of many brethren. He brings many sons to glory.

This blessedness we have in the present sense of divine love; the love of God shed abroad in our hearts; God dwelling in us and we in Him; the consciousness, through the Holy Ghost, that we are in Christ and Christ in us; in the consciousness that we are sons, through the Spirit of his Son sent forth into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father; the looking for glory, to be like Him and with Him; the consciousness of the Father's love resting on us as on Jesus. More than the promise of the Father to Christ, showing His love to the Son, and having our place in Him before the Father and enjoying His own love we cannot think of. God has made Christ as man, and us in Christ, the pattern of what His blessing in love is. As it was said of Joseph, “In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh.”

And this fullness of love constituting our blessedness, flows forth in love, in the expression of it to brethren; and to sinners flows out. Thou shalt be a blessing and in thee shall men be blessed.

How brightly does the consciousness of this shine in Paul! “Would to God that not only thou, but all who hear me this day,” —there was overflowing, uncalculating love—were—what?— “not only almost but altogether such as I am, save these bonds.” There was the consciousness of such blessedness that the best things divine love could wish was that they might be as he was. Oh what true consciousness of blessedness, what genuine love! Oh how different in spirit, temper, tone, foundation in righteousness, divine out-flowings of grace, the love of God satisfying itself in good, from “Do this and live,” were it even done!

There is righteousness, but not man's, under the law, whoever has accomplished it, but God's, in setting Christ at His right hand in glory, who had given up Himself and all promised, as come in the flesh, for God the Father's glory, according to the everlasting purpose of blessing and displaying Himself in blessing; of which Christ, the promised seed, first of all, was the object; then, if we are Christ's, we also are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise. And how the divine person of Christ comes out to view in this! For God, in a certain sense was debtor to Him, for the maintenance of his glory—yea, for the only full bringing it out in redemption. So that, as we have seen, He righteously entered into it as man. But to whom can God be debtor, in any sense? Who can make a “therefore” for God to act or love upon? but Christ in the divine counsels has. I conclude, then, that life, righteousness, and the inheritance do not come to me under law, nor by the law. I cannot have righteousness by it nor be under it at all if I have it by Christ according to promise. Nor have I righteousness by any one's fulfilling it for me, for then it would be under and by the law; but if righteousness come by the law then CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN.

Chapter 70

The Epistle to the Galatians

The epistle to the Galatians was not written about discipline, nor could it be, but to bring back the whole body of the saints in many churches to sound doctrine. But it shows that false doctrine was more terrible than the most false conduct. There is not a wish of kindness, not a salutation, not a gracious word. The apostle breaks in at once with rebuke and reproach, and closes with resentful coldness; while in 1 Corinthians where gross evil was committed and gloried in by all, he says all the good of them he can.

Chapter 71

Scripture Query and Answer: Gentiles Not Under Law and Romans 3:19

Q. Many Bible-Students hold, and perhaps rightly, that Gentiles are not under Law: if so, what is the meaning of Rom. 3:19. “We know whatsoever things the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law; that all the world may become guilty before God.” Does not all the world here include Gentiles? Is not the precious argument in Rom. 6 in regard to Law and Grace, applicable as well to Gentiles as Jews? in Rom. 7. Although the Spirit by Paul is speaking “to them that know the Law,” I apprehend such as had been Jews. Are we not to understand the lessons here given, so replete with joy and peace to the believer,—death to the Law by the body of Christ and union to Him in resurrection, “married to another.” —as involving a principle equally bearing on Jew and Gentile? If so, how can it be shown that the Gentile is unbelief, and within the hearing of the Word of God, is not under law?

A SCOTCH READER.

A. Our reader has not perceived that the apostle had already dealt with the guilt of the Gentile in Rom. 1., and of both Jew and Gentile in Chap. 2. As he says in chap. 3: 9. “we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” The Jew would have especial difficulty in submitting to a sentence so leveling. Therefore the Apostle Paul proceeds to fortify the proof of Israel's utter ruin by quotations from the Psalms and prophets in verses 10-18, on which he reasons in verse 20. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” He clearly means that the Jew is therein addressed; and therefore the very law of which he was so proud was the most unsparing witness of his moral condition. No Jew but would admit the wickedness of the Gentiles; the mass of Jews would deny that they themselves were hopeless, gone from God. Hence the force of these Jewish Scriptures; which, having that people in view, denied a single righteous man among them. If there was not one good Jew, (and nobody could overlook that the Gentiles were deplorably bad,) the conclusion was obvious: every mouth was stopped, and all the world guilty before God. This text, then, cannot be understood without limiting “them who are under the law” to the Jews. (Comp. Rom. 2:12; 1 Cor. 9:20, 21.) “Every mouth” and “all the world” do include Gentiles as well as Jews, because they embrace those without law, no less than those under law. The principle, again, of Rom. 6:7. applies equally to all believers; but the actual, personal deliverance from law in the death and resurrection of Christ necessarily belongs to such as were once under law. Both Jew and Gentile had been alike lost, and, believing, were alike saved; but they were each brought out of a different position.

Chapter 72

God Entering His Temples

A SOLEMN, holy subject, which the heart would reverence, while the pen traces it for a little through Scripture.

Scripture abounds with evidences of the intimacy which God has sought with the works of His hands. He has always been making a habitation for Himself, in some form or another, among His creatures.

At the beginning, as Creator, He formed His works, so that He Himself might rest in them. He saw everything which he had made, that it was very good; and all furnished Him with a desired habitation. The Sabbath at the end of creation-work tells us this. Whatever measure of happiness was provided for man in the arrangements of creation, (and that measure was indeed complete) still the Lord God was to have a place in the garden. He walked there in the cool of the day, seeking the presence of Adam.

Thus was it at the first, when the earth was in her virgin purity. She is quickly changed, but this purpose of God does not change.

The creation denies the Lord God a rest or a habitation, by reason of sin that defiled. He must arise and depart. It could not be His rest, for it was polluted. We therefore at once see Him as a stranger in the world His hands have made. This was not His place of abiding. He visits His elect that are in it, but He does not make it a home in patriarchal days, as of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He communicates with them in marked, personal intimacy, but He seeks no place on the earth. Still, however, He has a dwelling place, here in counsel and in prospect.

The seed of Abraham are redeemed from Egypt, and brought into the wilderness. Egypt was as the world, the polluted creation; the wilderness was as a spot outside of it, and there in the midst of His people again, He finds for Himself a “holy habitation.” (Ex. 15:13.) The tabernacle is reared to be His dwelling, and He enters it.

But how, I ask, did He enter it? He had, of old with evident delight taken His creation, as we saw; but now, the earth being defiled, and a wilderness around Him, and before Him, and under Him, after what manner does He take His place and enter His dwelling, in the midst of His people? Just with equal delight as at the beginning He enters the tabernacle reared in the wilderness of Sinai, as with his whole heart and His whole soul. The cloud abides on the outside or top of it, and the glory goes within—but goes there with all expression of earliest, delighted satisfaction. Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:35). God, as it were, would have the whole of it for Himself—at least for a season—as at creation. He enjoyed the work of His hands, hallowed the seventh day and rested, ore He shared His rest and his enjoyment with Adam.

This is full of blessing. It is an expression of the early desire of God to find a place among his creatures. If pollution separates him from the earth in its common, general condition, it cannot

separate Him from this purpose of His heart. He will purify a people that He may still dwell among His creatures. He will give them His Sabbaths, sanctify them as He did the seventh day, and dwell in the midst of them, as in a garden of Eden.

There can be no more happy thought than this, that the Lord God purposes to be thus near to His creatures and intimate with them. And it is a thought, as we shall find from this meditation, that the heart is never for one moment called to part with. As we travel through the book of God, we take it up at the beginning, we carry it along with us on our journey, and find it full and fresh at the end. It accompanies us all the way, and is to be realized forever.

Israel has to change their condition. They cease to be a traveling and become a settled people. They leave the tents of the desert for the cities and villages of the land. The glory, according to this, has to go from the tabernacle to the temple. There may be all these changes in circumstances, but there is no change in affection, no abatement in the fervency and desire of the Lord of Israel towards his people.

A great interval also took place, and fresh provocations were given. As soon as the ark, the witness of the divine presence, had entered the land, the sword of Joshua began the work of conquest to prepare “a mountain,” a kingdom, for the Lord. But Israel was untrue to Jehovah, and all through the times of the Judges and of Saul, there is confusion and defilement, and the restlessness of iniquity. The sword of David has, therefore, after so long a time, to finish what the sword of Joshua had begun, till at length there is rest—no evil or enemy occurrent—and the peaceful throne of Solomon, the throne of the Lord, is set in the land and over the people. And then the temple is built, and the ark leaves the tabernacle of the wilderness (or the tent which David had prepared for it, in principle I may say the same thing) for the house of the kingdom.

This long delay—this delay of many centuries, during which the Lord of Israel was kept out of His rest, and that, too, through the faithlessness of His people—works no change. The glory enters the temple exactly as it had afore entered the tabernacle.

The priests cannot stand in the temple, just as Moses had been unable to stand in the tabernacle—the glory had again so filled the house of God. (2 Chron. 5.) And this was the Lord again seating Himself in the midst of His people, or entering His habitation there as with His whole heart and His whole soul.

In Eden He found His rest, because all there was “very good” —now He finds His rest in the temple, because “he is good and his mercy endureth forever.” This difference we see; (Gen. 1:31; 2 Chron. 5:13) but still He takes His place, and enters His dwelling with the like earnest affection and delight.

After this He still goes on, and we still trace the same mind in Him. The fullness of time arrives, and God is to be manifest in the flesh. This great mystery bespeaks itself in Luke 1:2. But what fervor is there seen and felt to wait upon it! What joy in heaven among the angels, what joy on earth in the vessels filled by the Spirit! The fields of Bethlehem witness this. Elizabeth, and Mary, and Zechariah, and the shepherds, Simeon and Anna, witness this. God assuming the manhood, manifesting Himself in flesh, entering the temple of the human body, shall be, in its generation, like the glory entering the tabernacle or the temple. It shall be a moment of rapture. The Holy Ghost Himself, the angels that are in God's presence on high, and the elect that are visited and

quickened by Him here below, shall all be made to tell of the divine joy of that moment. It was no exile from the higher regions that we see in the glorious, eternal Son of the Father, “made of a woman,” and taking flesh and blood. Unspeakable riches of grace indeed it was; but Luke 1:2. forbids us to say that it was an exile that was then entering a foreign land, or the place of banishment. There is no finer glow of joy expressed in the whole of Scripture than in these chapters which thus usher in and reveal and celebrate the Incarnation. If ever the Lord God entered His temple with desire and joy, it was then; but this, as we have seen, He has always done.

Wondrous and precious beyond all thought, had we hearts to enjoy it; but is there still more of this? Is this same story, full of blessedness as it is, able and prepared to tell itself out in still further numbers?

See the house of God, again and after this, in Acts 2. That may give us our answer.

The house is then finished, as the heavens and earth of old were, on the sixth day. The vacant, forfeited apostleship is filled, and the day of Pentecost has fully come. The glory again enters. The Holy Ghost comes into His temple now, as the Son, in the day of Luke 2, had come into His. The temples are different, but the joy in which God enters them is the same.

The living house of God, then raised and completed in Jerusalem, is filled with the Spirit; and like cloven tongues of fire, He sits upon each of the assembled saints. This was a new form, but it was as when the cloud covered the house, and the glory entered it, in the times of Ex. 40. and 2 Chron. 5.

But how was this entrance made? Like “a rushing mighty wind” the Holy Ghost came; and this style of covering, this expression of it, bespeaks the delight and fullness with which it was done. The full glory was there. The Spirit Himself, in His proper personality, in fullness and power, entered. And the fruit of this is shown all around, as we saw in the day of the Incarnation. The wonderful works of God were rehearsed at once, by the baptized body. They were glad, and praised God. They were delivered from themselves, both dwelling together, and sharing with one another all they had. Moreover, they gave witness, and that, too with great power, to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Surely, we may again say, if the Son entered His tabernacle of flesh, the temple of His body, in divine fullness and glory, so did the Spirit now enter and sill His house in like affection. Intense personality is here again witnessed. God is again near and intimate. He finds His habitation here in the midst of us, as with his whole heart and His whole soul—as the prophet speaks. (Jer. 32:41.) The dispensation may change, the tabernacle may have to give place to the temple, or one temple to yield to another—the temple of a human body may be prepared for the Son, the temple of living stones for the Spirit; but the fervor and intimacy with which God, or the glory; enters each of those in its day, is alike throughout.

Further, however, still—for it is thus to the end and at the end—there is one other form which this same mystery is to take; but it takes it in the same manner, as from the beginning hitherto.

In Rev. 21 the millennial city, or, if you please the eternal city, descends in full form and solemnity It is a finished thing, perfect in all its beauty, ere it appears in sight. It has been built in heaven. The

marriage of the Lamb was celebrated there, and there the bride had made herself ready. She is now seen in all her costliness and perfection, the habitation of the glory, as once the tabernacle of the wilderness, and then the temple of the kingdom, had been; the habitation of God through the glory, as I may express it, as once the Church on earth had been the habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22.)

This city is now seen as “a bride adorned for her husband” —a figure which needs no comment to tell its deep meaning.

A great voice accompanies it in its descent; and the voice cries, “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

This introduces, or waits upon, the vision which is given John of the holy city.

As the cloud of old filled the courts when the glory entered the tabernacle and the temple—as the angels rehearsed the joy of heaven when the Son entered the flesh and blood of humanity, making it His temple—as the Holy Ghost entered His living temple with like witness of His presence in its fullness; so now, the millennial, eternal dwelling-place of God in the midst of men is shown as with kindred witness of the divine delight, and of the rapture of heaven. At the beginning, the Lord God had rested in His creation and walked with man; and now at the end, He rests in His own accomplished redemption, and pitches His tabernacle in the midst of men again.

Surely all this tells us of the delight which He take in the works of His hands, in His presence with His creatures, and in His nearness to them.

We may draw some happy moral from this holy and very blessed fact—the way in which God has ever entered His temples in this world of ours. If it has been thus with Him, how may we entirely trust Him for the forgiveness of our sins, and for our blessings in grace! He would not thus delight in His communion with us, and in His nearness to us, did He not also delight in the mercy He has shown us, and in our believing and ready and assured acceptance of peace at His hand in Jesus. The reasoning of Manoah's wife with her husband applies to this—and sweet comfort there is in that artless, but unanswerable argument of faith. (Judg. 13:23).

Can I, I may ask myself, see the delight of the Lord God in His creation, and then in coming near to man and talking with him—the fervency and freedom in which the glory first entered its tent, and then its house of hewn stone—the joyous solemnity that accompanied the Son from the eternal bosom, as He came, and entered the body prepared for Him—the earnestness and fullness of the Spirit filling His living temple—and then the decided and happy witness that was borne to the day on which the Lord God removed His tabernacle from heaven to dwell among men again—can I, I ask, survey these wondrous things, as they pass in succession before me, and doubt His delight in mercy? Can I question my welcome to that mercy, and the provisions it has made for me a sinner, in Jesus? Among a thousand answers to this, let this meditation give one:—there is hindrance and dimness and cloud, I know; but they are in our eye.

The difficulties the soul knows in living the life of faith may well introduce that life to us afresh, as being from God. Revolted, tainted nature ought to calculate on finding that which comes from such an One altogether contrary to itself. It is hard for a selfish nature to believe in self-sacrificing love.

God takes such an attitude in the Gospel as man never put himself in. It is more than strange or wonderful; it is absurd; it is not to be credited. A man would be beside himself to act as God in the gospel acts. But what is all this but God's glory? The Son of God has loved me, and given Himself for me. For whom? A creature that had rebelled against Him, insulted Him, believed the he that had deeply, deeply slandered Him, done all he could to dishonor Him. Is it to be believed? How can a selfish nature accept such a fact?

But all this turns to a testimony. It receives a seal from the very fact that man rejects it. It is from God, one may say, just because it does not suit itself to man. What a witness for it!

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, has to give it place in vs. But He does so. In some, the love of God is “shed abroad” as the apostle speaks, so blessedly, that the soul is always breathing a free and gladdening element. To some, there is such a deep “rooting and grounding” in love, as he also says, that the sense of it constitutes the sure foundation on which the soul rests. (Rom. 5.; Eph. 3.) But what a privilege is it, that we are thus taught and encouraged to rest in the ground of love, and to breathe the atmosphere of love—and that love, God's! The poor, cold heart of some of us knows all this after its own poor measure. But it is in ourselves, and not in the love, we are straitened. And each of us, conscious of being quickened of God, is taught to know that our condition, as thus quickened, comes from the great love wherewith we are loved. (Eph. 2:4, 5.)

Chapter 73

God Is Love or Love Is God—Which?

God's love in Christ is not only an object which gathers; it is an activity which does so. Love is relative; it acts and shows itself. Hence God has acted. It is not the silent depths of self-consciousness which heathenism made of God as mere intellect, though erroneously supposing matter equally eternal and receiving merely form from God; though it then became active in generating thoughts, and delighted with them objectively, became active in creation to produce them according to truth. In this scheme they justly made primeval darkness the mother of all things. But such is not our God. They knew not love in God, save in benefits sensibly known in creation. Jesus revealed Him, and we thus know Him to be love, and light too. Blessed knowledge it is, as given to us in the word, eternal life; and this life is occupied with it, as we have seen, with the Father and the Son. But we can equally say that we know this sweet and blessed truth: “My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” it is the activity of love which is the power of gathering. “He gave himself.... That He might gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad.” even in Israel, “how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” here we have not only the attractive sanctifying object bringing into fellowship, but the activity of love, which acts, gives itself, in order to gather. In this we are allowed to have a part. It is this, while sanctifying and maintaining his holiness and making us partakers of it, which reveals God and gathers weary souls

Chapter 74

God's Dealings With Man

In regard to God's dealings with man since the fall, or rather, the flood, there have been three great epochs: first, the period before Christ came, died, and rose; secondly, the present interval; and thirdly, the age, after He comes again. There were many subdivisions during the first period, when God tried man in unwearied patience, to see if good could be got from him. The cross of Christ closed this. Not that God did not know the result; but it was for his glory that man should be thoroughly put to the proof. The rejection of Christ was. In a very real and solemn sense, the world's judgment, its judgment morally, however God may delay the execution of it. Therefore is the believer, the Christian, said not to be of the world, as Christ is not, and is called to go out to meet the Bridegroom in regard to God's dealings with man since the fall, or rather, the flood, there have been three great epochs: first, the period before Christ came, died, and rose; secondly, the present interval; and thirdly, the age, after He comes again. There were many subdivisions during the first period, when God tried man in unwearied patience, to see if good could be got from him. The cross of Christ closed this. Not that God did not know the result; but it was for his glory that man should be thoroughly put to the proof. The rejection of Christ was. In a very real and solemn sense, the world's judgment, its judgment morally, however God may delay the execution of it. Therefore is the believer, the Christian, said not to be of the world, as Christ is not, and is called to go out to meet the bridegroom.

Chapter 75

Fragment: God's Nature: Holiness and Love

There are two great principles in God's nature—holiness and love. One is the necessity of that nature, imperative in all that approach Him; the other in its energy. God is holy: God is—not loving—but, love. We make Him a judge by sin, for He is holy and has authority; but He is love, and none, has made Him such. If there be love anywhere else, it is of God; for God is love. This is the blessed, active energy of His being. In the exercise of this, He gathers to Himself, for the eternal blessedness of those who are gathered. Its display is in Christ, and Christ Himself is its great power and center. His counsels as to this are the glory of his grace: His applying them to sinners, and the means He employs for it, are the riches of His grace.

He who is goodness and light can dispel evil and darkness, according to the perfectness of divine wisdom, by the display of Himself, in such sort that no one but must see they are opposite to what He does display, if the mind has them before it; yet he who enjoys the goodness and light has no need to turn to their opposites to know light is light and goodness good.

Chapter 76

Scripture Query and Answer: Grace for Grace?

Q. Jer. 31:22. an inquirer asks what is the real meaning. Is there any ground to apply it, with some Jews and many Christians, to the incarnation?

A. I do not see either analogy in other occurrences of the phrase, or anything in the expression itself, or scope of the context, to give such a turn to the passage. The point is the marvelous change God will effect in the virgin daughters of Israel after all her backslidings and when reduced to the lowest ebb of weakness. A woman shall compass a man—a male or man of might. It is a most emphatic figure to set forth the strength which shall be made perfect in weakness as regards the Jews in the latter day. The ancient versions give little help, especially the Septuagint and Arabic, which are singularly far from any just sense. The Syriac and Vulgate agree with the Authorized Version, which is quite correct. It is a question of interpretation, not of the rendering.

W.J.E.

Chapter 77

Grace Upon Grace: Correction

Dear Mr. Editor, As to John 1:16, I think you will find that αντι thus used, signifies accumulation—one thing on another. For one blow another comes. Hence, it must be translated, grace upon grace. You may see passages cited in Kuinoel and Bengel on the passages. Calamities on calamities. Αντ' ανι■ν ανιαι (Theog. v. 344.) ■τεραν ανθ' ετ■ρας φροντιδα.. ChryS. de Sac.

Further, in denying the Lord that bought them, the simple answer is, there is no reference to redemption at all. The ordinary word for redemption is απολντρωσις. The price for it is called αντ■λυτρον, applied to (περι) all, But απολυτρ■σις is not. Redemption from under a given state is expressed by εξαγοραζω in Gal. 3:13; 4:5—deliverance from under the law. The only two other passages are in Ephesians and Colossians—redeeming the time, rescuing an opportunity [καιρ■ν) which offers, so as to profit by it for good—not making a good use of all time, as usually supposed. (Comp. Dan. 2:8.) I do not believe that αγοραζω has ever the sense by itself of "redeem." It is simply to buy. I know it is so translated in two or three passages, as Rev. 5 and 14.; but it is simply "bought."

The passage in Peter, I am persuaded, refers to the idea of a slave bought in a market—the contrary of redeemed from a state of slavery: and who, though his δεσπ■της—not κυριος, the Lord—has this right over him will not own it. You may remark, that in the passage of Jude treating the same subject, δεσπ■της is applied to God also. They deny the only δεσπ■τη θεον. The question of redemption out of a previous state does not enter into either passage; but the denial of a divinely inherent or acquired title over them. The strongest expression connected with this, and referring to all, is that which I have quoted—αντιλυτρον περ■ π■ντων—a ransom for all. Nor can the well-instructed saint desire to weaken it. Christ has a title by His dying gift of Himself, not merely by creation, over all flesh. If rejected, He is rejected as the accomplisher of a redemption work, the guilt of the rejection of which lies in all who hear of it. And he has an absolute title by it over all flesh; giving, in virtue of it, eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. But απολυτρωσις—actual redemption—is never referred to all. But I comment as well as criticize. Λυτρον, to redeem as well as λυτρον, a ransom, or λ■τρωσα, redemption, bear out the general statement above.

Hosea

Hosea prophesied in the prospect of the breaking up of the kingdom of the ten tribes, and near the end of the house of Jehu. He is full of the thought of the ruin that was at hand; but he anticipates scenes of restoration and glory beyond it. As I may express it, the death and resurrection of Israel is contemplated by him, and announced under different figures, in a very abrupt and vivid style.

At the opening of the book, the prophet is directed by the Lord to take to him a wife and children. And he might say of them, as Isaiah did of his two sons, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders.”

The first child is “Jezreel” —the sign of the doom, both of the house of Jehu, and of the house of Israel. The second child is “Lo-Ruhamah” —the sign that God would withdraw His mercy from the house of Israel. The third is “Lo-ammi” —the sign that He would disclaim Israel, so that they should be no more His people. But all this is followed by a promise of final re-gathering, called “the day of Jezreel,” when the very same nation, now cast off, should be restored. The strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, pass by to do their appointed service; but the still, small voice closes the history.

The second chapter then gives us a more expanded view of this guilt and misery of Israel, and of their final blessedness. The beautiful description of the covenant made by the Lord for Israel, as between them and the beasts of the earth, after he has taken them into covenant with himself, and the sight we get of the Lord at one end of a magnificent system of blessing and Israel at the other, after wilderness days, are exquisite indeed. “The valley of Achor” is also declared to be a “door of hope” —that is, judgment ending in victory or glory, tribulation in joy. (Josh. 7) All these things bespeak the death and resurrection of the nation.

Then, in chap. 3, the prophet is directed to take a second wife. These marriages are emblematic actions, reminding us of many things in Ezekiel, of Jeremiah going to the Euphrates to hide his girdle there, and of Agabus in the Acts of the Apostles, taking Paul's girdle and binding his own hands with it. All these were actions emblematically or typically fitted to give intimation of coming events.

The instruction of the prophet's first marriage is about the casting off of Israel as a nation, and their return to blessedness in the last days. The instruction conveyed to us by his second marriage is about the political and religious history of the people; and this may well strike us as marvelous; for with our eyes we see this anticipation of the prophet verified and exhibited to the very life. They are, at this moment, without a king, without a sacrifice, without teraphim. They have no political standing, and they are neither a sanctified nor an idolatrous people. They are not in the knowledge and worship of God, nor in the service of idols, as their fathers were. Our own eyes do indeed see all this. But they are to revive politically and religiously. As the prophet goes on to tell us: “They shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” Surely this is again their present death and coming resurrection.

Then, after these first three chapters, we get, in the great body of the prophecy, details of the sins which had provoked this judgment. “There is a sin unto death,” as we read in John. Israel as a nation, I may say, committed it. All the prophets, I may also say, tell us this. “This iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die,” says Isaiah to them. But Ezekiel's valley of dry bones is the leading and the best-known scripture on this mystery. And the Divine Prophet Himself talks to the Jews of His day of the Lord God miserably destroying them as the wicked husbandmen; and says also to them, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” And surely it is a death-stricken land and people we see in them and their country at this moment. Surely it all tells us, “There is a sin unto death.” They are as a nation in Ezekiel's valley, or in Hosea's graveyard.

But this death shall be triumphed over. The nation of the Jews shall have a resurrection. And then, as the saints shall have a resurrection. And then, as the saints in their glories shall fill and adorn the heavens, so Israel shall blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. “What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?”

In spirit, as well as in circumstances, there shall be revival, moral as well as national recovery, conversion as well as restoration. Hosea's last chapter lets us see this, and all the prophets. Micah, whom we were considering in the Treasury for February last, gives us this subject in a very vivid way, delineating the exercises of the soul very strikingly in his last two chapters, Very various and broken are the notices which our prophet gives us of those iniquities which were leading the people to their graves, or to the judgment of death.

The land was to mourn—the people were to languish. The Lord would be to Ephraim as a moth, to the house of Judah as a worm; as the fowls of the heaven He would bring them down. They should be swallowed up; Memphis was to bury them: their children should be brought forth to the murderer: they should use the words prepared for the day of utter excision, “mountains cover us, hills fall on us.”

Such words are used, such descriptions are given of them. But they were to revive, and of this we get abrupt witness also. The Lord was God and not man, and His heart would turn within Him—His repentings should be kindled; there should be no full and final destruction. Resurrection, as in the third day, (a glance at the resurrection of the Lord of Israel Himself) is spoken of. The coming out from Egypt also, as a renewal of their history, as though they were beginning afresh, under the hand and grace of God, and Jacob's history, are likewise referred to, with the same intent. Birth from the womb, and resurrection from the grave, are also called forth to set forth, as in figures, the same story of this people. And, again, the blighting force of the east wind, and then afterward the bloom and beauty of spring, tell us of the doom and the revival of the nation.

Such passages throughout the book give it its character. I read it as that which, under the Spirit of God, keeps the judgment and redemption, the death and resurrection, of Israel as a nation, constantly in view. The language of resurrection itself is so employed in chap. xiii., that the apostle can use it, when he is making literal resurrection his subject, in 1 Cor. 15 Here, however, it is the recovery of the nation. And standing, as Hosea was, in the full prospect of the Assyrian captivity, and in the near approach of the doom of the house of Jehu, it was natural and easy, so to speak, that the Spirit should lead him to see and speak of the death-stricken state of Israel as just about to begin.

Principally, again I say, we have a detail of those iniquities which were making such a process, judgment unto death, necessary. But I welcome and fully admit the instructions of another, that, in a passing way, we get a large view of truth in this book of Hosea.

In addition to the present casting-off of the Jews, and their future restoration, which, as we see, constitutes the great subject, we get the grafting of the Gentile on the Jewish root, intimated in chap. 1:10, used to that end by the apostle in Rom. 9:26. So the idea, the scriptural idea, of a remnant in Israel is conveyed in the “Ammi” and “Ruhamah” of chap. 2:1, and thus we do get notices of other points of truth beyond the leading ones. And, further still, as he has said again upon this prophecy, “nothing can be finer than the intermingling of the moral necessity for judgment, the just indignation of God at such sin, pleadings to induce Israel to forsake their evil way and seek the Lord, God's recurrence to the eternal counsels of His own grace, and, at the same time, the touching remembrance of former relationship with His beloved people; there is nothing more affecting than this mixture on God's part of reproaches, of loving-kindness, of appeal, of reference to happier moments, that touching mixture of affection and of judgment, which we find again and again in this prophet.

In this way, we get variety of matter in Hosea, while, again, I say, the death and resurrection of the nation of Israel constitutes the great theme.

The closing verse draws the moral. It tells us where wisdom, true and divine wisdom, wisdom in which the soul is concerned, and concerned for eternity, is to be found. And surely it is in this mystery of death and resurrection, judgment and redemption, sin and salvation, the mystery, as I may say, of Adam and of Christ, that the grand moral of the story of this ruined world of ours lies.

All that is to be brought back to God, all that is to stand in Christ, or under Christ, is to be in resurrection-character, in redemption from the judgment of death; and the Jew as well as everything else, the nation of Israel in the latter day, as Hosea, and the prophet and the apostle of the Gentiles himself teach us.

We might formally close with this reflection on the closing verse of our prophet, but I must add another word.

Redemption leads to relationship. This is God's way. He only satisfies His own nature by this. “God is love.” Whom He redeems, He adopts. fie puts His ransomed ones into relationship to Himself. It was thus among the patriarchs. Isaac followed Abraham. It was thus in Israel. God speaks to Israel and of Israel, as betrothed and adopted. I might refer to Isa. 54., Jer. 3, Ezek. 16, Zeph. 3, and a multitude of other scriptures, in proof of this. It is thus with us. We read this largely in the New Testament. Redemption from the curse of the law is followed by redemption from the bondage of it. In other words, the blessing of justification is waited on or followed by the Spirit of adoption. (Gal. 3; 4)

And among the scriptures which show us that the nation of Israel is to be in relationship as well as in redemption, Hosea may be very principally cited. For here, in the second chapter, the Lord, anticipating His people in the coming days of the kingdom, says to them by His prophet, “And it shall be at that day, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali.” Wonderful and precious! Restored and quickened Israel shall have communion with their Lord in the grace and freedom of conscious relationship of the dearest, nearest character? For thus again speaks the

Lord by Jeremiah, “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; I will surely have mercy upon him.” (31:20.)

It is enough. Redemption leads to relationship, and so to glory; and in coming days, the heavens and the earth shall witness it, in its various, and excellent, and wondrous exhibition.

Chapter 79

Joel

THE age of this prophet is not given to us. From this, we might say, it matters not when he flourished: but we may say the same also from the character of his prophecy. And thus the silence of the Spirit on that point is more than accounted for: it is justified.

He delivered the word of the Lord in some day of sore national calamity, when either again and again the adversary came in to waste and destroy, or year after year famine was in the land by reason of plagues upon it.

But through this present calamity, the great closing calamities of Israel are seen, as by the far-seeing eye of Him who knows the end from the beginning, and in the grace of Him who would fain sound an alarm in the ears of the people, that they may prepare themselves for a day of visitation.

Nothing is more common than this in the prophets. They treat the present moment as the pledge of a future. Indeed, the Lord does the same-taking up, I may say, this style of the prophets in Luke 13.; where, in the day of Pilot's cruelty to the Galileans, and of the fall of the tower in Siloam, He says to the generation, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

In Joel's day, the vine and the fig, the corn and the wine and the oil, palm-tree, pomegranate, and apple tree, all are withered; and the priests and ministers are summoned to weep, and a solemn fast is proclaimed, that the elders and all the people may gather themselves. The services of God's house are suspended, the meat-offering and the drink-offering are withheld, and the joy and gladness that belonged to the house is no more. The seed is rotten in the field, and the garners at home are empty. Herds and flocks share the misery of the times. The prophet himself begins to cry to God under this sore sorrow. He leads the way, as it were, in the humiliation and confessions which suit such a moment in the people's history.

In the second chapter, we have again a detail of national miseries, but with a near approach to that great, final, judicial day, which is to close, in righteous, wrathful visitation, the story of Israel in apostasy. The call to repentance is repeated with the hope of a turning of God's anger away. And however suitable to the calamity of that day these calls of the prophet may have been, we know that there will be this spirit of humbling and confession in the coming days of, his nation, and on the eve of their deliverance. A spirit of grace is then to be poured out, and every one is to mourn apart. The punishment of the people's sin is then to be accepted. If the trumpet have blown “an alarm,” to tell of the enemy at hand, it will be blown, but not as an alarm, to call the people in assembly to the mourning. So that in this feature of the prophet's day, we may trace again the moral circumstances of the closing day. Calamity comes as the judgment of the Lord in righteousness; repentance comes as the fruit of the Spirit in grace. And then, as the fruit of this repentance, the whole system in Israel is revivified; all fruitfulness is pledged to the land now wasted; times of refreshing and the restitution of all things are anticipated; and “my people,” says the Lord again and again, “shall never be ashamed.” The gift of the Spirit is promised, and the

times of “the day of the Lord” are seen to end in the destruction of the enemies, and the deliverance of the Israel of God. In all this we have Matt. 24. and Acts 2. combined: the one giving us a sample of the promised gift; the other detailing the terrors of that day which is to make an end of the confederated enemies of Israel, to deliver God's remnant who have called on the name of the Lord, and to bring in the elect for whose sake those days of terror are to be shortened.

Indeed, all the great characteristics of this coming day are clustered here. The pouring out of the Spirit—the deliverance of the elect brought to call on the name of the Lord the judgment of the apostate nation by the hand of their great enemy, as in “the great tribulation” —the destruction of that enemy, the confederated Gentiles, by the Lord Himself, when sun, moon, and stars shall be disturbed—the peaceful reign and glory of the King in Zion, following all this; these things are together here, as we find them scattered through all the prophets. I say, we see them here clustered together. We may not be competent to settle them in their order, or to put them in the presence of each other, and in their relations, as they will, by and by, be the living materials of the scene around; yet do they contain rich principles of truth, which we can be edified in knowing, and in which we can justify the ways of that wisdom that has ordered them, which is now revealing them, and will in due season accomplish them.

Here I must turn aside for a moment, and observe that the gift of the Spirit in the day of Acts 2., according to this prophecy, was not followed by those judgments on which the darkened sun and moon and the falling stars are thus solemnly to wait and to give witness. Such was not the history in the Acts after the gift of the Spirit there. Why Israel was not then obedient. These judgments will be in favor of Israel. They will light upon the head of the oppressor, and close the day of Israel's tribulation. But they did not follow the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2., as they are spoken of in Joel 2., and again I say, because Israel was not then repentant and obedient.” “If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be established” is a standing oracle in the case of the nations. (Isa. 7:9.) And being then unbelieving, refusing (even to the slaying of Stephen) the testimony of the then given Spirit, the nation was not delivered nor established.

The Spirit, therefore, given at that Pentecost, led on in a very different direction. He became the baptizer of an elect people, Jewish or Gentile, into a body destined to heaven, and to be the bride of the Lamb in the day of the glory, when again the Spirit will be given. The remnant in Israel, who, under that gift, will be so left in faith, repentance, and obedience, as to let the full amount of this prophecy of Joel spent itself in the behalf of the nations.

But I must say a little more on Joel 2. and Acts 2.

In what a profound and interesting manner the Spirit is an apostle fills out the word of the Spirit in a prophet! Many an instance of this might be given, as we generally know. But I am now looking only at Peter's commentary on Joel: that is, at Peter's word in Acts 2. on Joel's word in chapter 2.

Joel tells us of the Spirit, the river of God, as we will call it. He traces it, in its course or current, though the sons and daughters, the old men and young men, the servants and handmaids, of Israel; he speaks of it in its rich and abundant flowing, and the fruitfulness it imparts.

Peter admits all this. In the day of Pentecost, as he was preaching at Jerusalem, he looks at that same river of God, charmed, as it were, at the wealth and fruitfulness of it, as it was, at that moment, under his eye, taking its course through God's assembly. But then, he does more than

this, and more than Joel had done. He traces this river backward and forward—backward to its source and forward to its mouth.

He traces it to its source, and does so very carefully. This occupies him in his discourse on this great occasion. He tells us of Jesus—ministering, crucified, risen, and ascended; how He had served in grace and power here on earth; how men with wicked bands had crucified Him; how God had raised Him from the dead; and how He was now exalted at the right hand of God in the heavens. These things he proves diligently and carefully from Scripture. And then, having thus followed the Lord Jesus through life and death, and His resurrection up to heaven, there, in Him—the ascended and glorified Man—he discovers the source of this mighty river.

He traces it, likewise, onward to the end or issue of its course. He tells us, that it is to reach to the children of that generation, and also to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord shall call.

What a commentary by an apostle on a prophet is this! What enlargement of heart and understanding in the ways of God is given to us by it! In what an affecting, and yet in what a wondrous and glorious way, is Jesus brought in as having connection with the river of God! He becomes the source of it as soon as He, who had once been the serving, crucified, rejected One, became the ascended One.

And now we reach the third chapter. The Lord comes with a recompence. Other scriptures speak of this, and tell of the Lord's recompence of the controversy of Zion—the recompence, too, of His temple. But the same idea fills the mind on reading this chapter. Now, as the end is contemplated, things are changed. The last are first. The captive is the spoiler. Israel is the head, and not the tail, as was pledged in the patriarchal age of the nation, when Abraham was sought by the Gentile, and he, in the presence of the King of Gerar, the chief man of the earth in that day, prepared the sacrifice, made the covenant, and gave the gifts. (Gen. 21.)

God has taken the whole of the interests of His people upon Himself. He is summoning the hosts of the nations to the battle, as once He did the host of Sisera, captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitudes, to the river Bishop, (Judg. 4) to meet their doom. The plowshare must become a sword, the pruning-hook a spear, until the Gentiles, in the height of their pride, and in the strength of their resources, like Egypt at the Red Sea, meet the day of the Lord—the judgment of God in the valley of Jehoshaphat, at the hand of His descending mighty ones. And the sun and the moon and the stars shall then be in darkness—not in the light, for which they were formed, and by which they were filled; and the heavens and the earth shall then be shaken, instead of pursuing their even, steady, staid course, in which they had been making their rounds for thousands of years: and all this to witness the terrors of that day.

For the end is come. Judgment is to clear the scene, and then glory to fill it. The Lord is to dwell in Zion, and Judah and Jerusalem to be at rest and in safety. The days of Solomon the peaceful are to be realized in their millennial fullness, and the earth itself be a quiet habitation.

Chapter 80

Obadiah

The spirit in the prophets constantly looks beyond Israel and Judah, taking notice of the nations of the Gentiles. “An ambassador,” as Obadiah speaks “is sent among the heathen,” how and again. Thus, Nahum was sent to Nineveh, and now Obadiah is sent to Edom.

But from the very beginning, the Lord had a word or controversy with Edom, as by his prophet He now has. “I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.” Esau was a profane one. He sold his interest in the Lord for a mess of pottage. He was “a man of the field” and “a cunning hunter.” He prospered in his generation. He loved the field, and be knew how to use it. He set his heart on the present life, and knew well how to turn its capabilities to the account of his enjoyments.

His history was destined to be a very singular one. It was also to prove, again and again, the occasion of sorrow to God's people, though it will be found that Israel had entailed this sorrow on themselves.

“The elder shall serve the younger” was the word of God in favor of Jacob, ere the children were born. But Jacob did not wait in patience of faith, till the Lord in His own tune and way made His promise good. The promise, therefore, gets laden with reserves, and difficulties, and hurdler's. It shall assuredly be made good in the end; but by reason of this way of Jacob, his unbelief and policy, the elder shall give the younger much trouble.

Accordingly, Esau got a promise from the Lord, through his father Isaac, to this effect, “Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, raid of the dew of heaven from above, and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.” (Gen. 27.)

All this comes to pass. David, who came of Jacob, set garrisons in Edom, and the Edomites became his servants and brought gifts. But Jehoram, who also came of Jacob, afterward loses the Edomites as his servants and tributaries. They revolted under his reign, and continue so to this day. (2 Sam. 8:14, 2 Chron. 21:8.)

But still, “the elder shall serve the younger.” This promise is yea and amen. Amos is a witness of this to us, when he says, Israel shall possess Edom. (Chap. 9) And our prophet, Obadiah, is another witness of the same, telling us that by and by saviors shall come to Zion, and judge the mount of Esau. (See ver. 21.) in early days the Lord gave mount Seir to Esau for a possession; and what he gave him He would preserve to him; and accordingly, His would not let Israel, as they passed along the borders of the land of Edom, in their wilderness-journey, to touch with hostile hand a village or a rood of it. But long after all this, not only after the wilderness-journey of the children of Jacob, but after the times of David and of Jehoram, Edom made fresh trouble for himself, as we read in this prophet. He made merry in the day of Jacob's captivity. He looked on his brother with congratulation and malice,” “in the day that he became a stranger.” He rejoiced in the fall of Jerusalem under the sword of the Chaldean. Even Moab might have been a

dwelling-place for the captives of Zion; (Isa. 16:4;) but Edom stood in the way to cut them off.

The Lord needs no more. He has a word for Edom because of this, and He utters it. through Obadiah. For God's controversy with the Gentiles is this, that in the day when He was angry with His people, they had help forward the affliction. This we read in Zech. 1:15. How much more, then, may we expect to find Him angry with Edom, Jacob's brother, for looking on him in the day of his calamity And the Lord of hosts is jealous for Jerusalem with great jealously. Because Zion is His set on earth; He has linked His name with Israel. “Israel is the lot of His inheritance.” He is “the God of Israel.” Despite of that people is, therefore, contempt of His glory and defiance of His power. Accordingly, Babylon and Edom may well be put together, as they are in Psa. 138 Edom rejoiced in the ruin which Babylon wrought. Nimrod and Esau may be tracked in the same field, hunters before the Lord; the one the bold defier of the God of judgment, the other the profane despiser of the God of blessing. Babylon is never restored, neither is Edom. The judgment of the millstone awaits the one, perpetual desolations the other. (Jer. 51; Ezek. 35.) Nimrod of the lions of Ham, and the circumcised Esau, who comes even of Abraham according to the flesh, may he together as in the same pit.

Surely we may say again that this laying of hands upon Israel, this despite and hatred of Zion, whether by the Assyrian, by Babylon, by Edom, or any other, is a bold act, bespeaking contempt and defiance of God Himself because God was with Israel. As Ezekiel expresses it, “God was there.” (See 35:10). And this fact the enemies of Israel ought to have felt. Even had they been employed as the Lord's rod upon His people, they should have executed their commission under the sense of what Israel was or had been; just in the spirit of the mariners and ship-master, when they were casting Jonah into the sea. But this was not so. The Assyrian had once said, “Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?” The Chaldean had “brought the vessels of the house of God into the treasure-house of his god.” And now the Edomite “entered into the gate of God's people in the day of their calamity.” And surely all this was after the pattern of apostate Egypt in the first days, who said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?”

Thus it has been, and thus will it be, as the judgment of the Son of man in the day of His throne of glory lets us learn: “inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.” (Matt. 25.)

All the prophets who have spoken of Edom have given that people the same character, and have found in them the same causes of God's controversy with them. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and the Psalmist have a kindred burthen for Edom. Profaneness or infidel suffering, pride, hatred of Israel these are Edom's common marks, the posts upon Esau. Hatred of Israel is noticed in the history, as well as by the prophets. (See 2 Chron. 28:17.) The world was Esau's portion, while Israel was still a stranger and a pilgrim. His children had their dukedoms, were kings also, and had their cities; were settled, as in the clefts of the rocks, where eagles made their nests; and all this while Jacob's children were still but houseless wanderers in lands that were not theirs, or in wasted deserts.

According to all the moral account given of them, the Edomites are called the people of God's curse, (Isa. 34,) and “the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever:” (Mal. 1) and, addressing Himself to the land of Edom, the Lord says, “When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will

make thee desolate.” (Ezek. 35.)

Amalek, I may observe, came of Esau; and we know what place Amalek fills in the page of Scripture. Agag belonged to Amalek and Haman to Agag: Doeg likewise. He was an Edomite, and so is he called; and a true Edomite, a man of blood he was. And when the Lord arises for the avenging of Israel, for the recompense of the controversy of His people, “the day of the heathen,” as it is called, the land of Edom is presented to us by the prophets as the scene of that solemn action, as the gathering-place of the confederated hostile nations, and where the Lord in judgment meets them. (Isa. 63)

I think we may see, from all Scripture, that God has a special question with this people. Edom was kindred with Israel, a blood-relation, as we speak. Israel had spared Edom in their passage through the wilderness, under the direct command of the Lord. God's claims on Edom, and that too in company with Israel, were peculiar; and He seems to be treated as the servant who had earned many stripes, having known his Lord's will, and yet did it not.

But short as Obadiah's word is, it does not close without taking notice of the kingdom that follows the judgment. And this is so with all the prophets. Resurrection follows upon death, the kingdom and its glories succeeds the judgments. Jesus the Lord never speaks of His death alone, but of His resurrection after it. His prophets, who spake by His Spirit, never speak, I may say, of the judgments which are to clean se the earth, without telling of the glory that is to follow. And according to this, here in Obadiah we see, at the end, Zion established and had in admiration; her king, the king of glory, seated in her when Edom has become a desolation. When the mount of Esau is judged, and salvation shall rejoice on mount Zion, and holiness find its sanctuary there.

Chapter 81

Jonah

Our moral corruption is very deep. It is complete. But at times it will betray itself in very repulsive shapes, from which, with all the knowledge of it which we have, we instinctively shrink, confounded at the thought that they belong to us. Privileges under God's own hand may only serve to develop instead of curing this corruption.

The love of distinction was inlaid in us at the very outset of our apostasy. “Ye shall be as God,” was listened to; to this lust, this love of distinction, we will, in cold blood, sacrifice all that may stand in our way, without respect, as it were, to sex or age, as at the beginning we sacrificed the Lord Himself to it. (Gen. 3.)

We take God's gifts, and deck ourselves with them. The church at Corinth was such an one as that, instead of using God's gifts for others, the brethren there were displaying them. But the man who had the mind of Christ, in the midst of them, would say, “I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that others might be edified, than ten thousand words is an unknown tongue.”

The Jew—the favored, privileged Jew—grievously sinned in this way. Rom. 2 convicted him on this ground his separation from the nations was of God; but instead of using this as witness to the holiness of God in the midst of a revolted world's pollutions, he took occasion to exalt himself by it. He boasted in God and in the law; but he dishonored God by breaking the law.

Now, Jonah was of the nation of Israel, and among the prophets of God. He was thus doubly privileged. But the nature is quick in him to take advantage of this, and to serve her own fond ends by this. Yea, and Jonah was a saint of God also; but this alone, under pressure and temptation of the flesh, does not secure victory over nature.

As a prophet, the Lord sends him with a word against Nineveh, a word of judgment. But he knew, when he received it, that in the bosom of Him who was sending him, mercy was rejoicing; and he reckoned, therefore, that His word, which was to speak of judgment, would he set aside by the grace that abounded in Him. (See chap. 4: 2.)

Was he prepared for this? Could he, a Jew, suffer it, that a Gentile city should be favored, and share the mercy and salvation of God? Could he, a prophet, suffer it, that his word would fall to the ground, and that, too, in the presence of the uncircumcised? This was too much. he goes on board a ship bound for Tarsus, instead of crossing the country to Nineveh. But surely, when we look at him under such conditions, we may say, it is a proud apostate, another Adam, that is now in the merchant-ship on the waters at the Mediterranean. He was a transgressor like Adam, a transgressor through pride, like Adam; and, like Adam, he must take the sentence of death into himself.

Simple, sure, and yet solemn, all this!

To accept the punishment of our sin is the first duty of an erring soul. We are not to seek to right ourselves by an effort of our own, when we have gone wrong, lest Hormah (Num. 14) be our

portion. Our first duty is to accept, in the spirit of confession, the punishment of our sin, to be humbled under the mighty or chastening hand of God. (Lev. 26:41.) David did this, and the kingdom was his again. Jonah now does the same. “Take me up and cast me into the sea,” said he to the mariners, in the midst of the tempest, “so shall the sea be calm unto you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.” And they did so, but with a grace that might well shame their betters, which bespeaks the hand of God with them, as it was against Jonah, And Jonah is soon wrapped among the weeds of the sea, down in the bottoms of the mountains there, Could Gentile Nineveh be in a worse plight? Was not Jonah's circumcision as uncircumcision? A Jew and a prophet in the depths of the sea, with the weeds wrapped about his head, because of the displeasure of Jehovah! Surely, such an one in such a state may well cease his boastings, and no longer despise others. Could any one be well lower? Proud Adam was behind the trees of the garden; proud Jonah is in the bottom of the sea.

The Lord by no means clears the guilty. The Judge of the earth does right. But grace brings salvation. And thus very soon, and it will be only Jonah's sin that shall be in the bottom of the sea, Jonah himself being delivered, as his first father, Adam, left his guilt and his covert behind him and returned to the presence of God.

But Jonah was taught as well as delivered. In the belly of the fish he finds out that, Jew as he was, he stood in need of the salvation of God, just as much as any Gentile could need it. Uncircumcised Nineveh had been unclean and despised in his eyes, and he grudged her God's mercy. What would become of himself now, but for that mercy? He was in prison, and he deserved to be there. What could do for him, what reach his condition, but mercy—free, full, and sovereign? “Salvation is of the Lord,” he has to say. It is not in himself as a privileged Jew, or a gifted prophet, that he will now rejoice, but only in Him to whom it belongs to bring salvation.

And then the exulting question arises, “is He the God of the Jew only? nay, but of the Gentile also.” Our need of salvation, our dependence on the sovereignty and grace of God, equalizes us all. “It is one God that shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.” The Jew must come in on the very same mercy that saves the Gentile. (Rom. 11:30, 31.) Jonah must be as Nineveh.

This is the lesson the whale's belly taught Jonah, the Jew. Let Nineveh be what it may, Gentile and uncircumcised, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, or anything else, it could not staled more in need of the salvation of God than the favored Jew and the privileged, gifted prophet at that moment did, being as in hell for his transgression. It was all over with him, but for that. But that he gets, and the fish casts him up on the dry land, when he had learned, and confessed, and declared, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

He was a sign to the Ninevites.

His nation, by and by, will have the like lessen. No sign is now left with them, but that of this prophet; and they will have to find out, as from the belly of hell, or as from under the judgment of God, (where now as a nation they are lying,) that grace and the redemption it works is their only place and their only refuge.

But this salvation of God, in which Jonah is called to rejoice, we know gets all its authority from the mystery of the cross; because One who could do so, for us sinners, went down under the

dominion of death, under the judgment of sin, and of whom in that condition, as in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, Jonah himself in the belly of the fish for the like time, is made the type.

And when we think of this, we may say, Scripture may magnify its office, as the apostle of the Gentiles does his. It has to reveal God and His counsels; and surely it does this in marvelous and fruitful wisdom, delivering forth, as here, pieces of history for our instruction, but at the same time making that history deliver forth samples, and pledges, and foreshadowings of further and richer secrets for our more abundant instruction.

Jonah, as a sign, suits both the Lord Himself, and Israel as a nation, as the Gospels let us know. Israel must go through death and resurrection. Their iniquity is not to be purged till they die. (Isa. 22) All scripture affirms this—the valley of dry bones illustrates it. But they will be as a risen people in the day of the kingdom—all thanks and praise to the death and resurrection of the Son of God for this and every blessing! And Jonah's death and resurrection, as I may again say, applies significantly or typically to the history of his nation, and to the history of his Savior. (See Matt. 12:40; Luke 11:29, 30.)

The story of our prophet is, thus, a fruitful one. True as a narrative, it is significant as a parable; and all of us, the elect of God as well as Israel, may, in our way, take our place with him, as dead and risen, the only character that can be ours as saved sinners.

Returning, however, to the history itself, we may now observe that as one that had been thus taught, taught his need of God's grace, Jonah is sent on a second message to Nineveh. He goes, and with words of judgment on his lips, he enters that great city, that Nimrod-city, the representation, in that day, of the pride and daring of a revolted world. “Within forty days,” he proclaims as a herald, “and Nineveh shall be destroyed.”

Thus he “mourned.” It was his commission. Responsively, Nineveh “lamented.” The king rose from his throne, and all the nation put themselves in sackcloth; and in such condition, as humbled under the hand of God, a king of Nineveh shall find the Lord as a king of Israel had before found Him. “I said,” says David, “I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” “Who can tell,” says this royal Gentile, “if God will turn, and repent, and turn away from his fierce auger, that we perish not?” And so it was. “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.”

“Is he the God of the Jews only,” again I ask with the Apostle? and with him again I answer, “Nay, but of the Gentile also.” Grace is divine. Government may know a people, and order them as such; grace knows sinners just as they are, whoever, wherever. The earth has its arrangements, heaven holds its court in sovereignty. Nineveh, like Jerusalem, is spared; the hand of the destroying angel is stayed over the one city as well as over the other. (1 Chron. 21, Jonah 3.)

But “tell it not in Gath.” Let not the daughters of the Philistines hear of Jonah the Jew in the 4th chapter.

Did Lot go a second time to Sodom? Did Hezekiah, after the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial, sin through pride, with the ambassadors of Babylon? Did Josiah, after his humbling and tenderness, go willfully to the battle against the King of Egypt? Did Peter, in spite of warnings from

his Lord, deny his Lord? have you and I, beloved, forgotten lessons learned, and correctings endured? And is Jonah now to be unmindful of the whale's belly? It is passing wonder; a lesson so sealed, so stamped, so engraven, as we would judge, and yet so quickly lost to the soul!

Jonah is displeased. The mercy shown to Nineveh had made a Gentile important to the God of heaven and earth; and this was too much for the Jew. The word of a prophet had suffered wrong, as pride suggested, at the baud of the God of mercy. Jonah was very angry. He cannot exactly again take ship and go to Tarsus; but, in the spirit of him who lately did so, he goes outside the city, and he says, “O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country; therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil: therefore, now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

What naughtiness of heart all this was! Was he preparing another whale's belly for himself? well deserved it. What troubles we make for ourselves! Why did not Lot remain in the holy, peaceful tent of Abraham? and why did he prepare for himself a first and a second furnace in Sodom? Why did David bring a sword upon his house, which was commissioned of the Lord to hang over it unsheathed, to the day of his death? “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear; but Jonah was deaf. He has forgotten the lesson of the fish's belly, and he must now be put to learn the lesson of the withered gourd.

Outside the city, Jonah prepares a booth for himself, that he may sit under it, in his moody, bad temper, angry as he was with the Lord. The Lord then prepares a gourd to overshadow Jonah in his booth, and Jonah is very glad because of the gourd. But, then, the Lord prepares a worm that eats and withers up the gourd; and, the sun and the east wind beating on the unsheltered head of Jonah, he is very angry, and wishes in himself to die.

The Lord, then, in marvelous gentleness, turns all these simple circumstances into a page of the profoundest and most affecting instruction. “And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madst it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle.”

The prophet's delight in the gourd is but the faint reflection of the Lord's delight in the mercy that visits the creatures of His hand—be they where they may, at Nineveh or Jerusalem, or elsewhere, it matters not. And if Jonah would fain have the gourd spared, he must allow repentant Nineveh to be spared. Out of his own mouth he shall be judged: Jonah shall witness for the Lord against himself.

It is, indeed, a precious and an excellent word. Jonah had been sent down to learn the grace of God in one character of it, and now has he been taught it in another; i.e., his need of it and God's delight in it. The whale's belly, the belly of hell, where he once was, had taught him his own need of “salvation,” in that sovereignty of it, in that magnificent height and depth of it, that could stretch,

as from the throne of power in the highest heavens, down to the bottom of the seas in the lowest, to deliver a captive there under the righteous judgment of God. The withered gourd now teaches him (as all the parables in Luke 15. have also taught us) how the blessed Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Lord of the cattle on the thousand hills, whether in Assyria or Judea, delights in His creatures, the works of His hands, finding his rest and refreshment in the mercy that spares them, when they repent and turn to Him.

Chapter 82

Micah

This prophet is mentioned and quoted in Jer. 26:18. He was called to be one of the Lord's watchmen, much at the same time with Isaiah, and it was a marked time. The history of things in Judah was taking a peculiar character, and things in Israel were ripening for the sickle of the Assyrian. It was a day in importance only second to the day of the Chaldean; but it was second to that, I grant. For the captivity of Israel, or the removal of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, did not involve the house of God as did that of Judah. The glory was still in the land, though Israel had gone away to the river Gozan. But the Chaldean sacked the city of the king, and spoiled the sanctuary of God; and the glory had to depart when Judah became a captive, and Jerusalem a desolation. And as the prophetic spirit was largely poured out in that day of the Chaldean, as in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others, so was it now, as in Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, and others.

2 Kings 17. is an important scripture in connection with Micah. It details the sins of Israel on the ground of which the captivity of the Ten Tribes had come. It gives us an account also of the beginning of that people who, in the New Testament, are called, “Samaritans.” It shows us their origin as a religious sect, holding truth, which the Jew had corrupted by a mixture with the various lies which the heathen conquerors of Israel had brought with them into the land.

As to this little book of Micah we may see it in three parts:

Chaps. 1 - 3. These chapters give us a gloomy burthen over the sins and consequent miseries of Israel and Judah.

Chaps. 4., 5. These chapters anticipate the political or national recovery of the people.

Chaps. 6., 7. These chapters exhibit their experience or moral recovery, Chaps. 1 - 3. The strain begins with anticipations of judgment, specially on Samaria, but not entirely overlooking Jerusalem, and then details the sins which led to this; thus, in prophetic style, telling us what we may have already read in historic style. in that chapter referred to. 2 Kings 17.

Judah had transgressed as well as Israel, and the Assyrian rod, now prepared by the Lord in righteous anger, is raised against Jerusalem as well as Samaria. The day of Ahaz there, had been as the day of Hoshea here. But Hezekiah, who came after Ahaz, did right in the sight of the Lord, and therefore the L rd debated with His rod, and the Assyrian did not prevail over Judah, as he had over Israel.

Such was the condition of things in those days, and Micah spoke as the Lord's watchman.

Princes, priests, prophets, and people, are all severally challenged by him, and all are found guilty and condemned. That land which had been redeemed out of the hand of the Amorites, and been made the clean vessel among the nations, and the Lord's dwelling place, has now acquired for itself another character altogether; and now, if there be any ear to hear, any circumcised heart among the people, they are addressed in these words, concerning this land, “arise, depart, for this

is not your rest, it is polluted." Strange and humbling indeed! How has the fine gold become dim!

Waste and desolation are to follow in the train of pollution. But in the midst of all this, the prophet himself is full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and he talks of judgment in the hearing of the nations. "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field; and Jerusalem shall become heaps upon the mountains of the house of Israel, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."

Chaps. 4, 5. The very first expression of the goodly estate of Zion in the days of the kingdom, here called "the last days," which Micah gives us in these chapters, is that fine one—presented also by Isaiah in his second chapter—i.e., the peoples of the earth, all the world over, coming up to her to learn the ways or statutes of the king of glory then seated there.

This is highly characteristic. Now, in this time of the ministry of grace, the Savior's messengers go forth, carrying glad tidings with them, and beseeching sinners to be reconciled. For love is active in goodness; it busies itself at its own cost about the blessing of others. But royalty and judgment take a different attitude. Judgment enthrones itself, and will be waited upon and listened to. If a king reign in righteousness, the people must be in attendance. His courts must be filled. Ibis will is to be learned and observed; and thus it is here.

But if it be a scepter of righteousness, it shall be also of peace; and a willing, happy world shall witness that a morning has risen without clouds, and that another Solomon, a greater than Solomon, has taken rule in Zion over the whole earth. (2 Sam. 23:3, 4.) The remnant now scattered are brought home; and in Jerusalem the Lord, the Messiah, reigns over them, His natural-born subjects.

The prophet speaks of all this, and then turning to Judah, leaves the Assyrian of his day for the Chaldean of a coming day; and the daughter of Zion is taught to know that she must go to Babylon, ere she can be brought forth in the majesty that it is to be hers in the days of the kingdom. It is in Babylon her pains, her travailing is to end; but the progress of the delivery is noticed; "Thou shalt go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon, and there shalt thou be delivered, there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies." Zion must reach her joy through captivity and come to honor through sore sorrow. As it had been told Abraham of old, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land for centuries, ere they came to their inheritance; so it was—the brick-kilns of Egypt went before the victories of Joshua. And now again, Babylon is as a second Egypt to the children of Zion, ere the first dominion" came to them, ere the palmy days of David and Solomon be restored.

The day of the Chaldean leads the prophet to the day of Israel's confederated enemies at the close. (Jer. 6:10, 11.) This closing visitation will be severe, and the rejection of Christ is brought forward as the occasion and the warrant for this. Judah insulted Messiah when He came to them. The Judge of Israel was smitten on the cheek. (Matt. 27:30.) But the One whom they refused and insulted, shall be their only hope. This is Joseph again, and Moses again. Those whom the nation once refused, are their only strength and expectation in the day of their calamity. And thus, because of Messiah, whom they once insulted, the Assyrian of the last days shall seek to trouble Israel in vain.

The condition of the people under such a Messiah is then detailed. They shall be purified, while their enemies shall be destroyed. The remnant shall now “abide,” because their Messiah in strength and majesty “shall be great unto the ends of the earth.” They shall be also as “dew from the Lord,” and as “a young lion among the flocks,” the occasion of either blessing or judgment to all around them.

And in the midst of all this, Messiah the ruler is presented in various glories, personal and official; and poor Bethlehem, little in Judah, is honored because of him. For as the poor carpenter's wife of Nazareth, His mother, so the poor town of Bethlehem, His birthplace, take honor and blessing because of Him.

This leaves us at the end of chap. 5.

Chaps. 6., 7. The earlier chapters of this prophet have been giving us a view of the Lord's hand with Israel: here we get the way of His, Spirit with them. These two subjects very much occupy all the prophets some way or another. They substitute the political and the moral history of God's people, all the restoration and the conversion of Israel.

The work of the Spirit, in these chapters of Micah, is given to us in the form of a dialog. The exercises of the soul are delineated as in a living person, and the dealings of God in answer are given to us as upon the voice of the Lord Himself; and, therefore, these chapters may remind us of the Psalms, where the pulses of the heart are so constantly felt, and the path of the spirit of a man as led of God is so variously tracked. We get personality here as there.

It is the Lord that opens this dialog. He challenges the ways of His people; and this He does as in the hearing of the mountains and the hills and the foundations of the earth. He refuses not, as it were, to let the whole creation be present when He judges. The Judge of all the earth does right; therefore let. heaven and earth wait as in the courts of His righteousness, and before the throne of His judgments. (See Deut. 32:1.)

This challenge has been heard by a remnant, and they answer it in verses 6, 7. They are awakened to know the sword of the Lord which has now been lifted up. They are alarmed, and would fain find a refuge. Ignorance of God and his ways and truth mark their words. But no matter. It is no longer the sleep or stupidity of the soul: there has been a quickening.

The Lord shortly answers them. He lets the awakened, inquiring ones learn what is “good” and what is “required.” That which is “good” is shown to them. God reveals it, as we know, as belonging to Himself. “There is none good but one, that is God.” The gospel reveals this in its fullness. That which is “required,” or demanded, is nothing of man's cattle for offerings; it is not rivers of oil, or the fruit of his body: it is that only which is morally fitting, that we should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. (Ver. 8.)

This is perfect in its place. But having thus shortly answered the remnant, (the “man,” as he is here called, the one that had ears to hear in the midst of the reprobate nation,) the Lord goes on with His challenges of the nation, detailing still further, and with awful disclosures, the ways and iniquities of Israel. For His voice was to the city, though he will surely hear and answer the cry of His remnant, who have heard His rod and Him that path appointed it. (Ver. 9-46.)

The quickened ones then, at once, take up the word, and seal the judgment which had been just pronounced, owning that things were indeed as bad as they could be, that few were left to form a goodly seed in the midst of the people, and that the nearest and the dearest relationships were violated. But they avoid where they had not found their refuge and relief, even in God, Himself, so that they could challenge all that might oppose them. And yet, with all this happy, holy boldness in the presence of their enemies, they humble themselves under the Lord's hand, knowing and owning that, as of a sinning, unclean people, they had no answer for him. (Chap. 7:1-10.)

To this the Lord again replies, and it is beautiful. If the godly had just set their seal to the righteousness of His judgments, He now, in His way, sets His seal to their expectations, and talks to them of the day when their captivity should be turned—when they should be re-established in their own land and city, and the purposes of their adversaries be all frustrated, and when they should be sought by the nations around them, after their penal righteous desolations. (Ver. 11-13.)

Again the remnant take up the word. Being encouraged, they seek for a restoration of those days, when all the tribes were at home in their inheritance, even in the distant eastern places of Bashan and Gilead. (Ver. 14.)

The Lord, in answering, exceeds this desire; for grace, I may surely say, abounds over faith, as well as over sin. Sin does not exhaust it—faith does not measure it. The Lord here pledges that the day of the Exodus shall be renewed, and that His Israel shall again enjoy strange and magnificent displays of His power in their behalf, as once they did, when He brought them forth from the land of Egypt. (Ver. 15-17.)

These gracious words, however, the remnant interrupt, insisting (as it were, when they had listened to the story of these mercies) on giving all the glory to God, and that the secret of their deliverance lay in the fear of Him, which their enemies were then to know. This interruption is seen in the last clause of verse 17.

But then, having thus taken the words to themselves, ascribing the honor of these great, final, delivering mercies to the Lord alone, they continue in that strain; and in fervency of spirit utter the praises of His grace and faithfulness. (Ver. 18-20.)

Chapter 83

Nahum

THE Ninevite was the first great man of the earth in the age of the kingdom, as I may speak; as Nimrod, the ancestor, as to territory, of the Ninevite, had been the great man of the earth in the earlier age of the fathers. Nimrod had affected dominion and empire then, when as yet things were in simpler, and primitive condition. Now that kingdoms have been formed, and nations rather than families overspread the earth, the king of Nineveh, in Nimrod—pride and worldliness, affects dominion and empire in the midst of them.

He is not one of the great imperial powers that are looked at in Daniel. He is neither the head of gold, nor the breast of silver, nor the thighs of brass, nor the legs of iron. Such an image had not begun to be formed in the day of Nineveh, when the king of Assyria was supreme in the world. But among the kingdoms which were then formed, in days preceding the day of the Chaldean head of gold, he was eminent. Asshur had carried away captive many of them. Amalek was then gone from the scene, and the Kenites had been wasted until their full removal was accomplished by the Assyrians (Num. 24:20- 22.) And further, the Assyrians had insulted and reduced that people whom the Lord God of heaven and earth had chosen as the lot of His inheritance, and formed for Himself.

The Lord, in that action, had used him as a rod upon His disobedient, rebellious Israel; but “he meant not so.” He purposed “to prey the prey, and to spoil the spoil.” Pride gives him his only language: “Are not my princes altogether kings,” he says— “as my hand hath formed the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel those of Jerusalem and of Samaria, shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?” (Isa. 10) The Lord God was angry. He pronounces a burthen upon him, and Nahum delivers it. “The Lord is a jealous God and a revenger.”

The ministry of Jonah, as well as of Nahum, had respect to Nineveh. We have considered that already in the Bible Treasury for September last. Jonah preceded Nahum, it may be, about 120 years. Under the word of Jonah, Nineveh had repented; but the word which now follows by Nahum is a notice of judgment, final judgment, judgment that is to make an utter end. “Affliction,” says the prophet, “shall not rise up the second time.”

What are we to say then, of Nineveh's repentance in the day of Jonah? Was it, as the morning cloud, or early dew, a goodness that passed away? It may have been such. Or, it may have been reformation, and a genuine work like that in another Gentile world, the Christendom of this present age. It worked its fruit, and had its blessing at the time, and it would seem, left its witness behind it, even in this distant day of Nahum (see 1:7). There may have been a remnant in Nineveh: I say not otherwise. But at the most it was but a blessing in the cluster. “My leanness, my leanness,” Nineveh surely had to say. The repentance in the day of Jonah, like the Reformation in Christendom, secured nothing—it did not prepare Nineveh for glory, or for a place in the kingdom of God. Whatever may have been the moral fruit of it in a remnant in this distant day of Nahum, Nineveh as a city or kingdom, had returned, like a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the

mire and ripened herself for the cutting off of the land.

This is a figure for us to study, a voice for us to hear, What did Jehoshaphat-days, or Hezekiah-days, or Josiah-days, for Jerusalem? Did judgment after such days enter by the hand of the Chaldean, though they were very fair and promising? We know it did. Did Nineveh want the day of the Lord, though once upon a time the king there descended from his throne and sat in ashes, and man and beast were clothed in sackcloth, and neither did eat nor drink? Yes, we know this also. And I may ask again, What has Reformation done for Christendom? Coming judgments, and not the Reformation, or progress, or education for the million, will prepare the world for the glory and kingdom of the Lord. But further. The earlier history of God's dealings with Nineveh by the hand of Jonah may, in this day of judgment announced by Nahum, witness to us that He is “slow to anger” —for He sent a preacher then to warn, and turn them to that repentance which He received, and spared them. But He that is slow to anger, does not “acquit the wicked” (see ch. 1:3). There is a separating between the precious and the vile. “He knows them that trust in Him,” even the remnant in Nineveh if there be such, as we said before (chap. 1: 7); but the Judge of all the earth, like the Judge of Sodom who stood of old before Abraham, “will do right.”

“I doubt not,” says another, “that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. And this is another instance of that which we so frequently observe in the prophets—a partial judgment serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested.” Surely the Assyrian is a mystic or representative person, as well as a real individual. Isaiah so looks at him. And this was easy and natural; for the Assyrian began the captivities of God's people, and in his day represented the enmity of the earth, the enmity of the Gentile world, to God and His people. The Spirit, therefore, in the prophets, sees the Gentile in him, and looks along the vista which then opened, to the very end of the earth's history under the Gentile or the man of the world, when the full measured and ripened iniquity of man shall call forth the closing, clearing judgments of God.

But does judgment close the story? That never has been, nor could it be. It only makes way for the purpose of God. The judgment of “this present evil world” will introduce the millennium or “the world to come.” And Israel will be received as the seal and pledge of that bright and happy age—as our prophet says, “though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more; and now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds asunder. O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows, for the wicked shall no more pass through thee, he is utterly cut off” (see ch. 1: 12-15). Or, in the words of one of ourselves, the saints of God in this day, “the vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer.”

Come, Lord Jesus! Do not present doings of the Spirit show a rapid gathering in of the elect unto the hastening of that hour?

Chapter 84

Habakkuk

WE must begin with God, as sinners, on the principle of faith, and go on with Him to the end, as saints, on the same principle. “The just shall live by faith.” (See Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38; taken from Hab. 2:4.)

This prophecy of Habakkuk has great moral value for us. But besides this, it is seasonable now; for in this our day, things are ripening to a crisis, as they were in the day of Habakkuk.

His was a day when the iniquities of the professing people of God were moving the holy anger and sorrow of this man of God. And yet, while his soul was thus vexed with their evil conversation, his heart would feel for their misery, and he would earnestly make their cause his own.

I would listen to him a little carefully for a few minutes, and observe upon his words as they show themselves to us in their natural parts and order.

Chap. 1: 1-4. In these opening verses, as I noticed already, the prophet's righteous soul is vexed with the evil conversation of his nation. He presents the sad, reprobate scene that was lying under his eye to the notice of the Lord. He cries out of violence, and grievance, and spoiling, and strife, and such like iniquity, found, as it was, in the very midst of God's people.

Vers. 5-11. In His answer to this cry of His servant, the Lord seems, at the first, to vindicate and to join with it. He enters into the resentment of the moral state of Israel, which Habakkuk was so deeply feeling. He challenges His people as “heathen” —for such they would prove themselves to be, by not believing the work that He Himself was purposing to work among them. He counts their circumcision as uncircumcision. The apostle, quoting this word from our prophet, calls them “despisers.” (Acts 13:41.) The Lord, therefore, thus, at the first, follows the story of Israel's iniquities, which the prophet had been rehearsing; and anticipates their great crowning, closing iniquity—the rejection of His word and work through unbelief.

But having done this, He lets the prophet know, that this iniquity which had been vexing his soul, and against which he had been crying to Him, should not go unpunished, for that the Chaldean sword should soon enter the land to avenge the quarrel of His holiness.

Vers. 12-17. Hearing this, Habakkuk is terribly alarmed. Like Moses, in such a case, he cannot be prepared for this; nor can his heart, that so cared for his people, welcome the Chaldean, however his soul may be angry with their evil ways.

In the deepest strain of fear and of feeling, and in the skilfulness of an advocate whose affections were making him eloquent, he pleads against the Chaldean, assured that the Lord would not give over His own people, however guilty they might be, to the reckless wrath of those who were still more wicked than themselves. Moreover, he seeks that this terrible scourge may, in the Lord's grace, be only for correction, and not for destruction, to Israel.

All this is a sweet state of soul in our prophet. Habakkuk, perhaps, is more of a Jeremiah than any of the prophets. He lives more personally in the scenes he was describing than is common. He feels everything—and so did Jeremiah. They lived the prophet, and not merely spoke as such.

Chap. 2: 1. And having thus unburthened his heart and pleaded with the Lord, he waits for the answer. His heart is with his people, and he must watch for “the end of the Lord.” He is no hireling; he cares for the flock, and cannot flee. His service for Israel had not been lightly taken up, and it cannot therefore be quickly laid down. He must see the end of it; and for this, he sets himself upon the watch-tower.

Vers. 2-20. Here we read the Lord's answer—and it is full of solemn, interesting meaning. Habakkuk shall not be disappointed; he shall not be on his tower for nothing. As Daniel's fasting for his twenty-one days, so Habakkuk's watching on the tower shall be rewarded.

The Lord, however, begins His answer by stating some strong, leading facts, or rather principles of truth.

1. That the vision or prophecy was to be clearly announced.

2. That all was to remain in vision, or unfulfilled, for a season.

3. That during that season the man of the world would ripen himself in pride for the judgment of God.

4. That during the same season the saint should live by faith.

5. That in due season, God's appointed time, the vision should speak, the prophecy be fulfilled, so that the end was surely worth waiting for.

Then, having laid down these facts or principles, the Lord goes on to announce, to the welcoming ear of the prophet, the awful judgments that were to overtake the Chaldean.

Chap. 3. Having listened to this from his watchtower, the prophet, as I may say, descends to speak with the Lord. Having been graciously visited and answered on the tower, he will now enter the sanctuary, as with the voice of prayer and praise, and in the power of that faith which had accepted the answer of God, rejoiced in it, and counted on still further blessing.

But these his closing words are very beautiful.

The answer he had just received seems at once to put him in spirit, back to the earliest days of his nation, or the time of the salvation of God, when He was beginning to make Israel His people. The Chaldean reminded him of the Egyptian and of the Amorite. And he designs that the Lord would do for Israel now in the face of the Chaldean, what in those primitive days He had done for them in the face of the Egyptian and the Amorite. He seeks that there may be “a revival” —that now in the midst of the years God would do the works which so wondrously marked the beginning of the years. And with affecting beauty, and in the broken style of one who was following the currents of a heart alive to its subject, he rehearses, as in the divine presence, those early works of Jehovah in behalf of Israel, whether accomplished in Egypt, or in the wilderness, or in Canaan, that, (if I may so speak), the Lord might look at those mighty doings of His, and do the like in these present Chaldean times. It is as if Habakkuk were lifting up the bow under the eye of God in the day of the

cloud; so that, looking at it, He might remember His covenant, His grace, and His power for His saints, His promises and His mercies, and save His people from this threatened overwhelming.

For as yet the Lord had only promised judgment on the Chaldean. (See Chap. 2.) He had not spoken of the final restoration and glory of Israel; but Habakkuk must have this also promised and secured; and therefore he prays for “a revival” of His work in behalf of Israel.

And then, at the very end, as the just man living by faith, whom the Lord's word had already told him of, (see chap. 2.) he utters his present full confidence in God. He tells, indeed, how the Lord's word about the coming of the Chaldean had frightened him, so that he was as one astonished, or as a dead man; but that now, as a man of faith, he knows that he has but to wait, through a season of discipline and patience assured that all will end in the salvation of God And in the joyous assurance of this, he sings to the chief singer on his stringed instrument; and as Jehoshaphat entered the battle with the song of victory on his lips, so Habakkuk now enters on the season of the vision, or of the exercise of faith ant patience, in the joy of the Lord, and with a song prepared as for a day of glory.

Now, upon this, we may again say, the present day may put us much in company with Habakkuk. The man of God looks round, and sees everything it Christendom to provoke the resentment of holiness, or to vex the righteous soul. But while he resents the thing, he would fain plead for the people, like Habakkuk; and, like him again, turn to God, with his burthens and his expectations. But somewhat beyond our prophet, the believer now, from the fuller instructions of God, knows there will be “a revival,” and does not merely pray for it. He knows that the judgments which are coming, more solemn than that by the hand of the Chaldean, will only clear the earth of all that offends, take out of it all that are corrupting it, and thus lead to its redemption, and not to its destruction. And he knows that a brighter, richer condition will mark its end, than that which did its beginning—for “the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” So that it will not be merely a revival of early days in the history of either Israel or the earth; but their latter end, like that of Job, will be more than their beginning.

And I would add a practical word upon the experience of Habakkuk, which is so blessed at the end. “I will rejoice in the Lord,” he says, “although the fig-trees shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines.”

To live happily in the love of God, through Jesus, is the glory He seeks at our hand—sinner, self-ruined, as we are. And to do this, like Habakkuk, in spite of the contradiction of circumstances, makes this service and worship still more excellent—the fruit, as it surely is of His grace and in working power.

Man seeks to live pleasurably, but he has no care to live happily. He would live pleasurably, or in the sunshine of favoring, flattering circumstances; but to live happily, or in the favor of God, in the light of His countenance, the sense of His love, and the hope of His presence in glory, this is not what man cares about. And it is God's work in the heart and conscience, when man is bethinking himself, and seeking to cease from living pleasurably, that he may live happily—find his life only in the greatest of all circumstances, that is, in his relation to God, having discovered, through grace, that that relationship is settled for him forever, in the precious reconciliation accomplished in the

blood of Christ.

And let me still take on me to add another word on what the Lord says as to the Chaldean in chap. 2: 14. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The pride of man, whether he be Chaldean or any; other, that would affect universal empire, has ever; been, and shall still be, judged and broken; and that dominion shall be reserved for Jesus "the Lord," and for Him only. He shall be made higher than the kings than the earth, and His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Neither the past or present unbelief of His own nation, Israel, nor the purposes and attempts of any of the Gentiles, shall hinder this. (See Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14.) For, in the coming peaceful days of the scepter of the righteous One, this shall be accomplished. (See Isa. 6:9).

The people shall labor after this, but they shall weary themselves for nothing—, for "very vanity." (Chapter 2: 13). But Jesus shall have it. "Blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen." (Psa. 77).

Chapter 85

Zephaniah

Very commonly in the prophets, glory touches judgment. These are their themes, with the iniquity that provokes the judgment, and the characters that attach to the glory that follows

But these things, judgment or iniquity and glory succeeding, have been, again and again, in the history, as they are, again and again, in the prophecy, of Scripture.

The day of Noah was such a day—a day when judgment introduced glory, or a new world. So the judgment on Egypt was accompanied or waited on by the deliverance of Israel, their triumphant song, the presence of the glory in the midst of them, and their journey onward to the land of promise. So the judgment on the Canaanites or Amorites was at once followed by Israel's taking of their inheritance.

The day of Nebuchadnezzar was a kindred day of judgment. The spirit of prophecy lingers over it. Not only does it anticipate it in earlier prophets, as Isaiah and Micah, but it is, at the time, or about the time, poured out very largely, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah witness.

And that day, the day of the Chaldean invasion and triumph, was truly a remarkable crisis. The iniquity of the kingdom of Judah was then full, as that of the Amorites had been in the day of Joshua. Sad, however, it is indeed, that things should have taken such a turn; that the iniquity of the Jew was now full, and that the Gentile was called out to judge it, as once the iniquity of the Gentile had been full, and the Jew, the man of God, was called out to judge it.

But the Chaldean was not only a real, but a representative, or mysterious person. He stands forth in the prophets as telling us of coming and final judgments. His sword visited not only Judah and Jerusalem, but the surrounding nations. His was a day in which the God of all the earth was rising up, and the world had to keep silence. It was a miniature or inchoative judgment of all the nations. It was “the day of the Lord,” in spirit or in principle. The sword was furbished for the slaughter. The dominion went from “the daughter of Jerusalem,” for the house of David was reprobate, and the Chaldean took the throne under God, so to speak, away from the Jew.

Judgment, however, never closes the scene. As we said, glory touches judgment, in the ways of God. Judgment cleans out the vessel, and then glory fills it. It takes away what hinders the presence of the Lord, and then the kingdom is established and displayed, as Zephaniah, together with all the prophets, show us. The Apocalypse is the great closing witness of this. There judgment makes way for glory again; and that finally—in other words, that which offends and does iniquity, the great reprobate, apostate energies, are all judged and removed, and the day of millennial brightness begins to run its course.

It is judgment, judgment; over them sing, over them sing; in continuous succession, because no steward of God has been faithful, or given an account of his stewardship. Adam, the Jew, the Gentile, the candlestick, all, in their day, have been untrue to Him that appointed them; and “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, He judgeth among the gods.” The garden was lost by

Adam: the land of the fathers by their children, or Canaan by Israel; the Gentile was as faithless as they, and power passed from the head of gold to the breasts and arms of silver, thence to the belly and thighs of brass, and then to the legs of iron, and the feet which were of iron and clay. There was no delivering up to God of that which had been received from Him. The stewards have been removed, one after the other, and their stewardships have been taken away from them, in the stead of their delivering of them up, or giving a just account of them. Thus it has ever been, and thus is it still, and there is no exception to this till we look at Jesus. With Him all stewardships are accounted for; for which is committed to Him in the due season is delivered up, and not taken away. And, what a volume, I may say, on the glories of Christ does that one sentence in 1 Cor. 15 write for us: “then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God.” It signalizes Him in the face of the whole world, and in contrast with all the generations of the children of men, from the very beginning to the very end. Every stewardship committed to others is taken away, because of the faithless hand that had betrayed it; but He delivers up His, as having fulfilled all the purpose of Him who had entrusted Him with it. In Christ, but in Christ only, all the promises of God are yea and amen. When He takes the kingdom He will at the end, or in the due moment, “deliver it up.” Precious words! But we see the kingdom taken away from Saul, and from the house of David;

and then, when given to the Gentile, taken away from him in like manner, again and again, in a series of judgments or overturnings, till He came whose right it is; and then for the first time we get a stewardship accounted for, and a kingdom delivered up.

In this day of the Chaldean, on which we are now looking, with Zephaniah, everything, as it were, is judged. As in the Apocalyptic day, or as before the great white throne, all is judged, personally or individually, so now in the light of the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, all is judged nationally. There is Judah, and there is Jerusalem; and the peoples around Eclom, the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Ethiopians and the Assyrians; north, south, east, and west, all come in for this common and complete exposure, and that, too, in all its minute distinctions; the remnant of Baal, the name of the Chemarims with the priests, idolaters, those who swear both by the Lord and by Malcham, the backsliders and the careless, and those who wear strange apparel, are all severally visited; and the candle of the Lord searches out those who are settled on their lees, and who despise the fear of judgment. Nothing escapes. All is naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. And the Judge of all the world does right; they that have deserved many stripes get them, while others are beaten as with few; for God is no respecter of persons. He renders to every man according to his deeds.

But, “the remnant according to the election of grace” are recognized here in Zephaniah, as everywhere. “The meek of the earth,” they are called; and they are told to wait on the Lord under the hope that they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, (chap. ii.; iii. 8.)

And then, as we said, glory comes in after judgment. Some features of millennial blessedness are presented to us. It is told us, that with one life or language the nations of that kingdom, “the world to come,” shall worship the Lord the God of Israel. The confusion of Babel shall be at an end; a sample of which was given at the Pentecost of Acts 3 The distant parts of the earth, those beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, shall take part in the common acknowledgment of the Savior, God of Israel. Israel shall be purified, saved from all fear of evil any more, and be glad with all the heart, because

the Lord their God is in the midst of them.

These are the days of the kingdom. The judgments have cleansed the scene, the remnant have been carried through them, the earth witnesses the salvation of God, and the name of the Lord is owned in the joy and service of His restored people.

The mourners in Zion, moreover, have taken to them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The lamentations of Jeremiah are heard no more; for the captive daughter of Zion has been brought home with every band that was about her broken off; and she that was led a captive, of whom it was written, “This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after,” is made a name and a praise among all people of the earth.

Such things are here, in the third chapter of our prophet, and such things are the common themes of all the prophets, in anticipation of the kingdom of the Lord following upon the day of the Lord.

Glory, however, shines hem, in one very attractive character. The harp of Zephaniah has one note of very peculiar sweetness. The personal delight of the Lord in His people is given to us in words which savor of the Song of Solomon itself in its rapture and affection. “The Lord thy God,” it is said to Zion, “will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

This is the Bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, as had been anticipated by Isaiah, long before this day of Zephaniah. (See Isa. 62:5.) This is as if the Lord were taking the place which the rapturous song of the King of Israel put Him into, when He says, “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!” (Cant. vii. 6.)

It is the personal joy of the Lord in His people that it thus anticipated by Zephaniah—the brightest, dearest article in all their condition. It may remind us of a little sentence in our own 1 Thess. 4—“and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This is all that is said of us there, after our translation. Glories might have been detailed, and the various joy of the heaven of the Church; but it is only this, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” It is personal, like this passage in Zephaniah; but, had we affection, we should say, it is chief in the great account of our blessedness.

One further thing I would notice. There are two suppers laid out before us in Rev. 19—the supper of “the Lamb,” and the supper of “the great God.” The supper of the Lamb is a scene of joy in heaven: blessed are they that are called to it. It is a marriage supper. The supper of the great God is the fruit of the solemn, terrific judgment that closes the history of the earth as it now is, the judgment of this present apostate world, when the carcases of the confederated enemies of the Lord are made the food of the fowl of the air.

Ezekiel notices the last of these two suppers, and gives us as full a description of it as John in the Apocalypse. Zephaniah just glances at it as he passes on with his account of the acts of the Lord in the day of His wrath. (Ezek. 39; Zeph. 1:7.)

“The day of the Lord is at hand,” says Zephaniah; “for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.” He does not, however, go into the scene, as Ezekiel and John. do. What the sacrifice or the feast is, and who the guests that are bidden to it may be, he does not let us know. For there are voices and under-tones in the perfect harmony of Scripture. Certain truths and mysteries are given a chief place here and there, while at other times the same truths are only assumed, or passingly, incidentally, touched on. But all this does but yield us that grateful, artless

unison that lives in all the parts of the book, giving us witness that it is but one hand that sweeps all the chords of that wondrous harp which is the present “harp of God,” till other harps be formed by the same band to celebrate the glories of His own name, and the fruit of His own work, forever. (Rev. 15:2.)

Haggai

This book is a witness how rapidly declension sets in, and fresh corruption follows upon restoration and blessing.

Return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon was made at the opening of the book of Ezra, with great brightness and promise. Thousands left Babylon; and they who remained behind helped them with their goods; and a general awakening of the national heart and energy was known.

The first business of the returned captives was to build the house of the Lord; and they laid the foundation of it in the midst of such mingled and diverse affections, as showed how thoroughly and personally they had set themselves to it. Tears and joys, shouts and wailings, told the living realities of the moment, and gave promise that an earnest-hearted work, then begun, would fine its way happily and prosperously to the end. But it was not so. The promise was not made good. Is man's pledge, and promise, and stewardship ever realized? The Gentile seed which had been planted in the lands of the ten tribes became the occasion of hindrance and difficulty; and the building of the house is suspended, and that, too, for so long a time as fourteen years; during which interval, self-indulgence and consultation about their own things marked the moral ways of the people, of that people who had started so earnestly and so single-heartedly.

Under such conditions, the Spirit of God visits Haggai, and by him the word of the Lord addresses itself to Zerubbabel the chief of Judah, and to Joshua the high priest, and to the congregation of returned captives.

It was in the second year of Darius king of Persia, that Haggai was thus called forth by the Spirit. This notification of time has meaning in it. It bespeaks the degradation of Israel. The coin of the Roman is by and by to go current through the land, and Israel will then be taught by their land to accept that badge of their vassal-state; and so now, the Spirit teaches them the like lesson, marking the eras of their history by the reign of the Persians.

Haggai begins by challenging the people on account of their neglect of God's house, and concern about their own houses; and he calls on them to take knowledge of their present condition as the consequence of this, and to mark how unequal the fruit they were gathering out of their fields and vineyards was to the toil they had spent upon them. And, under this rebuke the people are brought afresh to the fear of God: and fear being awakened, the conscience being reached, the fallow-ground of nature plowed up, the same voice of God by Haggai begins its ministry of comfort and encouragement. “I am with you, saith the Lord.” But the Spirit visited the heart of the people, as well as the lips of the prophet, and the end of the ministry was therefore reached. “And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.”

The heart of Lydia, in other days, was opened by the Lord, as well as the lips of Paul that spoke to her. He spoke to her and she attended to him; and both of these things were of God. How simple,

and yet how needful! The Lord lets us know the need of each of those operations in his great discourse in John 6, teaching us that if the Father gave not to the Sort, if He draw not, if He teach not, the ministry will be lost upon the soul, and the bread of life, the true manna of the desert, will be spread in vain.

Now, this was a revival, and reviving of God's work in the midst of the years became the necessary way, because of the tendency to decline which is found to be in us. The sinner's utter ruin and full incompetency to restore himself, is the ground of needed sovereignty at the first (Isa. 1:9); the saint's or the church's tendency to slacken, to grow cold and dull, becomes the like ground of renewed, repeated revivals afterward. A fresh putting forth of reviving virtue has been ever the way of maintaining a dispensation in any condition worthy of itself. And this day of Haggai was one of those revival seasons.

The subject of this prophetic word by Haggai might lead us to observe, how perfect, in their seasons, the divine thoughts and purposes are, though so various and different. David proposed to build a house for the ark of God, a house of cedars, costly and stable, but the word of a prophet forbad him; the time had not come. There would have been moral unfitness in the ark taking its rest before Israel had reached theirs; or seating itself in a sure dwelling-place in a land as yet unpurged of the blood of the sword of battle. But in the day of Haggai we find the contrary of all this. Israel are rebuked by a prophet for not building the house of the Lord. David erred in saying that the time had come for such a work; the returned captives now err in saying that the time had not come. And the Spirit of the Lord knew the times, and what Israel ought to do, whether to build or not to build. “God is a rock. His work is perfect.” He is true, though every man be a liar.

But again, as we find also in the book of Ezra, the returned captives had refused the Samaritans, rejected alliance with people of such mixed blood and principles. They had done rightly in this—surely they had. They had kept themselves pure. But this was a provocation, and under the suggestions of those Samaritan adversaries, the great king, the Persian “breast of silver,” had stopped the building of the house.

This, however, becomes a temptation. As soon as their hands get free of the work of the Lord's house, the people go, every one to his own house. How easy to understand this! Nature is ready to take all its advantages. We know this every day. But faith acts above nature. Paul, for instance, becomes a prisoner after he had been for years a servant. His activities abroad are stopped by the adversaries. But Paul, though a prisoner, though stopped in his work abroad, waits on the same Master still. There is prison-service, as well as field or pulpit-service. He will receive, at his own hired house, all that come to him, though he be in chains, and talk with them from morning till evening, expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. This was faith, not nature. But the returned captives employ their hands for themselves; tied up from walking in God's house, they use them, as free, for the work of their own house; and thus Satan masters them as well as the Samaritans. And it is upon this condition of things the Lord breaks in by the voice of Haggai.

The building of the house, as I observed, seems to have been suspended for about fourteen years; but it is very happy to find that it was resumed, not by force of a decree in its favor by the great king, the Persian who had rule over the Jews at that time, but by the voice of the prophets of God, Haggai and Zechariah. The Lord, indeed, did dispose the heart of the king; but this was not

till His prophet had disposed the heart of Israel. (See Ezra 5; 6) And this is very much to be remembered in connection with our prophecy. The fresh spring in the heart of the people was found to have been in God, and not in circumstances. It was God's voice by His prophets that set them on work again, and not the royal favor of the Persian. The Lord turned the heart of the king their master to countenance them, when they had taken again the place of faith and obedience.

Haggai is simply styled, “Haggai the prophet.” We have nothing about him more than that. The word of the Lord was delivered by him on several distinct occasions; but all in the second year of Darius the King of Persia: and all was directed to this end, to set agoing and to further the building of the house of the Lord.

I can look at them only in the most general way, noticing the time of each, during this second year of Darius the Persian.

6th Month, 1st Day.} Haggai arouses the careless, self-indulgent people—the returned remnant, who were neglecting the Lord's house, and serving themselves.

6th Month, 24th Day.} He promises them that the Lord will be with them; thus, as in the name of the Lord, appreciating the fear that had been awakened; and, Consequently, the people begin to work.

7th Month, 21st Day.} In order to encourage them in their work, Haggai tells them that the final glory of the house which they had now begun to build should be the brightest after the shaking of all things by the hand of the Lord.

9th Month, 24th Day.} He leads the people to a humbling sense of what they had been ere the house of the Lord was attended to; but he tells them also of future blessing.

Same Day. } He addresses Zerubbabel, telling him again of the shaking of everything, and of the establishing of Zerubbabel as the Lord's signet.

These are his utterances in their seasons. The voice of the Lord by this prophet first awakens the conscience of the people, and then, in various ways of grace, encourages them in their revived condition and energy.

Let me observe, that the Spirit of God in the prophet does not take part, either with the aged man, who Wept over the remembrance of the past, or with the younger ones who were rejoicing in the present (see Ezra but He bears the heart of the people on to the future. Those tears had been real, and were service to God; but neither were perfect. The Spirit who leads according to God indulges neither, but carries heart and hope forward. Encouraging the people in their work by His servant, He tells them of the future glory of the house, and of the stability of the true Zerubbabel, when all that has its foundation in the creation, be it what it may, shall be shaken to its removal and overthrow.

The Spirit again, in an apostle, comments upon this of the prophet. (See Heb. 12) He tells us, that all that which has to be shaken is “all that is made” —that is, as I judge, all that has not its root or its foundation in Him in whom “all the promises of God are yea and amen.” He only is the Rock. His work is perfect. Christ the Lord can say and will say, “The earth and its inhabitants are dissolved; I bear up the pillars.” What is of Him cannot be shaken. It remains. And in the faith and

hope of what we have in Him, and from Him, beloved, let us say to one another, in the words of the apostle, “we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably; with reverence and godly fear.” Amen.

Zechariah

Zechariah was a companion with Haggai in that energy and gift of the Spirit which was animating the returned captive in the building of the temple. But, under that inspiration, Haggai applies himself more exclusively to that one object. All he says he addresses to the captives by way of encouragement in the work then immediately in their hand. Zechariah looks out more widely, anticipating distant days in the history of Israel and of the nations, with a purpose beyond that of merely encouraging the builders in their work.

This book opens with a kind of preface in which the prophet, ere he details his visions, challenges the people, warning them not to treat the Lord's words by him as their fathers had treated other words of the Lord by other prophets, and which, nevertheless, had been fulfilled against them—had “taken hold of them,” as he speaks. (Chap. 1:1-6.)

He then begins to record his visions. Haggai had no visions. Zechariah is principally instructed by them. But they both prophesied in the same year, the second of the reign of Darius the Persian.

Chap. 1:7-17. This may be called “the vision of the horses among the myrtle trees.” The first of these horses had a rider on it, the others were in the rear, and, as far as we learn, were without riders. The prophet asks the angel that waited on him what this meant. The rider upon the foremost horse tells him that these unridden horses were the agents of the Lord's pleasure in the earth. The unridden horses, the representatives of the Gentiles, then speak and say that the whole earth was still and at rest; that is, just as they would have it. For such, surely, was the mind of the nations of the earth, whom God had set up upon the degradation and fall of Jerusalem. So would they have it—their exaltation upon the ruin of God's people.

The angel, who stood for Jerusalem, upon this, at once takes the alarm, and pleads for the city of the Lord and of Israel. The Lord having answered this appeal of the angel, the angel seems. to let the prophet know the answer, telling him that the Lord was displeased with the Gentiles, who were thus at ease, though they had helped forward the affliction of Jerusalem; that Jerusalem should be restored, the Lord's house be built there again, and the cities of the land be re-occupied.

Ver. 18-21. The second vision we may call, “the vision of the four horns and the four carpenters.” It gave the prophet a view of the Gentile adversaries that had dispersed Judah, and also of the friends who were soon to avenge Judah at the hand of his Gentile adversaries.

Chap. 2 This third division may be called, “the vision of the man with the measuring line.” The prophet here has before him not only the angel who was attending him, but another angel and a man with a measuring line in his hand; and moreover, he hears the voice of the Lord; or, it may be, the word of the Lord is rehearsed to him. But the whole of this teaches him, that Jerusalem is to be in its place, established and dignified again; and that after the glory has seated itself there, inquisition should be made of those nations, who, in the day of their calamity, troubled the Israel of God. Zion, in that day, is to sing for joy; nations also shall join themselves to the Lord of Israel, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God, and be subdued to the sense of the presence of the Lord in

the earth again.

Chap. 3 The fourth vision is that of “Joshua, the high priest.” Having just received a pledge of the restoration of that city, we have now, in another vision, a picture of the justification of the people; and this justification of Israel leads, in the end, to the beauty and acceptance of Israel in the days of the kingdom, when Messiah, “the Shepherd and Stone of Israel,” shall be exalted in providential authority over the whole earth. But this picture is so vivid, so graphic, that it can be used as the delineation of the story of the justification of any sinner, in the great principles of it—as we know that justification itself is one and the same for each and all of us. It is the sinner, the polluted one, the Joshua in filthy garments, chosen, cleansed, stripped and clothed again, all in grace, in a grace that acts as from itself on the warrant of the blood of Christ, while we, like Joshua, are silent before it.

Chap. 4. The fifth vision is that of “the golden candlestick.” If, in the preceding vision, we saw the great act of justification exhibited, the value of Christ applied to the unclean condition of Israel, here we find exhibited the communication of power, and the application of the Spirit to the circumstances of Israel. It therefore follows in due order. And the power is pledged not to be withdrawn till the needed grace be accomplished, and the work begun be completed; till what was entered on in that day of restoration under Zerubbabel, be perfected in the day of the royal Messiah, the true Zerubbabel, the revived heir and holder of the honor and strength of the house of David, the head of all order throughout the earth, as in kingdom-days.

Chap. 5:1-4. The sixth vision is that of “the flying roll.” This is an exhibition of curse or judgment finding out sinners, whether sinners against their neighbors as thieves, or sinners against God, as false swearers. The previous visions had been of mercy to Israel, either under the providence of God, or under Messiah, or under the Spirit; but now we get visions of judgment.

Chap. 5:5-11. The seventh vision is that of “the Ephah with the woman sitting in it.” This is a picture of wickedness—ανομια—lawlessness. It is hidden—the woman in the ephah—and it is borne to the land of Shinar, its base, where it began its course. This we know; for Nimrod was the first great representative of the wicked or the lawless one, who is to be destroyed in the day of the Lord. This “wickedness” is hidden as here in an “ephah;” or, as in Matt. 13., in “three measures of meal” —hidden, may say, under a profession, as of the religion of Israel, or of the name of Christendom. But it is really Babylon at the end as at the beginning, “the land of Shinar;” as we again see in Rev. 17., and many other Scriptures.

Chap. 6:1-8. The eight vision is that of “the four chariots.” These symbolize the four great monarchies so much spoken of by the prophet Daniel. These chariots, drawn by different horses, come forth from between mountains of brass, and then take their appointed course over different parts of the earth, and this may remind us of the first vision, or that of “the horses among the myrtle trees.” Only we have a new fact here: viz. that the second chariot has settled God's question with the first; or, in the language of this vision, “those that go forth-to the north country have quieted my spirit,” saith the Lord, “in the north country.” The Persian had, in the days of Zechariah, put down the Chaldean.

Chap 6:9-15. These closing verses of the same chapter seem to be a kind of appendix to this vision of the four chariots. The prophet is instructed to take certain children of the returned

captives, and in their presence to set crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest? and then to address Joshua as a type of the Branch, the destined builder of the Lord's temple, the bearer of the glory, the combined priest and king who is to secure peace in the coming days of His kingdom. And having gone through this ceremony, the prophet was ordered to lay up these crowns under the hand of certain guardians, in the house of the Lord, as a memorial of all this destined glory and power which are to be displayed in the last days, in the person of the Branch, that is, the Messiah of Israel, the Christ of God.

But now we may observe, that on closing the sixth chapter, we have done with Zechariah's visions. We are also in another year, the fourth instead of the second of Darius. But I would separate these remaining chapters into what appears to me to be their distinct portions, as I have done with the preceding.

Chaps. 7. 8. These chapters must be read together, I judge. For chapter 8:19, clearly seems to refer to chapter vii. 3. They form the communication which was made by the Lord to the prophet, when the returned captives sent to inquire whether their captivity-fasts were now to be continued. The prophet begins his answer by a humbling word addressed to the conscience. They had, it is true, been fasting statedly during the years of their captivity; but he now tells them to ask themselves, had this been done to the Lord?

The character of the answer which the prophet, under the Holy Ghost, he returns to the inquiring people is greatly worthy of thought; but it would be too much to consider it in its detail. I would, however, say this upon it; that this word of Zechariah reminds me of the method of the Lord Jesus in a like case. He never simply answered an inquiry, but so took it up as to call the conscience and heart of the enquirer into exercise. He looked rather to the moral state of the enquirer than to the subject of the inquiry. So, Zechariah here. He humbles, exhorts, and teaches, ere he gives the answer. But then, when he does come to give the answer, he gives it fully and blessedly indeed. He tells them that their fasts shall become feasts; and further, announces prophetically the bright and palmy days which yet in the distance awaited Israel.

Chaps. 9, 10. These chapters, taken and read together form another burthen of the prophets.

Syria, the Philistines, Tire and Sidon are to be humbled, though a remnant may be spared, in the day when Israel is protected and vindicated by God her Savior, and the eyes of men are towards the Lord. This is first announced here. And then, the appearing, the royal glory of Messiah, is anticipated, offered, as we know it was, in the day of Matt. 21, but being then refused, it remains for a coming day when it will assert its place, and make good its claims by judgment, as the prophet here goes on to tell us. But then, after that the kingdom shall be displayed it its universality of strength or peace. The prophet then addresses Messiah, and pledges to Him, that by His own blood, which was the seal of the covenant, His people, His prisoners in Israel, should be delivered. And He then, suitably, addresses another word to Israel, presenting Messiah to them as the object of their confidence, and the security to them of victory and honor.

The results of the recovery of Israel are then enlarged upon, in great and various blessedness, in chapter 10.

Chap. 11. This chapter may be read by itself. It given us, as I believe, an anticipation of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, as in the gospel by Matthew—introduced, however, by some solemn

premonitions of judgment, as we see in verses 1-3.

Messiah begins to cite His commission under the God of Israel, telling us, that He had come forth to find the sheep of Israel, for that they were in an evil case, from their possessors, their vendors, and their shepherds—that is, from such as the Romans, the Herods, and the Pharisees.

He then tells us that He took two staffs, in order to fulfill this His commission. And these staffs were significant or symbolic. Moses, in other days, had his rod, Messiah now had His staffs. They signified strength and beauty; for Christ had to impart each of these to Israel, to establish and adorn them, to secure and dignify them. The inhabitants of the land, the great body of the Jewish people, are found to disappoint His service as much as any, so that He has still to separate “the poor of the flock” from the general “flock of slaughter.”

His first service is then told us. After thus taking up the flock of Israel, (as He does in the earlier chapters of Matthew) He cuts off three of the shepherds whom He found in the land. This we see in Matt. 22: the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees, religious heads of the people, being then silenced in controversy with the Lord Jesus.

Having done this, Messiah disclaims them, breaking His staff, “Beauty,” as we see Him doing in Matt. 23.; withdrawing Himself, which was, the taking away of their beauty from them; for they lose their glory when they lose Him. They were but a crownless head without Him; and that being so, all is gone for the present.

He then tells us that “the poor of the flock” waited on Him as “the word of the Lord;” and this we see, in perfect order and place, in Matt. 24:25.

And then, He anticipates the scene of His betrayal and death, as in Matt. 26, & 27. And this is followed here by the Prophet, as we know it has been historically, by the disruption of Israel. The other staff, “Bands,” is broken.

A remarkable anticipation of Christ's ministry, all this is. But this being the history of the true Shepherd, the good Shepherd, at the hand of the flock, we then get the history of the flock at the hand of the foolish shepherd, the idol-shepherd. This is retribution, as many other Scriptures let us know, that the raising up of Antichrist will be in judgment upon Israel for their rejection of God's Christ, their own Messiah. This is future. See verses 15-17.

Chap. 12, & 14. These chapters form the last burthen of our Prophet. It tells us of “the day of the Lord.” or of that great action which is to introduce the kingdom. It begins very significantly, celebrating God in three characters of glory—the stretcher out of the heavens, the layer of the foundations of the earth, the power of the Spirit of man. For these three characters are such as the kingdom is destined to display. For then, the God of grace and of glory will be seen as having furnished the heavens, as having established the earth, and as having renewed man. And the details of the prophetic burthen that follow this introduction, give witness of these things.

It is, as I said above, “the days of the Lord” which is delineated here, in various virtues and features of it.

The confederated enemies of Jerusalem shall be broken under the walls of Jerusalem in that day; and this shall be done after a manner and method which is to have respect to certain moral

results. But if the hand of God work amid the circumstances of that day, the Spirit of God shall work with the people of that day also.

This is blessedly delineated here. The Spirit will begin His work with them in the power of conviction. They are brought to remember their sin against Jesus, and to mourn bitterly. Then, they are led to discover by faith, the remedy for sin in that very Jesus whom once with wicked hands they crucified and slew. Then, they consider their ways, and with Levite zeal, purify themselves; according to Deut. xiii., nothing is spared, though dear as near kindred. Then they hold communion with Jesus about those very wounds which once they themselves inflicted.

The hand of the Lord shall then work in company with His Spirit, the fire of persecution or of discipline (the purging of the floor, as John the Baptist speaks) taking its course, and then Judah shall be acknowledged again by the Lord, and again the Lord shall be acknowledged by Judah, according to the pattern or precedent of Deut. 26:17-19.

This leads us to the close of chap. xiii. At the opening of the next chapter, the 14th and the last, we have the great action around the city, which had been anticipated at the beginning of chapter xii. further and more fully described, together with the interference of the Lord Himself in the behalf of the city, and the results of its deliverance, such as the consecration of it as the center of God's earthly purposes, and the seat of His earthly glory; and then the millennial or kingdom-joy of the nations holding their feast-days there as the scene of public, universal festivation.

Solemnly, in the midst of all this, we are given to see the judgment of those who had. been fighting against Jerusalem, and also of those who would not go up there to worship in the days of the glory. What ought to have been, but was not, shall then be realized. Holiness shall give character to everything; consecration: to God. Nor shall there be blot or exception then, as hitherto there has been. The Canaanite was in the land, and left there, after Abraham had entered it; but now, “there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.” (See Gen. 12:6; Zech. 14:21.)

As one of our own poets says, ("Days surpassing fable, and yet true.")

Chapter 88

Malachi

Malachi closes the writings of the minor prophets, as they are called, and with them the volume of the Old Testament. This suggests and warrants a short review of things in the previous story of Israel.

From the beginning the Lord had been, in various ways, testing and proving that people, whom He had made His people. After having delivered them from Egypt, and borne them through the wilderness, under Joshua, He set them in the land promised to their fathers; and then, in a certain sense, began afresh with them. This is seen in the days of the Judges who succeeded Joshua. But what was the story? The people transgressed; the Lord chastened; the people wept under the rod; the Lord raised up a deliverer. Thus it was again and again.

But during all this time the Lord kept Israel before and under Himself. In those days there was no captivity of the people, or conquest of the land. Israel was still at home. The land was still their own, and Jehovah their king as well as their God.

In due season, the Lord gave them the house and the throne of David. They flourished into a kingdom. But the kingdom became untrue to Him as the nation had been. Much long-suffering towards the house of David the Lord exercised, as before He had exercised towards the nation. The Books of Judges and of 2 Chronicles show us all this. But at length, loss of home and country, with sore captivity, ensued; and a worse condition than had been known under the rod of the Philistines, Midianites or Canaanites, was now known under the kings of Assyria and Babylon. Scattering of the people among the Gentiles, and possession of their land by the Gentiles now takes place.

This was fearful. There is, however, restoration. There is a return of captives from Babylon. Jerusalem is regained, rebuilt, repeopled. The house of God is raised up again, and the worship of His name and the service of His altar are observed again. But this state of things was something quite new. Israel was not now a nation set in their own]and, as they had been under Joshua and the Judges; nor a kingdom with one of their own children on the throne, (such a throne as the glory could accompany) as under David and David's sons. The people were now the vassals of the Gentile. They were debtors to the Gentile for permission to occupy the land of their fathers, and to observe the laws and do the service of their God. They were the subjects of the Persian, and their ruler was their vicegerent.

This, surely, was a new condition. But they are put into it, that they may be again tested, tested to the full, and thereby proved and convicted to the uttermost. For so, it comes to pass: when the trial of them is made in their new circumstances, failure ensues, as it ever had done. The book of Judges had already witnessed against them as a nation; 2 Chronicles had already witnessed against them as a kingdom; and now Ezra, and Nehemiah, and this prophesy of Malachi witness against them as returned captives.

I must, however, turn aside from this for a moment.

The returned captives at their beginning, give some beautiful samples of faith and service. They are left, as we may see presently, by Malachi, in a very sad moral condition. But there had been brighter, earlier moments. Greater events, greater than had been known for centuries in Israel, had been witnessed such as their journey from Babylon, the building of the temple, the building of the wall, the purifying of the congregation again and again. Yet there was no miracle: all was accomplished by force of moral energy; the Spirit of God working in the people, rather than the hand of God working for them. There was no cloudy pillar to conduct them across the second desert; but they went, the fast and the prayer on the banks of the Ahava bespeaking the virtue of the Spirit that was among them. They refused Samaritan alliances, as a people that knew their Nazaritism. The customs of the nations, the traditions of the elders, their own thoughts and wisdom, had no place in forming their character or conduct. The word of God was their law. Individual grace and gift shine eminent, as in Ezra and Nehemiah. The light that was in Ezra, the single heartedness that mark Nehemiah, could carry the people through difficulties, when the rod of Moses was no longer in the camp to do its marvels, as in the sight of the enemy.

I speak not of Mordecai and Esther, though strange and admirable was their way, without a miracle in their behalf, because they represent Israel in time dispersion, and not as returned captives.

But these brighter moments had now faded and Malachi gives us our last Old Testament sight of the state of Israel, sad and humbling as indeed it is. In due season, the hour of the New Testament arrives, and we find the same before us, just as Malachi had promised us it should be. Messiah, the Lord of the temple, appears, introduced by John Baptist, the messenger of Mal. 3:1, and the Elias (if the people would receive him) of Mal. 4:5. The series of tests which have been made from the day of the Exodus to the day of the returned captives is resumed now. Messiah is offered, and He proposes Himself, in full and varied forms, to the acceptance of Israel. And, at last, the Spirit is given, and apostles full of the Holy Ghost call on Israel to repent and believe, and thus enter the times of refreshing and restitution promised and spoken of by all the prophets. These are the brightest, richest, visitations: the last yet the best; the closing, yet the most promising; but, like all the rest, they fail. Israel is not gathered. In Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land; as a pilgrim-people, or as captives; as a nation, or as a kingdom; as presented with Messiah and His works, or as visited by the Spirit and His virtues—still, from first to last, under all the patient exercise of this long-suffering, grace, and wisdom, they are untrue still. “They always resist the Holy Ghost,” as one inspired voice says of them: “they fill up the measure of their sins always,” as another inspired voice pronounces against them.

The nation had been preserved, as we saw, and kept in their own land till the king, the house of David, was set up—and now they are restored to their own land, and kept there till Messiah appear and offer Himself to them. “The rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that the Branch of the root of Jesse may be presented.”

At the opening of the gospels we find passages from Malachi quoted, as belonging to that moment of the evangelists. The close of the Old thus links itself with the opening of the New Testament. And these connections, simple, and striking, and self widening as they are, illustrate the unity of the divine volume. They display something of the moral glory of the Book, and let us learn, what we learn from another and a more direct witness, (that is, from a passage in the Book itself,) that,

“known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18.)

We may briefly present this prophesy in the following manner:

Chap. 1. It opens with a terrible exposure of the moral condition of the returned captives. Was the state of Israel ever worse? If idolatry had marked it from the beginning hitherto, infidelity does now; the spirit of scorning, the spirit that contemns and repudiates all the claims of God, and only mocks His pleadings and entreaties. So that, we may say, if the unclean spirit have at this time of Malachi gone out, a more wicked one has entered. We cannot say that the old unclean spirit has returned, bringing with him seven other spirits; for we do not find, under the word of this prophet, a return to idolatry. But, we may say that a spirit more wicked than the old one has entered.

The “wherein” of this chapter, used by the returned captives again and again, as they answer the appeals and rebukes of the Lord, sounds awfully in our ears.

Chap. 2 The Lord by the prophet, in this chapter, addresses a word of rebuke to the priests now, as He had done to the people before. The Spirit awakens a word in the bosom of the prophet, challenging the abominations that were committed in Judah and Jerusalem, the treachery against the nation's covenant—letting the people know that they were not straitened in the Lord who had provisions for them in the Spirit to fulfill His part in that covenant, but that they had been their own enemies, unfaithful to their conditions in the same covenant. The covenant is spoken of, under the figure of a marriage-contract, or marriage vows, according to the style of the prophets generally. And it is such a figure as the Lord's own words about Himself and His people Israel would warrant and suggest.

Chap. 3., 4. The Lord, continuing His controversy with the evil estate of Israel, here lets them know, that of a truth the Lord of the temple would come and His messenger before Him; but that such a mission would turn out to be a very different thing from what they expected. They thought, to be sure, that it would be in their favor, that it would flatter and accredit them, set them up, and be deliverance and glory to them. They sought it: delighted themselves in the prospect of it. (Ver. 2.) But the prophet would have them undeceive themselves, and learn that in judgment this mission would be; necessarily so, because of their evil condition. And the present question with them should therefore be, who will abide this coming of the Lord? not, as it were, who will tell its glories and its blessings, as they might have thought, but, who will abide the searching process that will attend it?

Still there was patience in God thus insulted. Had not this been so, had He not been God and not man, Israel would have been already consumed. But even now, they Might prove that He would bless them beyond all expected measures, if they would but be obedient.

In the midst of all this national iniquity, the remnant are manifested. The Lord declares that He has them and their ways in His remembrance now, and will have them as His displayed jewels by and by, in that day when there shall be to some a sun with healing in his rays, to others a sun to burn up as an oven—like the two in the bed, at the mill, or in the field,—of which the Lord Himself speaks in the Gospels.

The prophet then closes by addressing this remnant with advices and promises; and as the Old Testament thus closes, so does the New open; for, at the very beginning of Luke, we see this

remnant, in the persons of Zechariah and Elizabeth, following this advice of Malachi, obedient to the law of Moses, with its statutes and judgments; and we see them also receiving the Elijah in the person of their child John, according to the promise of Malachi.

I would add a little by way of postscript.

The John Baptist of the Gospels is identified (officially, not personally) with the Elijah of Malachi. (Matt. 11; Mark 1; Luke 1; 7) John Baptist stood ready to fulfill the promise of the prophet to Israel. He was as the messenger that went before the face of the Lord of the temple; and as the one who would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers. But Israel was unbelieving; and, as the ancient oracle is a standing oracle in the story of that people—"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," (Isa. 7:9), Israel remained unblest.

Elijah, in Ahab's day, was a restorer, as we see in 1 Kings 18 But this was but for a season. His light was rejoiced in by the people; but Jezebel forced him out into the wilderness again. So with the Baptist. His light was rejoiced in also. But, again, this was only for a season. The multitude were baptized of him; but the wicked hated him; and there was another Jezebel in that day that had him beheaded; and Israel was left unestablished, whether by Elijah or the Baptist.

But the promised Elijah will still appear, and lead on to the throne and power of Messiah. For God is true, though every man be a liar. His gifts and calling are without repentance. He will be faithful to Israel, though, as we have seen, Israel under every trial has been unfaithful to Him. He will accomplish His purposes in grace, be the world, be Israel, or man, never so angry or never so perverted. "God is unchangeable both in righteousness and grace."

"All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there. shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," (Rom. 11:26.)

"Behold the mountain of the Lord

In latter days shall rise,

On mountain-tops above the hills,

And draw the wondering eyes."

Chapter 89

Thoughts on Hebrews 1

The Spirit of God in this epistle distinguishes between the way in which God spoke, or dealt in time past and now. So in Rom. 3 the apostle speaks of Christ, “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.” There he applies the death of Christ to the sins committed before He came. The day of atonement in Israel was for the putting away of past sins. He had been bearing with them all the year, and then when the sacrifice came, on that day the sin was all put away and all bright in the presence of God. There is the day of atonement yet to come for Israel as a nation, when in their land. Then the other part was “to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him,” &c. This is for the present time. By ascending before God on high, he establishes a present righteousness all sins forgiven and we made the righteousness of God in Christ. Rom. 3:25 gives it historically, for the sins of all who were saved in the Old Testament times are put away by this sacrifice; but we may apply it immediately and see that not only our past sins are put away, but we stand in righteousness for the present

Ver. 1. “God who at sundry times,” &c. That was before the time came for the revelation of Himself. Messages were sent through others. They had communications from God, for He spake to them through the prophets: but now we have the manifestation of Himself The Son of God has now come. “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Thus the word of God is so exalted. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” His name up to that time was exalted—He had made Himself known to Abraham as the Lord Almighty, telling him to trust His power, when he had to walk up and down as a stranger, with none to take care of him. Then again He was made known to Nebuchadnezzar as the most High God, higher than any of the gods of the nations; and to Abraham too He was called thus, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings He will take it again when the kingdom comes. Then, again, He was known by the name Jehovah— “I am,” the practical force of which is “the same yesterday, to-day, mid forever.” All these names were glorious; but the Word He has magnified above all. The Word is that which tells all that God is—holiness, love, wisdom, &c. His word expresses His thoughts and feelings: it is the revelation of Himself. God speaks by Christ. Everything that Christ did was the manifestation of God.. Who could heal the leper but God? “I will, be thou clean,” are His words. Who could raise the dead but God? “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 17:8.) “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” He has committed His words to us, to be the vessels of His testimony according to our measure. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”

We are not only brought to God now, but to God revealing Himself, God manifest in the flesh. Christ came declaring the Father. Believe me that I am in the Father.....else believe me for the very works' sake.” What a blessed place we have in Christ, having Him as the revelation of God to us! The mind of God is brought before us in Christ. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.” This is what makes Scripture so precious. It is indeed the written word, but the revelation of God. “No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” You have got the mind of God in writing, and there it is stable and imperishable—in contrast to traditions, merely handed

down from one to another. There cannot be the Church speaking without scripture. if the Church can say anything itself, then Christ's words go for nothing. I have another master over me. I am speaking of authority now, not of gait, which of course there is in the Church for the bringing out of truth. But authority in the Church trenches on the lordship of Christ over His house. It is a great thing to treasure in our souls that we have this revelation of God in Christ; and the beginning of the next chapter takes us up on the ground of possessing it. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” These were Jews to whom the Apostle was writing, and they had heard the Lord Himself speak, and afterward His apostles; and that is the reason why Paul did not put his name to this as to other epistles, when inditing them. You Jews hear what God Himself has said to you. You have heard him. Thus, the apostle only confirmed what He had said. It is blessed thus to see how Paul drops his own apostleship, (he was not, it is true, the apostle of the circumcision,) and only speaks of the twelve who confirmed Christ's own words.

In this chapter we have first the glory of Christ shown in His being “heir of all things.” He was the Son of the Father, and the everlasting Father, by virtue of His own power; and He will take everything. He will inherit all things. If a Son, we may say, then an heir; and it is even said of us, “if children, then heirs.” All that is the Father's is His. “He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” Psa. 8, alluded to in chap. 2., when in the counsels of God it is appointed that as a. man He should take all things; but in this chapter we have this same One as the Son of God and “heir of all things;” and for this glorious reason He “made the world's. In Colossians we have it, they “were created by him and for him.” There it is His title over creation, but as the image of the invisible God, the first-born,” &c. So here it is “heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” He is distinguished from God the Father—the right hand of His power. By wisdom He planned and by power He wrought. Christ is that wisdom and that power.

Ver. 3. “The express image of his person.” Christ was the outshining of God's glory. That is more than testimony made by the prophets in other ages. John 12:38-41, in connection with Isa. 6, shows the shining out of His glory very remarkably. See also Heb. 12:27 in connection with this word, “the express image of His person.”

“Upholding all things,” &c. Of course this is a divine act. Who could keep the universe going? How could it all go on without God, so that not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him How could it be without Him who made it Though He has established the order of all things, it is He who is keeping it all going. The one actually acting and possessing all is Christ. We see His glory in all this.

Another divine work there is spoken of in His having “purged our sins;” and it is just as much a divine act to purge our sins as to create a world, and in one sense far more difficult, because sin is so hateful to God. It would be easy enough for Him to create another world out of nothing. He could look at His creation and say it was all “very good;” but He is so holy, He cannot look upon sin. Therefore, there is something He must take away, and He does come to put sins away. We have sinned against God, and it is impossible for any to forgive the sin but the person sinned against. We have sinned against God, not man primarily, and man cannot forgive sins. This is another reason why God should be the only one who can forgive sins.

Mark another thing. He must purge before He can forgive. In passing through this world, man has to pass Over a great deal, and, get through as well as He can; but God cannot do that. He is of

purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Then if God is to have anything to do with us, He must purge it. There is this dreadful necessity, that God should be occupied with our sins; and He had love enough and power enough to do it if he passed it over, He would have to give up His holiness. Therefore there was this moral necessity of His holiness, that if He is to have any such poor sinners in His presence, He must cleanse us. So there must also be the feet-washing, if we are to have part with Christ.

“When He had by Himself purged our sins” —it must be by Himself. No one could help Him in it; angels could have nothing to do in it, though they were sent to minister to Him when engaged in the work. Man could not, for man can do no more than his duty; if he did more, it would be wrong. It must be a divine work to purge away sin. There is a divine necessity upon God to do it—and that by Himself, because He could not allow sin. This is how I am pledged. Because He could not bear sin, He must take it away Himself, and “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” It is a work that has been time: not anything that He will do, and may do—not something yet to be done. It is done, and He has sat down. We then no longer have a prophet coming to tell us—he will do it, but there is the testimony of the Holy Ghost that it has been done.

“The brightness of God's glory,” it is said, not the Father's. Sin is connected with God as its judge, not with the Father. He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The whole work is accomplished, and so perfectly done that He can take his own place again, and with this blessed difference, that He goes back as a man, which He never was before. Stephen saw Him as the “Son of man” standing on the right hand of God. Here He is “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Here He is “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on High.” He has taken our sins, and yet is on the right hand of the throne of God. This shows that the righteousness wrought out was so perfect and divine, that though He has taken our sins, He could sit down on the throne of God, and not soil it. He had a right, of course, on the ground of His divine person; but there is more than that here. Divine righteousness is presented to God, as an accomplished thing just as the Divine Son was manifested to man when He came down amongst us it is all divine glory throughout.

Psa. 2 Kiss the Son,” &c. Blessed is the man who trusteth in God; but cursed the man who trusteth in man. (Jer. 17.) We find in the prophets certain traits in mystery, as it were, to display the divine per son of the One who was coming humiliation. See Isa. 50:3-5. The same glorious person who said “I clothe the heavens with blackness,” &c., says. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious,” &c. In Dan. 7 again see verse 13. “the Son of man,” brought before “the Ancient, of days,” and in verse 22, He is giving out Himself to be “the Ancient of Days,” Heb. 1:7. “Who maketh His angels spirits,” &c., but he does not make when speaking of the Son. “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.” (See Psa. 45:1-7.) Heb. 1:9. He whose throne is forever and ever has been put to the test; and he loved righteousness and hated iniquity while amongst us, and has brought us up as His fellows out of our iniquity. See the contrast in the connection in which “fellows” is mentioned here, and in Zech. 13:7, where Jehovah speaks of the man. His fellow, who has been “wounded in the house of His friends.”

Thus we see the glory of Christ, shining through the Old Testament continually, but in this chapter it is fully brought out. He is owned as God, though a man, and glorified above all others.

Ver. 10, 11, &c. See Psa. 102 “Thy years are throughout,” &c., in answer to ver. 23, and first clause of ver. 24. This is still more pointed and precise. Jesus, in His humiliation, breathes out His broken heart to Jehovah. The psalm anticipates the rebuilding of Zion. If so, where would this smitten Messiah be if cut off in the midst of His days, how could He be there! God's answer is, that He, the holy sufferer, is Jehovah, the creator and disposer of all things. What a testimony to His unchangeable deity!

This is the time of grace. when those who are to be His companions in the glory are being gathered out (His fellows, ver. 9.) Ver. 13. Angels have a very blessed place and office, but it is never said to them. “Sit on my right hand,” &c., but Jehovah did say so to the man, Christ Jesus has His, own place there.

What a blessed Savior we have! The Lord Himself has come and taken up our cause. The one whom we look to, and lean upon, as a Savior, is the Lord Jehovah.

Then, besides the glory of His person, there is the other blessed truth, essential to our peace, to see what a wonderful salvation we have: our sins completely purged away! There is a wonderful and divine glory in this salvation. and divine and ineffable love—the love of One who is not like an angel, who could only do his work when told.

Our souls are thus called to worship Him who clothes the heavens with blackness, who indeed made all things: even Jesus, the Son of God.

Chapter 90

Thoughts on Hebrews 2

The first four verses of this chapter are an exhortation founded on the preceding one. Observe, this epistle does not begin with an apostolic address, as the others do; but Paul puts himself entirely among these Jewish believers, and speaks of Christ as their Apostle, not himself; and, throughout, he is unfolding all the riches of Christ, to keep them from sliding back into Judaism. Though the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, yet is Paul the one used to these Hebrews believers. In chap. 1:2, God hath “spoken to us:” that is, he puts Himself among them. In the Hebrews, the Church is not addressed as such, but the saints individually—not in their aspect of oneness with Christ. Even in the epistle to the Romans it is said,—whom he justified, them he also glorified;” but here we get Him only “crowned with glory and honor.” Further, I would remark as it is not of union with Christ, of which the apostle speaks here, responsibility is pressed; continual “ifs” and warnings flow from this. These warnings do not one whit touch the final perseverance of the saints, as the doctrine is called; though I would rather say, the perseverance of God, His faithfulness, for He it is who keeps us to the end. “If you continue,” does not throw a doubt on your continuance. The quickening work of the Spirit of God is scarcely referred to in this epistle, save in one or two cases. (Chap. 2:2.) “The word spoken by angels,” means the law given at Sinai. In these verses the whole Jewish nation is addressed, while those only who had faith would receive the warning. And I would notice that the winnings of God are not merely against sin, but not to let slip truth, &c. Christ came into the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them, but they added to their rebellion of heart by rejecting Him who came to warn them. Neglecting salvation is despising it. By the rejection of Christ the Jews bound their sins upon them. To have broken the law was had enough, but to reject grace was worst; and these first four verses press this upon them.

God's purpose for man, (ver. 5, and following,) is to set him over everything; but that purpose is still unfulfilled. “The world to come” is not heaven, for that does exist now; but it is the habitable earth to come, not this earth in its present state. The Jews expected a new order of things; they looked for blessing and peace, and they were right, for so it will be. The present world is in subjection to angels. God's hand is not seen directly, but His angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Everything in this world, however mercifully ordered in providence, is a proof of sin—the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, &c. All this was not God's purpose. He is not, as I said, now acting directly. He permits and overrules, but He draws His own people from this world, (delivering us “from this present evil world,") and then teaches them to walk through it, as not of it. He protects us through His angels; they are His ministers in His providential dealings. (Ver. 6.) But it is man who is to be set over the world to come. Once (in Adam) dominion was committed to man, but he lost it. (Ver. 8, &c.) God's purpose. that is, His order of things, is not thereby touched. Now we see Jesus crowned, and when we are, then all things will be accomplished. The Head is now glorified, and the members are down here in suffering. Christ is sitting at God's right hand, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. Take Psa. 2 and compare it with Psa. 8. God says, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” Christ is come, and is not yet set there as king.

Now, Psa. 8 shows that, though rejected as Messiah, Jesus took the place of Son of man. So when Peter confesses Him as the Christ, Jesus charges him straightly not to tell any, for “the Son of man (This title in Psa. 8) must suffer many things,” &c. Sin must be put away before God could set up His kingdom. We are now passing through that order or state of things which is not yet put under Jesus. Christ has gone through this very world, and been tempted, before He took his place as priest, that He might succor them that are tempted. This is not sin, for we do not want sympathy in sin, but help and power to get out of and overcome it, and all this we have in Him. He went perfectly through reproach and tribulation. All that Satan could do to stop Him in His godly course Satan did; but all was in vain. The Lord “resisted unto blood.” We need to pray God for help to judge sin each in himself. Sympathy in distress and suffering is another thing, and this we have as well as forgiveness.

I began by saying there were two things—the purpose and the ways of God. Now, the latter it is our privilege to trace, while the former remains still unaccomplished. instead of being merely Son of David, Christ is Son of man. he takes possession in our nature—not, of course, in the state in which it is in us, but still in our very nature. Now, as to the ways of God, we get these in ver. 10: “By the grace of God he tasteth death,” &c. Mark this well—our sin brings us to the same place which, by the grace of God, He took. Perfect grace and perfect obedience we find in Him. When Christ came, as in Psa. 40, to do the will of God, God's majesty needed to be vindicated; and I would say, unhesitatingly, that God's truth, His righteousness, His love, his majesty were all vindicated by the death of Christ, aye, far more than they would have been, had we all died. In anticipation of this, He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” His love could not fully flow forth till then. in the words, “It became him,” I find the character of God; while in the expression, “many sons,” I find the objects of His love. He could not bring us to glory in our sins. We get Christ taking up the cause of this remnant; and where, historically, did He begin? It was in John's baptism that He outwardly identified himself with His people, that is, with the sanctified ones. (Ver. 11. See Psa. 16:2, 3.) His association was with the saints; and there cannot be a step in the divine life in which Christ does not go along with us. Christ, in all that He is, is with us in the smallest fiber of divine life, from the repentance which is at the beginning. Not, of course, that He had ought to repent; yet His heart is with us in it. This is as true now, as it will be when manifested in glory. (Ver. 16.) There was no union of Christ with the flesh. The associates of Christ are the excellent of the earth; while in grace one of His sweetest titles was “the friend of publicans and sinners.”

Verse 12 is a quotation from Psa. 22 where Jesus in resurrection takes the place of leader of the praise of His brethren. Our songs should, therefore, ever accord with His. He has passed through death for us; and if our worship express uncertainty and doubt, instead of joy and assurance, in the sense of accomplished redemption, there can be no harmony, but discord, with the mind of heaven.

Verse 13, quoted from Psa. 16, where, as also elsewhere, Christ on earth takes the place of the dependent man. He is specially thus described in Luke's gospel, where it is so frequently recorded that He swayed. Again, “Behold I and the children,” &c. This passage from Isa. 8:18, is particularly applicable to these Hebrew believers. While waiting for Israel, He and His disciples are for signs.

In ver. 14 we find the consequence of His association with us. In these latter verses we have these two things: He took our nature that He might die, and also that He might go through temptation. We were alive under death; then Christ comes, and He takes upon Him all the power of Satan and death, and destroys thus Him that hath the power of death. By His death He made propitiation for sin. The feeling's of His soul, the temptations of Satan, were before His actual death, in the garden of Gethsemane, where His language was, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” This was because of Satan's power; for He said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” But all this He went through, as part of His appointed sufferings. In the three first Gospels, we have His cry in Gethsemane. In John. we have His remembrance of His mother, and His other cries (“ I thirst!” and “It is finished!") at the cross; and this is in character with that Gospel in which His divine aspect is given. After the conflict with Satan was over, Christ took the cup from His Father's hand. They who were sent to secure Him had no power against Him for they all Fell back; but He gave Himself up. Satan pressed the cup upon Him; but He took it from the hand of His Father.

As regards temptation, I should hope to speak more about it another time. I would only now say that succoring is not dying instead of me; but now that I am going through this world, I need succor. The ark in Jordan was like Christ preceding us through the waters of death, which to Him overflowed its banks, while we follow dry-shod. For what is dying to the Christian? It is passing away from all sorrow into the presence of the Lord—the happiest moment in a Christian's existence.

Chapter 91

Thoughts on Hebrews 3

The first title of our Lord in this chapter is connected with the first part of the epistle; the second, viz., the priesthood, refers to what follows afterward. In chapter 1 also we have His qualification for being the Apostle; in chapter 2, His qualification for the priesthood. He was the Divine Messenger for the testimony He was to bring to earth; and He is gone up on high to exercise His priesthood on behalf of a needy people down here where He has been. “God manifest in flesh, justified in the Spirit—received up in glory,” referring to His having come down and become man. He must be in the holy place in order to carry on His work as Priest; but He must be a man. Therefore what He was on earth fitted Him, as it were, for this work. There is a third character connected with Christ brought out in this third chapter; Christ set “over His own House.” In this epistle we do not get the unity of the body at all; we get a Mediator speaking to God for us, and speaking from God to us: “Let us hold fast the profession,” &c. If He spoke of the unity of the body, that is inseparable; there is one Holy Ghost uniting the members to the Head,” ye in me, and I in you.” It is not so here. Therefore, profession is spoken of, and the possibility of that being not true profession; yet assuming it might be sincere, “we are persuaded better things of you,” &c. (Chap. vi.) There might be all these privileges and no fruit, but falling away. These Hebrews had made a public profession of having embraced Christ, and received a heavenly calling. in speaking of the body of Christ, we know it is perfect—no possibility of a false member getting in; but in a living congregation, I may address them as hoping they are all saints, but the end proves. No man can tell the end, whether they will all persevere; but if there is life, we know they will.

“Apostle of our profession,” it could not be said, Apostle of life. We never can understand this epistle properly, unless we get hold of this truth. In Ephesians, where the body is more the subject, I do not get such an expression as this, “that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.”

The character of this epistle not being understood is the reason many souls are tried and exercised by passages they find in it. They are addressed with the possibility of their not having life, and so not continuing to the end. The Church supposes a body in heaven. “Heavenly calling” does not necessarily imply that, because they are called to heaven, they are part of the body of Christ. The kingdom and the body are different. “Head over all things to the Church” is wider, too, than the kingdom. Kingdom implies a king; a body implies a head. The Church is precious to God. Everything that Christ has, I have; the same life, the same righteousness, the same glory. If my hand is hurt, I say it is I who am hurt. Paul was converted by this truth, “Why persecutest thou me?” It shows what grace has done for us—taken us out of ourselves. The body of Christ shows out the fullness of redemption, and the purpose of God respecting it. But another aspect of the people of God is down here in infirmity, but having this heavenly calling. In this condition I need One in heaven; and there is not all infirmity, a need, a sorrow, an ache, an anxiety, but it draws out sympathy and help from Christ. This draws out my affections to Him. But before the priesthood is taken up, Moses is spoken of as a type:— “Christ Jesus, faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” The house is the place where God dwells: and there is another thing here—the Head of the house administered in it.

God has met this people according to the need in which they were. In Egypt they need redemption, and He comes to redeem. In the wilderness they were dwelling in tents, and He would have a tent too. In getting into the land they wanted One to bring them in, and there is the captain of the Lord's host. Then, when they are in the land, He builds His palace, His temple. There is rest. We are not come to the temple yet—we have not rest: we get the tabernacle now, and “there remaineth a rest.” There was a temple existing when these Hebrews were addressed, but that was not for us.

The temple is a dwelling for God. There never was a dwelling-place for God until redemption came in. Scripture never speaks of man getting back to innocency, or the image of God. God did not dwell with Adam; though in the cool of the day He came to talk with him. Neither did He dwell with Abraham. “The earth hath he given to the children of men” — “the heaven's are the Lord's.” But when redemption comes in, God is forming something for Himself. Thus, in Ex. 15:13, “habitation” refers to what they had in the wilderness; verse 17 to the rest at the end. (Ex. 29.)

There were visits to Abraham (Abraham will dwell in heaven), but God could not have a habitation among men until He had made known redemption to them. The nature and character of God require it. Love is God's character: to enjoy God I must be with Him. Holiness is His nature. We are made sons of God ("the servant abideth not in the house forever,” &c.) in the divine nature communicated to us, we are capable of being at home in that house of God, and redemption gives the title.

The individual Christian is a temple now; but the temporary provisional thing is God dwelling with us. The full blessed thing is our dwelling with God. (John 14.) I go not away to be alone there, but to have you there. “I go to prepare a place for you.” In verse 23 the Father and the Son make their abode with us till we are taken to abide with them. God's having a house, as a general thought, is the consequence of redemption. Here in Hebrews it is rather alluded to as to administration than dwelling. “Habitation of God,” is the present thing; “temple,” is future in Eph. 2 It is spoken of in a larger and vaguer way in Hebrews, because here it takes in profession. he that built all things is God. In one sense creation is His house; in another, Christ has passed through the heavens., as High Priest, into the heaven of heavens, (through the two vails, as is represented in the type), into the holiest. In a third sense the body professing Christianity is His house, “whose house are we,” &c.—the saints. There may be hypocrites amongst them; but they “are builded together for an habitation of God,” &c. Christ administers in it, as Son over His own house. Moses was but servant in the building. There is immense comfort for us in this; first, because it is perfectly governed; second, when we look at the house, we may see all sorts of failures coming in; but though all may be failure, the One who administers in the house cannot fail. Therefore, though all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, Paul could say, “Rejoice in the Lord alway,” &c. There is One whom nothing escapes. Anyone who has a real care for the Church of God, need never distrust. Paul, in looking at the Galatians, sees so much wrong that he does not know what to think of them: he changes his voice towards them. Ye that are under the law, hear the law. But in the next chapter he says, “I have confidence in you through the Lord.” Christ is over His own house. Two things follow then. He will turn everything to blessing—Paul in prison, &c.; and there is present good too. When all the joints and bands do not play as they ought, the immediate ministry of Christ is more experienced. Christ connects everything with his glory; and faith connects the glory of the Lord with the people of the Lord. Moses did so. Faith does not only say, the Lord is

glorious, and He will provide the means for His own glory; but it sees the means for it. Moses said, “Spare the people,” when with God; and when he came down amongst them, he “cut off the people,” because he was alive to God's glory (in the matter of the calf in the camp).

We have to count upon Christ for the Church, not upon itself. Thus Paul, when tried by Nero, passes sentence as it were upon himself; (Phil. 1:23-25;) he settles it that he shall be acquitted. Why? Because he sees it is more needful for them—one single Church. It was divine teaching and faith in exercise which made him to judge thus.

There is failure on the part of the Church down here as to responsibility, but Christ has perfect authority in His Church, and He has interest in it. We have not to make rules for the Church; it is the Master must govern the house, not the servants. There is one Master, and that is Christ. He is over the Church, and not the Church over Him. “Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence,” &c. Ah! people say, don't you be too confident, because there is an “if.” But, I ask, what have you got What he presses is, that you should not let it go. Is that to be used to hinder my having the confidence? What did they believe? That Christ was come—al heavenly Savior to them, and this far better than an earthly one. Do not give up that. There is a fear of their living up that confidence, not of their being too confident. What am I to distrust? Myself? Oh! I cannot distrust myself too much. But is it Christ you distrust? his eye ever grow dim, or His heart grow cold? Will He leave off interceding? A proof that I am a real stone in the house is that I hold fast the confidence, &c. Those high priests under the old dispensation were continually standing; but He has sat down, because the work is all done. They needed for every sin a new sacrifice: sin was never put away. They needed a fresh absolution from the priest every time sin came up. Now, He says, “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” If you are under law, it is another thing; you have not got the confidence. If you talk of distrust, what do you distrust? If you trust in man at all, it is a proof you do not see that you are lost. If you give up confidence in yourself, and say, I am lost already, it is another thing. No one that has really come to redemption, has in the substance of his soul confidence in himself; and no Christian will say, you ought to distrust Christ. Our privilege is to have confidence in Christ as a rock under our feet, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His righteousness has brought Christ into the glory as a man, and the same righteousness will bring me in.

Does another person say, I do not know whether I have a portion in it? You are under the law: God may be plowing up your soul—exercising it for good; but you have not been brought to accept the righteousness of God. The soul in this state has not accepted the righteousness of God for it, instead of ours for Him. You are still depending on your own heart for comfort and assurance. It is a very serious thing to get the soul so empty of everything. that it has only to accept what God can give. It is an awful. thing to find oneself in God's presence, with nothing to say or to present. You never get love to Christ until you are saved; and it is the work of God's Spirit. The prodigal found what he was by what his father was. Did the prodigal doubt his interest when the father was on his neck?

The remainder of this chapter takes up the people of Israel—the professing people in the wilderness. They did not get into the land, but their carcasses fell in the wilderness. It is speaking of them on the road. The “to-day” quoted from Psa. 95 never closes for Israel, till God has taken up the remnant at the end of His dealings with them, after the Church is gone up to heaven.

Ver. 14. “Partakers” is the same word as that translated “fellows” in chap. 1. You are fellows of Christ if. you are of this company. ere place with the fellows is yours if you go on to the end. This kind of statement does not touch time question of the security of the saints. Both Calvinists and Arminians might say, He will reach heaven, if he holds fast to the end. The certainty of salvation is the certainty of faith, and not that winch excludes dependence upon God for every moment. I have no doubt that God will keep every one of His saints to the end; but we have to run the race to obtain eternal glory.

Holding fast the faithfulness of God, it is important. along with this, to keep up the plain sense of passages such as the present, which act on the conscience as warning by the way. There is no uncertainty, but there is the working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. In 1 Cor. 9:27, personal Christianity is distinguished from preaching to others. It is not a question of the work, but of the person being ■δ■κιμος, and this means disapproved or reprobate, i.e., not a Christian. (Comp. 2 Cor. 13.) In Rom. 2 eternal life is spoken of as the result of a course which pleases God. No doubt, His grace gives the power; but it is the result of a fruit-bearing course. In a word, it is equally true that I have eternal life, and that I am going on to eternal life. God sees it as one existence, but we have to separate it in time. Walk that road, and you will have what is at the end of it. This does not interfere with the other truth, that God will keep His own, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. Our Father says, as it were, That is my child, and I watch him all the way, and take care to keep Him in it.

Chapter 92

Thoughts on Hebrews 4

The word of God is connected with the apostleship. (Chap. 3:1.) In the last verses the priesthood of Christ the subject. These are the two means of our being carried through the wilderness—the word of God, and priesthood of Christ. Israel were treated as a people brought out of Egypt, but liable to fall by the way. So the warning to these Hebrews, (chap. 4:1.) “as to seeming to come short.” The word is softened. In chap. 3 we have seen them addressed as a body brought out under the name of Christ, but admitting the possibility of hypocrites among them.

There are two distinct things connected with the people—redemption, and being carried on when brought oat into the wilderness.

The epistles to the Hebrews and to the Philippians both address saints as in the wilderness. In Philippians it is more personal experience that is spoken of, e.g., “I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer.” In both it is as passing through the wilderness, and not yet in the rest.

Ver. 1. We have “His rest.” Not merely rest, but God's rest; and this makes all the difference. It is not merely as tired ones, and glad to rest; we are going into the rest of God. There is an allusion to creation when God saw all that He had made very good. He delighted in it, and rested. Spiritual labor now is not rest, nor the worry and plague of sin. God will rest in His love. (Zeph. 3:17.) How could He rest here? Not till He sees all those He loves perfectly happy. How can He rest where sin is? Holiness cannot rest where sin is. Love cannot rest where sorrow is. He rested from His works in the first creation, because it was al] very good; but when sin came in, His rest was broken. He must work again. God finds rest where everything is according to His own heart. He is completely satisfied in the exercise of His love.

When conflict and labor are over, we shall get into the rest in which He is. That is the promise. “A promise being left us of entering into his rest” —God's own rest. If affections have not their object, they are not at rest. They will have this then, and we shall be like Him. There will be also comparative rest, even for this poor creation, by and by.

These Hebrews, who are addressed, are compared to the Jews who came out of Egypt, some of whom fell; but he says, “We are persuaded better things of you,” ye “are not of them that draw back unto perdition.” What had they got? Their Messiah on earth? No. He was gone, and they were left strangers as to what was here below and not having reached heaven either. That is what every Christian is: the state of his heart is another thing.

Ver. 2. “Gospel preached.” We have glad tidings preached to us as well as they. The apostle is speaking of the character of those who go in (heaven, God's rest, the promise for us, as Canaan was for Israel).

Unbelievers do not go into rest—believers do. That is the door they go in by.

As to God's creation, there is no rest for them in it—it is not come for them. “If they shall enter,” &c. This means they shall not, but God did not make the rest for no one to enter. He begins again. (Ver. 7.) David came five or six hundred years after Moses, and in Psa. 95 he says, “To-day after so long a time,” &c. If they did not get into the rest by Joshua, there “remaineth a rest to the people of God.” That is not come at all yet. It is to be under the new covenant, when Christ comes, the Messiah according to their own Scriptures.

“He that is entered into His rest hath also ceased from His own works,” not only from sin. When God ceased, it was not from sin, but from labour. Godly works are not rest. God rests in Christ. I have ceased from my works, as regards my conscience because I have ceased from works for justification. I have not ceased from godly works: that rest is not come yet. Laboring to enter in here, does not mean as to justification. “There remaineth a rest.” We have the former, but there is more we wait for.

The two means of carrying us through, spoken of before, are the Word applied by the Spirit, and the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We never get union with Christ spoken of here: there is no discerning, judging, &c., connected with that; but as Christians in the wilderness, there is, and the intercession of Christ is needed; as distinct, separate Christians going through the world, beset with snares on every hand, we are addressed.

It is remarkable how the word of God is made to be the revelation of God Himself. “The word of God is quick and powerful, manifest in his sight.” Whose sight? The word of God, the revelation of Christ. He is called the word of God— “God manifest in the flesh.” He was the divine life the perfection of all divine motives of a man in this world. The word of God brings the application of God's nature. All that He is, is applied to us in going through this world. That begins by our being begotten by the word—born again, of incorruptible seed—the divine nature imparted, which cannot sin because born of God. Then all the motives and intentions of the heart have to be displayed by this word. The written word is the expression of God's mind down here. Divine perfectness, as expressed in the life of Christ, in the written word, is applied to us. What selfishness was there in Christ? I do not now refer to His going about doing good, but as to the feelings and motives of His heart. How much has self been our motive! Not like Christ. It is not gross sins that are spoken of here, but “thoughts and intents of the heart.” How much self through the day!

In John 17 our Lord says “I sanctify myself.” Christ set apart as the perfection of man—Christ, a model man, if I may so speak—all that God approves in a man was seen in Christ. The same should be seen in us. “Sanctify them through thy truth.” The word applied to us in all this path, in motives, thoughts and feelings, is for this purpose. Christ was not only doing good; He walked in love, and He says to us, “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself,” “forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.” What comes down from God goes up to Him. Self may enter in our doing good; but only what is of a sweet savor goes up to God—“an offering to God.”

What is not done exclusively in the power of divine love, in the sense of an offering, is spoiled—self has come in.

“Dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” God has created natural affections, but how much self and idolatry come in! Self-will, too, and self-gratification, how awfully it comes in! That is soul, and not

spirit. The word of God comes in and knows how to divide between soul and spirit, what looks like the same thing, the very same affections, altar as man sees. What a mass of corruption! Can we have communion with God when self comes in? How powerless Christians are now—you, and I, and every one. There is grace, blessed be God! but, in a certain sense, how low we are! “I will give myself unto prayer,” said one. All blessing comes from the immediateness of a man's life with God. There are rivers of living water. How are you to get them? “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” and “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” A man must drink for himself first, before there can be rivers, &c. In the time of the prophets they had a message, “thus saith the Lord,” and then had to inquire the meaning of the prophecy, but with us, we drink ourselves first. We are so connected with Christ, that we have it ourselves from Him, before communicating it to others.

What would make us fall in the wilderness? The flesh. It has no communion with God; flesh in saints, as well as in others, is bad. What would make us fall is flesh—the unjudged “thoughts and intents of the heart.” The word of God comes and judges all that is of nature in us, after He has brought us out of Egypt. According to the new nature, everything is judged. Everything in Christ is applied to the motives and interests of our hearts—everything is judged according to God Himself. The word is a sword—not healing, but most unrelenting in this character. It detects poor flesh, shows it up, and marks its thoughts, intents, will, or lust. All is sifted. But are there no infirmities? Yes. But whenever the will and intent is at work, the word of God comes as a lancet to cut it all away. For infirmities, weakness, not will, we have a high priest, who was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin.

This is beautifully expressed in a figure in the Old Testament. There was water wanted; the rock was smitten, and the water flowed. (There are resources in Christ Himself, the smitten rock for us; but besides, for us there is the water, a well in us.) They were also tried all through the wilderness. The two-edged sword was wanted. There were murmurings.

They must be turned back. God turns back with them. How did they get through? What was on Moses' part, for he was like the apostle here, set forth? How was he to get rid of their murmurings? The rock has not to be smitten again. The rods must be put in. There are leaves, buds, blossoms on Aaron's—life out of death—living priesthood. Then go and speak to the rock. Suppose God had only executed judgment! How would they have got through the wilderness? There was the living priesthood come in; grace in the shape of priesthood. That carries us through: and all the infirmities, and even failures, when they are committed, are met by Him who has passed through the heavens, &c.

There is not the least mercy on the flesh. This is judged by the word. Moses, the meekest man, failed in that. Abraham, who had been taught God's almightiness, goes down to Egypt, and fails through fear. God glorified Himself. He glorified Himself at the rock in the wilderness, but Moses did not glorify Him, and he was shut out of the land.

Ver. 14. There are things mentioned, very important, about the priesthood. 1st. The priesthood is exercised in heaven, where we need it; it is the place where God is. When it was an earthly calling, the priesthood was on earth. Ours is a heavenly calling, and Christ, our high priest, has passed through the heavens. Another important part is, Christ in no sense has any of these infirmities while he is exercising the priesthood for us. He has passed through all the course in holiness,

obedience, and sanctity. When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them. He walks the sheep's path, and they follow Him. Christ went through all these exercises of a godly man (e.g. wanting bread, and being tempted to make it, but not yielding to it.) Everything that a saint can want as a saint, Christ went through before in perfection. There is the example of perfectness in Him, in the sheep's path; but that was not the time of His priestly work. He has passed through the road, and now can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

In Hebrews we have, as another brother has remarked, more of contrast than comparison. The vail in the tabernacle, and the priesthood in Israel, all in a contrasted state to that in which we have them. Our high priest is not compassed with infirmity. Mark the consequence of that: His being in heaven, He brings all the perfectness of the thought and feeling of the place He is in to bear on us. I have these infirmities and difficulties, and He helps me up into all the perfectness of the heavenly places where He is. That is just what we want. He can show a path, and feel what a path is of passing through this world, and bear the hearts down here clean up into heaven.

People often think of priesthood as a means of getting justified; but then God has the character of a judge in their eyes. They are afraid to go straight to God, and, not knowing grace and redemption, they think of enlisting Christ on their behalf. This is all wrong. Many a soul has done it in ignorance and infirmity, and God's meets it there, but it is to mistake our place as Christians. Does our getting the intercession of Christ depend upon our going to get it? It is when I have got away from God—when not going to him—I have an advocate with the Father. Again, Christ prayed for Peter before he committed the sin. It is the living grace of Christ in all our need—His thought for us, or we should never be brought back. It was when Peter had committed the sin that He looked on him. Even when we have committed faults, His grace thus comes in. It is in heaven He is doing it: then how can we have to say to Him if we have not righteousness? The reason I can go is because my justification is settled. He has given me the title of going into heaven in virtue of what He is, “Jesus Christ, the righteous” and what He has done. Our place is in the light as God is in the light—sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Our walk on earth is not always up to this. Our title is always the same, but our walk not. Then what is to be done? I am within the vail, and not in a condition to go there at all. The priesthood of Christ is there to reconcile the discrepancy between our position in heaven and our walk down here. Jesus Christ is the righteous one; and the righteousness I have in Him is the title I have to the place. The priestly work restores me to the communion of the place where I am in righteousness. It is immediately connected with the perfectness of His own walk down here and the place where He now is.

Satan came to Him, when here, and found nothing, He ought to find nothing in us, but he does. I do not want to spare the flesh; then there is the word of God for that. But in all the feelings down here, as He said, “reproach hath broken my heart.” In Gethsemane He was in an agony, and prayed the more earnestly. He had the heart of a man; and all that the heart of man can go through, He went through, but in communion with His Father, no failure possible. Apart from sin, is better than “yet without sin,” because there was no sin in Him inwardly any more than outwardly. In all these feelings he is now touched for us. Verse 16, “Come boldly to the throne of grace.” This is going straight to God, not to the priest. It is to the “throne of grace.” We want mercy; we are poor weak things, and need mercy; in failure we need mercy; as pilgrims we are always needing mercy. What mercy was shown to the Israelites in the wilderness! their garments not getting old; God even caring for the clothes on their backs! Think of the mercy that would not let their feet swell!

Then, when they wanted a way, Oh! says God, I will go before with the ark to find out a way. That was not the place for the ark at all. It was appointed to be in the midst of the camp, but God would meet them in their need. They want spies to go and see the land for them: fools that we are to want to know what is before us. They had to encounter the Amorites, high walls, giants. A land that devours the inhabitants, is their account of it, even with the grapes on their shoulders. Just like us on the way to heaven. They cannot stand these difficulties. We are as grasshoppers, say they; but the real question is, what God is.

As saints we are weaker than the world, and ought to be; but when waiting on God, what is that? When they have not confidence in God, they find fault with the land itself. What a wonderful God He is! He says, If you will not go into Canaan, you must stay in the wilderness; and He turns them, and turns back with them. It is grace, but the throne of grace. God governs: it is a throne. He will not let a single thing pass. See the people at Kibrothhataavah! In case of accusation from the enemy, as Balaam, there is not chastening, but He says, “I have not seen iniquity in Jacob. The moment it is a question between God's people and the enemy's accusation, He will not allow a word against them; but when there is an Achan in the camp, He judges. Why? Because He was there. It is a throne. If you are not victorious, there is sin.

We may come boldly to the throne, &c. Still it is a throne, (not a mediator,) but all grace. If I go to the throne, instead of the throne coming to me, so to speak, it is all grace; I get help. I never can go to the throne of grace without finding mercy. He may send chastening, but it is a throne of grace and all mercy— “grace to help in every time of need.” If you have a will, He will break it; if a need, he will help you. Do you feel that you can always go boldly, even when you have failed? humbled, of course, and at all times humble, but humbled when you have failed.

Chapter 93

Thoughts on Hebrews 5-6

Perfection here means the state of a full-grown man. There is much, and, in a certain sense, more, contrast than similarity in the allusions in Hebrews to the Old Testament types. We are now in a different position; those things which went before were only a shadow, instead of their giving us a distinct perception of our position. While they were figures, they did not disclose what we have at the present time. We have boldness to enter into the holiest; with them, the vail was there to separate them from it. In this passage it is important to see the contrast. Christ is the high priest. “Every high priest taken from among men (though He was taken from men, I need not say)... can have compassion on the ignorant... for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” Here is contrast, though the general. image is taken up. They had infirmity, and had to offer for themselves as well as for the people. If we do not see this, we may make great blunders in drawing these analogies. Absolute analogy in them would draw us away from the truth. There are certain landmarks of truth that guard the soul, e.g., the atonement. The priesthood of Christ is in heaven. It has to be exercised as a continual thing in the place where we worship. We worship in spirit in heaven, and there we want our priest. Those sacrifices were the memorial of sin; we have no more conscience of sin. The priest is there, once for all, in virtue of the sacrifice made once and forever. While, in point of fact, we fail, our place is always in Christ in heaven. When communion is interrupted, priesthood removes the hindrance.

Observe the dignity of the person called to this office. “Thou art my Son.” The glory of His person is owned in order to His priesthood. “This day have begotten thee.” (Ver. 5.) He was as really a man as ally of us, without the sinful part of it. He was neither like Adam nor us exactly. Adam had no “knowledge of good and evil.” Christ had—God has. But now men have the knowledge of good and evil and, with it, sin. Christ was born of a woman, but in a miraculous way. The spring was sinless, and yet He had the knowledge of good and evil.

We cannot fathom what He was. Our hearts should not go and scrutinize the person of Christ, as though we could know it all. No human being can understand the union of God and man in his person— “no man knoweth the Son but the Father.” All that is revealed we may know; we may learn a great deal about Him. The Father we know: “no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.” We know him to be holy; we know him to be love, &c. But when I attempt to fathom the union of God and man—no man can. We know He is God, and we know he is man—perfect man, apart from sin; and if He is not God, what is He to me? What difference between Him and another man? Christ came in flesh. Every feeling that I have (save sin), He had. The quotation here from Psa. 2, “This day have I begotten thee,” does not refer to his eternal Sonship, but to His being born into the world in humiliation. He is called to be high priest. He has this calling as a man, not only being taken from men. The glory of His person comes first. Looked at in the flesh, He was born of God; with us, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” But He in His very nature is associated with God, and associated with man. He is the “daysman that can lay his hand upon us both.” Job 9:1 may fancy myself clean when away from God, but when I come before God, I know Be will “plunge me in the ditch,” &c. “Let not his fear terrify me.” God

takes away the fear through Christ. Christ was perfect holiness, and He was ready for everything. This lowliness was perfect; fear is taken away by Him; He is even as a man, the holy one—on that side He lays hold on God, and on the other He lays His hand on us; thus on both He is the daysman to lay His hand upon us both.

The priest in Israel had to take offerings to cleanse himself. Christ is fitted in himself, without that. Aaron alone was anointed without blood; his sons after the sacrifice.

As to office, there is in Christ perfect competency. He is the Son, and therefore fit for God. He is man, and so fitted for me. I am not speaking of His sacrifice, but of His person. “This day have I begotten thee;” there is His person. Then comes the office, “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec,” without beginning of days, &c.; not like man with descent from one to another, “but after the power of an endless life,” without genealogies. These great principles are thus laid down concerning His person and office—the Son and a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Before He takes the office, there is another qualification necessary. There would be a difficulty (not in the earthly priesthood, for it was connected with an earthly tabernacle, and earthly worship, but) now it is in a heavenly place, and the worship is in heaven. Then the priesthood must be in heaven. He could not have experience of infirmity there. What must He do? He goes through all first.

Priesthood supposes a people reconciled to God. There was the day of atonement, and daily priestly offices went on with the reconciliation for the year. The day of atonement laid the foundation for the priesthood for the year. Then on that day the high priest represented the whole people—laid his hand on the scapegoat in order to their reconciliation; (this was not the continued office;) that Christ did on the cross, as the victim and the representative. He gave His own blood. He suffered as well as represented the people, and then he went within the vail, in virtue of the reconciliation He has made. One of these goats was the Lord's lot, (the other was the people's,) and the blood was put on the mercy-seat. There was no confession of sills in that. Christ's blood being on the mercy-seat is the ground on which is proclaimed mercy to all the world, even to the vilest sinner in the world. But suppose a person comes and says, “I find sin is working in me; how can I come to God?” I say, Christ has borne your sins; He has represented you there; confessed your sins on His own head, and God has condemned sin in the flesh in Christ. A person is often more troubled at the present working of sin in him than at all the sins past; but I say to that person, God has condemned your sin on Christ. God's character has been glorified, majesty, righteousness, love—all vindicated on the cross. God's truth is vindicated. he said, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die,” and Christ dies instead. Then when I get my conscience exercised, it is not enough to see God has been glorified in the death of Christ; I feel may own sin before God. Then I see that He has confessed may sins; and now, as Priest on high, He maintains me in the power of the reconciliation made.

Before He made the sacrifice, He has gone the path the sheep trod. It was before He began to represent His people,— “who in the days of his flesh” —a past thing, before He exercised His priesthood. When He putted forth His own sheep, He goeth before them in the paths of temptation, sorrow, difficulty. Therefore it is said of Him, “the author and finisher of faith,” not our faith there. We go through our small portion of exercise of faith. He went through everything. Moses refused the treasures in Egypt; Christ refused the whole world. Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise

as in a strange country;" Christ was a stranger in the whole world. In all His path we see him not screening Himself by His divine power, but bearing everything that a human heart could bear. There is not a trial but He felt it. If I speak of a convicted conscience, this is another thing. He did bear that; but it was in our stead, on the cross. In a still deeper way, He took it all upon Himself. What entire dependence! "Prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death," &c. Especially in Gethsemane did He realize the full power of what He came to meet. In His walk we are to follow Him, to "walk as he walked." But in Gethsemane it is another thing—He was alone there.

There are three parts in Christ's life. In the beginning He was tempted, first to satisfy His own hunger, and then with all the vanities of this world, but He would not have them, He did not come for that. The next thing was more subtle; the answer He gave, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" —thou shalt not try the Lord. Tempting is not trusting. When the people tempted the Lord, they went up to the mountain to see if God would help them. Christ would not take these things from Satan's hands. He bound the strong man, and He departs for a season; then Christ goes on spoiling his goods—healing the sick, raising the dead, &c. A power had come in in grace, perfectly able to deliver this world from the power of Satan, to deliver us as to the consequences of sin—all the misery and wretchedness here. But there was something deeper: man had hatred to God—they would not have Him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." They entreated Him to depart out of their coasts in one place. For His love He received enmity. This world would have been a delivered place, if they would have had Him, but they would not; and man profits by the occasion of God's humbling Himself so as to be within man's reach, by seeking to get rid of Him! That brings out another point. Having taken up the people, He must take consequences. Satan says, if you do not give me my rights over them, you must suffer. Satan comes and uses all the power he has over man to deter Christ front going through. In the garden of Gethsemane, He calls it "the power of darkness," and says, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye and watch," &c.; but they could not watch with Him, they went fast asleep. As Satan has power in death, He brings it over Christ. Does Christ go back? No; but being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly; He does not defend Himself; He might have driven away Satan, but He would not have delivered us if He had. No other cup did he ever ask to be taken away; but He could not be under the wrath of God, and not feel it. He was heard because of His fear. He went down into the depth where Satan had full power over His soul. He was in an agony, in conflict, but there was perfect obedience and dependence, "Not may will, but thine be done;" only He was crying the more earnestly to God, and then let His soul go into the depth under Satan's power. If He had not given Himself up, they would have gone away who came to take Him; they went backward and fell to the ground. Again He presents Himself to them, "I am Jesus of Nazareth. if ye seek me, let these go their way." He puts Himself forward into the gap. He goes to the cross; and there, before He gives up His soul to His Father, He has drunk that cup; then His soul re-enters the presence of His Father. Having gone through Satan's power in death, ("this is your hour and the power of darkness,") He goes forward; God raises Him from time dead, and gives Him a place in glory. He is the full-grown man, as the second Adam—perfect. Stephen saw Him as "the Son of man," on the right hand of God.

Now we might suppose that He had come to time end of His service, after humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death as time servant. What more? See John 13. He is going to be just as

much the servant as ever!

Three things we have seen connected with His priesthood, besides His person. He has walked the same path we have to tread, only unfailingly, through it all, and even unto death. That is one thing. He understands the path. When there is sin, He dies. In His living, holiness is seen. The second thing is in making propitiation for the sins of the people—blood is presented. Thirdly, He is a perfect man in time presence of God. I have, then, the path-trodden sin atoned for, and a living man in the presence of God—an Advocate, Jesus Christ, time righteous. The foundation is not altered, righteousness remains. He has made propitiation for our sins. He has gone through all the trials of the way, and is proclaimed or saluted ("declared") of God an High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec. The trial is gone through, and the work is wrought out before He enters in, and He is perfect righteousness in the presence of God. Aaron's order was not Christ's order at all. Christ's is Melchizedec's order; but the analogy is according to Aaron. What was Melchizedec's order? Blessing. He blessed Abraham from God, and God from Abraham. When the full time of blessing is come for heaven and earth, He will have it as Melchizedec had it. it will be praise and power, We have the taste of it now. 1 Peter 2:9. When we are with Christ in glory, we shall sinew forth His praises. While He is within the vail, not yet come out, He does not publicly take this title; outward blessing is not come. Why? Is He indifferent? slack concerning His promise? No; but if He put all this evil down by judgment, men must perish; but He is long-suffering, not willing any should perish, &c. While Christ is within the vail, the operation of the Spirit is going on, gathering in poor sinners. He has the title now, but not display. It is, therefore, after the analogy of Aaron. We enter with Him in spirit, there to offer up spiritual sacrifices. The display of power is not come, but we are within the vail, therefore the apostle presses them to go on unto perfection, full stature growth. What is my measure of a perfect man? In one sense, Adam was a very imperfect man, and what he has in innocence he soon lost, at any rate; (imperfect, therefore, in the sense of being able to lose it;) and certainly man is not perfect now in the Adam state. Where, then, is perfection? In the man in heaven. I have it in the knowledge of my position now in Christ, not in fact there myself yet, but in Him; and we are to “bear the image of the heavenly;” in that sense perfect. The Father has set Him at His right hand. Then, suppose I have the knowledge of that, I am called to walk as such. Then why perfect? Because I have fellowship with Him, association with Him where He is.

Does any Christian say, ‘I am at the foot of the cross.' Christ is not at the foot of the cross. The cross puts a man in Leaven. Christ is in heaven. You have not come to Him yet. You are laboring about in the thoughts of your own heart, and have not followed Him in faith to where He is, if you are at the foot of the cross. How do I see the effect of the cross now? By being in heaven. I have come in through this rent vail. (The person is not to be despised who is there; but you have not come in by the cross through the vail, if you are at the foot of the cross.) If you were inside the vail you would know yourself worse—not one good thing in flesh. It is precious to see a soul exercised even in that way, as the prodigal son in the far country; but he had not come to his father then: he had not found out where he was. There was a mixture of self, not knowing his father, and talking about being a hired servant. He had not had the Father on his neck, or he could not have thought of being a servant. It is not humility, as people think, to be away from God, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, as Peter. Is insensibility to God's goodness humility? The prodigal could not dictate and prescribe when his Father was on his neck: he had no business to be in the house at all as a hired servant. It is not humility. It is a mixture of self with the knowledge of having got

away front God. Where will you put yourself? You must take Christ's place or none. That is what is meant by perfect here. There is one way of coming in; it is by Christ who is in the glory. We have no title to any other place. How is Christ there? Not in virtue of His High Priesthood, but He is there in virtue of the offering for sin for us. “I have glorified thee on the earth.” “Father, glorify thy Son.” That is the reason the apostle speaks of the gospel of the glory. Christ is in heaven, the witness of the perfectness of the work that He has done. (Ver. 13, 14.) Milk is fit for a babe and strong meat for a full-grown roan; that is all that is meant. Do not let us look for a place the godly Jew had, but the place Christ has. Then he goes on warning them, if they are only on this Jewish ground.

On the cross, Christ was drinking the cup; in Gethsemane, anticipating it. Death and judgment are gone; Christ cannot die again. The victory is complete. Sins are put away and He is gone into heaven in consequence; and that victory is ours.

Nothing seemed to be a greater burden on the heart of Paul than to keep the saints up to their privileges. They saw Christ had died for them, (and this had not the power over them it ought to have had), but they were risen with Him also; they were in Christ in heavenly places, within the wail; and how were they realizing that?— “Are become such as have need of milk.” There is a great deal of love in the heart when first converted. And there is another thing. When first converted, all these things are easier to understand than when more used to hearing them, and the world comes in. When there is freshness in the heart, the understanding goes with it. Great force is in that word “become,” (chap. v. 12,) here. See the state they were in (Heb. 10) when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had “a better and an enduring substance.” Because they knew they had substance in heaven, they were willing to sacrifice what was here. When Christ had not that place in the heart, they were not willing to give up those things, and the understanding of the heavenly things would be dulled too. Freshness of affection and intelligence go together. When it is bright sunshine, things at a distance are easily seen. If it is dark, there is more difficulty. In the day one may walk through the streets without thinking about the way—one knows it; but at night one has to look and think which way. Just so with spiritual thing's; there is less spring, less apprehension, less clearness, when our hearts are not happy. My judgment is clear when my affections are warm. Motives that acted before, cease to be motives when my heart is right. I can count all dross and clung, when force is given to my affections. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age;” not persons who have made a great progress, but persons of full age. There were things hard to be uttered, because they were dull of hearing. The freshness of affection being lost was the secret of all this. It is serious to think that freshness of affection and intelligence we may lose; but “to him that hath shall more be given.” There are good and evil to be discerned; therefore I spoke of finding the way.

Take this in connection with the beginning of the next chapter, “Therefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ,” &c., instead of wasting your time with what has passed away, go on to the full revelation of Christ; be at home there, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. We cannot separate the knowledge of good and evil from the knowledge of Christ. When I come to separate between them of myself, how can? How can I walk as He walked, without Him? I cannot do it. “In Him.” What is that? “Ye in me.” Where is Christ? In heaven; then I am there too. My affections should be there too; my hope is to be thoroughly identified with Him. The portion I have is what He

has—life, glory; what He has; all my associations are with Himself. There is the difference between the principles of the beginning of Christ and the full perfection “being made perfect,” (chap. v. 9,) glorified. He went through the experience down here, and then went into heaven to be priest, because our blessings, associations, &c., are all above, perfect up there, not down here. He had not received that point of the counsels of God in glory when down here. Now He is there, and He has associated me with Himself in that place. I can see Christ has been through this world so as to sympathize with us in all our sorrows and difficulties. He has borne my sins; and where is He now? In heaven; and I am there too, in spirit, and He will bring me there in fact. Where He is, is His “being made perfect.” The work is done, and now He is showing me the effect of that—showing me the walk belonging to the righteousness He has wrought out. He has taken my heart, and associated me with: Himself; and he says that is the “perfection” for me to go on to. Where did Paul see Christ! In glory. If he had known Christ after the flesh before, he did not know Ma so now; (that was the beginning when on earth;) but now he knew Him in heaven; and this great truth was revealed to him, that all the saints on earth were as Christ. Paul had been a hater of Christ, had sought to root out His name from the earth; he had gone on in sin, been a breaker of the law, a rejecter of Christ when on earth, and, more than that, he had resisted the Holy Ghost, refused the testimony by the Holy Ghost given in mercy to those people for whom Christ interceded on the cross.

They stoned Stephen who bore witness, and Saul was helping in it. He was “chief of sinners,” because wasting the Church of God. He discovered the carnal mind to be enmity against God, not subject to God; he proved it in his own experience, and now he found there were saints not in that state—those quickened with Christ, and associated with Christ in glory. “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” They were not associated with the first Adam, but with the second man, in Christ; that was their position. These people whom he had been persecuting were Christ. What broke him down was seeing Christ in glory, and all these associated with Him. Now he learns that he is dead to law, dead to flesh. The Christ I want to win is a glorified Christ. To win Christ may cost me my life. Never mind. That is my object. As to the first Adam, he was “weighed in the balance, and found wanting.” He is out of it; not in the flesh, but in Christ. The old thing entirely past; dead to the law, the world, &c.; dead and risen again, having another object. He is alive from the dead, because Christ is; he is “accepted in the beloved;” he has the consciousness that this work of Christ put him into a new place: (not glorified yet in the body:) this was the “perfection.” What was the state of his affections then? “That I may win Christ,” was his desire. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” This was his object. His mind was full of it.

The Holy Ghost has come down to brim all these things to cur remembrance. Believers are united to Christ (it is never said Christ was united to man) in glory. Then the apostle was living by the power of the Holy Ghost. What a trial for him to see these people going back to their “first principles,” “repentance from dead works, faith toward God eternal judgments” —all true! but if you stop there, you stop short of a glorified Christ. “Who hath bewitched you?” he says to the Galatians. He says of himself, “I know a man in Christ,” and his spirit is broken to find the saints resting with things on earth about Christ. The Holy Ghost was come out to make them partakers of a heavenly calling; to associate them in heart and mind with Christ, and to show them things to separate them from the world; not only to keep them from evil, though that is true, too. They had a

temple standing then, where Christ Himself had been. Why should they have left it if Christ had not judged the flesh? The middle wall had been put up: how should they dare break it down, if God had not done it If God had not said, “I will not have to say to flesh any more,” how could they dare leave the camp and go outside? Christ glorified is the end of all the “first principles,” and we have to go through the world strangers and pilgrims.

The only thing God ever owned in religion was Jewish. It had to do with the flesh. That is gone by the cross; all is crucified: your life, your home, your associations, are all in Christ. The doctrine of the beginning of Christ was not that. What do I find when Christ is on earth? He is speaking then of judgment to come, which they believe. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection from death; baptisms, which mean washings, &c. All these they had then; they formed a worldly religion, and were sanctioned by God until the cross. The Messiah coming on earth was the beginning, but now I leave that. I do not deny these things; they are all true; but I have other things. Saul might have been the brightest saint going under the old things, but not knowing Christ. But suppose persons got into the heavenly thing, being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, having “tasted the good word of God,” and then gave it up, what could they do then? Suppose they had received it all in their minds, and then gave it up: what else was there for them? There might have been a going on from faith in a humbled Christ to a glorified Christ, but there is nothing beyond.

There is nothing of life signified here, in their being partakers of the Holy Ghost. It brings very strongly before us the actual presence of the Holy Ghost, and power through Him; a very different thing from life; and what, notwithstanding, we are in want of knowing. We must have that besides life. Being born of the Spirit, there is power for us through the presence of a person, who may act in another without his having life. There may be light in the soul without the smallest trace of life. In the case of Balaam, we read the Spirit of God came upon him: he had to see the blessedness of God's people, and speak of it. He had light, but there was sleep on his soul, and he has to say, “I shall see him, but not now.” That was the opposite to having life. You see a man close to life, seeing all the blessing of it, but not having it. Now, if all the heavenly blessing is seen and rejected, what else could there be?

“Tasted the good word of God” —Simon Magus is an example of this.

“Powers of the world to come” or miracles, putting down Satan's power. In the future day this power will gain the victory over all Satan's power. Simon Magus wanted this power when he saw it.

Impossible, if they shall fall away seeing they have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh,” &c. The nation had crucified Him—they did not know what they were doing. Now these knew what they were doing. The Holy Ghost had poured forth the light, and now they did it for themselves. It was not ignorance, it was will. There are some who anon with joy receive the word—the very thing that proves there is nothing in it. They would have it in joy, and give it away in tribulation. The word of God does not always give joy. When it comes in and reaches the conscience, and breaks up the fallow ground, and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart, that is not joy. It racks the heart when it is to profit, but it is for life and health. Here is not merely the joy of hearing about it, but having tasted of the good word about a glorified, heavenly Christ. It is not quickening that is spoken of here. Moses was quickened, but he was not baptized with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghosts did not come till Pentecost.

He made the house shake where they were assembled, but that was not for giving life. Power is a different thing from giving life. Those already quickened were to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. There were manifestations of God through these things. tongues, &c., anticipative of the setting up of the kingdom. It is after salvation is given, after the soul is born of God, the Holy Ghost comes to the believer as a seal, an earliest, an unction. I might get a taste of the power without being sealed; but as a believer I have the seal, am broken down in myself, not only “with joy” receiving it. I am a sinner—no good in me. It is a direct question between my soul and God; not like Simon Magus, believing the miracles that He did. Before I was converted, I believed there was Christ, as much as I do now. When Christ was on earth, there were those who saw the miracles, and went home again. But when the Spirit of God works in the heart, He shows what we are and makes us submit to God's righteousness. It plows up the whole soul and being of it man—makes him submit to the righteousness of God—shows him his place in the risen Christ—shows him that all is his. That is a different thing to merely seeing it. If you have rejected these glorious things, there is nothing else for you. If you will not have Christ, there is nothing else. Here this warning is in connection with the Holy Spirit in the tenth chapter. It is connected with the sacrifice. Then what follows shows no change supposed in the man. “The earth which drinketh in the rain receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected,” &c. The ground is just the same—the rain comes upon it, but it brings forth briers. So in men, there may be nothing in them to produce fruit. The result of life is seen in fruit, not power. The dumb ass might speak, but that was power not spiritual life.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” (Ver. 9). There is the work of love here; then there is life. Perhaps there is only a little bit of fruit; but the tree is not dead if there is any fruit— “things that accompany salvation,” not power merely—not joy merely: that might be without a divine nature. But “though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I could remove mountains, and have not charity. I am nothing.” Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest, but Christ says to His disciples, Rejoice not because the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice that “your names are written in heaven.”

The connection of your heart with Christ, the consciousness of God having written your name in heaven, is the blessed thing. Here was fruit; love of the brethren was there—the divine nature was there, and the “full assurance of hope to the end” is the thing desired. We may look for that.

When the seed fell into stony places, it sprang up rapidly; there was no root. When the word clues let reach the conscience, there is no root, no life, and therefore no fruit. You might weep over Christ, and have no life, like the women going out of Jerusalem.

Flesh could go all that length without divine life. There might be working of miracles, without knowing or being known of Him. One atom of brokenness of spirit is better than filling all London with miracles.

Ver. 6. The nominal church of God is just in this state. There is to be a falling away, and they are to be broken off; prophesied of in Rom. 11, to be cut off, if they did not continue in His goodness. The apostasy will come, and no renewing them again unto repentance.

Now, a little word for ourselves, what we have got in Christ. We have heavenly things—we are associated with Christ in heaven; “because I live ye shall live also.” I have all in Christ. He is my

life, my righteousness, before God. Then God rests with delight on me, because in Christ. What place have I in Christ? In heaven, and He has given me the Holy Spirit to know it and enjoy it, so that my soul rests on it as the testimony of God. God cannot lie. Abraham got a promise, and he believed in it; an oath, and he believed it. I have more than that. I believe He has performed it. I have a righteousness now in the presence of God; and we have more in hope, viz., the glory that belongs to His righteousness. I have life, righteousness, the Holy Ghost as the seal, and more, the forerunner is gone in, and the Holy Ghost gives me the consciousness of my union with Him; not merely the fact that sin is put away. We have the Spirit in virtue of the righteousness. The Holy Ghost has come to tell me I am in that Christ. What is the practical consequence? If the glory He has is mine, I am going after Him. Then all in the world is dross and dung.

“They might have had opportunity to have returned:” that is, where faith is exercised and put to the test. You who have known the Lord some time have had opportunity to have returned, how has it been with you? A stone left on the ground gradually sinks in. There is constantly a tendency in present things to press down the affections—not open sin, but duties, and nothing is a greater snare than duties. We have one duty, that is, to serve Christ. On the side of God, it is all bright.

Chapter 94

Thoughts on Hebrews 7

The apostle, being now on the ground of priesthood, shows the excellency of the Melchizedec priesthood of Christ, and uses it to bring back these Hebrews from that which was after the “carnal commandment to that which was “after the power of an endless life.”

The order of the priesthood is according to Melchizedec, but after the analogy of Aaron—not yet come out from the holiest. Arguments are drawn from Scripture to show that this priesthood is far more excellent than that of Aaron. One point of importance is its being another— “after the similitude of Melchizedec there ariseth another priest:” that implied the setting aside of the other. Directly the Aaronic priesthood is gone, the whole system connected with it is gone; for that was the keystone. According to their own Scriptures, there was to be another, and now that is come. And wherever Christ is concerned the Spirit immediately bursts into all the beauty and excellency of it.

Gen. 14 and Psa. 110 These scriptures bring us greatly into the history of Melchizedec. They are all we have about him, showing us the mystery of his person and glory. The people, when Christ was on earth, could not understand His being David's Son and David's Lord. In Psa. 110:4, it is Jehovah, and not in ver. 7. “He shall drink of the brook in the way” —in humbling Himself He shall have His head lifted up.

The history of Abraham is remarkably interesting in Gen. 14—his having entirely done with the world, while Lot, in a selfish way, liked the world, and chose the world when he was a believer. Abraham does not this: he gives up the world in the power of faith. Lot was under the world: Abraham had complete power over the world because he had given it up. He would not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet. And then God says, “I am thy shield,” &c. He had God. Giving up the world, he had victory over it, and has God for his shield.

It is after this that Melchizedec comes out to meet him. In the future day this will be seen in Christ coming out to His people; it applies to ourselves in a heavenly way now. “Priest of the most High God.” In that word, all the peculiar character of Melchizedec comes out. Abraham had overcome by faith—He knew God by faith. Now He is made known to him as “possessor of heaven and earth.” The Gentile powers broken, God rules and does what He pleases; and Nebuchadnezzar gives Him the title of “Most High God.” He takes to Himself His great power and reigns as Most High. This is not the name known to Abraham's faith; that was Shaddai. Abraham was called to walk before God, and he suffered no man to do him wrong in going through the world. Jehovah, the one true God, brought His people into relationship with Himself—all the rest were false Gods. We have the relationship of Father in contrast with these; but all these names are for faith to own. Most High is another thing; Possessor; Col. 1. “to reconcile all things to Himself;” and Eph. 1. “to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” He will be the possessor of heaven and earth; Melchizedec-priest, in this character of priest of the Most High, He has gained the full victory over the power of the world. The Heir of Promise is the great victor. Psa. 91 He who has got the secret of who this Most High is, (never the Father's name

in Hebrews; it is the “throne of grace” spoken of) shall have the blessings of Abraham's God. So Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:33) taunted by the enemy, “hath any of the gods of the nations delivered out of my hand,” Psa. 91:2. I will have the Jehovah the God of Israel, now despised, but He will overcome amidst the gods of the nations, (ver. 9.) No secret now in His name. (Luke 4:11, 12.) And He says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Tempting God—trying whether He is as good as His word—to see whether it is true. Thou shalt not put God to the test, (ver. 9.) The knowledge of the Most High as Jehovah, is Israel's God. When Christ has taken This real power, He will be Melchizedec-priest: at least He will be Priest on His throne. The counsel of peace, as regards this earth is between Jehovah and this Priest on His throne— “righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Aaron was never a king.

Melchizedec brought bread and wine after the victory. There is no thought of a sacrifice to secure blessing while living a life of faith; but he brings forth refreshment for the victor, bread and wine, eucharistic, accompanied with thanksgiving; bread, the symbol of that which strengthens, and wine, of that which refreshes the heart of man. The people on earth are fully brought into blessing. Melchizedec blessed the Most High God on the part of Abraham, and blessed Abraham on the part of God.

The earthly priesthood takes the character of joy and gladness on the victory being obtained. Melchizedec was king of Salem, and king of righteousness. This says nothing about divine righteousness; it is righteousness established. He rules according to it—righteousness looking down from heaven—righteousness in His person, and mercy shown to those who do not deserve it. “A king shall reign in righteousness.” “A man shall be as an hiding-place, and a covert from the tempest,” “righteousness and peace have kissed each other;” righteousness is the character of the rule, and the effect of it peace. We have it now in a higher way, a divine way. We have it in our souls; but it is to be on earth, in Melchizedec, king of righteousness and king of peace. In Psalm 110 Christ is sitting at God's right hand, and we connected with Him during the time he is sitting there— “until” his enemies are made His footstool. His people will be willing in the day of His power—we, through grace, are made willing now, (ver. 3.) “Thou hast the dew of thy youth;” all the new generations of Israel when the fresh blessing comes in on the earth (a figure, of course). he will come in power, and rule over His enemies—He will judge the heathen. “He shall drink of the brook in the way,” i.e., willing to get the refreshment by the way, being perfectly dependent. “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;” and this is rewarded with exaltation. Looked at as to His title, it is after the power of an endless life; but not exercised according to that yet. When “righteousness and peace have kissed etch other,” it will be. It was necessary that the atonement should have been made. The Jews had rejected promise just the sane as law, and now they must come freely, through His grace, like any poor sinner.

But there is more as to dispensation; there is the question of the new covenant. We have to see what our part is in this; the new makes the other old. That old covenant was made at Sinai: it was addressed to man in the flesh, making a claim upon him. The new covenant is on the ground of the law being put into the heart, and forgiveness given. The new covenant was made with Israel and Judah. Have we nothing to do with it? I do not say that. His blood has been shed. “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many.” All that God had to do to bring the Jews in was done: their bringing in is suspended because of unbelief. Then what do we get He was minister of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of His spirit. We have the law in our hearts, and forgiveness. We

have all the blessing's of the, new covenant—God's part all thoroughly laid. We have Christ in whose heart the law was hid; not the letter—that was made with Israel and Judah, though they are now outside. Then another thing: I am one with the Mediator of the new covenant. I am as part of the Church—a member of His body, (that is not brought out here,) but while He is gone in—not seen in the Aaron character—I am associated with Him. He has shed the blood on which it is all founded. He is gone to make good that part which is in heaven, and meanwhile I am connected with Him. I have the effect of the blood. He is there on the throne, a proof of its being accepted. He is the forerunner into the glory I am going into. He is a priest forever, while I am here in infirmity. He is a priest different to those priests who died, “after the power of an endless life.” While He sits waiting till His enemies are made His footstool, He has done everything for His friends, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to associate us with Him in heaven, and to maintain us in communion till He comes out. There is no figure of the temple used here: it is all the tabernacle in the wilderness. He who is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec is gone in. There was provided some better thing for us, and we get this heavenly association with Him.

In Heb. 7. the superiority of this priesthood is shown. (Ver. 3) “Continually,” that is one great thing for us, and that is insisted on much. The constancy of our position comes out in the 9th and 10th chapters. The meaning of it is, without any interruption, not only forever. Aaron's priesthood could be broken up—pass from one man to another, but this is all transmissible priesthood. It has the stamp of eternity on it in its very nature; so the value of His blood is for, perpetually—that is the force. What do we find in the state of souls generally now? Is their peace continuous? or are they, when conscious of failure, wanting to be sprinkled again? The Jew wanted a sacrifice for every sin; but with us there is one sacrifice uninterrupted in its efficacy—not broken in upon. The priesthood goes on continuously. We fail, and there is the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. It is after the power of an endless life—not like Aaron's —not in the temple—but in the “true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Always there, untransmissibly, “to the uttermost,” right through. “He ever liveth to make intercession.”

Melchizedec was a man, no doubt, like any other—a mysterious personage, appearing on the scene without an origin known. Whose son was he? All kinds of suppositions without any conclusion. Why? Because Scripture leaves us in the dark. As a priest, Christ was without genealogy—not as a man. His mother is known. Again, He was not to be cast off at a certain age, as those priests were. He continueth ever. “Made like unto the Son of God” —only as a priest. Royalty is connected with the priesthood. Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedec is another important point. God had given them Aaronic priesthood, promises, &c.; but there was something greater, something behind, which was above and beyond all this. Levi paid tithes to Abraham, showing the superiority of Melchizedec to Levi. (Ver. 12-11.) They must give it all up as applying to Aaron.

-Ver. 18 20 give the secret of the whole thing. There was the disannulling of what went before, because not perfect, and the bringing in of a better hope. “Did” is better left out. What is the result of that? We draw nigh to God. (Ver. 19.) Did the Jews do this? Did the priests do it? No. “Now we see not yet all things put under him;” but we have a better thing; “we draw nigh to God.”

Perfect atonement has been made—the veil is rent—the High Priest in heaven; and when He comes forth, we shall come with Him.

There is a time for Melchizedec Himself when he shall come in glory. To be sitting on God's own throne is the highest thing. Now He is sitting on God's right hand in all the fullness and brightness of His glory; and while there, we get all our associations with Him—dead with him, &c. And when He appears, we shall appear with Him. We may take it as to our union and our association with Him in priesthood, He is the High Priest, and we are priests, The Holy Ghost, being sent down, associates. us with Him, while He is in heaven. We could not receive the holy Ghost until Jesus was glorified. Then having perfect righteousness, we are seated in Him.

Ver. 25. “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” We do not come to Him, (the Priest,) but He goes to God for us, and we go to God by Him. As Lord, we came to Him; but as Priest, not. He intercedes, and brings us back when we have failed. He is watching always—thinking of us when we are not thinking of Him.

Ver. 26. “For such an high priest became us,” &c. Why this? It became us! The Jews had worship on earth; we go higher than the heavens. Our priest is there, on the right hand of God. That stamps the character of our worship. “Higher than the heavens” is the place of our worship. In The fullest sense he sanctified Himself (John 17) when He went up on high. Instead of a priest joined with us in the place of sin or its consequences (which could not be. He was, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, but bore the sin on the cross). He is taking our hearts out of the present world to the scene where He is. The thing that fitted Christ for the exercise of His priesthood is, that He could take me where sin is not. He has Put it away. It was not put away under the Jewish service; but that is not the character of our relationship with God. We are dead—dead to sin; you cannot connect it with your place on earth. He is gone “higher than the heavens.” We have no other connection with God than that in Christ, out of the flesh (not physically of course, we have the treasure in earthen vessels Christ made “higher than the heavens,” “being us.” There is a great deal in the world that is undermining this. Men say we are not dead to sin, and are associating themselves, not dead, with Christ. It is all false. If not dead, I have no associations with Christ at all. The veil is rent, sin is put away in the flesh is condemned—we are dead. I see more and more daily of the danger and conflict there is in connection with this, and the effort to bring our association with Christ down to flesh. He is risen. We have association with Christ in heaven. Our citizenship is there. Most blessed comfort for us it is, that all I have to go through here, Christ has gone through. He passed through all, “tempted like as we are, without sin.” He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” while our hearts are associated with Him through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 95

Thoughts on Hebrews 7:26-28 and Hebrews 8

There are two great foundation principles connected with our coming unto God by Christ. 1st, The place, as giving the character of His priesthood; and, 2ndly, the non-repetition of the sacrifice. “Such an high priest became us,” &c. Our place of meeting with God is above the heavens, and the questions of—can I come? how can I come?—are met by His priestly work being carried on there, where we meet with God. He first came down to us in the place where we are as sinners, but in our going to God it must be in the place where He is. The place of the priest was the holy place, under the Jewish order, but with us there is no wail between us and the holiest. God is light. We walk in the light. We must therefore be able to draw near according to the light in which He is. The presence of God is purity itself, and the power of purity.

God has first visited us as enemies. He did not wait for us to go up to heaven; but when we go to Him as worshippers, being partakers of the heavenly calling, we are higher than the heavens. Our intercourse with God is in the sanctuary, in the light where He is; and a high priest is needed for this, who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

The Jews had priests who had infirmity; but in going into the holiest, we could not go in by these. There must be One aide to maintain us in the place where divine righteousness has set us. The priest must be holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, i.e., the work is carried on out of the region where sin is going on; the work of Christ on the cross having brought us there. He is separate from sinners (as to His own state, morally, He was always a Nazarite, but) He has set Himself apart as a Nazarite in connection with us. He is there, where the worship goes on.

Failures are measured by the place where we are, Of Israel it was said to the priests, “ye shall bear the iniquity of the holy things.” We are all priests—there is no separate caste of priests—and all our faults and failings are measured by the place we are in. The place to which we belong, and where our worship is carried on, and where our Priest is, is out of the reach of sin. When we are there in fact, we shall be able to let our thoughts and feelings free; we shall not want our consciences there. Now we must watch everything down here, bat there is full liberty with God, there may be the freest, fullest letting forth of every thought and feeling with Him.

The other thing different in our High Priest from those high priests, is that He offered up Himself once, not for His owe sins, but for his people's—for the church's and Israel's. He has done it fully, finally, and once for all; it cannot be repeated. Once forever constitutes the full character of the priesthood of Christ. This gives us a very distinct place. Brought into the light as God is in the light, where sacrifice never can be made again, a Priest is there, by virtue of an unalterable condition, in the presence of God. If Christ has not put away sins, they never will be put away. His blood was shed, not sprinkled only. If once you have been sprinkled by the blood of Christ, has anything taken it off? Has the blood ever lost its value? I cannot talk of being sprinkled again, if the blood has not lost its value. I may have my feet washed with water, for renewal of communion; but as to the person, that is never even washed with water again, though the feet may need cleansing.

There were three cases of blood-sprinkling in Israel: the covenant, the leper, and the priest. The covenant was sprinkled once for all: it was never renewed, but is set aside by a better. The leper was sprinkled once, not again, and the priest. There was no replacing of the power of that blood. “We walk in the light, as God is in the light; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” That does not change at all: is heavenly in its diameter, cleanses and fits for God in light; and it is everlasting in its efficacy. It is a new place where we are set, and set forever.

Let me stop a moment to ask you how far you have forgotten this? how far you are on Jewish ground? It is connected with “the full assurance of faith.” We must be clean before we are there, as God is in the light. It is a different place altogether from that in which the question would arise as to what my state is. How do I get there? By the cross. But if I come by the cross, am I defiled or undefiled? I am brought into God's presence, and cannot be there without having been cleansed. When Learn I am a poor sinner, I know I cannot be in the presence of God without being cleansed. Christ came to us in our sins, or else there would be no hope; but it is by virtue of His blood we go to God. How do you go—cleansed or uncleansed? Do we not know whether we are cleansed or not? We may be ignorant of ourselves, but we know whether we are cleansed or not. The way we get into His presence is by being cleansed. That is quite different from the standing of those whose walk was on earth—finding a sin and getting it cleansed—finding a sin and getting it cleansed. The fruits of the light are such and such things. If we are made children of light, it is not to diminish the light, but to judge everything by it. That is the effect of our being there.

Chap. 8. “Set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” Why so? Because if we have nothing more to be done, Christ has nothing more to do. (I speak not of the priestly work, but of putting away sin.) He has set down He is resting, having nothing more to do. (Chap 10) The offering has been made, and cannot be repeated. (Chap. 8: 2, 3.) The whole of the priesthood is carried on in heaven itself. The offering was another thing. The offerer brought the victim, the priest received the blood and carried it in. On the day of atonement there was another thing: the priest had to go through the whole thing by himself—not carrying on the work of intercession, but that of representing the people. Christ took this place. He could say, “mine iniquities,” &c.; for He bore our sins. We can never speak of bearing our sins; He, the sinless One, bore them for us. He was the victim, and at the same time the confessor, owning all the sins. Then, as priestly work, he carries in the blood, having offered Himself without spot to God (the burnt offering in that sense). He was “made sin.” He offered Himself freely up, and the sins were laid on Him, and He takes that dreadful cup, then goes and sprinkles that place. His priesthood is entirely in heaven. The tabernacle was upon earth; there was the court of the tabernacle, and inside the court was out of the world, and not inside heaven. He was lifted up (John 12) to draw all men unto him.

Rejected by the Jews, He was held up by God—the dead Christ, to be the attractive center for the whole world. As coming in His service and mission on earth, He was coming among the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but when I see the crucified Christ, this is for the sinner, and then I get perfect love for the sinner and atonement for the sin—perfect grace. Then He goes by virtue of that blood through the rent veil into the holy place; and I come there in spirit into the very presence of God—not on earth. Those things were the example and shadow of heavenly things, and our place now is in the holiest of all.

No place is found for the first covenant. Be it remarked, that there is often great confusion about the covenant of grace and law. The law was given at Sinai. All the promises were given without condition—unqualified. When the people came out of Egypt, it was different. The accomplishment of the promise then depended on their obedience; and there was an end of the whole thing, because they could not keep it. Why did God bring in such a principle as this? With the promise, no question was raised of righteousness; but when law was given, there was something required of man: and the effect of this question being raised was to bring out sin directly. Why did the law come in? Because we are excessively proud creatures, we think we can do a great deal.

The law was not a transcript of God, but of what man ought to be; and when applied as a test to man, it brought out the evil there. Given to a sinner to tell him what he ought to be, it was too late—he had failed already: the golden calf was made before they received the words of the law. Christ, instead of requiring righteousness from man, bears the sins and works out the righteousness. It is much more than what the law requires that we have in Christ. The law never required a man to lay down His life—much less the Son of God to lay down His life. He glorified God in the place where He had been dishonored, not only in a righteous walk upon earth, but God was glorified in Him.

Suppose God had swept away man for sin, in righteousness, where would have been the love? If he had only passed over the sins, without judging them, where would have been righteousness? There was infinite and unspeakable love to poor sinners, and infinite righteousness towards God. The whole ground of the Sinai covenant is gone—we are dead under it: it can go no further. Law puts man under responsibility. Are you standing on your responsibly? You are lost if you are.

It is the whole question of the two trees in the garden of Eden—life and responsibility. Christ, as a man, takes that of good and evil, and dies under it. He puts Himself under the one and gives us the other, for He is life.

Thus, in Chapter 8., there is an entirely new covenant, and the new makes the first old. In the letter, it is made with the house of Israel. But, besides, there is grace. Not I do not remember them, “but their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” I will never remember them any more. That is our place. A covenant made with man, as man, is certain ruin, because his righteousness is required, his keeping it is called in question. But here he says, “I will put my laws into their mind,” &c. If man is under the old covenant, he is under an “if.” If under the new, there is no “if.” This covenant of the letter is made with Israel, not with us, but we get the benefit of it. “This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many.” This was putting away the breach of all obligation by death. Israel, not accepting the blessing, God brought out the church, and the Mediator of the covenant went on high. We are associated with the Mediator. It will be made good to Israel by and by. Paul was the minister of it in the Spirit, but he could not be as to the letter. They will need no minister of it, because every one will know it, when God writes it on their hearts; the thing is done—God is their minister, (reverently,) when writing it on their hearts. We have it not in the letter, but in the spirit of it, and so have all the value of it, because the way we get it is that the Mediator of it becomes our life—we are forgiven our sins we are associated with the Mediator. He is our life, and we have all the blessings of the new covenant within the vail. We have all the blessings, for the very reason that it is not executed with the people for whom it was made.

Now the question arises, how far are we standing on this ground? has your faith got hold of this fact that Christ has settled every question against us, and gone in because our sin is put away? The true light now shines: that could not be said while there was a vail and an earthly priesthood.

Can you stand in God's presence without a vail, and knowing that the more the light shines upon you, the more evident that you are without a spot upon you?

Chapter 96

Thoughts on Hebrews 9

In the preceding chapter, the apostle has touched on a very important point, which, as regarded the Hebrews, (and, indeed, any of us,) was a most absorbing one: I allude to the two covenants. The first covenant made at Sinai had a very distinct character, viz., requiring man's righteousness, and therefore it gendered “to bondage.” What distinguished the law as a covenant was, that, instead of promise, it was blessing held out on the ground of obedience. The distinctive character of the ten commandments was, that they required obedience. All the prophets, indeed, spoke of failure in it; but all was connected with the old thing, and went on the ground of their obedience. That must be or not be; there is no question of a new nature. Now, we are told, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is not a question of how he gets holiness: the holy nature will desire to obey, but it is a different thing to the righteousness of obedience. God's nature is holy. I do not speak of God's obedience it is His nature, and we must have the new nature to be holy. The law showed God holy, but the condition of the law was, “If ye shall obey my voice.” The promises of God are connected under the law with the obedience of man. That covenant is now altogether put away. We are called to obedience, we are sanctified unto obedience, but that is different to being put under conditions. The new covenant has made the former old. God brings in a new one, not according to the covenant He made with them when He brought them out of Egypt. In chap. ix. the apostle is pressing what the conditions of the new covenant are. If the old had been perfect, God would not have brought in a new one. God will not let man have blessing on that ground, and why? The reason is that He has tried man and found him unable to bring forth anything good. If it is to be on the ground of my righteousness, I cannot have the blessing at all. Man must be convinced there is no good in himself. Man could never place himself on that ground but as maintaining the pride of the human heart that pretends to be able to gain it. The principle of requiring something from man is entirely set aside, and those who know God's principle, know that it is only in the pride of the natural heart that man could take blessing in that way.

Unless grace, and simply grace, lays new ground, there is no hope whatever. God has brought in a new thing. He had marked out in the provision of bulls and goats, &c., another way of getting blessing. There must be coming to God by cleansing from sin, instead of on the ground of being clean. It was impossible for those things to take away sin. There was no relieving the conscience by those ceremonial observances, which were but shadows, and not the very image of the things to come. Besides the day of atonement, there were continual sacrifices needed to keep them clean; but there was no coming to God (saving in the sense in which He says, “I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself.") Christ died, the just for the unjust, to “bring us to God.” In the tabernacle service there was no coming near by the people or even by the priests. Nadab and Abihu took strange fire and offered that not taken from the burnt offering; and God says, Ye shall not come at all times, &c.; but there was the great day of atonement, and the high priest even could only go in on that day with clouds of incense. There was no revelation of God whatever at that time: there was revelation from God, but not of God. He said, “I dwell in the thick darkness.” Moses could go into God's presence without a veil. When he came out, he put a veil on

his face, but when he went in, he took the veil off. Moses, as mediator,—type of Christ—represented the nation before God, but then the figure dropped; and we find Aaron could only go in once a year. His work was done behind the veil. God could give revelations of Himself to them, but never were their consciences in the presence of God. There was an unrent veil between God and the people and the priests also. This is very important to notice, because of the principle brought out in the contrast of our portion and the Jews'. We are in the presence of God, and we are always there; that is the Christian ground: they never were. Daily cleansing is needed with us, too; but still, we are always in the presence of God. This is very little realized by the people of God now. “If we walk in the light as he is in the light,” &c. The work is done once for all, and we are brought nigh by virtue of that work; and if we are not there through that work, we never can get there. I am speaking of God looking for atonement, and our standing in the presence of God, not the children with the Father. Our feelings may be varying from day to day, but our standing before God never changes in Christ. And if we reject this one sacrifice for sin, there is no other.

Verse 3, &c. Within the second veil none could enter. God's reason for it is, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.” The object of the veil was to show that the people could not come to God. He could give them Jaws, punish them if they broke them, enable them to look to Him; but they could not come near. If it is a question of being in His presence, I must come where He is. In His presence sin is not measured by transgression, but by what God is— “in the light as He is in the light.” “Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” God's people are now brought into This presence in the light, and always there; it is where God has placed them by faith—not a question of their feeling. As long as the first tabernacle was yet standing, this was not made manifest at all: God was hiding Himself. Directly the veil was gone, He must have let in the Gentiles as well as the Jews; but the very nature of the sacrifices shut out the thought of one eternal redemption. The repetition of them showed that sin was there, or they would not have been repeated. The one sacrifice for sin having been made, shows the sin to be entirely put away. The nature of those sacrifices was never to reveal God, and never to have the conscience perfect.

There is another practical thing to be noticed here. He does not merely say sin is put away, but the conscience is perfect; no more conscience of sins (not sinning); that is the same as a perfect conscience. We all have a conscience of sinning, but if I have a conscience of sin I cannot come to God, but am like Adam hiding from Him. What we have here is not only sin put away in the presence of God, but put away from the conscience, too. Many own the former, but think they need repeated forgiveness, repeated cleansing with blood. How could sin be put away? It could not be but by the suffering of Christ. Must Christ, then, suffer again?

There was piety in the Old Testament, and piety is a blessed thing, but there was never a purged conscience. We never find in the most pious persons under the law the sense of being in the presence of God. The high priest must go once a year within the veil with clouds of incense; but now the holiest is made manifest, the veil being rent from top to bottom, and the conscience as perfect as the light in which we stand.

Verse 10. Certain things were imposed on them until the time of reformation. Christ came “an High Priest of good things to come.” What does that refer to? Some may find a difficulty as to whether “to come” refers to what was future for the Jews, while that tabernacle was standing, or to what is

now future. I believe both. All was new in Christ. It was to come on a new foundation. The basis is laid for the entire and perfect reconciliation of man with God.

Verse 7. Under the old covenant, it was only “the errors of the people” that were forgiven. Now God takes up the spring of a man altogether. The old covenant dealt with man on the ground of obedience; now God is bringing the sinner himself into a new condition before Him. The old covenant was a partial remedy with the declaration that they could not come into God's presence. While this kept up a testimony for God, now a new thing is brought out, not to patch up the old thing—that was the old even in its remedial character; but now it is the bringing in a new thing entirely—giving a new nature in Christ. The Jewish system provided no remedy for great sins (“ keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins"); it was a provision for the old man without seeing God, instead of bringing man perfect, in a new nature, into the presence of God.

Rom. 3 God declares His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, &c. Righteousness was never revealed under the law—God bore with things, but there was no declaration of righteousness. Now it is “to declare his righteousness.” Righteousness was revealed when the atonement was made. Directly it is other ground than promise given to those walking by faith, as Abraham, there is no coming into the presence of God. The old covenant goes on the old ground; the new covenant goes on new ground. The work of Christ and the blood of Christ are not provision for the sins of the old man, but for the perfecting of the conscience of the new man, to set him in the presence of God. We could not be in the presence of God with one spot upon us; we are brought into heaven itself. He is gone in once into the holy place, not gone in to come out again and go in; but by virtue of His own blood He is gone in once. God looking upon the blood cannot see sin. It is not a question of my value of that blood, but the conscience rests on the value God finds in it. “When I see the blood I will pass over.” My heart wants to value it more, but the question is, how could I be in the presence of God with a spot upon me? God looks on that blood, and if He looks on the blood, He cannot look on the sin; if He did, it would not value the blood. Where is the blood? It has been presented to God, not to man, and God has accepted it. Impossible that God can impute sin to a believer, it would be slighting the blood of Christ.

Another thing is, it is forever and ever done. What is faith It is thinking as God thinks. If I say Christ is gone in once with His own blood, dues that ever cease to be there? Then I cannot cease to be perfect; Christ has either done the work forever or not at all. Another word gives it such power, too, “having obtained eternal redemption,” and it is “once for all.” How long is it to last? Forever. There is not only cleansing., but redemption. He has taken me up out of where I was, into the presence of God—appropriated me in the presence of God forever. Has He taken me up in an unclean state? While the veil was there, I could not be taken into God's presence; but now it is a question of the work of Christ bringing me there. Has He brought me there in an unfit state? Impossible! He has “obtained eternal redemption for us,” “who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.” We get here, first, His own perfect will in it. He offered Himself; not only, “Lo I come;” but, here filled with the Spirit, He offers Himself up. Christ having become a man, He was obedient in all things; but another thing was, He came to offer sacrifice. As a victim, He was man, spotless man, and the giving Himself up as a sacrifice was This own act; through the eternal Spirit He did it.

It is not here the point of sins being laid upon Him, but the giving Himself up, for the whole question of good and evil to be settled on Him in God's presence. he gave Himself up for God to

do what He would with Him, to make Him a curse if He would; and He was made a curse; yet it was His own will to come into that place.

It was redemption man needed, not only a little cleansing. Redemption was being taken out of the condition in which we were. God's glory needed to be vindicated where God had been dishonored. Here was man in rebellion, and in ruin as well as rebellion, under Satan, and He (Christ) must suffer, for God to be glorified—He offered Himself up. Here it was by the power of the Eternal Spirit. There was divine energy in the man, not mere feeling, &c., and it was “without spot.” when He was tried even unto death. He became a burnt offering, and that was a sweet savor to God. Every movement of His will was pure, purity in all His thoughts and acts, and there was the unhesitating giving up of Himself to be made even that hateful thing, sin. He would be made sin, made a curse, even unto death; He offered Himself up without reserve; “He was made sin for us;” but He gave Himself up for it: therefore it was a sweet savor. None of the sin offerings were a sweet savor to God: the word used for consuming them is not the same as the burnt offering. For the sin offering, it was merely a word signifying burning, used; in the other it means a sweet savor. It not being imposed upon Him, but His offering Himself up, made it this. All through His life He knew no sin, but on the cross the sin was laid upon Him, and He went through death for it. It led to death—its wages. Therefore we read of the blood, “How much more shall the blood of Christ,” &c. Two things there are, the person offering Himself, and the proof of His death for sin; blood being the proof of death. There is a cleansing, purging, daily; but that is with water, and not for forgiveness; and the Father forgiving is another thing. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” How clearly this shows that if it is not done by this, it never can be; the blood never can be shed again. “Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Here, again, we come back to the conscience. “How much more shall the blood of Christ.... so eternal inheritance;” (14, 15,) there is perpetuity spoken of again, too.

Ver. 13. Two things are here alluded to, and not indiscriminately: the great day of atonement, when bulls and goats were offered, and the red heifer, which was for daily cleansing for communion. This was one thing; the other was done once a year, for then it was repeated year by year continually. The blood of the victim was taken into the holy place, and the body burnt outside. This was significant of Judaism done with. Israel was the camp. They had a fleshly religion—flesh in connection with God; and it could never answer. It was appointed to prove man. Here the blood was carried in. The scapegoat took away the sins confessed over it into the wilderness. Thus the sins were gone. Now our position is having a place inside the veil by the blood, and sin gone. That is our place, shown thus in the type. The “heifer” was for sprinkling the unclean—not with blood, but with water and something connected with it, viz., the ashes of the heifer. A heifer was to be taken that had never borne the yoke; and a clean roan was to slay the heifer, and sprinkle the blood seven times, always in the presence of God. Its value always is in the presence of God. But a defiled person, even through touching death, could not go there. The ashes were to be taken with the running water, showing the sin all consumed in the sacrifice offered long ago. The things we have failed about are the very things Christ died for; and the Spirit brings to the conscience the sense of that defilement for which Christ died, and which He put away. This makes me feel the sin much more, while it makes me see it has all been put away. It is not so much the question of guilt, but of the terrible nature of sin that occupies me. It is the re-sprinkling with water, not blood; because the re-sprinkling with the blood would call in question its permanent value. The Spirit

brings to my conscience and heart the value of Christ's death, and so communion is restored, which is hindered by a sinful thought, &c.

Two instances we have of sprinkling with blood once for all—in the priest and toe leper; the whole walk and thoughts consecrated to God according to the value of Christ's blood. But that never loses its value. If I do not walk according to the value of it, the Spirit of God brings to my remembrance that my sin brought Christ to ashes. This gives a much deeper sense of the sin. We find out that we have allowed ourselves to be carried away by that which brought God's wrath out, and for which Christ agonized.

“To serve the living God.” Under the old covenant, obedience was required from man in his Adam-nature; a veil was before God, and man outside—and he must stay outside. The sacrifices made a temporary provision for intercourse with God, but there was no coming to God. Christ, as High Priest of good things to come, brings the new man into the presence of God forever. The veil is rent, and there is a risen person with cleansing power in the presence of God. Such is the perfectness of the place in which we are set, and every inconsistency is judged according to it.

Verses 16, 17. The word “testament” is rightly used in these two verses. It facilitates the understanding of the passage to see this. Excepting these two verses, read always “covenant.”

Thus we find a common event brought in as an illustration of Christ's death. He left us all the blessing in dying—it came into complete force directly. We are freed once for all through His death. There is no alteration of it. The blessings of the new covenant became available, valid after His death.

The first must become old if there is to be a new one: the bringing in of the new one involves dying. In this Epistle we get very little of the humiliation part of Christ's work. In the first chapter it is brought in in connection with His divine person, “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” The purging of our sins is spoken of by the way, and then we hear of His glory on high. The blessedness of Christ's sacrifice, Christ exalted, and having honor put upon Him, are more the subjects in Hebrews. There are three aspects in which the value of Christ's blood is here seen. First, it was the seal of the covenant, connected with its dedication to God. That was also done in connection with the covenant with Abraham. (Gen. 15.) A person, binding himself to death in the most solemn way, passes through the pieces of the sacrifice. It was the seal of the covenant. Second, it is purifying. Third, the blood is for remission.

First, the enjoining or sanction to it given by the blood. Another thing closely connected with that was consecration by blood. Blood was sprinkled on the leper for cleansing, and on the priest for consecration. The covenant sealed, and the people bound to it by blood; and the leper and the priest are the three cases in which persons are sprinkled. There must be blood, the power of death brought in, or there was entire separation from God. The wonderful efficacy of the blood of Christ is that it brought in death; those separated from God are brought back by His death. “You who were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ.” The blood was the figure of the life taken. When blood was taken the whole being of man was given up, and the agony of His soul on the cross was the separation from God. “My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” The consequences of it are most important to us. Man with all his perverse will, all his sin, where is it all, if he is dead? It is all gone, if he is dead. “He that is dead, is freed from sin.” There is an

absolute cessation of the whole will and being in which he was, as a sinner. Christ has taken that place for me. Cain and Abel, as far as appearance went, were equally likely to get the blessing, but in the one was no faith. He did not own that death had come in between man and God. As long as man is seeking good from himself, he does not see himself dead. Are you seeking a dead man or a living man? You are seeking fruit from a living man, and not owning you are dead, if you are seeking fruit from yourself. I cannot search to see whether dead or not, if dead. Abel came by slain beasts to God. He had faith. We do not know how he learned it, but death came in, and man was clothed in skins of animals. That is, in figure, what makes our peace. “He that is dead is freed from sin.” There was nothing done for man while Christ was alive, as to the putting away of sin. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” All that was proved by it was, that man in his natural state could not be reconciled to God.

The first covenant was not made without the sprinkling of blood, but it threw back the man behind death. If you do not obey, all is lost. (Jer. 34:16, 20.) If they did not obey, they must die; because they promised obedience and sealed the promise by being sprinkled with the blood. In the case of Abraham, God made a promise to him, and sealed it by passing between the pieces, by death. The question was raised by the law of righteousness among living men. There were various figures which intimated the necessity of death coming in, but obedience was the rule and consequently all was failure. Yet all through the principle was brought out—there must be blood. Now, under grace we see the whole putting away of sin. If we had died, judgment must have come on us. Christ coming into it, and bearing the judgment for us, we are free from the whole thing.

When God gave the covenant, He gave it this sanction—the sprinkling of blood. Aaron himself was not sprinkled with blood, typical of Christ, who needed not to be consecrated with blood Himself, but brought blood in for others.

Then you get the sprinkling of vessels—not for forgiveness, but for cleansing. “Almost all things under the law are purged with blood,” (not all things are purified with blood,) because there is a purifying with water not connected with blood-shedding. Out of His side came blood and water, representing the effectual grace of expiation and purifying. You could not have man morally purified without death; you must have death. Out of a dead Christ the water flows. Water signifies cleansing by the Spirit with the word. But there must be death—not the cleansing of the living old man; the old man is put to death—I do not own him alive, but there is something belonging to you (your members on the earth) to be mortified and put to death. The ground is laid for purifying by the blood of the heifer, which was sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle; but water is the figure used for cleansing, viz., “washing of water by the word.” “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Reckon yourselves to be dead and to have the power of life in Christ. I have neither life nor righteousness out of Christ. I have nothing out of Him. If I look for water to purify, or anything, it must be by death I get it; then there must be faith. If I look at myself as a living man in the world, I find my will working; then I am not really dead. If I set myself to inquire, I am not walking in faith. I am told to reckon myself dead—that is faith. You cannot mortify your members till you can say, I am dead. If the old man is not dead, it is sin. There was no putting away of sin but by death itself—taking life.” Without shedding of blood is no remission “not sprinkling here; you must have the applying the punishment to the One who takes the sin. in the remission of sin is involved the whole of God's character, majesty, glory. If God does not deal with sin as sin, there is no righteousness—it is indifference. There must be suffering for the sin; then as

to death, I am clear of it.

Remission is not connected with sprinkling. This is important in a twofold way. First, there vas actual suffering under the consequences of sin; and second, this could be but once. It was done once for all, and if the forgiveness of my sins is not perfect thereby, it never can be accomplished. It will never be done again. We learn more and more the value of the blood; but the work of Christ on the cross has a perfect value, into which the angels desire to look. The thing by which I have remission never can be done again. When I speak of water, it has its importance only so far as it washes; (there is washing and sprinkling spoken of); but not so with the blood; that had to be presented to God, the offended Judge. The efficacy of the blood is outside ourselves. As regards the man, he is cleansed once for all, but still that is connected with the man. That is not all; the blood has an efficacy in itself, as being the judgment for sin, and tells the tale to God that the judgment is passed over, the sin gone. God says, “When I see the blood I will pass over.” That makes the entire full distinction from personal application in cleansing. There is a special value in it for man, because a man when cleansed does not like to get dirty, while one not cleansed does not mind it. True, that as to the water when once regenerated by the word, it is done forever—once for all—but there is besides the constant cleansing of the feet needed. There is no presenting of blood afresh to God—no fresh “shedding of blood.” There is increase of spiritual search needed by us to know more of the value of the blood, but there is no fresh searching needed by God for Him to know its value.

Ver. 21, &c. Three things were done on the day of atonement. Blood was put on the mercy-seat, representing Christ gone into heaven, the ground on which we can preach peace to all the world. That was connected with the Lord's lot. His death glorified God, whether one or a thousand are saved.

All was in utter confusion by sin. What kind of world is this? Where is righteousness? Where is love? What folly them is in infidelity! How can men solve the riddle of all the misery we see around, without God? Where is the goodness of God to be seen? How can it be attempted to be explained without Christ? Indifference to sin is not love. Men try to persuade themselves God will be indifferent to sin. When I see God's judgment for sin on Christ, I get at the center of God's heart righteousness is satisfied, and what is more, God can rest in his love. And if you come as a sinner to God, and rest in Christ, it is a matter of the glory of God to see you there because of the blood.

“The heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices.” Satan and his angels are there and cleansing is needed. This purging is not remission. God must have his house cleansed as well as His people made righteous. (Comp. Col. 1.)

On the people's lot, the scapegoat, the particular sins of the people were confessed. This was substitution. Ver. 26.) And there is perpetual value in the sacrifice. He once suffered. This suffering was not the mere fact of death. The agony of His soul when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” was far deeper than the suffering of the separation of soul and body. Death was looked at as the wages of sin; God's wrath was poured out on Him against the sin. (Death to Christ was not merely going out of the body into Paradise.) That never can be done again. He has gone in once into the holy place. If he went in often, he must have suffered often. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down.” This does not mean forever and ever, but unremittingly He is sitting at the right hand of God. I never can stand in the presence of God,

but in the sacrifice of Christ, and that is never remitted. He has put sin away; why should He suffer again? He has put it away according to the glory of God. “Once in the end of the world path he appeared.” That may appear strange, seeing nearly as much of the world's history has gone on since as before Christ's coming; but it does not mean chronologically, but the closing in of the ages. Up to that time God had been trying men as living men in the world. That is ended—man not alive now (I speak of man morally, as judged by God); therefore it is said to the Colossians, “Why as though alive in the world?” Man has been tried as to life, and now the fig tree is cut down. Did it bear fruit.? No! and it was cut down. The fig tree represented the Jewish nation, in whom God made trial of men under the best circumstances. “What have I not done to my vineyard?” Christ came looking for fruit from the fig tree, and finding none, he said, Cut it down; let no fruit grow on thee forever. The “time for figs was not yet;” the fruit-bearing time not come. God, as it were, said, “they will reverence my Son.” No! then there is no fruit from man forever. Man, looked at as in flesh, is under the sentence of death. “When we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly.” Man is not only ungodly, but without power to get out of that state. Christ must close the history of the old man, by bearing the sin, and must bring in a new thing. Then God makes a feast and invites to the supper; when they not only refuse the Son, but they refuse the supper. Man has been fully tried, and now, if there is to be blessing, it must be not on the ground of responsibility, but wholly of grace, by the second Adam. (Rom. 5) If I believe this, I find out the truth about the old man by little and little. At first we only see gross sins perhaps. ‘But what is to be done when I find I can do nothing,' you say. Own you are undone. “In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Death is like the policeman to bring us up to the judgment. Then (ver. 28) we have the counterpart of this in grace. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,” “and to them that look for him,” all believers, “will appear... without sin.” What does that mean? As to his own person, He was without sin the first time; but now the same One comes back—what for? To deal about the sins No! That He has done the first time: and now, apart from that entirely, He comes to receive them to himself. For those who trust in His first coming, and look for His second, there is nothing but blessing. There is a work done in us to make us sharers in that which has been done outside us, but this is the question of the work done for us, outside of ourselves altogether. What had I to do with the cross of Christ? The hatred that killed Him and the sins that He bore are all that sinners had to do in it; therefore there can never come a shade upon the love of God in the cross of Christ. It is perfect.

Chapter 97

Thoughts on Hebrews 10

The practical conclusion is drawn in this chapter of what is brought out in chapter 9—the unity of the sacrifice; one offering by which the foundation is laid for the new covenant.

Instead of finding a man turned out of the paradise on earth because of sin, it is now a new man gone into the paradise of God in divine righteousness; gone in by virtue of a new title, which man never had before. The consequence is, when he comes again in glory, He has nothing to do with sin. He came once for sin; but when He comes the second time, it will be without any question of sin, to complete the salvation wrought out already. When He returns, it is to bring man into the full blessedness He is in Himself. “To them that look for him, shall he appear,” &c.; not only for the church, but it is open for the remnant when he appears to the earth.

The effect on the conscience of His offering for sin is shown in chapter 10. It is not only a statement of facts there. My sin might be put away, and I not know it; but Christianity show us how the conscience is purged, not only the sins put away. If the conscience is purged, there is nothing between me and God. I have the full deliverance from all consequences of sin, and a title to glory, by virtue of the new thing. But what is my present state? My conscience perfectly purged. That the law could not tell us. It could never make the comers thereunto perfect. That was reserved as a witness for the gospel when the work was done. When a man is in the presence of God, the full effect on the conscience is known. There must be a repetition of sacrifice while the sin was outstanding. There was always a question of sin between God and This people under the law. Israel in the last day will get salvation by virtue of the sacrifice; they will be blessed by Him from heaven; their thoughts will rest on Christ corning on earth to them. He will bring them blessing where they are, but not take them to heaven. That is not our case at all. We are with Him while He is in heaven. The Holy Ghost has come out in consequence of His being gone in. There was no blood taken within the veil, and the sacrifice not taken without the camp, until after the sin of Nadab and Abihu. After that Aaron was not to go at times into the holiest, but once a year, to sprinkle the blood on the mercy-seat. The veil was not rent then; but sin being brought out, the blood must be taken in. The witness of acceptance for Israel is when He comes out. They cannot have it while He is within. We are associated with Him in heaven by the Holy Ghost coming out and making us know the value of His sacrifice. He will come and receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be. We are to be associated with Him there.

Up to His death it could not be: God would have put aside the law if the fullness of blessing had been brought in; and the law was given to His own people, not to the Gentiles. The result of Christ's work is, that my constant state in the presence of God is the conscience purged. There is not a revelation, a prophet needed for that. The worshippers, once purged, have “no more conscience of sins.” How many Christians there are who do not know they have no more conscience of sins! If you do not, you do not know the virtue of Christ's sacrifice. Are you going to be in heaven with sin upon you? You cannot be there in sins. The old state was that of men living on earth—falling, getting cleansed, and falling again. That is your condition, unless you are in

heaven by virtue of that one sacrifice, without sin. The believer is introduced these in Christ—into these heavenly places, cleansed from sin (I am not speaking of what he is as a man on earth, but in Christ). Are you there? That is the question. Are you in the holiest as to your conscience, heart, and spirit, with “no more conscience of sins;” “in the light as he is in the light;” with no remembrance of sin before God? There is remembrance of sins under the law; but here, “no more conscience of sins.” Christ has not only entered within the veil, because there is no veil now, but I am in heaven by the veil being rent. What is the rending of the veil? The death of Christ. I get there by His death; then I get in without my sins. I get in through that which takes them away. I am there without them. Remark how God takes up all this as His matter. The whole thing is done without us, by God. The thing is done by Him, and the revelation of what is done is by Him too. It is God's work, and it is according to the truth of God.

There were three things needed. If I was full of sin, some one was needed to think about me; some one was needed to do the thing required, and then to tell me the effect. “By the which will we are sanctified.” The work of the Spirit in applying the work of Christ is not spoken of here. But there is, 1st, The will of God— “By which will,” &c. 2nd, The work whereby it is done— “By the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” Before I was born, it was once for all done. Did I do it? No! “By the obedience of one many were made righteous.” It was by the offering of the body of Christ once for all. 3rd, There is the knowledge of it given to me. Without this my conscience is not purged. I must be justified by faith: that is, my knowing it, not God's knowing it. Here he says, “the Holy Ghost is a witness to us.” That is the ground of the conscience being purged; it is not the quickening here: we have pardon when we are quickened. Peter speaks of being “sanctified unto obedience,” &c.; renewed to obedience. It is His (God's) work to quicken my conscience, but besides that, there is the testimony by the Holy Ghost. The thing is settled, and it is not a light thing. We adore Him for it. He says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” But you say, I sin to-day, to-morrow, &c. God's says, “I remember” no more. If there is sin, what can put it away? There is no more offering for sin. If it is not put away, how can it ever be done? If He does remember them, there is no hope for me, because Christ will not die again, and “without shedding of blood is no remission.” It is very important for the conscience to get into the presence of God, and know our whole condition as to sin there. Looked at as a Christian, there is no sin, for this one reason, that Christ has been in the condition in which I was. By virtue of His being in it, the condition has ceased to exist, and He is gone a man into heaven, by virtue of the condition having ceased. God has said to Him, “Sit on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” For the sacrifices provided for men in the flesh, there is substituted this one sacrifice of Christ, Verse 5. “A body hast thou prepared me.” Christ came once for all into the place of obedience to put aside all the other appointments. He took ears as a servant. Whatever man did, in offering sacrifices, he could not get out of the condition in which He was. Another comes in. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. They brought of their voluntary will, under the first: that was man. But in the second, all is of God's will, and it is obedience to that. As soon as He has the body prepared, it is not His will at all. It was in the counsels of God long before. “In the volume of the book it is written of me,” &c. There was the free-willing of Christ in heaven, to give Himself. He undertakes the whole thing. Then when in it, He goes through all in obedience. “As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.” There is perfect love to His Father, mid perfect obedience at the same time. There is God's will in all its perfection—Christ offering Himself to. be the obedient One, and I get not only the fact in purpose, but all the value of a Divine

Being giving Himself up. “Lo, I come to do thy will.” He is in the place of obedience. “Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldest not.... Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” Here I find the will of man altogether set aside. The will of man is wickedness, the principle of sin. A will independent of God is the very principle of sin. At the first, the will of man was disobedience to God. Christ had a free-will, because He was God; but when in the servant's place, He had no will. The horrid pride of man forgets that his independence of God, his will not being moved by the will of God, is rebellion against Him, and that is our natural state. All but obedience to the will of another is sin. We forget we are creatures. Christ came to do God's will, never His own. This would-be independence of man (for after all, men are the slaves of Satan) is entirely set aside by another Man coming in. He has to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. Every will of his was crossed. There was not a single thing to which he could turn in which obedience was not suffering. He suffered from God, too, for the sin of man. He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit. When tested by Satan's showing Him good and evil, He gave Himself up, (becoming specially the burnt-offering from the time of flue conflict in Gethsemane.) The first order of things is gone entirely. If I could have righteousness by the law, I would not have it, Paul says, because 1 have a better—the righteousness of God. If there could have been any righteousness by the law, there was an end to it now. A new thing is brought in.

Verse 11. “Every priest standeth daily &c. They were always standing, because there was always sin there to be put away. What they did to put it away never accomplished anything. They were dealing with offerings for men in the flesh, and they never did anything. But he has sat down. There was a righteousness fit to sit down on the throne of Gad, and that is where we are. It is on the throne Christ is, forever. He is not rising up, like the other priests. The sacrifice was completed and He sits forever. It does not mean eternally, but continuously. The other sacrifices could not have that effect; but now, His being there is the proof there is no interruption. The stopping, in some of the Bibles, makes no sense of it. It cannot be our sacrifice for sins forever. He is sitting, never having to get up again, because the value of the sacrifice is uninterrupted in the presence of God, and the Holy Ghost comes out to show me the result of it. The person who had the sins must be shut out of heaven; then Christ is shut out, if they are not gone, for He took them. But the Holy Ghost is the witness that He is there. If you are reasoning about it, saying, My sins are forgiven today, but to-morrow, what I may do may be remembered against me, you are away from God. In the presence of God, this is my whole condition, without my sins. In the presence of God, I am either a condemned sinner, or I have a purged conscience. Away from God, we may reason. In His presence there may be awful distress for a moment, but faith brings into the condition of a purged conscience.

Verse 13. “From henceforth expecting.” This is the patience of Christ. The conscience has nothing to do with the waiting. Righteousness has nothing to wait for; conscience has nothing to wait for. All is done. He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Not merely are those sanctified, sanctified by God, but He has perfected them; they are perfectly set apart, perfected by God, by the very thing He has set them apart by. Then such can say, I am perfect for God, and my heart is happy with Him, because I am perfect before Him. It is so settled with Him that we are thoroughly perfected, that he can sit there quietly.

Now the Holy Ghost declares it all to me, showing me the practical consequences “where remission of (sins) is, there is no more offering for sin.” The blood is presented to God, and it

abides in unalterable efficacy. This makes nothing, not only of the gross superstitions connected with professing Christianity, but of all forms and ordinances by which men think to attain anything before God. If we are not abidingly as in the presence of God with a purged conscience, we have not got hold of the truth of God about it. When we realize this our place, we have a different estimate of sin; evil is detected, and we know it can have no place, and the good is more understood in the presence of God; sin is judged in a much deeper way, than when there is merely terror and uncertainty.

Verse 19. “Boldness to enter into the holiest.” This rending of the veil is altogether ours. We know it is rent by the perfect love of God, and we go into the presence of God without a veil. The way is made manifest. We go where Christ is gone; the holiness that rent the veil has put away the sin. Verse 21: “having an high priest,” &c. We do not go creeping in all alone; the High Priest who has done the work is there before us. I cannot go within the veil without finding Him there. The apostle is following Jewish figures, becoming a Jew to Jews. There were other priests besides the great High Priest. Instead of, like the Jewish priests, offering incense outside, we go within. There was the washing of the priests, as for us. The anointing is not in question here, but the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water. So, in substance, it will be for Israel by and by.

Verse 22. “Let us draw near,” &c. The next thing, verse 23, is, “let us hold fast the profession of our faith,” &c. The exhortation is to be in communion within, and not to be attracted by the world without, ordinances, &c., to which they were in danger of going back. Then, (verse 24,) I am to think of others, walk in the power of the fruits of the Spirit; and (verse 25) not only to have love to individuals, but to remember the assembly. Christ would praise in the midst of the congregation. A person may say, I am very happy in staying at home; but that will not do. To go to the assembly often brings persecution.

The “day” spoken of here is not the catching up of the church, but the appearing. The more the day approaches, the greater the difficulty of assembling ourselves; but the exhortation is to be found assembling as plain evident Christians. It is not said to hear a sermon, but assembling ourselves. The way of God's working is not only to make Christians, but to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad. This is not to be fulfilled in the millennium. There will be different nations then, though they will come up to worship; and in the Old Testament times there was one particular nation, but no gathering together in one—it applies now. Church authority is not what is meant. That is not faith, but assembling ourselves together is faith. Not of man's will, but Christ's; who, through His death, has a church or assembly that is not of the world, and that is manifested by our assembling together.

Verse 26. If you say, I give up this assembling to Christ—there is none other sacrifice for sin but that He has made. If you trample under foot the blood of that sacrifice, knowing what it is, (I do not say being regenerated,) but giving it up willfully, your portion is the same as adversaries. A person who sees truth and gives it up, is always more bitter than any—he is an adversary. If they choose sin instead of Christ, there was no more sacrifice. It is a case of openly abandoning the Lord for one's own will in sin: not failure nor disobedience, but apostasy.

We see throughout this epistle the importance of the place in which we are set, and the responsibility of walk according to it. Christ is ever in the presence of God for us. Consequently, our title is to enter there boldly; our place never changes, though sin, of course, hinders fellowship

till it is confessed.

Chapter 98

Thoughts on Hebrews 11

We have already seen in this epistle that the Hebrews, instead of walking by faith, were in danger of turning back to the things they could see—things suited to them as men in the flesh, such as ordinances and objects of outward importance, of which the Jewish system was full. But Christians were called out of these; God was leading away from them. The constant tendency of all our hearts is to go back. It is a shame for Gentiles to take up with those shadows: in a measure, it was natural for the Jews, because they had had the beggarly element appointed for them to observe. Now there was something better. They were waiting for Christ to come again, and it is said to them, “He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” In this epistle we do not have the place of the Church, the body of Christ, brought out at all; in that connection the Lord comes and takes her to Himself. “I go to prepare a place for you,” &c. Here, as pilgrims, there is responsibility before us, and we look for His appearing. In church-character the hope is to be with Him. Here it is the heavenly calling and priesthood between us and God. The apostle goes on to show the power of faith. It is not a definition, but a description of its effects. It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Perfect certainty of realization is the effect of faith. The definition of faith is, that it “sets to its seal that God is true.” it remains that, what we hope for, we with patience wait for. The promise is just as certain as if we had the fulfillment of it. We do not see it. If we saw it we should not nope for it, but we realize things not seen. This is the power of faith in the soul.

In this chapter we have faith in its active character—the working of faith when it is there. The thing that produces faith is the Spirit of God bringing home the word with power, and when the soul sees anything of Christ it cannot rest satisfied without more. “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth,” is the reception of truth in the soul. Then there follows the practical effect in the walk of the believer. There is a great deal of method in this chapter, more than appears at first sight, for it is not man's method, but God's. The divine mind is always at work according to the measure of divine love. Directly you get the clue to the divine mind, you get beauty and order. Thus, in Exodus, we have the account of the things for the tabernacle, and then the priests, and then again the utensils. The human mind sees nothing but disorder in all this; and when the object of the shadow is known, the most perfect order comes out.

Faith here is spoken of in connection with creation. That nothing could come out of nothing, is man's wisdom! The philosopher could never of himself have found how out “the worlds were framed,” &c. Creation is absolutely unknown by reason. “By faith we understand,” but man's way of accounting for it led to pantheism, &c. Now men have got some knowledge of it from the Bible; but without scripture it could never be known simply or certainly.

In the next examples of faith we see the ground on which man could be in relationship with God. In Abel, the faith that brought a sacrifice; in Enoch, that which led to walking with God, and the power of life in his translation. In the seventh verse, it is faith connected with God in government, and the consequent judgment of the world. In the next example we have that kind of faith that reckons on

promise. It takes the promise of God, is satisfied with it, gives up everything, and gets nothing. All that flesh clings to is to be given up. These Jews had to do that. If I have nothing to do with earth I am a heavenly man. If I have nothing on earth, I am not an earthly man. God is not ashamed to be called the God of one whose heart and portion are in heaven; but He would be of one whose heart is on earth. This is the faith that gives character, heavenly character. (Ver. 8-22.) Then you have faith that counts on God, the active energy of life—not merely character, but energy; not so much the giving up as the active energy of the new principle in the soul. This is from verse 23 to 31. Then the getting into the land is passed over, the rest promised is heaven. They have possession of the land. It is different to passing the Red Sea and the wilderness.

From verse 32 come out all the various difficulties and traits of faith in which individuals had to stand against the professing people of God. This is a more difficult thing than any. If you want to live a life of faith, you must often live without Christians. People have to go alone with God and no one else, and if not, they must bring in unbelief to hinder them. Communion of saints is a happy thing, but there are times when you must act alone. Jonathan acted in faith, but Saul's folly spoiled the whole thing. We need that faith that reckons on God, let the people do what they like. This is not so brilliant an action of faith, but it is very valuable. A person who goes to preach in a heathen place knows what he has to do. His difficulty is not nearly so great as that of a Christian with the world, who profess to be Christians.

If not very near to Christ, a man cannot discern what is the world and what is of Christ.

Ver. 37, 38. They had to take what portion they could get here, and they died without receiving the promises, “God having provided some better thing for us,” &c. The beginning of chapter xii. is founded on this. The chastening there is connected with the trials of faith: the chastening is against the flesh, (Ver. 2.) Our attention is taken off all the other examples of faith in chapter xi., and the eye is to be fixed on Him who has gone through all. “Looking unto Jesus.” Looking away is the force of the expression. “He is set down on the right hand,” &c. Of the Abrahams, Isaacs, Josephs, Moses, &c., we read, they “received not the promises,” but of Christ it is not said, He has not. He has. He “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He has the reward; and another thing, He has run all the way, bearing mockery, scourging, &c. He has trodden every bit of the path of faith. The others all had their trial in a particular way, but the encouragement for faith now is that He has sat down, having run it all. David has not his reward yet. All these are not made perfect yet, but He is. Christianity was not brought in then. They were not brought into resurrection—glory. There were others to be brought into a better thing. He was the beginning and finisher of faith, and He has the reward.

It is well that we should see what the character of the reward is. Reward is never the motive for conduct: there would be no room for love in that but it acts as encouragement, when we are in the path which love has brought into, and encompassed. with difficulties and trials.

These Hebrews were going back to the expectation of a Messiah they could see. They are reminded that none of those in whom they boasted did see what they waited for. “These all died in faith, not having received,” &c. You want a visible Messiah, but none of these you glory in got what they waited for. With a Jew this was an unanswerable argument. They got nothing but by faith. So with us. What have we but what we have by faith.

Without going into the details of chap. 11 we have first, the creation—then, respecting sacrifice, “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” One thing to remark here is, how faith meets all cases since sin came in. It has nothing to do with innocence. Innocence does not need faith. When there was enjoyment all around, there was no need of faith. It was when sin came in that faith is known—a most blessed ordering of God; for it brings to us all that is required—righteousness, life, shelter in the judgment of the world. It can wander in a strange country, and bring in a living energy to overcome. It brings in God for enjoyment—communion—want of communion giving the sense of sin, and bringing back. It is the positive bringing in of God when sin had turned out of His presence. It takes out of flesh to God. It brings God in; or, rather, God brings Himself in His word and Spirit. There is no condition in which you cannot have it. The first thing we have it for is for righteousness.

Abel was a sinner: faith brings into a better place than innocency. I can enjoy nothing rightly. according to flesh! but the moment I get hold of Christ, I am out of those things, and am connected with Him: When they were in the land, the occasion for faith dropped through, except where special need brought it out.

When sin had shut us out from God, righteousness is possessed by faith. “He obtained witness that he was righteous.” Cain, before his heart was laid bare, was a very decent man: he was laboring in the sweat of his brow, and then went to worship God. What would you have better? It was this very thing that showed he had not one single right thought about God. He thought he could worship God as comfortably as ever. Cain really carried to God the proof of the curse—just what the natural man does. What we find in Abel was entirely different: he brings in death; he takes a firstling of the flock, a slain beast, by which he acknowledges he is under the effect of sin, not merely outwardly. He brings blood to God—a sacrifice—a slain sacrifice—the only way. He acknowledges by it, he is a sinner, and lost unless the death of another comes in. He comes to God with a sacrifice, and that declares, I am lost without. This passage is so clear as to righteousness— “he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” This is not only that righteousness is in Christ: He is my righteousness—I am “made the righteousness of God in him.” Abel obtained a witness that he was righteous, not that God was righteous. Not merely that God had given the sacrifice, but there are the actings of God in the man. God provided the sacrifice, but faith acts in bringing it to God. “God testifying of his gifts.” It is full of blessing. I have the witness that I am righteous. This is not experience. I do not want a testimony for what I experience. I want a testimony that delivers me from the things I am occupied about in myself, when I am suffering from them. I get it from God's gift that is perfect. I am “accepted in the Beloved.” You say, There is something about myself I cannot get over. Remember, the testimony of the Holy Ghost in us is the contrary of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to us. In me, He takes notice of every fault., that is not righteousness; but the testimony to us is, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” If a person brings a note to me, he does not ask what I am. In bringing Christ to God, I bring perfection. This is a peculiar figure of Christ, the sacrifice of Abel. Christ made Himself our neighbor: Israel slew him. They have the mark on them, having cast off Christ. But He is the sacrifice through which they will be restored. Faith says, I go to God by the sacrifice.

In Enoch, life has come in, as well as righteousness, Christ is “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony that he pleased God. In the Old Testament it is said he walked with

God. If we are reconciled to God, we can walk with Him. Then the life is manifested in walk, and the power of that life is, that he does not die at all. Christ said, “He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. So, those who are alive when He comes will not die. We may not die. The “wages of sin” for faith are entirely done away: Enoch is not found, for God took him—he is not touched by death at all. That which is the power of death is done away.

Another thing accompanying this is, that “before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God.” Here I get life before death. That we have as a present thing, and if the Lord comes, we shall not die. His long-suffering is the reason of His not coming. Walking with God, we have the testimony that we please God. It is peace, comfort—joy of the favor in which we stand. The Spirit of God, instead of reproving us, brings the light of God's favor streaming in upon our souls. Glory we now see, through a glass darkly; but it is a real truth that the Holy Ghost is in us, and if we are walking with God, He makes us happy in His favor; not merely I have done right in this or that; I do not think of myself at all, but of God. If I care only for what natural conscience says, I do not get God's mind at all. That does not touch what God is at all, but what man is. It is saying that man may exalt himself—has responsibility to himself; but believing God is a great deal more—it acknowledges responsibility to God. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder,” &c. It is coming to another that is spoken of. Do I come to a person I am with? In coming, I think of what He is—what God thinks of a thing. We have to do with Him in a living way, by faith. He is one who takes notice of everything. If you apply this practically at any moment, what a difference it will make! We are called to judge everything in the light. What do I mind about difficulties, if I know I am pleasing God! Such an one does not despise any, because thinking about God, he goes from strength to strength. Intercourse with God shows him more of God's mind—he sees what God is doing, “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

If he fail, there will be distress, thus walking with Him, because he has lost the thing he delights in. If accustomed to walk carelessly, he does not notice it. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” If there is diligence in seeking Him, there is the reward.

Ver. 7. If Enoch's case is that of exceptional translation, like the Church, Noah, like the Jewish remnant of the last days, is found in the place on which judgment is coming, and warned of things not seen as yet, (besides being a preacher of righteousness, as we hear elsewhere,) is moved with fear, and prepares an ark. His is the prophetic spirit; the world is condemned, and himself becomes heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He accepted God's testimony with the provided means of escape, and thus inherited that righteousness on which the new world is founded. Thus we have had faith in creation, faith in sacrifice, walking with God, and testimony.

From ver. 8.-16 we have, not the great principles of human relationship with God from first to last, as in the preceding verses, but the faith which goes and keeps out as a pilgrim, with all the strength given for fulfilling the promises. And as these realized strangership on earth through faith, lived and died in faith, not in the possession of what was promised, so God regarded them with special favor, is not ashamed to he called their God, and will exceed their hopes of heavenly things. Further we come (17-22) to the faith that sacrifices the things which apparently accomplish the promise, to receive it from God alone, or confides, spite of all that tends to destroy confidence. This is rather faith's patience, as what follows is its energy. Thus faith in the history of Moses (23-27) abides firm in the face of the utmost difficulties. Moreover, not providence, but faith, should

regulate the believer. Again, we may observe in the next verses (28-31) that faith uses the means God appoints; which nature either refuses, or can only meddle with to its own ruin. But if the Egyptians were swallowed up—the type of those who, of themselves, think to pass through death and judgment, the harlot Rahab identifies herself by faith with the spies and people of God, before a blow was struck on this side Jordan, and thus escaped the destruction which fell on self-confident Jericho.

Then follow statements of the actings and sufferings of faith all through the history of Israel after the conquest of Canaan, not detailed as before, but general; but all, like the patriarchs, without receiving the fulfillment of the promise. This was one grand lesson for the Hebrew Christians. Besides, they were to bear in mind that God has provided some better thing for us. They are to be perfected, as well as we, in resurrection-glory; but there are special privileges for the saints who are now being called— “for us.”

Chapter 99

Thoughts on Hebrews 12

Two things are the effect of being in the presence of God—alarm of conscience and encouragement. The presence of God keeps the conscience thoroughly alive, but it strengthens it to look above the evil while seeing the character of it.

He brings us into His presence to judge all that is contrary to Him and to strengthen us against it, and that is encouraging. He delights in us, and He delights in conforming us to Himself; thus grace comes in so blessedly, making us partake of His nature. It is of what He is He would have us partakers, not merely partakers of holiness, but of His holiness. He does not say, You must be holy, i.e., it does not come out in that form: but He communicates the holiness His own nature. See the contrast of grace and law. Does not God require holiness in His presence? That is true, but it is law. Grace is, that He delights to give it.

Separation from evil and power of good is the character stamped on all God's dealings down here chastenings, &c. We have the secret of His ways and dealings, if we are near enough to Him to see. The Hebrews were declining in spirituality; therefore they had not the key to understand His ways. The hairs of our head are all numbered. When once the heart has hold of that, it must apprehend that it is of God's grace that He is so occupied with us. It is a wonderful check on will to know that He is so occupied. As in Job it is said “He openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.”

We have seen the Apostle had named all the worthies in chapter 11; but then he says, “looking unto Jesus.” Christ had run the whole course through, the others only a little bit of it. He despised the shame and has sat down: He has reached the end, having gone through the whole course of trouble and difficulty.

Ver. 3, 4.-Addressing them, he says, You are set here in God's behalf in the place where sin is, to get the better of it. We are all set here a witness of divine good in the midst of evil in this world, and that with a power greater than the power of this world. Greater is he that is for us than he that is against us. We are called to be the epistle of Christ—to glorify God in all circumstances;—not to be apostles.

We fail here and we fail there; but we are set according to His will here or there in this world to manifest Christ in it, and not merely to do the work.

In saying this, one immense truth is supposed, viz., that we have this life. Another is, that all questions between us and God are settled; then, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. To use His name I must be authorized by Him.

All questions connected with us as sons of Adam are entirely done with. “Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though alive?” &c. (Col. 2) You are not alive in the world at all; “reckon yourselves dead.” That is the reason we are freed from the law. We are dead; and the law cannot have authority over our dead man. This position in which. we are set as

bearing witness, and all God's dealings with us, go on this ground—we are born of God. This is more than receiving life in nature. We do not read of being born of God as creatures, but as a Christian I am born of God. The effect of the communication of this life is having done with all the old life; we have a life “hid with Christ in God.” All is settled; not only we have the nature, but perfect peace. “My peace I leave with you.” Christ's peace. No cloud of any sorrow was on Him. He has cleansed us so to be without spot, and His righteousness is ours.

Having this nature, born of God, which has to be manifested, (and alas! we find in nature many hindrances, temper, &c.) God sets about to do it for us, when we fail to resist “striving against sin,” by chastenings, &c. We are set in the place of children and we must look to what God's thoughts are about us. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” &c. I get the discipline, chastenings, &c., that God sends to those He loves. There is my will to be broken perhaps, and tendencies to be found out in myself that I did not know of before, to humble me. I get exercised about the good and evil. He hates the evil and loves the good, and in breaking us down, subduing the evil, wearing it out, &c. He is bringing us nearer to Himself. God is educating us as children. Sometimes when we do not see what He is doing, we get the blessing. Will works in us; He comes in to smash the will; and we see afterward that we have got the blessing through it.

A babe does foolish things which perhaps we may be amused at, but it has to be taught better. A Christian is like a babe, to be trained and instructed. God's patience in taking such pains with us should cheer us. It is strange to talk of affliction cheering us; but if our wills are broken, that is a good thing.

There are various ways in which as saints we get tried, (though we live in great quietness, there might be more persecution if there was more faithfulness) but through all circumstances God is threading our way, occupying Himself with us, our particular characters, &c., to break us down and instruct us. What we want is to realize that God loves us so much—we are of such value to God (more surely than many sparrows) as that He should take such pains to make us “partakers of His holiness.” We are apt not to believe the activity of His love. Some trouble comes on us; God has been watching us individually for years, weeks, &c., watching us to bring this trouble which He sees needed.

It is of the greatest importance that there should be the consciousness of God's constant dealing with us in love. We are of that family, belonging to Him, God's family, and not of the world; therefore He deals with us as sons. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward,” &c. This is all to encourage. Encouragement is given, founded on the bond of grace between us and God. Then He gives us this blessed privilege of being the witness for God in this world. Everything that makes the condition of the heart better is good, and all is grounded on grace. Therefore it is said “looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God,” —lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, &c. (ver. 15, 16.) Why does He press this? No profane or impure person! Oh, because we are come to God. Grace puts us in His presence, makes us partakers of His holiness; then He says, “looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace,” &c., i.e., do not lose this entire confidence in God's love. This is the present practical enjoyment of what God is for you. If you lose that, you fail. There is nothing that links up the heart with God but grace. “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

Walk in the sanctuary of His presence. You are not come to the terrible mountain Sinai; but having come to the perfect grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, take care how you walk. Grace must be the character of our walk (ver. 22). This is true blessedness. There is no hindrance of evil by terror. The effect of the fire from Sinai was that they “entreated the word should not be spoken to them any more.” Was that getting on with God? We are not to terrify people by our lives. We may warn them if needful and use the law to hammer at people's hard consciences—all is well in its place; but we cannot be a witness in our walk of this. We are come to a different thing. We may speak of the law, but that is not where we are. Now we must be living witnesses of what we are, and where we are. We are come unto Mount Zion, which represents grace. This is the result, speaking of the place we are brought to. It is to God. He speaks of what will be on this earth, and that is as it were looking down. Zion came at the end of the whole course of responsibility. As to the law, the result was, “Ichabod,” for the ark was in the enemies' hand. The only link with God was broken. Then God came in and choose David, of the tribe of Judah—not Joseph (which was significant of a full tide of blessing in nature). The Jebusites conquered and gone, David founded the temple on Mount Zion. This was a new link with God in grace when responsibility was ended. The whole of the heavenly and of the earthly part is spoken of here. Now we have something more—that which was in the purposes of God, which man never had before in any way. God is glorifying Himself in a way angels never thought of. We are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem—to heaven. Then, when there, we find ourselves in the whole company of angels—the universal company of heaven; then “the church of the first-born” —a special assembly registered in heaven. We are that—not merely creatures as the angels are, but those registered in heaven, as having this special privilege—an assembly whom God has identified with Christ the First-born. It is remarkable how they are singled out here. In the general muster He cannot let them pass without distinguishing the “church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” We are come to that; it is all the grand result. These are all sitting around Him. Then there is another characteristic of the scene, “to God the judge of all.” There is Zion on earth, the heavenly Jerusalem above, the general company of angels, and the church of the first born. Then God Himself and in the way of government, “the judge of all;” then the “spirits of just men made perfect,” saints of the Old Testament in the character grace had given them, “or just men.” They had run their course and they are there. Then begins what is connected with the earthly part—looking at the effect. We are come “to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” We are not come to the new covenant, but to Jesus the Mediator of it. I am associated with Him who is the Mediator; that is a higher thing than if merely come to the covenant. He will make this new covenant with Israel on earth.

“And to the blood of sprinkling.” The earth will be benefitted by the shedding of the blood of Christ it cries peace instead of vengeance, as Abel's did.

Having come to the Mediator, I am come to the prospect of all the blessedness for earth. It is sweet to know earth will have it, but ours is the better part. We are to be a witness of whence we are. We come from heaven. In spirit it is true now. What is true in spirit is more real and palpable than what we see. What is passing in our hearts and minds is more what we are really, than what our bodies are occupied in. Christ was a carpenter (as really as any other carpenter), but that was not what He was. So with us, we are brought into all these things with God. Then the thing is to be always a witness of the place to which He has called us in grace. We are come; then we have God

dealing with us in respect of this place to which He has brought us.

Do you say, This trial or that is enough to discourage me? But no; it is God who is bringing you into it, and God is with you in the place, dealing with you in grace, according to the place He has brought you into.

In the midst of the company of heaven, one company is singled out—that is, ourselves. Surely this is enough to make us humble!

Chapter 100

Thoughts on Hebrews 13

The closing exhortations—i.e., of our chapter—are full of importance, and are, as might be expected from all previously seen, in view of the path in this world proper to the saints, who have Christ appearing in the presence of God for them. They do not consequently rise to the height of the communications in Ephesians; for the subject throughout has been the heavenly calling, rather than the mystery of Christ and the Church. Brotherly love is to continue spite of obstacles. Hospitality is not to be forgotten, if we would fare like Abraham. Prisoners and the ill-used are to be borne in mind, considering ourselves and our own circumstances. Marriage is to be honored and purity sought in or out of that state. Our conduct is to be without avarice, contented with what we have; for God will be true to His word of unfailing care, even as to these things; so that we say boldly, “The Lord is my helper and I will not fear. What shall man do to me?'

The Holy Ghost then tells the saints (ver. 7) to remember their leaders who had spoken God's “word to them, the issue of whose conversation was worthy of all consideration and their faith to be imitated. They were gone; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. Let them not, then, be carried away by various and strange doctrines. Grace is that which establishes the heart, not meats by which those who walked in them were not profited. It is a mistake that Christians have no altar: they have one whereof those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat. That is, the Jews have lost their place of privilege, which now belongs in an infinitely more blessed way to such as have Jesus. As in Him, so in us the extremes of shame here and glory above are found to meet. It was not so with Israel. They had the camp, and they could not draw within the veil. And yet even they had the most striking type of another state of things. “For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” Christians now must bear the cross, waiting for heaven with Christ. All middle ground is gone with the old covenant. But if we wait for glory, not the less but the rather should we praise continually, offering by Jesus to God the fruit of the lips which confess His name, and not forgetting sacrifices of doing good and communication.

Further, we are called to obey our leaders and to submit ourselves; for “they watch over your souls as those that shall give account.” It is not that they are to give account of the souls of others, but of their own conduct in respect of others. Obedience on the part of those watched over would be much for these guides, that they might do their work with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for the saints.

The apostle asks their prayers, which he could with a good conscience, occupied with the work of grace, and not the weakness and failure of a careless walk. Moreover, he besought it of them, that he might be the sooner restored to them.

And how blessed and suited to their need and comfort is his concluding prayer! “The God of peace that brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in [virtue of] the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work to do his will, doing in you that which is pleasing before him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The name of Paul does not appear at the close any more than at the commencement; and this for obvious reasons in a letter to saints of the circumcision. But who else would have spoken so of Timothy The writer was in Italy, and sends the salutation of such as were there. The apostolic under-current is apparent to a spiritual mind.

Chapter 101

Fragment: Holiness

Holiness is separation to God from evil. The new nature, besides its intrinsic character as being of God, has a positive object, and that is God in Christ.

Chapter 102

On the Humanity of Christ

Dear sister,—the questions you put make me feel deeply all that there is sorrowful in the walk of one whom, nevertheless, I love very sincerely, our friend M. G. To enter upon subtle questions as to the person of Jesus tends to wither and trouble the soul, to destroy the spirit of worship and affection, and to substitute thorny inquiries, as if the spirit of man could solve the manner in which the humanity and the divinity of Jesus were united to each other. In this sense it is said, “no one knoweth the Son but the father.” it is needless to say that I have no such pretension. The humanity of Jesus cannot be compared. It was true and real humanity, body, soul, flesh and blood, such as mine, as far as human nature is concerned: but Jesus appeared in circumstances quite different from those in which Adam was found. He came expressly to bear our griefs and infirmities. Adam had none of them to bear; not that his nature was incapable of them in itself, but he was not in the circumstances which brought them in: God had set him in a position inaccessible to physical evil, until he fell under moral evil. On the other hand, God was not in Adam, God was in Christ in the midst of all sorts of miseries and afflictions, fatigues and sufferings, across which Christ passed according to the power of God, and with thoughts of which the spirit of God was always the source, though they were really human in their sympathies. Adam before his fall had no sorrows. God was not in him, neither was the Holy Ghost the source of his thoughts. After his fall, sin was the source of his thoughts. It was never so in Jesus. On the other side, Jesus is son of man, Adam was not; but at the same time, Jesus was born by divine power, so that that holy thing which was born of Mary is called Son of God: which is not true of any other. He is Christ born of man, but as man, even born of God; so that the state of humanity in him is neither what Adam was before his fall nor what he became after his fall

But what was changed in Adam by the fall was not humanity, but the state of humanity. Adam was as much a man before as after, and after as before. Sin entered humanity, and it became estranged from God, it is without God in the world. Now Christ was not that. He was always perfectly with God, save that He suffered on the cross the forsaking of God in His soul. Also the word was made flesh. God was manifest in flesh. Thus acting in this true humanity, His presence was incompatible with sin in the unity of the same person.

It is a mistake to suppose that Adam had immortality in himself. No creature possesses it. They are all sustained of God who “alone has immortality” essentially. When God was no longer pleased to sustain in this world, man becomes mortal and his strength is exhausted: in fact, according to the ways and will of God, he attains to the age of nearly 1,000 years when God so wills, 70 when He finds it good. Only God would have this terminate, that one should die sooner or later when sin enters, save changing those who survive to the coming of Jesus, because He has overcome death. Now, God was in Christ, which changed all in this respect (not as to the reality of His humanity, with all its affections, its feelings, its natural wants of soul and body, all which were in Jesus, and were consequently affected by all that surrounded Him, only according to the Spirit and without sin.) No one takes His life from Him; He gives it up but at the moment willed of God. He is abandoned in fact to the effect of man's iniquity, because He came to accomplish the will of God,

He suffers Himself to be crucified and slain. Only the moment in which He yields up His spirit is in His hands. He works no miracle to hinder the effect of the cruel means of death which man employed, in order to guard His humanity from their effect; He leaves it to their effect. His divinity is not employed to secure Himself from it, to secure Himself from death; but it is employed to add to it all His moral value, all His perfection to His obedience. He works no miracle not to die, but he works a miracle in dying. He acts according to His divine rights in dying, but not in guarding Himself from death; for He surrenders His soul to His Father as soon as all is finished.

The difference then, of His humanity, is not in that it was not really and fully that of Mary, but in that it was so by an act of divine power, so as to be such without sin; and moreover, that in place of being separated from God in His soul, like every sinful man, God was in Him who was of God. He could say, “I thirst,” “my soul is troubled,” “it is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels;” but He could also say, “the Son of man who is heaven,” and “before Abraham was, I am.” The innocence of Adam was not God manifest in flesh; it was not man subjected, as to the circumstances in which His humanity was found, to all the consequences of sin. On the other hand, the humanity of man fallen was under the power of sin, of a will opposed to God, of lusts which are at enmity with Him. Christ came to do God's will; in Him was no sin. It was humanity in Christ where God was, and not humanity separate from God in itself. It was not humanity in the circumstances where God had set man when he was created; the circumstances where sin had set him, and in these circumstances without sin; not such as silt rendered man in their midst, but such as the divine power rendered Him in all His ways in the midst of those circumstances, such as the Holy Ghost translated Himself in humanity. It was not man where no evil was, like Adam, innocent, but man in the midst of evil; it was not man bad in the midst of evil like Adam fallen, but man perfect, and perfect according to God, in the midst of evil, God manifest in flesh; real, proper humanity, but His soul always having the thoughts that God produces in man, and in absolute communion with God, save when He suffered on the cross, where He must, as to the suffering of His soul, be forsaken of God; more perfect then, as to the extent of the perfection and the degree of obedience than anywhere else, because He accomplished the will of God in the face of His wrath, instead of doing it in the joy of His communion; and therefore He asked that this cup should pass, which He never did elsewhere. He could not find His meat in the wrath of God.

Our precious Savior was quite as really man as I, as regards the simple and abstract idea of humanity, but without sin, born miraculously by divine power; and moreover He was God manifest in flesh.

Now, dear Sister, having said this much, I recommend you with all my heart to avoid discussing and defining the person of our beloved Savior. You will lose the savor of Christ in your thoughts, and you will only find in their room, the barrenness of man's spirit in the things of God and in the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man because he labors there at his own charge. It as if one dissected the body of his friend, instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character. It is one of the worst signs of all those I have met with for the church as they call it, to which M. G. belongs, that he has entered thus, and that it presents itself after such a sort before the Church of God and before the world. I may add that I am so profoundly convinced of man's incapacity in this respect, that it is outside the teaching of the Spirit to wish to define how the divinity and the humanity are united in Jesus, that I am quite ready to suppose that, with every desire to avoid, I may have fallen into it, and in falling into it, said something false in what I have

written to you. That He is really man, Son of man, dependent on God as such, and without sin in this state of dependence, really God in His unspeakable perfection,—to this I hold I hope, more than to my life. To define is what I do not pretend. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” If I find something which enfeebles one or other of these truths, or which dishonors what they have for object, I should oppose it, God calling me to it, with all my might.

May God give you to believe all that the word teaches with regard to Jesus. It is our peace and our nourishment to understand all that the Spirit gives us to understand, and not to seek to define what God does not call us to define; but to worship on the one hand, and feed on the other, and to live in every way, according to the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Yours affectionately, J. N. D.

Chapter 103

Scripture Query and Answer: Jeremiah 31:22—May It Be Applied to the Incarnation?

Q. John 1:16. Grace for grace?

A. There are two ways of interpreting this passage; both, however, amount to grace answering to grace. The question is, in what sense does grace answer grace?

Either (1) by grace succeeding to grace—one grace, so to speak, following another—grace upon grace; or (2) grace in the effect answering to, i.e., equaling in quality, the grace in the cause—grace in the stream answering to grace in the fountain.

Thus in Christ there is infinite fullness; and what we receive out of that fullness is abundant, precious, lasting, divine, heavenly, according to those qualities which exists in the source.

The Lord will give grace and glory. (Psa. 84) But the gift of glory is one form of grace. To what, then, does an inheritance of glory answer? To His glory. (See Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2.) Again, the value of a promise depends upon the power and faithfulness of the party that promises, just as the value of a bank-note depends upon the credit of the bank that issued it. Why do men prefer a Bank of England note to a provincial bank-note? Because they have more confidence in the Bank of England that in a country bank.

Chapter 104

Job 9

IN Job we have an example of a strong and upright soul, not understanding grace, with a great deal of self-will. He knew he was not a hypocrite, but was upright; God said so of him, and Job knew it. But there was a great deal of self-righteousness, self-complacency, and self-will. His piety made him attribute what came upon him to God, and his pride made him rebel against it. It is very interesting to see the exercises of a soul in this state. Job said many right things of God, and he knew God would not treat him as his friends did. He wants to find God. He knows God would do him justice if he found him. “He is in one mind, who can turn him back?” But he could not find God. Job had not the secret opened as we have it; he was calling himself righteous. The question raised was, how righteousness was to be found. Here is a soul in conflict with Satan.

There was life in Job, graciousness in his walk in life, upright dealing, &c.; and God said to Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” &c. It was not Satan spake first to God, but God to Satan. God knew what He was going to do, Satan did not. This history shows the resources the soul has when righteousness is called for. This took place before the law was given, before promises, before the gospel came. How is a man to be just with God? was Job's exercise. His friends had no thought about that. They were going on the ground of this world being the sphere in which God's righteousness in government is manifested; but Job saw the wicked prospering, the righteous sad. Some will tell us the other world will be the sphere where righteous acts will be rewarded and the converse. But why, if worthy of a good place in the next world, are they tormented here? But it is not so, that the condition of men answers to their conduct. There is another thing besides righteousness, and that is grace. Grace meets with sin, and yet it does not contradict righteousness. Man knows nothing of this way. Job had not learned what his own righteousness was, and he had not learned how God brings out to a soul the consciousness of its state. Neither Job nor his friend's understood God's way of grace—how God could ride over the sin by meeting it in grace. Job's friends could philosophize, they could tell a quantity of truths; but what comfort was there in that to a broken heart Now God is dealing with sinners: not men acting for God, but God acting in grace, because of man's state. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Christ had not broken the Sabbath, but God was working because man was in sin and in misery.

This was not God dealing in law, not promise, not full grace, as shown out in Christ; but here is a man taken up, Satan accusing him, and God dealing with him. A master-hand was guiding all in Job's case, though Satan was permitted to sift him. The accuser goes up, and God says, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” Satan accuses. Now, he must go through another process to learn how a man, a sinner could be blessed with God Himself—could know Him, could understand His thoughts and feelings. Satan might touch his goods, but not himself. This seems but an every day occurrence: loss of children, property, &c. God carries it on, showing how He orders everything. Job stands these losses; he blesses the name of the Lord; but his heart was not reached. Satan says, “Skin for skin,” &c. Well, says God, You may go and do it; and his wife comes and says, “Curse God and die.” His piety is proof against this also, his heart was not reached; but God has to do His work thoroughly. Job sits in the gate, his friends around him; he

was a mark for every one; it is too much for him. Now he curses the day he was born. He was feeling human complacency before, and had not been exercised in the presence of God. Many can say good things of God who have never tasted what they are themselves in the presence of God. What we want is, a righteousness that cannot be shaken in the presence of God. We must be brought to this—not only be conscious of grace, but have truth in the conscience.

Peter needed to learn what he was. There is a practical discovery is the presence of God of all the mischief that is in the springs of the heart; we want the springs of the heart broken up. How many are as discontented with God as possible, not looking after holiness, but seeking to make themselves comfortable! Until the will has been crushed in the presence of the majesty of God, there cannot be a right state before God. God does hate iniquity and love righteousness; but what good is that for a ruined man?

The world goes on on the principle of sin being in it. Deceit is the will unbroken in the midst of the consciousness of sin. Those justified God who received Christ. The Pharisees complained because He ate with publicans and sinners; but the publican can say, That is just what I want. The sinner justifies God in owning the sin and receiving the grace. A. man never knows God until he gets to that point— “How shall a man be just with God” Men are willing to contend with Him; but what good is that? says God. God does love righteousness; but what avails that to me? How many sins to-day, yesterday, &c., have I committed? It is no good pleading with God on that ground.

Then Job takes up another case. He cannot answer Him in his majesty, and he does not see His love. “If I justify myself my own mouth will condemn me.” How can I justify myself? How many foolish words this week? If I am unrighteous what can I do? He is vexed in his soul about it. “He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If a scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.” A scourge comes, and, perhaps, the best family falls a prey to it. Shall I give up God then, and not trouble myself about it? But he has to do with God, and he cannot help it. He cannot escape His hand. He is not a man, as we are. Job would have got away from God's presence if he could, but he could not; he was all wrong as to this, but he could not get away from God.

“Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch.” I cannot make myself clean before God. Men pass through the world in an astonishing way, thinking about their character, conduct, &c.—getting honor from one another, &c.;—but what are they in God's sight? Whited sepulchers, fair without, but full of dead men's bones within. The more a man labors to be good, the more he finds he is like the Ethiopian, who cannot change his skin: the evil is in his nature, and he cannot get rid of it. When there is real integrity of heart, there is struggle. The sense of integrity, without the knowledge of righteousness, is the occasion of much misery in the heart. Job says, “Let not His fear terrify me.” He had this fear. God has taken away the fear in Christ, and there is a daysman betwixt us, such as Job felt the need of.

The consequences of sin are not known yet. God is saving now, not judging in righteousness. There is the time coming when He will rule in righteousness. He is saving souls now for a better state hereafter, but then the “sinner dying a hundred years old will be accursed.” We cannot judge of people's state of soul by their circumstances—we cannot say those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse than all that dwelt at Jerusalem.

When I come to that point, to say not the world is wicked, but I am wicked, I have the “daysman” between me and God. He is the One who has come to me in all the wickedness of my heart, and has come to me because I am so. Now I have not only God working in me, sending Satan to plow up the fallow ground, and to show to my conscience what was there long before, but God doing a work for me. He brings in a righteousness (His own) for the sinner. He works a work for us.

The first thing I find, then, is that this my state has not kept Him away from me, but it has brought Him to me. That is grace, not righteousness. Hiding my sin from me would not be mercy. Not letting me see things as God sees them is not mercy. It is in meeting me just as I am, and acting above the sin, that He has shown mercy. Christ never alarms people who come to Him in their need. To the hypocrite He speaks terror, but to the poor in spirit it is “fear not.” I am all that you need. You say, ‘I am such a sinner.' Christ says, ‘That is just the reason I am come.' You say, ‘I have an awful will.' ‘That is the reason I am come,' says Christ ‘I will break your will.’ “Neither do I condemn you,” said He to the woman accused by the Pharisees.

I defy you to find a case where Christ brought fear upon a convicted conscience. He takes the fear away instead of causing it. He comes in the poorest and the lowest way to meet with those in need, and that they might not be afraid of Him. Grace reigns—it has come in God's own blessed sovereignty.

How different are men's thoughts of righteousness now to God's! We can let all go on quietly without trying to set things right, knowing we have something better. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

We have a daysman not only laying His hand on man, but on God. He is the mediator to reconcile. If a day is assigned in a court of law, the daysman is the one who appears on my behalf to undertake my cause. Not only has Christ come to me in my sins, but He has come to answer for me, taking up the whole cause. He has done it—settled the whole thing as to my sins, and is gone back to appear in the presence of God for me. He has appeared for God amongst us, but now He is gone to appear for us in the presence of God. I have given up all attempt to answer for myself; He has taken it up. Has God accepted His answer for me? Here faith comes in to accredit God when He says He has accepted Minn. The work that the daysman has done is accepted. We know not only that there is a daysman, but that the daysman has sat down—the work being finished—no more remaining to be done (as to the sacrifice). The Holy Ghost is the witness of that; “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Righteousness is there! Where? Before God. I am not talking of the fruits of righteousness, but righteousness itself there. God's mind is that He has accepted Christ. God has given Him, and that is love. He has accepted His work, and that is righteousness. Now there is no fear. Grace reigns through righteousness. I stand in the presence of God by virtue of the perfect righteousness that has been presented to God. Where is love to be seen? Very feebly truly amongst Christians, but love is not feeble in God. I find in Him perfect love. He has broken my heart because it was a hard heart. Here was all the country set in movement to get Job's heart right—Sabeans, Chaldeans, &c. God has been working in all this. I have the key to it all now through the gospel. Self-will, pride, all must be broken, but God is perfect love. He has taken away the sin by the cross, and He has provided righteousness. Then what have I to fear? Though He will exercise our souls, that we may know good and evil, it is all love. I can glory in tribulation, knowing that it worketh patience,

experience, hope.

Now, beloved friends, are you resting on the daysman? or are you saying, ‘If I can make my hands a little cleaner, my conscience a little quieter, I shall be all right?' If you were to stand in the presence of God, that would be all spoiled. (Job 9:31.) What righteousness is that which is spoiled in the presence of God?

It is the blood which has made atonement, and Christ at the right hand of God is our righteousness.

Chapter 105

On John 1:29-39

IN this beautiful scene, or succession of scenes, we have a very striking setting forth of Christ, both in the power of His work and in the attractiveness of His person, the character too of His presentation in contrast with the law; and then its effects upon souls. We may remark the great care taken with regard to John the Baptist that he should not have had a knowledge of Jesus previously. And there had been such a remarkable association between the mothers of the two babes, as we find in Luke 1, that it makes it the more startling to hear the repeated assertion of the Baptist, “I knew him not.” God is setting forth that knowledge which is infinitely above nature, which comes from His own teaching, and the direct testimony of the Holy Ghost. And this was therefore brought forward in a peculiarly forcible way and reserved for this gospel. For we should hardly gather it from any other.

When John does see Jesus coming to him, his utterance here goes far beyond the bounds of Israel or even men at large into the wide scope of God's largest purposes. “Behold,” he says, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The law neither brought sin into the world, nor took it out. The law is the strength of sin, aggravating it, but never delivering from it. So far from taking it away, even from the Jew with whom alone it had to do, it only drove its guilt and misery into the awakened conscience. It allowed a man no rest nor comfort that had sin upon him.

But now we have another thing altogether, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” It was God in the depth of His grace; God appearing in the world that He had made, dealing with the sin that the enemy had brought in. And His way was giving Jesus, that He might be the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. Such is the first direct testimony of the Baptist given here. Because in fact where sin is not taken away—judged according to God in another—judged in the holy sinless Lamb, that even the world might have full deliverance brought to it, (I am not speaking now of every individual person in the world, but of Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately,) there could be no divine foundation of blessing. This, then, is the first picture brought before us; the full action of divine grace in dealing with the sin that the law could only discover and not remove.

“This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me.” His divine glory was essential to give efficacy to the work He undertook. He must in reality be before John, however John might be before Him historically, “And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel therefore am I come baptizing with water.” There you have John's part. All he could do was to baptize with water. That was a sort of token or sign to Israel that the Christ was about to be manifested.

“And John bear record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove.” Now you have something entirely different. “And it abode upon him.” But even that is not all. He repeats, “And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” That is, in the 32nd verse, you have the personal seal of the Holy Ghost given to Christ. “Him hath God the Father sealed.” The Holy Ghost came and abode upon Him.

But a most blessed truth is brought out in the next verse. The same blessed Person, who was Himself thus sealed, was also to baptize others with the Holy Ghost. There you have the two great divisions of our Lord's work—the Lamb bearing away the sin of the world, which is the crowning work of Christ upon earth; and then His great heavenly work founded upon what He did on earth. And these two things brought home to us by the Holy Ghost, call the Church into its proper place. We have not the Church named as such here or elsewhere in John's Gospel; but the grand features of the Church of God are brought out in these few verses.

Then comes the declaration of His personal glory: “And I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God.” I believe that, in the use here made of that term, “Son of God,” you have a much higher expression of His glory than in verse 49. Because there it is connected with the earth and with Israel. Here you have Nathaniel, the Israelite indeed, and without guile, the type of Israel so to be viewed by God's mercy. He says, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel.” Acknowledging Christ according to the titles of glory in Psa. 2, where we learn Messiah is yet to be established in His glory here below. “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” And this, too, as Son born into the world. “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” Nathaniel, thoroughly entering in spirit, though not in full intelligence into this, confesses the Lord accordingly. And then the Lord unfolds to him His glory as Son of Man also. How wonderfully blessed is the way in which we learn throughout the chapter the manifestation of Christ, and that, too, in our position, as He is specially unfolded to us now: from His being the Lamb of God, bearing away sin, to His heavenly operation in baptizing with the Holy Ghost. “I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

But, besides having thus the full revelation of Christ and His work, (though, in point of time, preparatory to it), we have the unfolding of results in souls. “Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples: and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” Here it appears to me that we have something still more blessed than the testimony of the first day. And it is remarkable as showing the ways of God, that it was not when John brought out the full description of Christ's work on earth and in heaven, that we find any particular effect produced upon his disciples. It was when his own soul was raptured at the sight of the Lord, as he saw Him walking before him. Jesus Himself filled his heart now, not His work, not His glory, but Himself. It is his delight, the satisfaction of his soul in looking at Him that we hear now. He says but a few simple words, not half as many as he had used before, in his wonderful testimony to Him. But there was divine power along with them, “Behold the Lamb of God.” It is His person simply, not merely His dignity, but the full grace of His person, as God the Father looked at Him. “And the two disciples heard him speak.” What was the effect? “And they followed Jesus.” John had been their earthly guide hitherto. But now there was the anticipation of what he himself afterward said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” He had borne his witness to Christ's work and glory, and now his soul is carried away in worship of the Lord. “Behold the Lamb of God!” The effect was most mighty upon the hearts of the disciples that heard the outpouring of his heart. And it is so always. It is a mistake to suppose that the clearest enunciations of truth have the greatest effect upon the hearts and consciences of God's children. What God gives through the Spirit the second day is what He most notices as attended with marked effects upon others.

No doubt, the truth that John had brought out on the first day had done its work in their souls, but this made the testimony so overwhelming that they could not stay away from Jesus any longer. He

was not only one who met the law, and all the need that sin had produced, but we have here the other great feature of Christianity and its effects: the attractiveness of Christ, an object made known to us that wins our affections, so that we cannot stay away from Him. It is the Holy Ghost that produces it through the truth; but it is the person of Christ that the heart finds its delight in. Therefore, we find the Lord gratifying this desire that His spirit had wrought in them. He turns and sees them following, and says to them, What seek ye? He loves to hear from themselves that it was not merely that they followed Him because they had heard of certain things that He was going to do. But he asks, What seek ye? They answer, “Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?” In Christ we have not merely God dealing with sin, but makes us one with Him who put bur sin away. And the effect in this world is, the attraction to his person and dwelling with Him. These disciples go away from all that had been previously so blest to them. To have staid now with John, away from Jesus, would have shown that God's object, by his servant John, had failed of its adequate effects. But, no; they follow Jesus. The Lord at once invites them to “come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.” We are not told where it was; that was of no consequence. On the contrary, I believe it was of importance that it should not be told. Thus, the delight and satisfaction of the heart in Jesus draws us to follow after, and makes us strangers with Him. Companions of an unknown land of glory with Him that we become strangers in the world. John the Baptist himself went away from the cities and the haunts of men and dwelt in the wilderness. But that was in correspondence with the moral sentence of God, that the wilderness was better than the city. To use the language of the Psalmist, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away and be at rest, Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness,” &c.

But now there is a new and heavenly kind of isolation—an isolation for the Christian. It may be in the very heart of the city; nor need we go to the wilderness to seek it. Christ's dwelling is an unknown spot; it was on the earth, but of heaven. And it is made so to us, because it is companionship with Him that came down from heaven—the Son of man, who, even when on earth, was “the Son of man in heaven.” And it is the more so with us, because of the Spirit sent doll n from heaven, who knits us with Him there. Left here for a little while, we are strangers with Him who is in heaven. And this is Christianity as a practical thing.

And, oh! may the Lord grant that these things may be increasingly true of our souls—that we may not be satisfied merely with having them before our hearts and consenting to them, but that they may be our daily enjoyment.

In Christianity there is no such thought as that man should first work for himself, and then give up a portion of his time for rest. We begin with Christ risen from the dead, when His work for us was done; we enter on a new reckoning of time, not to say eternity, with blessing from God's full grace. We may have to earn our bread day by day; but we are not laboring aright if we do it for ourselves. A Christian is more than any other liable to go astray, unless he be always serving his Master in heaven. Let the work be what it may, where there is a godly doing of it, doing it to the Lord, the heart is kept happy, free from the uneasiness of mind and the care that would corrode its peace. The Lord grant, then, that, delighting ourselves in Jesus, we may be content to be strangers with Him. And allow me to say that it is a harder thing to be an unknown, unnoticed stranger in the world, than to be roughly used and persecuted by the world. The most trying thing to the heart is when we are not counted worthy either of a word or a look. Many could bear to be the objects of

stripes or imprisonment much better. How happy it is that the Lord gives us this strangership to the world—communion with His own grace. The world may treat us with scorn or slight, but this only shows after all that their hearts, however given to pleasure, are not happy. Anything that is of Christ makes the world uneasy. The more calm and quiet you are, the more the world is afraid, feeling instinctively that there is something entirely above itself. May we be then where Jesus dwells. Such perfect peace is there; such purity; such love, even to the poor world. We are heirs and representatives, not only of the life of Christ, but of His love.

We shall often murmur and complain if our strangership does not flow from this, that we are with Jesus, and because we have such a blessed portion with Jesus, that what is around us is not worth thinking about.

Chapter 106

Dr. M'Neille on John 7:39

Sir, I have long thought that the doctrine which denies to the saints of God, since our Lord's death and resurrection, any special blessing beyond what was previously enjoyed, is not only untenable in itself, but also mischievous in its tendency.

Of all the attempts which have been made to uphold this error, I have met with none so preposterous as that of the well-known Canon of Chester, Dr. M'Neile, at a recent and numerous clerical meeting in Lancashire. The Dr. delivered an address with the purpose of reconciling Psa. 51:11, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,” with John 7:39, “The Holy Ghost was not yet [given].” This he endeavored to effect by assigning to the latter passage the meaning that, “during the incarnation of Christ, the Spirit was imparted to Him exclusively. This would account for the promise He gave to His disciples that the Spirit should be bestowed on them when He departed, and for the advantage He said they would receive in consequence of His leaving them. Thus, as it appeared to him, it was that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Dr. M.N. had before stated his disagreement with the interpretations. “The Holy Ghost was not yet working,” “the Holy Ghost was not yet endowed with His miraculous powers,” “the Holy Ghost in His sanctifying influences was not yet given.” Here we agree with him; for these notions are vain and groundless. If he had said that the Holy Ghost had personally come to dwell in Christ, as He had never done in man before, and that on Christ's departure, He had been in like manner poured out upon believers at and since Pentecost, we must also agree. But his view seems to be that, whereas the Holy Ghost had been given to men under the Old Testament, He was not so given during the life of our Lord. “During the incarnation of Christ the Spirit was imparted to Him exclusively.”

In other words, the Canon evidently believes the Holy Ghost to have been no longer given to men during the time that the Lord was here below. Hence it follows that what David so earnestly deprecates as a chastening for his sin, viz., the removal from him of the Holy Spirit, became the universal condition of men when the Son of God was born in this world! According to his scheme, that blessed event must have proved, instead of a source of increased light and joy, the occasion of the greatest spiritual darkness and sorrow. The deluge itself, on this absurd view, had not been such a calamity to mankind.

How different is the picture drawn by our Lord Himself of the then position of His disciples. “Blessed,” He says, “are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Luke 10:23-24.) Surely it will not be said that it was to mere outward seeing and hearing that the Lord attached this blessedness. This He elsewhere otherwise describes and contrasts with the intelligent apprehension of the disciples, “because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”

It was clearly a superiority of real soul-blessedness, as well as of outward privilege, which the Lord spoke of. But could this be the portion of the disciples, if the Holy Spirit, imparted before Christ's coming, had been absorbed into His sole person? For the mere presence of Christ with them, without the action of the Holy Spirit, would, indeed, have been a decrease rather than an accession of spiritual blessing.

Does Dr. M'Neile believe that the disciples (Judas of course excepted) were really children of God? Does he deny that those who then believed in Him were born of God—born of water and of the Spirit? Does he mean that the “good tidings of great joy” were to consist in the total absence of the Spirit's gracious dealing with the souls of men? If this be not his thought, it appears to me that this argument is null and his statement without meaning; if it be, the case is yet worse.

The fact is, as Scripture makes plain, God had from the beginning of the world been converting souls to Himself through the faith of the Savior. Assuredly the epoch of our Lord's life and ministry was no exception. Of this the gospels furnish abundant proofs, which undeniably could only be accounted for by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. Spiritual regeneration is a truth common to all dispensations. There may be a greater ingathering at one time than another, but at no period can this be save by the Spirit, who quickens souls through the word of God that reveals Christ to them. Is it really conceived by the Canon of Chester that all this was suspended during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus, (save the exclusive indwelling of the Spirit in Him,) only to recommence with men after His departure! Wherever does this gentleman find such serious difficulty? And why does he gravely propound such a distressing idea? It is because he denies the peculiar standing of the saints since Pentecost! Hence his violent effort to escape the plaint statement, that the Holy Ghost was not yet given (i.e., in the blessed and unprecedented way which followed our Lord's ascension.) “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” In other words, that (in addition to the everlasting life which, as believing on Him, they already possessed through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit,) the disciples should, in consequence of His death and glorification, receive the Holy Ghost in a new and special manner; or rather, I would say, receive not His gifts or effects only, but, for the first time, Himself. They were already born again of Him, even as the saints had been in Old Testament times; NOW they should, besides, receive not merely life more abundantly in Christ risen, but the personal presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven to be in and with them. This same truth is presented often and in various forms throughout the Epistles, and very clearly in John 14; 15, and 16.

Thus it was expedient that Christ should go away. It was an immense privilege over and above what the disciples had enjoyed during Christ's life, and still more above what any saint had possessed before Christ.

G. W. G.

To the Editor of the Bible Treasury.

P.S.—To many readers of the Bible Treasury it will be a new and strange thing to hear that Dr. M'N., in a work published some years ago, under the title of “The Church and the Churches,” sought to turn aside the force of Matt. 11:11, by applying the “least in the kingdom of heaven” to Christ! He, evidently not knowing that the greater part of the New Testament could be cited to the

same end, supposed that this was the main foundation for the claim of peculiar privileges for the present dispensation, and therefore set himself with extraordinary zeal to destroy the stronghold, as he thought, of that error. For it is plain enough that, interpreted according to its obvious meaning, this scripture predicates a higher place of the least Christian than God was pleased to give John the Baptist, i.e., the highest under the old economy and up to the eve of the new dispensation. But, such a thought being assumed to be false, some other turn must be given to the passage. Is it not solemn to see how tradition habitually nullifies, as far as it can, the word of God.? and, what is worse, to see how error persevered in, notwithstanding adequate light, ever tends to lower the glory of Christ? The truth is, that the kingdom of heaven was not set up till Christ went to heaven, and therefore cannot refer to His humiliation. Further, it would be more true to say, considering who it was, that the kingdom was in Him, than that He was in the kingdom. But to make Christ the “least in the kingdom” is at once foolish and irreverent; and the end (viz., the denial of the special blessedness of the saints since Pentecost) is only less evil than the means. It is not surprising that he who misunderstood the “one body” then, should now be in like error as to the “one Spirit.”

Chapter 107

Scripture Query and Answer: The Jewish Remnant

Q. On the supposition of a Jewish remnant, distinct from the Church of God, now in process of formation, and the object of God's dealing after we have been caught up, and before we appear with Christ in glory, how far will they all know Jesus? Will they enter into His sufferings, or His glory in heaven? How far will they apprehend the teaching of such Psalms as 8; 68; 80; 110; or of such prophecies as Isa. 53; Dan. 9; Mic. 5; Zech. 12?

A. Two things require to be noticed in replying. First, the supposition of the same degree of knowledge in all is quite, as it seems to me, unfounded. Secondly, we are little aware of the immense difference of common knowledge current in the Church by the presence of the Holy Ghost—that unction from the Holy One by which we know all things, winch will not be then thus present with the remnant, though He will act in producing longings after deliverance and good in the hearts of the remnant, and directing their thoughts to the Scriptures of truth, with an intelligence which the cravings of want alone give. Another point to be noticed is that there are wise ones, who instruct the many in righteousness—wise ones who understand. How many now appreciate the real calling and standing of the Church of God? The godly of that day will cry to Jehovah in their distress, and the more profoundly convinced they are of their sin, the more will they understand the prophetic declarations. They are directed to the law and the testimony, all that is in the Old Testament, and all short of the Church, I apprehend, in the New Testament open to them, such as Matthew and Hebrews Certainly all concerning Christ, as revealed in prophecy, is before them. They will not understand personal forgiveness and acceptance till they see Him—the rejection of Messiah they may feel as their national guilt. How many now have not found personal acceptance with God? The repentance after seeing Him will be wholly different in nature and kind from that before; it will be under grace, and less egotistic. Psa. 8 can be only hope, with a question—shall I be there? But the thought of Messiah, as they have not pardon, will be at the utmost as in an awakened soul who has not the Spirit; the sense of a guilty nation, uncertain whether they will participate in a blessing which faith believes, will come. The degree of the sense of guilt will, of course, vary. I apprehend the Psalms are specially calculated to minister expression and direction to their feelings in that day. Isa. 53 gives hope to the nation, not peace then to the individual. They may know from Psa. 68 that He is gone to heaven, from Psa. 110 that He is at the right hand of God. How little the Jews understood it we learn from the Savior's question. But though there will be individual wants, the nation, their common lot, will be more in their thoughts than personal forgiveness and peace; God's government rather than individual salvation. And all is colored by this. When they see Him, each will mourn apart, Some, I hardly doubt, will have seized the Old Testament instruction as to Christ—perhaps those who are killed and taken up, the saints of the high places. Yet even they will, as to their testimony, be more associated with the God of the earth than we. As regards Daniel, the wise will understand. But he does not speak of atonement, nor any passage I know but Isa. 53; and that is for the nation as they would then understand it. I cannot doubt the guilt of a rejected Messiah will shine in on some souls as regards the nation.

The difficulty for a Christian is to enter into the state and habits of thought of those concerned in these prophecies in that day. It is clear that all the Old Testament prophecies will be before them. But the Holy Ghost, not dwelling in them to guide into all truth, they will seek in distress of soul the answer to their need and circumstances with the feelings of a people. And the wise will instruct the many. I apprehend the Church, and the divine glory of the person of Jesus, will be understood by none till they see Him—certainly not the Church; and then only from without.

Chapter 108

Scripture Query and Answer: Justification, Quickening, Raising

Q. Is it sound doctrine—that believers were justified, quickened, raised, &c., in and with Christ, when He died, and rose again, i.e., that they were justified before they were born, and that faith merely gives the knowledge of it?

G.W.G.

A. It is not sound doctrine so to say. Abstractedly, everything is eternally present with God; and there is no time with Him; but, then, I cannot say “when” or “before” in this point of view, because there is no “when” or “before” when there is no time. And in the scriptural view, such language is wholly unwarranted. Because in due time Christ died for the ungodly, when we were yet without strength. And having been justified by faith—we are not justified without believing, but by faith, through faith in His blood; not without it or before it. Nor hence without being at the same time born of God. When we were dead in sins, we were quickened together with Him, &c. By faith are ye saved. We were by nature children of wrath, but God, who is rich in mercy, when we were dead in sins, quickened us. It is a new nature which we as persons never had before it was communicated to us, when we had only the old. To say we were eternally believers, is nonsense. In the same sense we were eternally unbelievers, too, and eternally glorified, for all these things were before God's mind together without time. It is not true that Rom. 4:25 means, because we were justified; “because we were justified,” is not in the passage; δικα■ωσις cannot mean it, but for justifying us. It would have been, δι■ τ■ δικαιωθ■ναι ■μ■ς!. Hence, when the part, passive is used, faith is added; wherefore, δικαιωθ■ντες!, “having been justified by faith” Eph. 4:18 proves the contrary to what it is alleged. They were “alienated from the life of God” when they were in darkness; and then he talks of learning Christ—that is, when unbelievers, they had to learn Him. If they had, indeed, learned Him according to the truth in Him—namely, the putting off according to the former conversation the old man, and being renewed in the spirit of your mind. Now, here is a work clearly wrought in them; if they had really learned Christ, they knew what it was to put off the old man; they had it before, and put on the new which they had not before. To say that a man is born of God when he is in sins, is false; that he is created again in Christ Jesus when he is a mere sinner, is nonsense. Scripture does not speak so. Justification is referred to faith, which I have not, assuredly, before I believe. High Calvinists have this manner of speaking. If they merely mean that all was in God's thoughts and purposes, it is all right. But scripture never speaks as they do, and puts a man as a creature, who belongs to time, into time, and deals morally with him. If it be said that the life which we get existed eternally, for it was Christ who is our life, it is all well. But it is not ours till we have Christ, and before that we are children of wrath; at least, so says the scripture. The work may be all viewed mentally in him, when the power wrought; but if it be referred to the saints, so that it is only their knowledge of it which is now given, it is untrue and mischievous, because God purifies the heart by faith, as well as justifies us. Scripture says, “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,” &c.; not to the elect. It had been only wrought in believers. I do not know whether it is held that faith is eternal.

Chapter 109

The Lord My Shepherd

Psa. 23

THE blessings into which, as the Shepherd, the Lord leads the flock, are not merely temporal, but spiritual. The vail is now rent from top to bottom, and we are brought to God. God is not only caring for us all the way, but the exercise of our souls should be to walk in the light with Him, and if by any means, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. The care He takes is to bring us up to walk in the power of that heavenly glory with Himself. “Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.” God is not only known to us as Jehovah, giving us mercies all the way along the road; but it is the Father blessing us with spiritual things. True, the hairs of our head are all numbered; but there is discipline for our souls as well, which leads into blessing.

Any pious Jew, having a renewed nature, in old time, might know and use this psalm, saying, “Jehovah, my Shepherd.” The holiness of God was not fully revealed; and therefore the conscience not disquieted, and the distance not felt. They knew the favor of God, and counted on His goodness then; but, now, we are brought into the light, and see what judgment is. The vail is rent, and God's holiness is manifested; for we are in the light, as He is in the light, through Jesus. “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

Now that sin has been fully shown out—the death of Christ proving what the enmity of the heart was—this matter must be settled. I cannot say, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever,” if I have not the knowledge of sin forgiven. I cannot talk of confidence, if I have a fear of judgment and I see the desert of sin in the light of His holiness. I cannot consistently speak of One who may be my Judge, that He is my Shepherd, and I shall dwell with Him. To know Him as our Shepherd, we must not have it an unsettled matter about sin being forgiven. God cannot let sin into His presence. There must be a conscience purged. Christ has been accepted, and He puts us into His place, having made peace through the blood of His cross. “He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” He has “entered in once into the holy place. having obtained eternal redemption.” God does not see sin in Jesus; indeed, in Him was no sin: and we who believe are in Him; therefore, He sees no sin in us. The comfort and peace Christ had, as a man walking on the earth, He gives us. “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Now I have come to put you in the place of unhindered confidence with the Father; and that is what you could never have, if the least sense of sin were upon you. The peace is made: therefore He can not only say, “Peace I leave with you,” but “My peace I give unto you.” These were not idle words, and we can see how He could give it us, having brought us to God, and put away everything against us.

Now the question is one of happiness with God. Conflict, by the way, there is also, of course—but God is my Shepherd. Not only has He done something for me, but He is something to me; therefore it is said “that your faith and hope might be IN GOD.” I believe in God as seen in Christ, as one who has loved me perfectly and manifested His love by putting away my sins. “The kindness and love of God our Savior towards men hath appeared.” The thought I may now have of

God is, that He has done all this for me, and that He is all this to me. I may fail and so get into evil, and this will make me ashamed; but it should not destroy my confidence, because my faith and hope are in God Himself. Now God is my Shepherd, and we may have confidence in Himself, for it is not merely said, He has done this, and He will do that, but “I shall not want.” There never can be a want to the soul that bas the supply. It is the application of this power and goodness of God to my everyday need that I shall feel, and all this must go on the ground of sin forgiven. Now I have found out, not only my need of being justified, but that He has justified me. Whom He called, them He also justified. (Rom. 8.)

The starting point of Christian experience is “God for us;” and “if God be for us, who can be against us?” I am the object of His favor, which is better than life. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters.” I shall find good everywhere. I shall he down, no one making me afraid. Though the wolf may prowl in the way, I lie down in green pastures—It is “He leadeth me,” and that must be in perfect peace and enjoyment, “beside the still waters.” This is the natural Christian state. We realize all things ours, for God is for us—therefore we may lie down. We shall have conflict, &c., but amidst it all enjoyment. If the sorrow gets between our souls and God, so as to produce distrust, it is sin. Even if sins comes in, sad as it is, He can restore the soul. Whether from trouble, or from offending, He can restore. See what thoughts are here given about God! The Psalmist does not say, I must get my soul restored, and then go to God, but “He restoreth my soul.” So “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.” Who can restore but He? There may be something to correct in us, if not actually a fall. There may be hardness in my heart, which trouble shows me, and the like. For our good, in this way, He sends trouble, as well as that which is our proper portion—following Him who was the “Man of sorrows.” But if he restores, it is “for His name's sake.” Here am I, a poor, fainting, wretched creature, and the Lord comes in and lifts me up—why? “For His name's sake.” Whatever I am, God is for me; and not only in this way, but also against enemies. “For, though I walk through the valley,” &c. (Ver. 4.) Man had reason to quail at death before Christ came; but now in the fullest sense, we need “fear no evil.” Death is “ours” now.

“We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.” If they took my life, they could not hurt me, for I was trusting to One who could raise me. Paul as good as says, If they take this life, I have lost nothing; nay, it is positive gain, for it hastens me on the road. Death is not terrible now. Why? “Thou art with me.” It is terrible without this. “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” It is not a rod, but Thine, so I shall fear no evil. No one can compete with God. Death is the very thing by which Christ has saved me, and it is that by which he will take me into his presence— “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” It may come as a trial to exercise my soul. Well, I have to remember, “Thou art with me.”

There is not only failure in life and failure in death to meet, but there are mighty enemies. (Ver. 5.) Nevertheless, I can sit down amongst them, and find everything given me for food. I feed on this dying Christ, and it was in His death Satan's power was most put forth. In another light Satan comes and tempts me with the flesh, but I can say to him, I am dead; I have a right to say it—I may fail in saying it, but that is another thing. Satan cannot touch anything but my flesh; and, if I am mortifying my members, he has no power. If my members are alive, Satan cannot count me dead. In the presence of all, then, I can sit down, and say, I have done with them all— “for Thou art with Me.” I have found that power by which they are made nothing to me. Then we arrive at further

security, joy, and blessedness still: “Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” Now that Christ has ascended, and the Holy Ghost has been given, there is triumphant peace and abounding in joy, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

I now find God Himself the source of all, and not only this is a present thing, but seeing what God is, I can say, “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” We shall never want goodness and not find it. “Goodness shall follow me.” Assuredly the goodness of God is better than man's, even if we could get this. There is a place to dwell in, that is my hope. For us it is the Father's house. There are not only blessings conferred, but a place to dwell in with the Father forever. As He brought Christ through, of course He will bring me through too, and am there now by faith. I am at home with my Father. He would have us feel that all the correctings, and chastenings by the way, are founded upon the fact that He is for us. When peace is really settled through the work of Christ, I have all these exercises; and what is known only to faith at the beginning, becomes afterward experience, though always faith too; but every step having had this experience, we can say that we know it. Whatever it be we met with by the way, we know it is all for good, and we shall dwell forever with Him. Wonderful grace!

(Dec. 1st, 1860)

Chapter 110

Extract on Luke 15

As regards the application of this chapter to a Christian turned aside. I have often heard it, but I reject it altogether. The fact of God's graciously receiving back a wandered Christian is, of course, true; but such is not the purpose of the parable of the prodigal. The first verses of the Chapter show as distinctly as possible that that is not its purport. The question is between the Pharisees and Jesus eating with sinners and receiving them. he thereon gives the picture of God's love in seeking and in receiving sinners. The two first describe the seeking, (as I believe by Christ and the Spirit) the third the reception. The restoration of a fallen Christian has not its application here. Further, die introduction of the eldest son carries us back evidently to the Jew, or any legally self-righteous person, but literally to the Jew in “all that I have is thine.” The principle is shown in the two first—joy in heaven over a sinner that repents; and the third is the way of original departure and return. Hence, all. that is seen of the elder is not an original estate, but the Jews jealousy of the admission of sinners of the Gentiles. The notion that “son” carries with it the reality of being born of God is all a delusion; because then the eldest ought to be one: whereas, on the footing of grace (which makes sons) “he would not go in.” Adam was the son of God: again, “Israel my first-born.” The first parables show the seeking, active love of God: the last is the reception by the Father of one who returned. I have, myself, no kind of doubt of the true application. - J. N. D.

Chapter 111

Scripture Query and Answer: Luke 15: The Proper Intention of This Chapter

Q. Luke 15. What is the proper intention of this chapter and particularly of the prodigal son? Is it restoring grace, or salvation? Is the best robe only given then? A.

A. I have no doubt that the application of this chapter to the saint's failure and restoration is a mere fancy, and that the truth intended is God's grace to the sinner. It is well to observe, that the notion, Calvinistic as it is, which makes so much of the circumstances that the sheep was a sheep of the flock before it strayed, &c., really would prove Arminianism, if it proved anything; because it is certain that—sheep, money, or son all were LOST. If therefore these parables were meant to teach restoring grace, they would equally teach that the child who departs from his Father is “lost” and “dead,” after having been in the place of a son and before he is brought back. But take the, parables, not as provision and instruction for disciples, but as the expression and vindication of divine grace in Christ's receiving sinners, and all is plain. The general truth of departure from God, and privileges abandoned or abused, is set forth in the straying of the sheep, the loss of the money, and the wretched, far-off penury of the prodigal. The previous relationship of the prodigal is not the point the Lord is illustrating any more than the question which curious minds often raise, about the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. The real point was, whether the blessed Lord was right in receiving sinner's; and what he demonstrates is that such is the very way and delight of God in grace. Hence, restoration of erring saints is quite beside the mark, and as the prodigal sets forth such souls as the publicans and sinners, so the self-righteous elder son as clearly portrays men like the murmuring Scribes and Pharisees. Not that I would deny also a dispensational bearing of mercy towards the poor Gentiles, in spite of Jewish pride and opposition. But the grand point is, I am persuaded, the joy of God in the salvation of the lost, be they who they may, closing with the relationship into which grace brings, rather than what sin spoils. Is the best robe, is divine righteousness, never the portion, till we have failed as believers? Is Christ not put on, till the saint has dishonored Him and turned to Him once more? Such thoughts are not only unfounded, but in truth, if pressed, they tend to sap the foundations of grace. In a word, whatever applications may be made and more or less allowable, it is clear to me that the Lord is here showing, not how communion, once interrupted, is restored, but the full free grace of God towards the lost.

Chapter 112

Remarks on Matthew 1

I HAVE thought it might be profitable to take up one of the gospels, and to trace, as simply as the Lord enables me, the general outline of the truth revealed there. It is my desire to point out the special object and design of the Holy Ghost, so as to furnish those who value God's word, with such hints as may tend to meet some of the difficulties that arise in the minds of many; and also to put in a clearer light great truths that are apt to be passed lightly over. Here I may assume, that the Spirit of God has not given us these accounts of our Lord liable to the mistakes of men, but that He has, on the contrary, kept an unerring hand over those who in themselves were men of like passions with us. In a word, the Holy Ghost has inspired these accounts, in order that we might have full certainty that He is their author, and that thus they are stamped with His own perfection. As He has been pleased to give us various accounts, so He has had a divine reason for each of them. In short, God has sought. His own glory in this, and has secured it.

Now, there can be no question to any one who reads the Gospels with the smallest discernment, that the first is most remarkably adapted to meet the need of Jews; and that it brings out the Old Testament. Scriptures and prophecies, which found their realization in Jesus. Consequently there are more citations of scripture, as applying to our Lord's life and death, in this gospel, than in all the others put together. All this was not a thing left to Matthew's discretion. That the Holy Ghost used the mind of many in carrying out his own design is clear; but that He was pleased perfectly to guard and guide him in what he was to give out, is what mean in saying that God inspired Matthew for the purpose.

Besides presenting our Lord in such a way as best to meet the right or wrong thoughts and feelings of a Jew; Besides furnishing the proofs more particularly wanted to satisfy his mind, it is evident from the character of the discourses and parables, that the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, and the consequences of it to the Gentiles, are here the great prominent thoughts in the mind of the Holy Ghost. Hence there is no ascension scene in Matthew. The Jew, if he had understood the Old Testament prophecies, would have looked for a Messiah to come, suffer, die, and be raised again “according to the Scriptures.” In Matthew we have His death and resurrection, but there He is left; and we should not know, from the facts related by Him only, that Christ went up to heaven at all. We should know it was implied in some of the words that Christ spoke; but, in point of fact, Matthew leaves us with Christ Himself still upon the earth. The last chapter describes not the ascension of Christ, nor His session at God's right hand, but His speaking to the disciples here below. Such a presentation of Christ was peculiarly that which the Jews needed to know. It was more suitable to them than to any other people on the earth. And who was the agent employed? One of the twelve who companied with our Lord from the beginning of His ministry till He was taken up from them. So far, of course, he was an evidently competent witness for the Jew, and far more suitable than Mark or Luke would have been, who were not, as far as we know, personal companions of the Lord. But there was this peculiarity—that Matthew was a publican, or tax gatherer, by profession. Although a Jew, he was in the employment of the Gentiles, which position would make him specially odious to his countrymen. They would look upon him with more

suspicion even than upon a stranger. This might make it appear, at first sight, the more extraordinary that the Holy Ghost should employ such all one to give the account of Jesus as the Messiah. But let us remember that there is another object all through the gospel of Matthew; that it is not only the record of Jesus as the true Messiah to Israel, but that it shows us His rejection by Israel, and the consequences of their fatal unbelief:—all the barriers which had hitherto existed between Jew and Gentile thrown down—the mercy of God flowing out towards those who were despised, and blessing the Gentile as readily and as fully as the Jew. Thus the admirable propriety of employing Matthew, the publican, and its consistency with the scope of his task, are apparent.

These few remarks may help to evince that there was the utmost fitness in the employment of the first of the four evangelists to do the work appointed for him. If it were our object to examine the rest, it could just as easily be made manifest that each had exactly the right work to do. As we proceed through this gospel, you will be struck, I doubt not, by the wisdom which chose such an one to give the account of the rejected Messiah, despised by His guilty brethren after the flesh. But I shall confine myself at present to showing how admirably Matthew introduces such an account of the Messiah. For many must have been more or less arrested by the prefatory record of names, and may, perhaps, have asked, What profit is there to be had from a list like this? But let us never pass over anything in scripture as a light or even doubtful matter. There is a depth of blessed meaning in the account Matthew gives us of the Lord's genealogy. I must, therefore, dwell a little on the perfectly beautiful manner in which the Spirit of God has here traced His lineage, and direct attention briefly to the way in which it harmonizes with the divine account of Jesus for the Jew, who would be constantly raising the question, whether Jesus was really the Messiah.

You will observe that the genealogy here differs totally from what we have in Luke, where it is not given at the beginning, but at the end of chapter 3. Thus, in the latter gospel we learn a great deal about the Lord Jesus before His genealogy appears. Why was this? Luke was writing to the Gentiles, who could not be supposed to be equally, or in the same way, interested in His Messianic relations. But when they had learned in some degree who Jesus was, it would be very interesting to see what was His lineage as man, and to trace him up to Adam, the father of the whole human family. What more suitable than to link Him with the head of the race, if the object were to show the grace that would go out towards all mankind, the salvation-bearing grace of God that appears into all men? One might put that word in Titus 2 as a sort of frontispiece to Luke's Gospel. It is God's grace in the person of His Son, who had become a man, connected as to humanity with the whole family of man, though the nature in Him was ever and only holy.

But here we find ourselves on a narrower ground, circumscribed to a certain nation. Abraham and David are mentioned in the very first verse. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Why are these two names thus selected, and why put together here in this brief summary? Because all the hopes of Israel were bound up with what was revealed to these two persons. David was the great head of the kingdom—the one in whom the true line of Messiah's throne was founded. Saul was merely the fleshly king whom Israel sought passingly for themselves out of their own will. David was the king God chose, and he is here mentioned as the forefather of the Lord's Anointed— “the son of David.” Abraham, again, was the one in whom, it was said, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Thus the opening words prepare us for the whole of the gospel. Christ came with all the reality of the kingdom promised to David's son. But if He were refused as the son of David, still as the son of Abraham, there was blessing not

merely for the Jew but for the Gentile. He is the true Messiah; but if Israel will not have Him, God will bring the nations to taste of its mercy.

Having given us this general view, we come to particulars. We begin with Abraham; not tracing Jesus up to Him, but down from him. Every Israelite would begin with Abraham, and would be interested to follow the stages of the line from him on whom they all hung. “Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phases and Zara of Thamar.” What is the reason for bringing in a woman and naming Tamar here? There were women of great note in the lineage of the Messiah—persons whom the Jews naturally looked up to as holy and honorable. What Jewish heart would not throb and glow with strong feelings of respect in hearing of Sarah and Rebekah, and the other holy and well-known women recorded in Old Testament history? But there is no mention of them here. On the other hand, Tamar is mentioned. Why is it so Grace, most rebuking to the flesh, lay underneath this, but most precious in its way. There are four women, and only four, who appear in the line, and upon every one of them there was a blot. It is not that all the sources of reproach or shame were of the same kind. But to a proud Jew with all these women there was connected what was humbling—something that he would have kept in the dark. O wondrous way of God! What can He not do? How striking that the Holy Ghost should not here attract attention to those who would have brought honor in the eyes of Israel! nay, that He should single out these that a carnal Israelite would have held in contempt! The Messiah was to spring from a line in which there had been dismal sin. And where all that is in man would try to hide this and keep it back, the Spirit of God brings it plainly out, so that it shall stand not only in the eternal record of the Old Testament history, but here also. These, on whom there were such foul blots in the judgment of men, are the only females brought specifically before us. What is man and what is God? What is man that such a thing should ever have taken place? And what is God that, instead of being ashamed of it, He should have drawn the story out of obscurity and set it in full revealed light, emblazoned, if I may so say, on the genealogy of His own Son! Not at all as if the sin were not exceeding sinful; nor as if God thought lightly of the privileges of His people. But God, feeling the sin of His own people to be the worst of all sin, yet having introduced in this very Messiah the only One who could save His people from their sins, does not hesitate to bring their sin into the presence of the grace that could and would put it all away. Did the Jew think that this was a scandal, a dishonor done to the Messiah? From that same seed their Messiah must spring, and from no other line. It was narrowed to the house of David, and to the line of Solomon, and they were in the direct line of Judah's son, Phares. No Jew could get out of that difficulty. What are we not taught by this? If the Messiah deigns to link Himself with such a family—if God is pleased so to order things, that, out of that stock, as concerning the flesh, His own Son, the Holy One of Israel, was to be born—surely there could be none too bad to be received of Him. He came to “save His people from their sins,” not to find a people that had no sins. He came with all power to save: He showed grace by the very family whereof He was pleased to be a, or rather the, Branch. God is never confounded; neither, through grace, is he that believeth, because he rests upon what God is to him. We never can be anything for God, till we know that God is everything for us and to us. But when we know such a God and Father as Jesus reveals to us, on one side full of goodness, and on the other, no darkness in Him at all—what may we not expect from Min? Who might not now be born of God? Who is there that such a God would reject? Such a hint in Matt. 1 opens the way for the wonders of grace which appear afterward. In one sense, no man has such a position of ancient privileges as the Jew; yet, even as to the

Messiah, this is the account that the Holy Ghost gives of His lineage.

But that is not all. “Phares begat Ezrom, and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab.” And who and what was she? A Gentile, and once a harlot! But Rahab is taken out of all her belongings—separated from everything that was her portion by nature. And here she is, in this gospel of Jesus written for the Jew—for the very people who despised and hated Him, because He would look upon a Gentile. Rahab was named for heaven already, and no Jew could deny it. She was visited of God; she was delivered, outwardly and inwardly, by His mighty grace; brought into, and made a part of, Israel on earth; yea, by sovereign grace, part of the Royal line out of which Jesus, the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever, was to be born. Oh, what marvels of grace dawn upon us, as we dwell even upon the mere list of names that unbelief would disparage, as a dry and even incorrect appendage to the word of God! But faith says, I cannot do without the wisdom of God: that shines on all that He has written here.

It might be said that Rahab was called in at some distant epoch. But no: “Salmon begat Booz of Rachab, and Booz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king.” Ruth, loving as she was, yet to a Jew was from a source peculiarly odious. She was a Moabitess, and thus forbidden by the law to enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation, Even the Edomite or the Egyptian were held in less abhorrence, and their children might enter in the third generation. (Deut. 23:3-8.) Thus was given a still deeper testimony that grace would go out and bless the very worst of the Gentiles. Whether the Jews like it or not, God has Rahab, the once immoral gentile, and Ruth, the meek daughter of Moab, brought, not only into the nation, but into the direct line of which the Messiah was to be born. “And Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias.” With only a few generations intervening, we have these three women, who would, for one reason or another, moral or ceremonial, have been utterly despised and rejected by the same spirit which rejected Jesus and the grace of God. It was then no new thought—the divine mercy that was reaching out to gather in the outcasts of the Gentiles; that would look upon the vile, to deliver and make them holy. It was God's way of old. They could not read the account He gives of their own Messiah's stock without seeing that it was so. For that this was the divinely-predicted channel no Jew could deny. They must all own that the Messiah was to come in no other line than that of David. Oh! the grace to us who know what we have been, as poor sinners of the gentiles—who know what wretchedness was ours, and what evil belonged to us. “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Here the first words which introduce the Messiah give the same blessed truth, if there was an ear to hear, or an eye to see, what God had in store and was now pointing to there. In the case last mentioned there was something more humbling than in any other. For though, of old, Tamar's was a wretched story, yet there were features, most false and lustful and violent, which met in her case, that had belonged to Uriah. And this was so much the more dismal, because the chief guilt was on that man's part whom God had delighted to honor, even “David the king.” Who knows not that it has drawn out the deepest and most touching personal confession of sic ever inspired by the Spirit of God? Yet here again we find that he who had to do with this fatal history, and whose utterance had been this psalm of sorrowful confession, was the direct forefather of the Messiah. So that, if the Jew looked to those from whom the Messiah. had sprung, such must He be according to His earthly ancestors. But God records the blessed display of His ways, for the

winning of the hardest, proudest, and most sinful, and for the unfailing comfort and refreshment of those who love Him.

I need not dwell upon the names that follow particularly. We might see sin upon sin, stain upon stain, interwoven into their various histories. It was one continuous tale of that which would cause a Jew to blush—what a man never would of himself have dared to bring out about a king that he honored; but what God, in His infinite goodness, would not permit to slumber. Not a word is said of women who came after the Scripture record terminated; but what Jew could gainsay the lively oracles committed to them? To leave out what a Jew gloried in, and to bring in what he would have concealed through shame, and all in tender mercy to Israel, to sinners, was indeed divine. We may see from this that the mention of these four women is particularly instructive. Man could not have originated it: our place is to learn and adore. Every female that is named is one that nature would have studiously excluded from the record, but that grace has made most prominent in it. That she truth taught thereby ought never to be forgotten, and the Jew who wanted to know the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah might have here what would prepare his heart and conscience for such a Messiah as Jesus is. He is a Messiah come in quest of simmers, who would despise no needy one. Not even a poor publican or a harlot. The Messiah so thoroughly reflected what God is in His holy love, and is so true to all the purposes of God, so perfect an expression of the grace that is in God, that there never was a thought, feeling, word of grace there, but what the Messiah was come now to make it good in His dealing with poor souls, and first of all with the Jew.

This, then, was the genealogy of Christ as given us here. There are certain omissions in the list, and persons of some learning have been alike weak and daring enough to impute a mistake to the Apostle Matthew, which no intelligent Sunday scholar would have made. For a child could copy what was clearly written out before him: and certainly Matthew could easily have taken the Old Testament, and reproduced the list of names and generations given us in the Chronicles and elsewhere. But there was a divine reason for omitting the particular names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, from verse 8—three generations. Why is it, we may be permitted to ask, that the Apostle Matthew drops, of course by inspiration, some of the links of the chain. The Spirit of God was pleased to arrange the ancestry of our Lord into three divisions of fourteen. generations each. Now, as there were actually more than fourteen generations between David and the captivity, it was a matter of necessity that some should he discarded, in order to equalize the series, and fourteen only are therefore recorded. And if you examine the Old Testament Scriptures, you will find that it is not at all uncommon in genealogies to drop some of the links of the chain. More than twice as many as in our verse are omitted in one place. (Ezra 7:3.) Now, it was Ezra himself who wrote that book; and, of course, he knew his own descent far more familiarly than we do. And if any of us, by comparing with other parts, can find out the missing links, much more could he. And yet, in giving his own genealogy, (chap. 7.,) the Spirit of God is pleased, by him, to omit no less than seven generations. This is the more remarkable, as no one could exercise his lights as a priest, unless he could trace his line up to Aaron, without any question as to the succession. I have no doubt that there were special reasons for the omission elsewhere, no less than in our gospel; but the motives for it are a very different question. One of them I have named. There were more than twice seven generations in at least the second division; and this may have been one reason why the writer should omit several of them. But why these in particular? Athaliah, the daughter of Omri, King of Israel, and the wicked Jezebel, had entered by marriage, the royal house of David;

and a sorrowful hour it was, indeed, for Judah. For Athaliah, enraged at the premature end of her son, King Ahaziah, was guilty of a too successful attempt to destroy the seed royal. But it could not be complete. For that family was selected out of all the families of Israel, never to be entirely extinguished till Shiloh came. There was but a single youthful scion whom Jehoshabeath saved by concealment in the house of the Lord. The light was covered with a bushel for a time; but it was not put out. The then son of David appeared. It was a time when Judah had fallen into manifold and ever-deepening evil. But as surely as that young Joash was brought out of his darkness—as truly as the priest was there to anoint the king, and the union of the two things accomplished the great purpose of God; so it will be when the years of man's rebellion against God are full. he will come forth who has been long hidden and forgotten, and all the enemies shall be trampled down; and then will Judah flourish indeed under the King, the true Son of David. For all this was the type of the reappearing of the true Messiah by and by. But my design is not so much to dwell upon that now, as to inquire amid suggest briefly why it is that we have these few kings omitted. The answer seems to be that they sprang. from Athaliah. Hence they were completely passed over. We find God thus marking His resentment at the introduction of that wicked and idolatrous stock from the house of Ahab. Athaliah's descendants are not mentioned even to the third generation. This appears to be the moral reason why we find three persons left out at this particular point.

But I will not dwell upon the various features of the genealogy. The word of God is infinite; and no matter what we may have learned, it only puts us in a position to find out our ignorance. When persons are altogether in the dark, they think they know all that is to be known. But as we make real progress. we acquire a deeper sense of how little we know; and, at the same time, more patience with others who may know a little less—and, very possibly, somewhat more. Spiritual intelligence, instead of making Christians lifted up, produces an increased feeling of our own littleness. Where it is not so, we have reason to fear that the mind outruns the conscience, and that both are far from being subject to the Holy Ghost.

The generations are divided, into three different sections. The first is from Abraham to David, the dawn of glory for the Jews. Then, when David was there, it was noon-time in Israel—sadly checkered, it is true, and clouded through sin; but still it was noonday in Israel. The second division is from David to the carrying away into Babylon. The third is from that captivity unto Christ. This last was clearly the evening history of Israel's past. But that evening is not the close. It ends with the brightest light of all. Just as in speaking of the house of God as it then was, being as nothing in comparison of its first glory, the prophet Haggai says, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.” A greater than Solomon was here. Although there had been the decline of the splendor of Israel, and Israel was now broken and subject to the Gentiles, that decline terminates in the birth of the true Messiah. Throughout the lingering on of the captivity, no persecution could destroy that chosen family; because Jesus, the Messiah of God, was to be born of it. And the moment that Jesus concludes his career here below, there is the chain forever broken as regards the earth, but only to be riveted to the throne of God in heaven. Jesus is there, alive again for evermore.

But let us look for a little at the remaining view given us of our Lord Jesus in this chapter. Joseph is made very prominent. The genealogy itself is that of Joseph, not of Mary. On the other hand, Mary is the principal figure of the two in Luke, and there it is, I believe, her genealogy. Why is this? It was of necessity, for a Jew, that Jesus should be the heir of Joseph. The reason is that Joseph

was the direct lineal descendant of the royal branch of David's house. There were two lines that came down unbroken to these days; the house of Solomon and the house of Nathan. Mary was the representative of Nathan's family, as Joseph was of Solomon's. If Mary had been mentioned without her connection with her husband, there would not have been a legal right to the throne of David. it was necessary that the Messiah should be born, not merely of a virgin, nor of a virgin daughter of David, but of one legally united to Joseph, i.e., in the eye of the law, really his wife. This is carefully recorded here for the special instruction of Israel; for an intelligent Jew would at once have asked that question; and everything must be fenced round with holy jealousy. Let people calumniate as they might, Mary must be espoused to Joseph; else the Lord Jesus would not have a proper title to the throne of David: and, therefore, the stress here is not laid ripen Mary but upon Joseph. because the law would have always maintained the claim of Joseph. On the other hand, had Joseph been the real father, there could have been no Savior at all. As it is, the wonder of divine wisdom shines most conspicuously, making Him legally the son of Joseph, really the son of Mary, who, in the truth of his nature, is the Son of God. And all three met and merged in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He must be the undisputed heir of Joseph, according to the law; and Joseph was espoused to Mary. The child must be born before Joseph. ever lived with Mary as his wife, and this we are carefully shown here. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ 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. 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,” &c. here the angel appears to Joseph in a dream. In Luke the angel appears to Mary. It is thus in Matthew, because Joseph was the important person in the eye of the law; and yet the Messiah must not be, in point of fact, the son of Joseph. All the wit of man could not have understood these ways beforehand; all his power could not have arranged the circumstances. If the law demanded that Jesus should be the heir of Joseph, the prophet demanded that He should not be the son of Joseph. God humbling Himself was the need of man; man exalted was the counsel of God. How was this, and far more, to be united and reconciled in one person? Jehovah Jesus, is the answer. “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.”

God meets the scruples of the godly Israelite; and signifies that most distinguished honor which He had put upon Mary. She was the very virgin, God had predicted hundreds of years before— “She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus.” Here, again, Joseph was to be the one who publicly acts; while in Luke Mary names. (Chap. 1:81.) The difference arises from the point of view which the Holy Ghost gives us of our Lord's person in the two Gospels. In Luke He was proving that Jesus, though divine, was very man; a partaker of humanity, apart from sin. In our case, it is sinful human nature—in His case, it was holy. Therefore, in speaking of Him simply as man, it is said in Luke: Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee. shall be called the Son of God “Born of thee.” So He was most truly and properly a man—the child of the virgin mother: and as such, too He is called the Son of God. In that gospel one great point was to prove His holy manhood; to show how fully and fitly He could be a Savior of men, and take up the woes and wretchedness, and on the cross suffer for the sinfulness, of others—Himself the Holy One. He was the Son of God, who had actually taken human nature into His own person—who was perfectly and really a man as much as any of us; but a man without sin, yet holy, and not merely

innocent. Adam was innocent—Jesus was holy. Holiness does not mean the mere absence of evil; but intrinsic power of God, and so power to withstand evil. When Adam was tempted, he fell. Jesus was tried by every temptation, and Satan exhausted his wiles in vain. All this, however, is most suitable to the Gospel of Luke, where it is accordingly shown that the proper humanity of Jesus flowed from His birth, i.e., from His mother. His legal right to the throne of David flowed from Joseph, and Joseph accordingly is the prominent personage in the Gospel of Matthew. Here, alone of the gospels, it is that we hear of Jesus as “Emmanuel.” This is equally instructive and beautiful; because the Jew was apt to forget it. Did he look for a divine Messiah—for one who was God as well as man Very far from it. Comparatively few of the Jews expected anything so astonishing as this. They craved mid looked for a mighty king and conqueror, yet still a mere man. But here we find that the Holy Spirit, by their own Prophet, Isaiah, besides speaking. of Him as man, takes care to show that He was much more than man, that He was God. Matthew alone brings out this clear testimony of the great evangelical prophet— “God with us.” So perfectly did God provide for these poor Jews, and develop the neglected seeds of their prophecies, and cast light on the obscure parts of their law; so that if a Jew rejected the Messiah, he did it to his own eternal ruin. Besides being the son of David and Abraham, then, He was God with us. Such was the true Messiah, and such the witness borne to Israel. Could they reject Matthew's history, if they received Isaiah's prophecy? In vain they worshipped God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

We have been tracing what, would have been of peculiar interest for a Jew; but may we also find the blessing of these truths for our own souls! Whatever exalts Jesus—whatever displays the grace of God, and puts down the pride of man, is pregnant with blessing for us. By the blessing of God, pursuing these lessons still further, we shall find how the wisdom of every word of God shines out, as we wait on this most illustrious testimony to Jesus the Messiah—to His rejection by Israel, and the blessings which thence flow out to us poor Gentiles.

Chapter 113

Remarks on Matthew 2

I think we shall find, in the chapter before us, abundant confirmation of the account I have already given of the Holy Ghost's special design by the Apostle Matthew. That is, we shall see proofs that there is a most careful presentation of Jesus as the true Messiah of God, and of His rejection as such by the Jews, and that God at the same time, takes advantage of Israel's fall, to work out larger and deeper purposes.

The very first incident in the chapter illustrates it. Jesus was born. We do not meet with the same interesting facts which are given us in Luke. The very early days of our Lord's infancy are passed by, save that we have Christ presented as born in Bethlehem of Judea. The first fact that the Holy Ghost gives us here is the affecting one, that there was no heart for the Messiah in Israel. And this was proved by the most significant circumstances. “Jesus having been born, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship (or do homage to) him.” We are not told bow soon this was after His birth. No doubt a considerable time had elapsed. People are often deceived as to this, in looking at this scene, through the notions of their infancy. We have all seen the pictures of the babe in the manger, and the wise men coming in to worship Him. But the truth is, that the Lord was not just born, as such associations would convey, when the magi arrived. For His earliest condition in this world we must consult, not Matthew, but Luke.

Some might, it is true, gather a wrong impression from the Authorized version of verse 1: “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king.” This does not intimate that the visit followed immediately upon our Savior's birth, but leaves room for a time more or less considerable, afterward. It simply means that after he was born, these easterns came: many months, or upwards of a year, might have intervened. What confirms this is, that the wise men had first seen the star in the east, and most probably at the time of our Lord's birth. After seeing the star, they had to set out, and a long way to travel; and traveling in those days was a hard and tedious matter in the eastern parts of the world. Even when they arrive in Judea, they go up first to Jerusalem to inquire there; which supposes necessarily the lapse of no little time. Their questions are answered by the scribes. Herod hearing of it, is troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, he gathers together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, and demands of them where Christ should be born. They tell him in Bethlehem of Judea, upon which he calls the wise men and sends them there. All this took place before the scene of their worshipping.

They, when they had heard the king, departed, “And lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.” We are not to imagine, according to traditional notions, that the star tracked the way before them to Jerusalem. They saw it in the east, and connected the sight with the promised Messiah; for at that time the prophecies about His speedy appearance had been spread over a considerable part of the world. Many Gentiles were expecting Him, especially in the east. And the greatest and most opposed in the

west were aware of such hopes. The last man that was known in the east as a prophet, before the Gentiles were broken in the presence of Israel, was Balaam. No doubt, he was a wicked man; but God took advantage of him to utter the most remarkable predictions of Israel’s coming glory. And that very prophecy had closed with a reference to the Star that should rise out of Jacob. And now, after many hundreds of years have passed away, the traces of this prophecy still lingered among the children of the east. It is unlikely, too, that Daniel's prophecies in Babylon, especially that of the seventy weeks, &c., were unknown, considering his position, and the extraordinary events of his day. We can understand that these prophecies would not only be such as the children of Israel would treasure up; but the knowledge of them might spread, especially in those lands. Much might not be clearly understood. Still, they looked for a wonderful personage to arise—a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter out of Israel.

When these wise men, then, saw this star, they set forward to his traditional capital, Jerusalem. It is clear that the star was a meteor of some kind. As it shone in the east, they put the fact of this remarkable phenomenon along with the expectations of the coming king. And this the more, because the easterns were great observers of the heavens, and were therefore more alive to any uncommon appearance. It may have recalled the prophecy of Bataan'. Certain it is that they soon started for Jerusalem, where universal report among the Gentiles maintained that this great king was to reign. Having got there, God meets them, and it is remarkable how he does so. It is by His word, and His word interpreted by those who had not the smallest, interest of heart in the Messiah. They were quite right in their interpretation: they knew where Messiah was to be born. The magi probably thought that Jerusalem was to be the place; but they were told by the scribes that Bethlehem was the predicted birthplace. Alas! the very men who could answer so pertinently, showed the not the less solemn because it is a common fact, that it is possible to have a measure of clear knowledge of Scripture, and at the same time to have no love for Him of whom all testifies. As to the magi, ignorant as they were, and though they might have been in the dark as to other things, still their desire was true, and God overruled all. Through these Gentiles, indeed, He sent a testimony to Jerusalem as to the birth of the Messiah. God knew how to accomplish this and to rebuke, through their testimony, those who ought, above all, to have watched for and hailed their own Messiah. If there was a queen who came from the distant parts of the earth, to see King Solomon and to hear his wisdom. who was the type of Christ, so was it now. The Holy Ghost wrought upon these pilgrims from a far country, to bring them in presence of the true King. The scribes could answer the questions; but there was no care for the Messiah, and it was for Him that these wise men came. This at once brings out the awful state that Jerusalem was in. The effect of the tidings that God's King was born was. that, instead of seeking Him, and instead of being filled with joy to hear of One whom they had not sought, they were all troubled, from the king downwards. More particularly, as we are told here, the chief priests and scribes are those that bring out the utter heartlessness of the nation. They had enough religious knowledge: they had the key in their hand, but they did not seek to enter in.

“Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.” (Ver. 7.) I would call your attention to that, because it confirms what was said before. It was after the diligent inquiry of the king from the wise men, that be had settled in his own mind at what time the child must have been born. When they, warned of God, had withdrawn themselves instead of returning to Herod, he sent forth the cruel command to kill the children in

Bethlehem and all the coasts, “from two years old and under.” (Ver. 16) In other words, he must have known that there had been a considerable lapse of time between the birth of Christ and the giving of this cruel order.

If we turn hence to the Gospel of Luke, we shall see the importance of this. We have there our Lord born, and born, just as Matthew shows, in the city of David; but we are told here the circumstances that account for this, for Bethlehem was not the place where Mary and Joseph ordinarily dwelt. It was a village to which they repaired because of the commandment of the Roman emperor, who had sent forth a decree, that all the world should be taxed or enrolled. They, being of the royal family of the Jews, go to Bethlehem, which was the city of David; and thus God brought to pass the accomplishment of the prophecy of Micah, through the decree of Caesar Augustus. Nothing was further from his thoughts than the result, which his decree, in God's providence, was to subserve—the birth of the Messiah in the very place where prophecy demanded it. It appears that the census was not carried out then, but it was begun, and then stopped for a time. For it is said in ver. 2. “And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria,” which was several years after. People, not understanding this, have concluded that there was a mistake in Luke. They knew that Cyrenius government of Syria was subsequent to His nativity; and too hastily inferred that the going up of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem took place in his time. But it was not so, I believe. The decree of Caesar Augustus did not come into full operation or effect till then. It was just sufficiently carried out, when the order for enrollment was given, to induce the parents, Joseph and Mary, to go up to the chief city of their lineage; and that was enough. God's object was accomplished. Joseph and Mary went there, and, while there, her days were fulfilled, and she brought forth her first-born son, and “wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger.” There we have a scene totally different from what we had in Matthew. It was at Bethlehem, but in all probability at a subsequent visit.

What more natural to suppose, than that the parents should, after such a miracle, re-visit the birthplace of the holy and royal babe? It was not far from Jerusalem, and we know that they went there every year to the feast of the Passover. So that I doubt not that the visit of the magi took place at another visit on the part of the parents to Bethlehem.

Mark how the circumstances recorded in Matthew differ from those we have in Luke. Jerusalem is all troubled by the tidings of the Messiah's birth, while strangers from afar come up to do homage to the King of the Jews. They had seen His star; they knew it was the promised king, and now they are come to worship Him. They are found at Jerusalem, and when they leave it, on their way to Bethlehem, they are again encouraged of God. The star which they had seen before in the east, re-appeared and went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. Plain evidence that the star had not accompanied them all the way. And we shall find it true in our own experience, that where we act without appearances, we find all that is necessary. God always takes particular care of those who are true to the light, even though it be ever so little while nothing is more abhorrent to Him than great pretensions to light, without any heart for the true light, which is Christ.

We may observe that, of the reputed parents, Joseph is ever made the prominent person here, as in chap. 1 The vision given us in verse 13 is to Joseph. Nevertheless, the magi, “when they were come into the house, see the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped

him," not her. Their homage was to Him. "And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." They acknowledged Him, as poor strangers whose greatest honor was to be owned of Him. Jerusalem is outside all this. An usurper was there; an Edomite ruled. And, as when Christ returns again to the earth, there will be a false king in Jerusalem under the influence of the western powers, and in conjunction with the religious heads of Israel, so it was at His first coming. All was entirely outside the recognition of Jesus.

In Luke we have quite another order of things. It is not so much one acknowledged as a king, though He was a king; but He is seen there in the lowliest possible condition. The persons that do own Him are Jewish shepherds, who had the news made known to them from heaven. The heavenly hosts sing—their hearts are attracted to the person of the Savior—for as such had He been announced to them: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you; you shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." This was the very opening of our blessed Lord's life here below evidently taking place immediately after His birth. The incident of the homage rendered by the magi was long subsequent. There is not the slightest ground for confounding the two occasions. Each gospel is true to its special purpose. It is a question of His royal rights over Israel and the Gentiles in Matthew. In Luke we have the perfect lowliness, from His very birth, of the Savior—Son of man; the interest of heaven in the birth of the earth—despised Christ the Lord, and none but the poor of the flock, who have their hearts awakened to receive this blessed One, alike the expression, and the means, and the substance of divine grace. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," or rather, "to all the people," for it means the Jews. A much wider circle appears afterward, but it does not go beyond the Jews yet. The message was sent to them in the first instance—to the Jew first, to apply the words of the Apostle Paul.

How beautiful these various accounts harmonize with the gospels in which they are found! In the one, the King, born some time before, is seen in Bethlehem, but none welcome Him save strangers from the east. From Matthew, we should not be aware of the slightest recognition of the Savior up to the time of their coming. On the contrary, when the first breath of these tidings is brought to Jerusalem, consternation was the result in all. The king, the priests, the scribes, all are in a state of ferment. There was no heart for Jesus. But God always will have a testimony. If the Jews will not have Him, the Gentiles come, and grace it is that effects this. Unbelieving Jews tell the magi where the king should be born. They at once act upon it, and the Lord, meeting them on the way, puts them in presence of the King, to whom they present their gifts. It is the Messiah of Israel, but rejected by Israel from His very birth. Jerusalem is with the false king, and cares not to receive Him. Those who were despised as dogs, whom the Jews themselves had to instruct in the first lessons of truth, have the glory of being the true recognizers of the claims of the Messiah. Nothing more humbling. It is the Messiah come, and owned by the ends of the earth; but the Messiah slighted and rejected of His own nation. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." Of this we have proofs from the very first in Matthew. And as it was true, so it was important that Israel should know it; that they should learn, through the earliest of the evangelists, that it did not arise from any want of evidence on His part. How did these Gentiles know? And where were the Jews that, daring all this time, they had not recognized their own Messiah? It was a terrible tale, but the truth was the strangest of all things in their ears. Such is always the way of God. He does give a testimony, but man dislikes it because it is of God. To recognize the person of Christ

was the difficulty. To see from Scripture that their king was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, was an easy thing; it did not test the conscience, nor put the heart to the proof. But to own that the ignored and despised One, the child of Mary and the heir of Joseph, was the Messiah; this was indeed hard to the flesh. To those who had seen the sign of it in the heavens; to those who have looked for it in the midst of great darkness, but who had looked for it, and who had no preoccupations of heart to hinder them from bowing. before His glory; all was simple, and they hastened to do Him honor. Now that He was born, they rejoiced at the thought, and they came from far to have the joy of seeing Him and offering their gifts at His feet.

“And being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” (Ver. 12, 13.) The unbelief that refused the word of God, is now allowed to show out how thoroughly it was under the power of Satan, who proves himself, as from the beginning, to be a liar first and a murderer afterward. But the purpose of Herod was revealed of God, and Joseph, in obedience to His word, takes the young child and his mother by night and departs into Egypt, “and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son.”

I have a little word to say about this prophecy, and the application of it to our Lord. We shall have to take into account many prophecies cited in Matthew, if it please God. But the present quotation has evidently a remarkable character attached thereto. It was said in the first place about His people. Israel was God's son, God's first born in Egypt. To them pertained the adoption. The prophet Hosea, writing seven hundred of years after their departure from Egypt, does not hesitate to apply this word to Israel; and now the same portion of Hosea in use of Christ, as that which fully came within the intent of the inspiring Spirit. How is it, that God's having taking Israel out of the land of Egypt, should be so illustrated in Christ's history? Because Christ is the object of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. It matters not what may be the place of His people: they may have troubles or deliverances, but Christ must enter into all. There is no kind of temptation (save, of course, of inward evil) that He has not known; nor of blessing on God's behalf, that He has not proved. Christ goes through the history of His people; and on that principle it is, that such scriptures as these are applied to Him. Christ Himself is carried into the very place that had been the furnace of Israel. There it is that He finds His refuge from the false king of Judea. What a picture! Because of the anti-king then reigning in Jerusalem, the true King must flee, and flee in Egypt.

We see from this, that no miraculous power is put forth to preserve His life. It was accomplishing the prophecies—filling up the outline of desolation morally and nationally, that the Holy Ghost had sketched many a long year before. It was God showing how precious to Him was every footstep of His son. It might seem a trifling circumstance in itself, that the Lord was carried into Egypt and came out of it another day. But whatever was the place of Christ—and His place was wherever His people were in their sorrow—He will not permit them to feel a pang without His sharing in it. He knows what it is to be carried into Egypt, and that too in a far more painful way than Israel had experienced. For the bitterest trouble of Christ was from His own people: the most murderous blow aimed at Him, was by the king then sitting on the throne in their midst. Failing in this he sends forth and slays all the children “that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old

and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise limn. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, in Rama, was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping and great mourning, Rachael weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not." (Ver. 16-18.) How clearly we find that the Holy Ghost is here providing for the Jew—the proof that they were precious in His sight and that, if Christ entered into their sorrows, they must not wonder if His presence will bring upon themselves the bitterest suffering through their rejection of Him. If Christ has the smallest connection with Israel, they become the object of Satan's animosity. It is Herod, led on by Satan, who issued the order to slay their little ones;—but the Messiah is taken away from the scene of his rage. In Israel they have weeping and great mourning. Such were some of the troubles that Israel bring upon themselves; and this is but a little picture of what will befall them in the latter day.

But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel." (Ver. 19, 20.) It is sweet to find "the land of Israel" occurring here. It was not merely the country, as known among men, where poor Jews lived by the permission of their Gentile lords. How few look on it as the land "of Israel" now! But God's thoughts are towards His people, in connection with the glory of His Son. If Jesus had His earthly tie there—if Emmanuel were now born of the virgin, why should not the land be called the land of Israel? It was the divine purpose completely to expel the foot of the Gentile that was now treading it down. If the people would only bow and receive Him to take His place as their King, how blessed their lot! But would Israel receive Jehovah. Jesus now returning from Egypt? There was no readiness for him yet. One Herod passed away; another followed. Hence, when the young child was taken back into the land of Israel, and when Joseph heard "that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." (Ver. 22, 23.) There comes out another and most striking turn which is given to the prophets; for we must observe that it is not one particular prophet, but "the prophets." And by that we are to gather, not that any one inspired writer said these words, but it is the spirit of the prophets who do speak of Him. When we read in one prophet, "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek;" in another, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and again, what they should give Him for meat, and in His thirst for drink, and how he should be taunted up to the last—we can understand this application of these prophets. Thus, it was the well-understood language expressive of contempt in that day: He should, in other words, be called a Nazarene. Nazareth was the most scorned of places. Not only did the men of Judea Proper look down upon Nazareth, but the Galileans themselves despised it, though it was part of their own district. Later on we read of a guileless Israelite, who, when he heard of Jesus being there, exclaimed, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Thus, if one spot in Palestine more than another would accord with the rejection that was the portion of Christ, it was Nazareth. Can there be a more wonderful picture than this of One who, while He was the true King, was yet refused by His own people? Gentiles might have done Him reverence; but His own nation was indifferent. How little fruit was there to answer to the culture that God had bestowed upon them! But here was the Blessed One who pursues His path of obedience unto death—who would not show His glory by protecting

Himself. His people went down into Egypt: He goes down there also. He has to be called out of Egypt. That was His portion. He would not screen Himself from the sorrows of His people: He would share them all. When He does come forth, Israel is still unprepared for Him.

God appears again to Joseph. This is the last mention that we have of Joseph in Matthew. Luke gives us later circumstances; but Joseph wholly disappears before our Lord entered upon His ministry.

When He is called out of Egypt, He cannot go to Jerusalem, nor to Bethlehem either. He was to be despised and rejected: the prophets had said so; their words must be accomplished. Archelaus reigned in Judea: an usurper was still there. Joseph turns aside at the warning of God to Nazareth. There Jesus dwelt with them; that the word of the prophets might be fulfilled, in our Lord's proving to the full what it was to be the most despised of men. He knew it preeminently on the cross; but it was His all through. And this is the way that God speaks of the Messiah to Israel. He shows what their hardness of heart and unbelief would entail—even if it were to the Messiah Himself coming, according to all that God had declared, to that land and people. What a picture of man and especially of Israel, when such must be His portion! He comes, and calls, but no answer greet Him. The unbelief of man hinders the blessing of God. It was the sin of Israel that thus complicated the early history of the King. But future chapters will show that God will turn the very unbelief of Israel into the means of blessing for the despised Gentiles, and that if the Jews rejected the counsel of God to their own perdition, the Gentiles would hear and receive all blessing in the blessed One.

Thus, we find from the beginning of this wonderful book the germs of all that the end will display. We find One who is really the Messiah, ready to accomplish the promises and to take the throne, but the people were not ready for him. Israel were steeped in sin—they had no heart for Him. They were full of their own king, their own ceremonies, their own light. All was turned to the exaltation of self. Hence Jesus is rejected from the very first. This is the story of man. The after chapter will show us the glorious consequences which God, in His grace, causes to flow even from the rejection of His own Son. Upon that happier theme we may dwell on other occasions.

Chapter 114

Remarks on Matthew 3

We are now carried forward from the return of our Lord into the holy land, to the days when John the Baptist Came insisting upon the grand essential truth of repentance. But here John's ministry is viewed entirely in connection with the Lord's relation to Israel. It is interesting to compare the different ways in which the gospels present John himself, as illustrating the manner in which the Holy Ghost uses His own divine right to shape and form the materials of our Lord's history, according to the exact object in view. A casual reader would scarcely recognize that John the Baptist of the last gospel, was the baptist of the first. The manner in which they are viewed, and the discourses that are recorded, take their form from the particular book in which the Holy Ghost has given them. This, so far from being imperfection, is a part of that admirable method in which God impresses the design which He has in view, and which suits the place which each portion of Scripture has to fill. And what can be of deeper interest or more strengthening, than to find that the very passage on which unbelief puts its finger and alleges as proofs of the imperfection of Scripture, (varieties of statement insuperable to the mind of man), on the contrary, when viewed as part of God's plan of commending His beloved Son, all assume their own place in this great scheme, which is the glory of Christ? This is the true key to all Scripture; and if that key be of great value, from Genesis to Revelation, there is no place, perhaps, where its value is so conspicuous as in the gospels. In finding four different accounts of our Lord, each presenting things in a different manner, the first thought of man's heart is, that each succeeding gospel must add to or correct what had gone before. But such thoughts only prove either that the truth was never known, or that it has been forgotten. Is it adequately born in mind that God is the author of the gospels? Once admit that simple thought, and it would be evidently blasphemous to suppose that He makes mistakes. Even in the meanest thing that God has made, the minutest insect that the microscope can discover upon the least blade of grass, what does not fill the particular niche for which God created it? I do not deny that sin has brought all kinds of derangements into the natural as well as into the moral world. I admit that man's infirmities may appear even in the word of God: first, in not keeping the sacred deposit free from all corruption; and, then, in interpreting that word through some feeble medium of his own; and thus, one way or another, hindering the pure revealed light of God.

I have made these few remarks, because all readers may not be equally familiar with the great truth of the difference of design in the gospels, and therefore I do not scruple to draw attention to the immense help it furnishes to the understanding of Scripture, and especially of its apparent discrepancies.

In the chapter before us, John the Baptist is presented as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. He came “preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye time way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” In Luke you will find that the prophecy is carried further down. More is given us than the words we have got here. “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be

made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." The range of Luke is wider. "Every valley shall be filled," &c. "All flesh shall see," &c. I ask, why is that quotation continued further there? It is the more remarkable because usually Luke does not quote much from the Old Testament, as compared with Matthew. How comes it that Luke departs in this particular instance from his habit? The reason is obvious. Luke is showing the grace of Cud that bringeth salvation and that has appeared to all men. Time Holy Ghost leads him therefore to fasten upon these words that display the universal range of the Lord's goodness to man.

But there is another expression that I must dwell upon for a little— "the kingdom of heaven," We are all familiar with it as a phrase often used in Scripture; but possibly not many are equally familiar with its force. Indeed, it is understood very vaguely even by most Christians. To many it conveys the idea of the church, sometimes the visible and sometimes the invisible church. By others again it is supposed to mean something of the gospel, or heaven itself at the end. The expression is derived from the Old Testament, and that is the reason why it appears in Matthew only. As we have already seen, our evangelist writes with a view to Israel, and therefore lays hold of a phrase which is essentially of the Old Testament, and taken from the prophecy of Daniel, who speaks of the days coming when the heavens should rule. Before that, (chap. ii.) we hear that the God of heaven is to set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed—the kingdom of heaven. And, again, in chap. vii. we are told of the Son of man's coming, and of a universal kingdom which is given Him. Chap. ii. does not give us the person, but the thing itself: so that there might still have been a kingdom without time revelation of the person in whose hands it was held. But chap. vii. completes the circle, and shows us that it is not merely the heavens ruling in the distance—not a kingdom opening with judgment on earth; but besides, that there is a glorious Man, to whom the rule of heaven will be entrusted; and that this person will not be one who will simply destroy what opposes God, but will introduce a universal kingdom.

This kingdom John the Baptist came preaching. I do not believe that he was at all aware of the particular form it was to take. He simply preached the kingdom of heaven as at hand, with the thoughts of a godly Jew, and a special witness that the Messiah was there—that He was about to be manifested, himself the public and immediate forerunner of the Shepherd of Israel, who would execute judgment upon time evil, and introduce good in the power of God, and bring in the glory promised to the fathers—and that all this was about to be inaugurated and established in the person of Christ here below. This, I believe, was the general thought. And we shall find subsequently, that, for the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, John was not at all prepared. This, too, it was that led to the twofold form taken by the kingdom of heaven. While the old or Jewish view of a kingdom established by power and glory, as a visible sovereignty over the earth, is postponed, the rejection of Jesus on earth, and His ascension to God's right hand lead to the introduction of the kingdom of heaven in a mysterious form—which is, in point of fact, going on now. Thus it has two sides. When Christ went up to heaven and took His place as the rejected but glorified One there, the kingdom of heaven began.

This is a view of time kingdom that we do not find time Old Testament. To it pertain the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, that were only opened out as the Lord was manifestly rejected by Israel. Thus we see in Matt. 11 John sends two of his disciples to ask, Whether Jesus was really the Messiah, or were they to look for another? Whether he was himself staggered, or his disciples, or

whether both were, it matters little—such was the result. It sounds like an unbelieving question to the Lord. He might well be astonished that Jesus did not deliver the Jews, and bring in the glory for which patriarchs had waited, and which prophets had predicted. Strange that, instead of this, His messenger was in prison, Himself and His disciples despised! Our Lord at once refers to these deeds of power and grace, which bespoke the presence of God, acting in a new way, and introducing a power evidently in grace—bringing in totally new thoughts, above time habits or hopes of time most godly Jew.

These they were to report to John. But he goes further, and says, “And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” This, apparently, conveys a, rebuke to John, and implies that he had been, more or less, stumbled. Yet it is beautiful to see how, at once, after the departure of the messengers, our Lord vindicates the Baptist before the multitude. But, after pronouncing John to be the most blessed among those born of women, He suddenly introduces a most startling truth, namely, that great as John was, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. This does not refer to the kingdom coming in power and glory; because, when that day comes, Old and New Testament saints must all be raised or changed to have their part in it; as it is said of those who are being called now, that they shall sit “with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” What then, does our Lord mean? Does He not refer to some shape that John had not sight of and what was this? He goes on further, and says, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” What an extraordinary statement must this have appeared to those who listened to it then! The Lord is contrasting the kingdom of heaven, in a public manifest form, with that kingdom as opened to faith only—more blessed as known to faith than to sight. As the Lord afterward said to Thomas, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” That holds good every dealing of God. Abraham was more blessed when, though in the land of Canaan, he possessed it not, than if it had all been actually his own. He gained a better place in the ways of God, from the very fact of his not having one foot of the land in possession. So with David, his reign was morally far more glorious than that of Solomon. His heir had the place of power; but David had that which was unseen, yet nearer to God. We never find that Solomon enters into what was taught by the ark, whereas it was always the great attraction to David's heart. Solomon was found before the great altar which the whole world could see. The ark was what was unseen, but nearer to God. It was the throne of His majesty in the midst of Israel. To it the heart of David ever turned. The blessing of faith is always better than the blessing of sight here below, how great soever that may be.

There has been no time in the ways of God so blessed for a soul as the ways of God now. To be born in the millennium is not at all to be compared with it. It is true that then all will be in subjection to Christ, and the heart might, say, Would that we were born then! But even the believers found in that day on the earth will not know what it is to enter within the veil, and to have the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. Neither will they know in the full sense the joy of the Holy Ghost, with the privilege of being cast out and scorned by the world for Christ's sake. So that, both in the matter of suffering and the enjoyment of what Christ has gone through for us, and His present glory in heaven, our present place is far beyond it. For those who suffer now, it will be the, best of heavenly blessings then. But the peculiarity of the present time is this, that while we are on earth, we are consciously the dwellers in heaven. We are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world.

Our life does not belong to it; our blessing does not belong to it; all our portion is outside this world. And this is communicated to us while we are in the world, to raise us above the world. It is not, as with John here, going into the wilderness, a most seasonable and beautiful expression of what, God thought of the city of holiness, Jerusalem, where the very priests themselves lived. John retires from it all. He is outside it in sympathy, and the act itself is as good as declaring that the wilderness is better than the city, even though it contain God's temple. But what a solemn declaration of the ruin, not only of the world, but of the favored people who were the great link between God and men generally! Now it is another thing altogether. It is not man blest, and the earth brought also into blessedness under the personal reign of Christ. But here the heavens were opened upon the Lord Jesus. Never had they opened before upon any one on earth, except as a judgment of God. (Ezek. 1.) But here, first of all, the eye of heaven, the eye of the Father who is in heaven, is directed upon the beloved One here. By and by He takes His place in heaven, as the Man who had suffered for sins and brought in the righteousness of God.

The kingdom of heaven then began. From the time that Jesus goes up into heaven, till He comes back again, the New Testament view of the kingdom of heaven runs on, and in that sense, the privilege of the feeblest soul brought to the knowledge of Christ now, transcends anything that ever entered into the heart or mind of men, or even of saints before the Lord died and rose again. You may dwell upon the blessed walk of Enoch and the bright faith of Abraham. But still this remains true— “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” There is no honest escape from the conclusion that has been drawn. If persons argue, Is a little child, believing in Jesus now more holy and righteous than the blessed saints of old I answer, that is another matter altogether. He ought to be. But that is not what is said. The Lord lays down that “the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” In a word, it is not a question of what men are; but God is glorifying Christ. Upon Him God is putting honor, and therefore gives such privileges to the least, one that believes in Him. Since His death and resurrection, the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. Think of what such a thing would have been to an Old Testament saint. Was there one that knew such a place as that? It could not be. They might look forward to it, but they could not say that it was an accomplished fact. It would have been contrary to the holiness of God and positive presumption for man to have even the thought, till Christ came and wrought the work that blotted sins completely out. Now it is presumption not to take with confidence what Christ has done. Remission of sins never was or could be thus known of old. When we enter into the position in which we are placed by the work of Christ, it is not merely that we have remission: we are made the righteousness of God in Christ; we have a new life, the risen life of Christ Himself. We are put in the position of sons of God, and are entitled by Christ Himself to say that his God is our God, His Father is our Father. We are entitled to know that we are one with Christ, and that there is not a single blessing or glory that God has conferred upon His beloved Son, but what the Son shares with us. But glory conferred, I say; for of course there is His essential, divine glory in which none can participate. God never gave Christ to be God. Deity was His own right from all eternity. He could not have Godhead bestowed upon Him. But Christ became man, and as moan He was the Son of God. He was not merely so as God. He was the Son of God as born into this world, and as such He has been raised up from the dead; marked out as the Son of God with power, by the resurrection of the dead, in virtue of which He brings us into the same place before God that He Himself has acquired. He has entirely delivered us from the place into which He

entered for us, enduring the wrath and judgment of God. He brings us into the place to which He is not only entitled Himself, but has acquired a title for us.

But John had no conception of such a compass of blessing. To draw near to God, to hear Jesus saying, My God and your God, my Father and your Father," could not enter His mind, if it were only because he was a saint in fellowship with what was then revealed. Such an one would be jealous of going beyond the word of God before Christ uttered it. The Jews looked upon the kingdom as the time when Israel would be blessed of God as a nation; and even those that may have understood further, still looked for all the power of the kingdom to be brought in, entirely independent of anything on their part. "But the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The Lord shows that there is an action of faith needed now; that the kingdom of heaven here presented implies the breaking of natural ties and the rending. of previous associations. In the sense of power and glory introduced by a personal Messiah upon the earth, John had already pressed on consciences, that it was not a thing of mere ordinance or privilege by birth; that God would not be content except with moral realities. And allow me to say, that it, is a very solemn thing indeed to claim the privileges of grace for that which is totally contrary to the nature of God. I am not speaking now of the lost one found by grace, to whom God gives a new life fresh from Himself. But the effect of a soul's receiving life in the person of Christ is, that there are produced feelings, thoughts, judgments, and ways, acceptable to God, and akin to His nature. If a person is a child of God, he is like His father; he has a nature suitable to God, a life that dislikes sin, and that is pained by what is iniquitous in others, but more particularly in oneself. Many had men are strong as to evil in others, and anything that does not touch themselves. But a Christian always begins with self-judgment. That is the reason why, now that there was to be a moral preparation for the Messiah, John preaches "repent." Repentance is the soul's moral judgment of itself under the eye of God; the soul's acceptance of His judgment of its state before Him, and bowing to it. John called upon them to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." This clearly implied two things—that he was only a voice pretending to nothing, that the work would be done by another. The voice only was on his part, but the other, whose way he was preparing was the Lord, Jehovah Himself. "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah."

Then we have the account of John the Baptist himself. "The same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey:" all perfectly suitable to this summons to repentance. As yet it is not grace introduced; that belongs to the kingdom of heaven, when it is fully brought in. But John did not know it thus. He knew that the Messiah was coming, a Messiah who would introduce the power of God and deliver His people. But the deep unfolding of grace, the mighty victory which a suffering Messiah would accomplish for a soul, and the way in which God would be magnified most of all by the putting away of sin by the death of his Son—were thoughts that must wait for another season. No heart could be in sympathy with them till the work was done. The ark of the Lord must stand still in the waters of Jordan first. Not one foot can pass that way scathless till the ark has passed in. God in Christ must be before man. John, therefore, most fittingly, does not bring out the fullness of divine grace. but the moral call to repentance. It is the Spirit of God producing a sense of what we are, but not yet revealing the work of Christ and the Fullness of grace there is in Him. In the Gospel of John we do had the

Baptist speaking so as to imply a good deal more, when he uttered those sweet and remarkable words, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” How far he entered into them I cannot say. There is no necessity to suppose that he comprehended all that was taught by them: many a child of God does not now. God might make use of them with great power as a prophecy; and the Holy Ghost, in his action in Old Testament times, did not go beyond this in testimony. The saints, then, had the Holy Ghost giving them faith in a coming Messiah. Some of the prophets were the Spirit's vessels in predicting Him. But as to the personal enjoyment of communion, such as results from the accomplishment of all, never was, nor could be, till the work was done.

John, accordingly, is found outside the religion of man, as well as outside his profanity. He was away from Rome, but he was also away from Jerusalem; and this, in the predicted messenger of Jehovah, was a most solemn thing. “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to the baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Here is a part of that truth which is exceedingly startling, when we reflect upon it. The Pharisees were among the most important people in Israel. The Sadducees were the loose, secular, self-indulgent class; the Pharisees, those who stood very firm for what they considered the truth. Yet when he sees them both coming to his baptism, he says, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance “fruits of a kindred character. He maintains that the day of ceremonial or of birth claims, was completely past. The Pharisee might rest upon his religion; the Sadducee upon the fact that he was a child of Abraham. The desire to escape wrath and to have part in time kingdom might be no more than nature. Humbled souls suit the kingdom. Descent from the fathers, the law, the promises even, may be turned into a right against God, who will not allow it, and can raise out of the stones children to Abraham. But there must be, if they attempted to draw near to God, ways of a nature morally suitable to God. “Bring forth, therefore,” he says, “fruits meet for repentance.” He is not explaining there how a sinner is to be saved, or how God remits sin; but that if persons take the stand of having to do with God, there must be that which is becoming His presence. So the Apostle Paul says, “Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” There he is not speaking of what is imputed, but at holiness as a real practical thing. This is written to Christians: and time Holy Ghost does not hesitate to insist upon it. So strong is the tendency to reaction in human nature, that the very baptized Jews who were pleading for the law, might fall into the opposite extreme, and think that sin is compatible with the salvation that God gives through grace. But God never allows such a thought as that His nature could co-exist with sanctioned iniquity.

Here, them was evidently a stern rebuke for the leading Jews. But more than that, John acids, “And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the tree,” that is to say, judgment is just at hand. “Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.” he does not go beyond that. The remission of sins that he might speak of appears to me to have been rather a question of the government of God, than of that complete putting away of sin which was the fruit of grace when the work of atonement was done. Even this was in view of Messiah's advent.

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” There he brings together the two grand features of the first and second comings of Christ. He did not know but what both would go on together. All that might be between the two, was a hidden truth. The Old Testament Scriptures did present the first and second advent of the Messiah, but not in such a way as to convey the thought of two distinct epochs. Even after the Lord's death and resurrection, the disciples did not understand this. John mingles these two things together—the baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire. We know that the baptizing with the Holy Ghost is the form of God's blessing in the kingdom of heaven as it now is. The baptism of fire is that which will accompany the kingdom of heaven, as it will be when Christ comes again. There is no such thing in the word of God as designating what took place at Pentecost time baptism of fire. Baptism with fire is the application of the judgment of God in dealing with man. Whereas the day of Pentecost was the outpouring of the grace of God, and the giving of time Holy Ghost to dwell in the saints of God, which merely referred to time power of the Holy Ghost going forth so as to bear testimony in such sort as would not bear a single evil thing in time heart of men, even while it showed out the grace of God shown to a man that has no claim upon it; all his evil condemned by the grace of God in the death of Christ. And thus it is that a man is made honest in the sight of God and men. He can afford to be guileless about himself, because he knows that God imputes nothing to him. When we read on the day of Pentecost of the tongues being divided, it was to show the going forth of the testimony of God to the Gentiles as well as to the Jew. But when Matt. 3 speaks of our Lord's baptizing with fire, the allusion is not to these tongues of lire, but to the execution of righteous judgment when Christ comes again. This appears still more clearly front what follows: “Whose, fan is in his hand; and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” It is not at all what he does in saving a soul, but the very contrary. It refers to the time when men having refused the gospel, nothing remains but the outpouring of vengeance upon them.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.” A most wonderful sight! Jesus coming to be baptized of John, who was avowedly preaching repentance and remission of sins. What could bring the Lord Jesus there? For He never confessed sins, and had none to confess. He challenges even His enemies to convince Him of sin. A man without sin—without the smallest particle of self in any form or degree—the lowliest, the most blessed of men—the One who judged everything according to God: and yet He comes to be baptized! John at once felt it. Jesus coming to be baptized of him! To be baptized at all, but above all of him whose baptism was that of repentance! What is the clue to this? It is grace—the source and the channel of everything in Jesus. It was not the judgment of God that put him there. It was not any need in Himself that brought Him there—nothing that He had to acknowledge or confess; but it was grace. For on whom in Israel did God's eye look down with compassion? Upon those that were confessing their sins. Upon such does His eye ever rest. For the next best thing to not being a sinner at all, is to confess our sins. We find that this is the first great movement produced by the Holy Ghost in a simmer's soul—the feeling of his true place in the sight of God. Here was this blessed One; and though He had not one thing naturally that could claim Him there, yet grace led Him there. And when John forbade Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” what blessed truth does not our Lord's answer unfold to us? “Suffer it to be so now; for this it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” It is all righteousness now to be fulfilled, and not

merely the doing of the law. But now there was the righteousness of acknowledging the true state in which even the best part of Israel lay. For if there were any in Israel that showed a feeling for God, it was those who were baptized of John—those who repented in view of the kingdom of heaven. They desired God's promises, and they wish to be ready for the King. And the Lord's heart was there at once; the sympathies of His soul were with those that were humbling themselves in the sense of their sin before God. The same principle is time of us, in proportion as the Spirit of Christ is ungrieved in our souls. Wherever even it is a question of acknowledging anything to man, who is the person you can most open your heart to? The most spiritual man: he who is walking most above sin, is the very person to whom you can open out your sin more fully than to another. “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” It was exactly the perfection of the holiness of Christ that could enable Him so to do: another might have been afraid of it. If Christ had merely been innocent, instead of holy, should we have found Him there? Never. Holiness implies divine power against sin—innocence merely the absence of sin. Thus we find our Lord in the full consciousness of His own perfect holiness coming to the baptism of John, and taking His place with those in Israel who felt aright for God. Then John suffered Him. He was fulfilling righteousness, not confessing sin.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto 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.” So that you see this wonderful testimony of God the Father, was the consequence of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in the waters of Jordan. It was the answer of God to the place that Christ in His grace, had taken. It was God jealous for the glory of His Son, and who would not permit that a suspicion should rest upon this loveliest and lowliest of acts. And, therefore, lest the full grace of it should not be felt, how quick is God the Father to say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!” Do not think He has sin. But if you are there, He is with you: if the sheep are in the waters, the shepherd must enter them, too. The Father at once vindicates His Son. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It is not that He was well pleased with that act merely, but it is the retrospective expression of God's delight. It refutes all that the pour mind of man might have gathered out of this transaction. It is always thus in the word of God. If there be, so to speak, a locked door, the key is always behind it. If there is a heart that counts upon God, and knows the perfection of His character, and is jealous over the honor of His beloved Son, God is always with such. Man has endeavored to take advantage of the Lord's grace in thus taking His place with the godly in Israel, in order to lower His person and His position, even in relation to God Himself. But when we read with chastened spirits, what do we hear? “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” We shall by-and-by find the importance of this in connection with what follows; but I leave the subject for the present. There is nothing in the whole compass of God's word, so full of blessing to the believer, as the person of Christ and His ways; but it requires great jealousy over self, and the special guidance of the Holy Ghost for who is sufficient for these things?

Chapter 115

Remarks on Matthew 4:1-11

There are two things that we may notice before our Lord is tempted of the devil. The first is, that He is most emphatically recognized as the Son of God by His Father; secondly, that He is anointed as man by the Holy Ghost. Now a similar thing is true of the believer, of course in an inferior way. Still, the believer is owned as a son of God, and has the Spirit of God given to him before he becomes the proper object of the enemy's temptations. And this is an important thing to bear in mind—that, strictly speaking, the relation which the sinner bears to the enemy is not as subject to be tempted. He is a captive: he is led by the devil at his will. This is a very distinct thing from temptation; for it supposes a person thoroughly under the power of Satan. We are tempted, when we are out of the enemy's power, and because we are sons of God. Thus you see all men have to do with Satan in one way or another. The mass of mankind are his slaves; but those delivered by the power of God, those who, by grace, are God's children, become the objects of his assault in the way of temptation. It is not so much his power that such have to dread; for when the soul has received Jesus, Satan's power is really null and void; it is completely broken for the believer. And therefore it is that we are warned rather against his wiles. In certain cases there may be the suffering from his fiery darts; but even this is not his power, which is nothing to the believer, while he is looking to Christ: he has only to resist, and the devil will flee from him. If he had really power, it is clear that Satan would not flee. But he has none. He has lost it as regards the soul that has received Christ. But then, while to faith the power of Satan is a thing destroyed in the cross of Jesus, his wiles are a very serious matter; and we ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Now God has been graciously pleased to give us his manner of dealing with our blessed Lord. And that this is intended for our use, and the great pattern and principle of the temptations of Satan, at any time, is clear from many obvious and weighty considerations.

Besides, we know from the Gospel of Luke that, in the case of our Lord, there was a very long-continued temptation of Satan of which we have no details. We are only told the fact that Jesus was tempted of the devil during forty days. But the great temptations, which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to record for us, are those that took place at the end of the forty days. May we not gather hence, that in the temptation of our Lord there were two parts—first, that not common to man, but peculiar to our Lord? For we are subject to no such circumstances as being driven into the wilderness for forty days. But, secondly, we are exposed to such as are given us at the close. The Lord, therefore, casts a veil over the first, and discloses carefully what, in principle, every child of God may be tempted by some time or another. We shall see that these three temptations, presented by Matthew and Luke in a different order, give us an admirable insight into the ways of Satan when he thus assails the children of God. But it is exceedingly sweet to see, that, before Satan is allowed to tempt at all, the blessedness of the Son's recognition by the Father is most fully brought out. And, indeed, it is something akin which renders anyone obnoxious to the hatred of Satan. The enemy is well aware when God converts and quickens a soul hitherto dead in trespasses and sins; and at once he is prepared with his temptations. They need not, of course, come in the same order as our Lord's; but they are, more or less, of a similar character with those

which are revealed.

It is clear that the first temptation grew out of our Lord's actual circumstances. He had been all this time in the wilderness without food, and at the end of the forty days He was an hungered. When Moses was without food on the mount for the same time, he was with God, and miraculously sustained. But the wonderful thing here is, that the time was spent with the enemy. None had ever been so, or will be so again. To be all that while in presence of Satan, dependent on God, was the greatest moral honor, though the severest trial, that man had ever passed through. Throughout, the Lord is seen as Son of man, though also as Son of God.

The introductory notice shows us that temptation was going on all the time our Lord was in the wilderness. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Whatever may be the aim of Satan, this is one main part of his tactics—he insinuates a doubt, a doubt of our own relationship with God. “If thou be the Son of God.” Now, search the word of God as you may, never will you find his Spirit leading a soul to doubt. Nor can anything, indeed, be more opposed to His way than sanctioning mistrust of God. And it shows the exceeding subtlety of Satan, that he has actually made the children of God themselves to be his instruments, not only by permitting doubts in themselves, but helping to raise them in others, often in the mistaken plea, that not to be confident with God is a sign of humility, and of a desire to be lowly! But faith says, “We are always confident.” Not that we are to shrink from self-examination: we do find this pressed in Scripture. Thus, in 1 Cor. 11. the believers are evidently exhorted to examine themselves, but not with any idea of producing doubt. On the contrary— “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;” for the question was about the Lord's Supper. If the right thing were hesitation, it would have been, “let him not eat,” if he does, not find himself as he ought. But supposing he finds that which is wrong within, is he not to eat. Surely he is to look up to his Savior, and cast himself upon that grace which never can fail. To think that there was no resource would be indeed to dishonor Christ, and to deny His truth and love. “My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Such is the word of the Lord. On the strength of His grace, the believer is to examine himself in the thought of going to the table of the Lord. It is not a question whether he is to go or stay away: I do not find this in Scripture. Nor do I find, on the other hand, that, because I am a Christian, it is no matter what state I may be in spiritually. But a man is to examine himself, and so to eat. He is sure to find that which calls for humiliation. It is important for a soul to draw near to God, and to have his light cast upon all that is there. This will give ground for humbling oneself, but never for staying away. Such is what the spirit of God lays down as a general rule for the Lord's Supper. Of course, I am not speaking now of cases of open sin, where the vindication of the Lord's glory is required. These suppose a man's walking in sin, and not examining himself. But I am speaking now of the ordinary walk of the child of God; and what we read there is careful inquiry as to what he finds within himself—but “so let him eat.”

“If thou be the Son of God.” Our Lord did not look like it. There was nothing of such a character outwardly as to carry necessary demonstration and beat down all question. If it had been so, there would have been no room left for faith at all. Satan takes advantage of the lowliness of our Lord in the place that He took as man. And, indeed, nothing could be more singular than His being found in the wilderness, and, as we read in Mark, with the wild beasts. if He were really the Son of God,

Maker of heaven and earth, what a place to be in and led there by the Spirit, after the Father had spoken from heaven and acknowledged Him to be his beloved Son But so it was. And so it is now, in a lower sense, with the children of God. For no matter how much blessed they may be of God, or how truly owned as His sons, and having His Spirit dwelling within them, they also in their measure have their wilderness. “As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world.” Not into some pleasant place where there is no room for trial, but the very contrary. Because we belong to God and to heaven, because we have the Holy Ghost sealing its unto the day of redemption, we have to encounter Satan, but with the certainty that his power is broken, and that his wiles are what we have to resist. This questioning the relationship of Christ with God shows how truly Satan was at work. But the Lord does not pronounce him tube Satan, until open rebellion is manifested against God. When it is mere subtlety, He does not call him Satan. There are two ways in which the enemy is described in Scripture. He is called Satan and the devil. The latter is the term which implies his accusing character and also his wiles; the former refer to his power as adversary.

We must wait, even when we suspect it is the power of Satan at work, before we pronounce it absolutely. For if there is such a thing as the devil tempting, “God also puts a soul to the test, and this may be very sharp. Moreover, even God Himself does not act till a thing is manifest. He shows patience wonderful and most contrary to the haste of man. He comes down to see whether the evil is so great, as in the case of Adam or of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it always remains true, that whatever God may be in other things, quick as He is to hear the cry of His own in sorrow, He is exceedingly slow to judge; and there is nothing that more marks the knowledge of Christ practically and the effect of it in our own souls, than where the same thing is made true in us. Hastiness to judge is man's way, in proportion to his want of grace, because it is not a question of knowledge but of love that lingers over another, unwilling to pronounce till every hope is gone. There might still be hesitation. The rising in the flesh. which looked so threatening, might turn out after all to be only on the surface, and not deep-seated. So here we see patience, even in our Lord's dealing with the adversary. It is only when he thoroughly makes manifest what he is, that the Lord Himself calls Min Satan. Only when he demands the worship due to God alone, does our Lord say, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Then Satan instantly flees. But the Lord lets him thoroughly discover himself first. This was divinely wise. Because, although the Lord knew him to be Satan all the time, what pattern would this be for us? The Lord is here the blessed man in the presence of Satan, showing us how we have to carry ourselves in the temptations that come upon us as saints of God.

And allow me to say another word with regard to temptation. In the sense we have it here, it is entirely from without. Our Lord never knew what it was to be tempted from within. He was “in all points tempted like as we are.” But the Holy Ghost qualifies this by adding, “Yet without sin.” It was not merely that He did not yield to sin, but He never had the principle of it—never the least feeling of any thought or wish contrary to God. He never knew sin. It is there that we so differ. We have cause of deep humiliation sometimes, because, besides having to do with the devil without, we have got also an evil nature within, what Scripture calls the flesh, i.e., self, the spring of insubordination and of enmity against God. It is the fountain of unloving, willful, ungodly desires in us; that which naturally never seeks God's will, save only in a spirit of fear; that which says, What will become of our souls if we do it not, but never seeks it as that which is loved, till we are born of

God? Even afterward the same wicked principle is still there; but we have a new life implanted of God in our souls, which delights in His will.

But although the temptations of our Lord, which we have here, were from without, still Satan adapted them to the circumstances in which our Lord then stood. He had been forty days without food, and the first word, therefore, of the tempter is, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Our Lord refers to the chapter of Deuteronomy, that alludes to the manna, the daily food of Israel, which involved dependence upon God, and showed that Israel did not need the resources of the world to sustain them. They did not require some rich country to supply them out of its abundant harvest; neither did they depend upon gold and silver. Israel, before they had a land to cultivate and the means of gathering from it, were taught alone with God. In the wilderness, where He had brought them out as His first-born son, He puts them to the proof; and the way of it was, whether they were content with God and with the fare that God provided for them day by day. Alas! they were not.

Here the scene is entirely changed. It is a man in the wilderness, but Satan is there, and not God. In spirit He ever dwelt with His Father; for even when on earth he was “the Son of man which is in heaven.” He combined thus two things in His own person. Day by day there He was, the man dependent upon God for everything. And this was the first great temptation of the devil; the appeal to His earthly natural wants. It was no sin to be hungry; but it would have been a sin to have distrusted God because of the desert place. Did not God know that there was no bread there? and was it not his Spirit who had led Him there? Had God told Him to leave the wilderness, or to make the stones into bread? He would not use His own power, independently of the word of God. And it is the constant mark of the way in which the Holy Ghost energizes in the children of God, that they do not use miraculous power for themselves, nor for their friends. if we look at it in the New Testament, we find Paul working miracles and using the power of God to heal the sick around. But was it ever used for his own circle? On the contrary, Paul leaves Trophimus sick at Miletus, and shows about him all the anxiety of one who might never have had power to heal the body. When Epaphroditus was sick, we see the exercise of a faith which knew that the will of God, and acquiescence in it, was worth a thousand miracles. Miracles had not in themselves the high character of exercising the soul in dependence upon God. To obey God, to submit to Him, to have confidence in Inn, is that which human nature is incapable of. Power alone never reaches so high. Therefore, in the case of our Lord Himself, we never find that He puts His works of might on a level with obedience. Nay, He even speaks of His disciples as those who should do greater works than He Himself had done. Great as had been His own works, He makes known to the disciples themselves that they were to do greater. But obedience was what characterized Christ: this never was found in a mere child of Adam. Here, in the face of Satan, our Lord finds His strength, not in mere miracles, or in any provision that He might have made for Himself, but in the word of God. Hunger might have legitimate wants, but here He was tried in presence of Satan, and He will not step out of the trial, till it is over; He will not shift His circumstances or lift one finger for Himself; He waits upon God. “Man shall not live,” He answers, “by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It was God's word that had led Him there, for the Holy Ghost always acts by this. He would not leave the wilderness till God Himself intimated as much to Him. This completely set aside Satan's temptations. But more: it brought out the real secret of living in

dependence upon God day by day. For it is not a question here of imparting divine life, but of how we live when we have received it; and the food of the new life is the word of God. Of what immense importance does not this show it is to be growing in the knowledge of the word of God, and having that word as our household bread day by day, not merely reading it as a task, or formal duty, but as it is indeed the divinely suitable provision for the child of God! It is good for every one to study it, because he needs it, because it is in every way for the good of the soul day by day to read it intelligently, heartily, as those that receive it from God Himself. And God does not give that which the heart of man cannot take in, but what is adapted to our daily wants. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

This, then, is the answer of our Lord to the first temptation. Why should He turn the stones into bread? He hung upon God's word; His Father had not told him to do it; He could wait. So should it ever be with us. Where we have no clear expression of the mind of God, it is always our place to wait till we have. Sometimes it will show our weakness that we do not know the mind of God, and this is distasteful to us. Restlessness would like to go somewhere or do something? but this is not faith. Faith shows itself in waiting for God to manifest His will.

The next temptation was not a personal one, but connected with religion, us the first had been in respect of bodily wants. We shall find that the order is different in Luke. But here, the second temptation mentioned, is what I may call the religious temptation. The Lord had said that man should “live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The devil then takes Him up into the holy city, sets Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and founds his temptation upon that very point in our Lord's answer—the word of God. He says, as it were, Here is a word of God for you: “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Very true. It was God's word, and evidently spoken of the Messiah. But what was Satan using it for? He says, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, &c.” That was making a move without God—doing something by oneself. Scripture did not say, Cast thyself down, because God has given His angels charge concerning thee, lest thou shouldst dash thy foot against a stone. The Lord would not turn aside from Scripture, because Satan had misused it. He shows us, in the most instructive way, that we are not to be moved from our stronghold because it may be turned against us. Our Lord does not enter into nice distinctions, nor analyze what Satan had said, but He has given us that which ought to be, if I may so say, the standard mode of dealing for every Christian man. There are those who might have spiritual discrimination to see that Satan was perverting the Scripture which he quoted; but many might not. The Lord takes a broad ground in dealing with the adversary. he stands upon what each Christian should know and feel, and this is, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” He cites a plain positive word of God which Satan was destroying by the use he made of Psa. 91. Now that is the strength of a believer who may have to do with one that reasons subtlety from Scripture. “It is written again.” He can appeal to that which is palpable and clear. It will be found that, where a person systematically misapplies Scripture, he destroys some fundamental principle of the word of God. Whatever is false is contrary to some plain passage of Scripture. Now this is a great mercy. The believer holds fast to what is sure: he will not quit what he does understand for something that he does not. He may be perplexed by what the adversary is producing and may only have a sort of suspicion that he is wrong. But he may say to himself, I never can give up what is beyond a doubt for that which I do not know. In other words, he holds

the light and refuses the darkness.

It is thus, it seems to me, our Lord deals with Satan. He could at once have set him aside on grounds of reasoning and have shown the perverted end to which Satan was applying Scripture; but He rather deals with him on moral grounds, which every Christian is capable of judging. Do I find a scripture used for the purpose of making one disobey God? At once I take my stand on, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” What is meant by this? I am never to doubt the Lord will be for me. If I do anything to prove Him, to see whether He will be for me, this is at once unbelief and disobedience. It is an allusion to Israel's history again and another quotation from the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed our Lord quotes every answer to the temptations, as has been long ago remarked, from the book of Deuteronomy. You will find in Ex. 17 that the Israelites tempted the Lord by asking, is He among us or not? That does not mean that they provoked him by idolatry or refusal to do His will. It is not a question there of open sin, but of unbelief of His goodness and presence—unbelief, in a word, of God's being for us. This is exactly what our Lord pleads. Cast myself down in order to find that the Scripture is true and that the angels will bear me up! I do not need to do such a thing. I am very certain that, if I were cast down, the angels would be there to sustain me. If you have a person whom you suspect of dishonesty on your premises, you may perhaps be disposed to test him in some way or other. But who would think of testing one that he had full confidence in? Now that is exactly the meaning of our Lord's answer. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” His soul resented the idea of trying God, to see whether He would sustain Him. God might try Him; Satan might put Him to the test; but as to His tempting the Lord, as if the Lord his God required to be put to the proof, whether He would be true to His word—away with such a thing!—He would not hear of it for a moment. The Lord still insists upon this—perfect confidence in God. Such is the full expression of it.

This temptation, which is the second in Matthew, Luke gives as the third. Why is this? Surely we ought not to read Scripture as if such differences were not intended to suggest inquiry. We have to take care that we do not misinterpret Scripture; but Scripture is meant to be understood. I say of these different orders in which the temptations are put, both are right, both are inspired of God. If they were both intended to give the temptation exactly as it took place, it is clear they are not right, but God had a much higher object. God wrote for out instruction, caul God has been pleased, in the different gospels, to put the facts in the way that is most instructive. Matthew simply gives the temptation. historically, as it took place. Therefore in Matthew we have notes of time. “Then the devil taketh him up,” &c. In Luke there is no such thought; it is simply “and the devil,” &c. This word at once prepares us for it. It is clear, there were these different temptations, but Luke puts them so as not to tell us the order in which they occurred. This is a general remark, true of the whole Gospel of Luke, that he habitually departs from the niece order of fact, to give an arrangement suited to the design which he had in view. As a whole, the Gospel of Luke is characterized by putting the facts of our Lord's life in an order that suited the doctrine He was teaching. Thus you will find in Luke, that even the genealogy of our Lord is not given in its regular place; there is a departure from the mere natural series, and there is, instead, a moral order. Take the case of the Lord's prayer: Luke puts that in a totally different place from Matthew, who gives it in the grand discourse commonly called the sermon on the mount; and, as prayer formed a most important part of the new principles the Lord was bringing out, so it formed one of the grand subjects of the Lord's discourse. Luke reserves that prayer till chapter xi., because our Lord is showing us there the

grand means of spiritual life, how it is to be kept up and sustained in the soul. And he shows us this from the history of Martha and Mary. (Chap. 10) Why was it that Jesus approved of the path and walk of Mary rather than of Martha? It is not that He did not love them all, nor was it that Martha was not fall of personal love to the Savior, and that her heart was not true to Him. But there was an immense difference between them. What and why was it? Luke gives us the moral difference. When Martha was all busied with what she could do for the Lord, to show her love to Him, Mary was occupied with the Lord Himself—seated at His feet, listening to His word. The one was full of what she could do for Christ; the other, full of Christ Himself, and nothing that she could do was of the smallest consequence in her eyes, compared with Christ Himself. Thus we find, in another instance, Mary breaking the alabaster box to anoint the feet of Jesus, an action little accounted for by others; yet what she has done, should be recorded throughout the whole world. Our Lord brings out in Luke this great point—the word of God, the waiting upon Jesus, being the first great means of strengthening the new and spiritual life; and, therefore, immediately after this account of these sisters, you have the request of the disciples to be taught how to pray. It really took place long before; but they are put together in that special form by Luke in order to show the connection of the word of God with prayer.

So in the temptation, Luke departs from the order of fact and gives us the moral sequence. Matthew simply names events as they took place. Luke puts them in the order of magnitude, and rises from the natural trial to the worldly one, and then to the religious temptation. For it is perfectly plain that the temptation by the word of God, was much harder for one who valued that word above everything, than that which merely appealed to natural wants or to worldly ambition. Therefore, Luke keeps this temptation to the last. In Matthew it is not so, but we have, in the third place, the temptation by the world. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Here at once the devil was manifest. The very idea of presenting any object of obeisance and worship between the soul and God, was at once to detect that he was either the devil himself or an instrument of the devil. The Lord, therefore, at once pronounces him “Satan.” “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” If it had been an apostle, it would have been just the same. If such an one had been so completely led away as to hint such a thing, the Lord would have said “Satan” all the same. Is not this most solemn for us in dealing with Christians even, who may have become for the time the instrument of Satan? The Lord did not hesitate on one occasion to say “Satan” to Peter himself, and yet he was the chief of the twelve; the first in dignity among the apostles of the Lamb. And yet our Lord Himself, after He had put more honor upon Peter, and given him a new name, does not hesitate to say “Satan,” as much to Peter as to the enemy himself. All this brings out an important principle for our own ways in having to do even with a child of God.

In answering the third and last temptation, our Lord still confines Himself to the book of Deuteronomy. Why? Because Deuteronomy is the book that regards Israel after they had completely failed under the law, and when God brings in the new principle of grace, and shows not the mere righteousness of the law, but that which is of faith. This is the reason why the Apostle Paul also quotes from Deuteronomy, for the same purpose. It is the book that indicates the place of obedience, when it is no longer a mere question of observance under the law. The Lord Jesus is

here taking that very place. He is not showing what He could have done as a divine person. As such, He would have taken ground where we could not follow Him. But throughout this temptation He takes the posture that becomes us, and all that desire to follow Him. The only thing right and becoming for a godly man, in meeting temptations, is the ground of the obedience of faith; one who stands in the confidence of what God is in His goodness. The Lord would on no account swerve from what was the due and comely place for a godly man in Israel. If a person was godly, his place was to confess and to be baptized with the baptism of repentance. Our Lord at once finds Himself with such, though in His case it was the fulfilling of righteousness; while with us it is the acknowledgment of sin. He who alone could have taken His stand upon legal righteousness, takes it as in every way vindicating God, not upon the mere righteousness of man. Satan may put temptation before Him in every form; but it is of no use. His only care is to vindicate God, and never to arrogate anything to Himself.

I believe that the principles brought before us in this chapter are of the greatest possible importance for the children of God. The few remarks I have made may help to direct souls to the value, practically, of these temptations of our Lord for guidance in our own path. I therefore commend the whole subject to the attention of the reader, as one that, although it may have come before us many a time, and we may have often meditated upon the practical value of it, may still claim our thought, and our prayerful study.

Chapter 116

Remarks on Matthew 4:12-25

It may be instructive to compare the different ways in which the Holy Ghost introduces our Lord's ministry in the gospels. And when I speak of His ministry, you will understand that I mean His public service, for there was much appertaining, to the Lord—miracles performed, and remarkable discourses uttered—before His ministerial course was formally entered on. What I would desire now, with the blessing of God, to notice is, the wisdom with which He has given us a distinct view of our Lord in each of these different inspired accounts. We may reverently follow Him who has been pleased to furnish them so variously omitting certain statements in some, and presenting them in others, altering now and then the order of narrating events, to accomplish thus His purpose more perfectly. In comparing these accounts we may see that the Holy Ghost always preserves the grand design of each gospel, and this is the basis of all just interpretation. We shall find, steadily keeping in view what He is aiming at, that we have in this what was really the principle on winch the gospels themselves were written, and consequently what alone will enable any soul to understand them aright.

Now, I have already shown, to commence with the gospel of Matthew, that, throughout, the Holy Ghost is setting before us the Messiah with the fullest proofs of His mission from God, but, alas! a suffering, a rejected One, and this specially by His own people; and among them rejected most of all by such as, humanly speaking, had most reason to receive Him. Were any peculiarly remarkable for their righteousness in the estimate of the nation? If Pharisees were so, who so bitter against Him? Were any celebrated for their knowledge of scripture? The Scribes were those combined with the Pharisees against Him. The priests, jealous of their position, would naturally oppose One who brought out the reality of a divine power, administered by the Son of man upon earth, in the forgiveness of sins. Now all these things come out with striking force and clearness in the gospel of Matthew. But although we are not arrived at these details as yet, still the main design of the Holy Ghost discovers itself in the manner in which our Lord is presented as entering upon His public ministry, in the portion that is now before us.

First of all, no notice is taken in Matthew of all that passed at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost knew this perfectly well; He had nothing to learn about it. Humanly, Matthew was as likely to have known and inquired into the earlier circumstances of our Lord, and particularly as connected with that city, as the beloved disciple John. Yet of a great deal given in John, not a word appears in Matthew. In the fourth gospel we have a deputation from Jerusalem to see John the Baptist first, and then our Lord is acknowledged as Lamb of God, and as He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. Then we have our Lord making Himself known to various persons, among them to Simon Peter, after Andrew his brother had already been in the company of the wondrous stranger. Then Philip is called, who finds Nathaniel, and thus the work of the Lord spreads from one soul to another, either by the Lord attracting to Himself directly, or through the intervention of those already called. All this is entirely omitted here. Then, again, in John 2 is given the first great miracle in which Christ set forth His glory—the turning of water into wine—and after that our Lord goes up to Jerusalem and executes judgment upon the covetousness that then reigned, even in the boasted city of holiness.

We have also a little incidental view of what our Lord was doing during this time at Jerusalem. He was working mighty miracles there, and many were believing on Him, though in a natural way. Jesus, it is said, “did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men;” but He does open the great doctrine of regeneration, and brings out the cross Himself to be made sin, thus, as the serpent had been lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, that whosoever believed Him “should not perish, but have everlasting life.” All this took place before the circumstances recorded by Matthew. When this is seen, it must strike any observing reader of the word of God. It could not be that these things were unknown to Matthew: they could not fail to be named and dwelt on, if, apart from inspiration, you look at him as a mere disciple. Andrew, Peter, and John, and the rest would have conversed on their first acquaintance with the Savior over and over again. Matthew does not say one word about it, neither does Mark or Luke, but John does. Now, when we examine the gospels themselves, we find the real solution. It is not the ignorance of one evangelist, nor the knowledge of another, that accounts either for the omissions or for the insertions. God gives such an account of Jesus as would perfectly impress the lesson He was teaching in each gospel.

Why does all we have noticed appear appropriately in John? Clearly because it falls in with the truth that is taught there. In John we have the utter ruin of man—of the world—from the outset. The first chapter shows us the practical evidence of what Judaism was—the Lord not received by His own, however duly coming, and thus calling His own sheep by name, and leading them out. For the testimony of John Baptist had no abiding effect upon the mass; it might pass from mouth to mouth, but it fell unheeded upon the ears of those that had no faith; “ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” Now we have the individual sheep called by name, and one of them receiving a new name, thoroughly in keeping with the character of the Apostle John’s gospel. In Matthew we have none of these striking incidents, because therein the Holy Ghost is showing us Jehovah-Jesus, the Messiah, working miracles, accomplishing prophecy, expounding the kingdom of heaven, but in want, despised, and the companion of such in Galilee; for He is not seen here as the Son of God, whether from everlasting or as born into the world; but He Himself takes a place of separation, to carry out the great thought that the prophet Isaiah had been inspired of God to reveal hundreds of years before. For you will remark that our Lord's leaving Nazareth and coming to dwell in Capernaum is brought in here, as the fulfillment of that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “the land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” It was outside the regular allotment of Israel; in that part of it which is yet to belong to Israel, which certain of the tribes had taken possession of, though, strictly speaking, it was beyond the proper limits of the promised land. The Lord goes through Galilee of the Gentiles—and all this He was doing to fulfill a prophecy. The Jews ought surely to have known it. The people which sat in darkness thus “saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”

Now, if we turn to the prophet Isaiah, we shall find the importance of this quotation somewhat more. It is part of a great prophetic strain, in which the Lord is showing the exceeding rebelliousness of Israel, and the judgments that came upon His people, because they would not hearken to His voice. His hand was stretched out against them. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” (Isa. 5:25) In the midst of these dealings of God we have in Isa. 6 the glory of the Lord revealed. God is acting in his own glory. Now, we know that this glory is in the person of Christ, as John 12. declares. The Lord shows accordingly in Isa. 7 that there

was to be a birth wholly above nature. It was no longer nor merely a glorious One sitting upon. a high throne removed from men, yet men receiving a message of mercy from Him in the midst of judgment. Chapter vii. reveals the great fact of the incarnation. The King of Glory, Jehovah of hosts, was to become a babe, born of a virgin. The next chapter shows us another fact. Israel no more cared for the glorious child of the virgin, than before for the warnings of God. On the contrary, they despised and rejected Him. Consequently, chapter viii. supposes a godly remnant more and more despised in the midst of a fearful state of things in Israel. who will then be joined, too, with the Gentiles, saying, A confederacy. There Israel are to take the place of utter unbelief; the inhabitants of Judea will be the leaders in this rebellion against God. But in the midst of it all, what is He doing? “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.” That is, there is a most distinct declaration that God will be pleased to have only a little remnant in the midst of His own people. When Israel should reject the Messiah, a separated remnant appears there, and the blessing would come at last in all the fullness of this grace. Still it would be a small despised thing in the beginning; and this is exactly the circumstance that our Lord now was bringing out in evidence. “And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? 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, accordingly, the prophecy goes on, “Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light (namely the Messiah): they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” He shows afterward in his prophecy that, while the Gentile affliction upon the nation would be heavier than ever, and the Roman oppression far exceed the Chaldean of old; yet the Messiah would be there, despised and rejected of men, nay, of the Jews, and that at this very time, when thus set at naught by the people that ought to have known His glory, great light would spring up in the most despised place, in Galilee of the nations, among the poorest of the Jews, where Gentiles were mixed up with them—people who could not even speak their language properly. There should this bright and heavenly light spring up; the Messiah would be owned and received. Thus we can see how thoroughly this prophecy suits the gospel we are considering. For what we have here, is One who is Jehovah-Messiah, in the truest sense, a divine king. and not a mere human being; but at the same time Messiah, while slighted by the nation, despised by the leaders, making Himself known in grace to those who were the most scorned in the outskirts, as you go out towards the Gentiles. What kings had looked for in vain, what prophets had desired to see, it was for their eyes to look upon. The Lord begins to separate Himself a remnant in Israel in Galilee of the Gentiles. This completely keeps up and confirms the object of Matthew, from the first.

But there is more than this. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Now it is clear that this begins His public preaching. The discourse to Nicodemus was entirely different. Why have we nothing like the Samaritan woman in Matthew? How does it fit in with the gospel of John? In Matthew the subject is the accomplishment of. the prophecies about the Messiah. The object of God there was to show that there was, on His part, no failure of testimony, till the Baptist's work closes. Jesus awaits this in Matthew In John He waits

for nothing. He gives the grandest possible testimony about the kingdom, not exactly of heaven, but of God; the necessity of a life that man has not naturally—that God alone can give; and the necessity of the cross as the expression of God's judgment of sin in grace to sinners—to the world. So that the discourse in John 3 consists of these two parts—a life given of God, that never sins, that is perfectly holy; and Jesus dying in atonement for the sins of the old life which never could enter into the presence of God. And though believers must have that new life, yet this cannot blot out sin. Death is needled as well as life, and the Savior provides both. He is the source of life as the Son of God, and He dies as the Son of man. And this is what He brings out most profoundly in the beginning of John's gospel. In Matthew we have Jesus waiting till the testimony of John the Baptist is closed, and then He enters upon His public ministry. These things are perfectly harmonious. If our Lord had been said to preach the kingdom of heaven to Nicodemus, there might have seemed to be a contradiction; but He did not. He showed the necessity of a new birth for any who would see the kingdom of God. But in Matthew He is looking at what, though from a heavenly source, concerns the earth—the kingdom of heaven according to the prophecy of Daniel. He therefore waits till His earthly forerunner had fully done his task. The ministry of John is set forth by Elias; the forerunner must have done his work before the Lord begins His own. Hence Matthew leaves out all illusion to anything public about Christ before John is cast into prison. He presents to the Jews the kingdom of heaven as that which was according to their prophets.

In the gospel of Luke let us see how our Lord's ministry is opened. Chapter iv. will suffice for my purpose. The Lord returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, “and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.” This is a previous scene; He is not in Capernaum yet. Matthew leaves it all out. This is the more striking because Luke was not one of those personally with our Lord, while Matthew was. But unless you believe that it is God who has guided the hand of every writer, and put His own seal upon it, you are incapable of understanding scripture; you will add your own thoughts, instead of being subject to the mind of God. What we want is to understand God, who is shedding on us His own blessed and infinite light. Why does God give us this incident at Nazareth in Luke and nowhere else? Is it the Messiah? No; such is not the object of Luke. Nor is it His ministry in the order in which it occurred; this you will find in Mark. But Luke, as well as Matthew, changes the order of events, for the purpose of bringing out the moral object of each gospel. Luke gives us this circumstance in the synagogue; Matthew does not. if any one has read the gospel of Luke with spiritual intelligence, what is the one grand impression conveyed to the mind? There is the blessed man, anointed of the Holy Ghost, and who goes about doing good. Indeed, this is precisely the way in which Peter sums up the life of Jesus in the Acts, when preaching Him to Cornelius; “How 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,” and then he gives an account of His wonderful work in His death and resurrection.

Opening, then, the Gospel of Luke, what is the first incident of our Lord's ministry recorded there? At Nazareth, the most despised village in Galilee, the place where our Lord was sure to be scorned—in His own country, where he had been living all the days of His private life of blessed obedience rendered to man and of dependence upon God—in this same place He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read from the prophet. Isaiah, where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to

the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book." He stopped in the very middle of a sentence. Why so? For the most precious reason. He was come here as a herald of grace, the minister of divine goodness to poor, miserable melt. There was judgment mingled with mercy in the prophecy of Isaiah. The Gospel of Matthew shows us judgment upon the Jews and mercy to despised Galilee. But here it is a larger thing. In Luke there is not a word about judgment; nothing appears but the fullness of grace that was in Christ. He was come with all power and willingness to bless: the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him for the purpose. He was sent to preach the acceptable year of the Lord—and there and then He closed the book. He would not add the next words, which announced "the day of vengeance of our God." He most significantly stops before a word is said of that day. As to the actual errand on which Jesus was come from heaven, it was not to execute vengeance: that was only what man would, by and by, compel Him to do by refusing grace. But He came to show divine love, flowing in a perfect, unceasing stream from His heart. This was what our Lord opened out here. Where does such a scene as this suit? Exactly the place where it does occur—the Gospel of Luke only. You could not transplant it to Matthew, or even to John. There is a character about it that pertains to this gospel and none other. Some of the circumstances of our Lord's ministry are given in all the gospels; but this is not; because it flows in the current of Luke: and there it is found, and there alone.

This will help to illustrate the characteristic and divinely-arranged differences of the gospels. Harmonizing is the attempt to squeeze into one mold things which are not the same. Thus, if I may add a few words on the account in Luke, we have more in corroboration. While they hung upon His lips to hear the gracious words, as the Holy Ghost characterizes them, all eyes fastened upon Him. "He began to say unto them, This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?". There was their unbelief of heart. He was despised and rejected of men; not only of the proud men of Jerusalem, but at Nazareth. This is Luke's object, who shows is the deeper thought still—that it was not only men who might be built up in the law, but that the heart of man despised Him wherever He was. Let it be at Nazareth, and let Him utter the most gracious words that ever fell from the lips of man, still He was despised. "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard down at Capernaum do also here in thy country." Evidently we learn, too, that the Lord had done many things there. and things that had taken place previously to this: but the Spirit of God records this first at length. The Lord accordingly brings in another thing that I must refer to. He takes instances from Jewish history to illustrate the unbelief of the Jews, and the goodness of God to the Gentiles. "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta." &c. That is to say, He shows that, is the unbelief of Israel, God turns to the Gentiles, and that they should hear. There was one grand point in Luke's Gospel—not only the display of the fullness of grace that was in Jesus, but God going out to the Gentiles and showing mercy to them. The first recorded discourse of our Lord's in Luke brings out the very object of the gospel. Accordingly when the Lord uttered these words, "they were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum." And then we have the Lord dealing with a man that was possessed with a devil. This is the first miracle detailed here and it is only in the next chapter that we find out Lord calling Simon Peter, Andrew, and the rest to

follow Him; all which is given with the greatest possible care. At once we are struck with the difference; for when we turn back to Matthew, there is not a word about Nazareth, or the casting out of a devil from a man possessed; but that our Lord, when He began to preach, was walking by the sea of Galilee, and "saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The account is given very succinctly. The particulars are not found, but we do get them in Luke, and I presume, for this reason that his is specially the gospel where we see the moral analysis of the human heart. There are two things specially brought out in Luke—what God's heart is towards man, and what man's heart is naturally towards God; and, besides this, what he becomes throngh the grace of God. Take the parable of the prodigal for instance. Have you not there God's heart, and the wickedness of man's heart fully brought out; and then his coming to himself, and being lost in the goodness of God towards him? That is just the Gospel of Luke, the sum and substance of the whole book. This is one reason why you have the experience of Peter when first called to service; how the Lord met his fears, and fitted hilt, to become a fisher of men. And Peter is there made a prominent one, because you cannot have experience except in all individual. Experience must be a thing between the soul and Christ; and the moment it comes to be a matter of public notoriety, all is gone; it becomes then rather a snare for the conscience. There is the danger of repeating what we have heard from others, or of keeping back what is bad in our own. souls. It must be a matter of individual conscience with the Lord. In Luke you have one individual singled out, and the account given of what be passed through with the Lord; but in Matthew this is not the point. There it is the rejected Messiah, now that His forerunner is cast into prison, who will himself soon find that there is worse than a prison in store for Him. lint for all that, the Lord will accomplish the prophecies. He is, it, the most despised place, fulfilling the prophecy that predicted in Isaiah the law bound up among His disciples, at the very time that the Lord was hiding His face from Israel. Now, He wants to have persons who are prominent as the representatives of this godly remnant in Israel. Therefore, He calls first two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother. It would be a mistake to suppose that this was our Lord's first acquaintance with them. They knew the Lord long before. How do we know this? John tells us. If you examine the point, you will find that all the incidents in the first four chapters of John's Gospel occurred before this scene. The circumstances recorded of our Lord in Jerusalem, in Galilee, and with the woman of Samaria even, all took place before Simon and Andrew were called away from their work. In order to call for a special line of service, there is a second work of Christ necessary. It is one thing for Christ to reveal Himself to a soul, it is another to make that soul a fisher of men. There is a special faith needed in order to act upon the souls of others. The simple, saving faith that appropriates Christ for one's own soul is not at all the same thing as understanding the call of Christ summoning one away from all the natural objects of this life to do His work. This comes out here. The Lord, in His rejection, calls, and causes His voice to be heard by these four men, and by others also. They had already believed in Him, and had everlasting life; but to have everlasting life merely is compatible with a man's following a good deal with the world, and being occupied with what contributes to his own ease here below; he remains a member of the society of men. Many that are godly still continue mixed up with the world; but in order for the Lord to make them to be the companions of his own service, and to fit them for carrying out His own objects, He must call them away. But they have got a father: what is to be done? No matter; the call of Christ is paramount to every other claim. They were casting a net into the sea; and He saith onto them,

“Follow me.” But they might have caught ever so much fish: what of that? “They straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.” No doubt it was a struggle. They were mending their nets with their father when the Lord called them; but they immediately left their nets and their father, and followed Him. And for this reason. They now knew who Christ was, that He was the Messiah, the blessed object of hope that God had from the beginning promised to the fathers; and now the children had it. He called them. Could they not trust all they had in His hands, and confide in His care for their father? Surely they could. The very same faith which gave them to follow Jesus, not merely as a giver of everlasting life, but as One to whom they now belonged as servants, could enable them to confide all that they had pertaining to them in this world into This keeping. Surely, if the Lord called them, His call must be superior to their natural obligations. This was an extraordinary case. We do not find that persons in general are called to such a work as this; but, it may be, there are occasions where the Lord has those that He summons to serve Him in this special way. How could one be of use to the souls of others, unless one has known somewhat of this trial for one's Own soul? The Lord is presented here as thus forming this godly remnant, for Himself From the very beginning. “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.” This was what the Lord was now showing; but it is not all. “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all manner of sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them.” Now, mark; you get nowhere, except in Matthew, such a series of the Lord's works and teaching compressed into a couple of verses. In Matthew they are crowned into a cluster, before we have the teaching commonly called the sermon on the mount. Why do we have the ordinary current of the Lord's ministry brought before us here in this comprehensive form? The gospel of Matthew is intended to show that, after the Lord had called these disciples, you have His general service given for the purpose of proving the universal attention that was drawn to His doctrine, The Lord had been giving a full testimony every where through all Syria. Persons had been brought from every quarter; and the Holy Ghost then gives us the grand outline, that follows, of the kingdom of heaven. The circumstances are so arranged by the Holy Ghost as to show the universal attention directed to it. When all are on tip-toe to understand about the kingdom of heaven, then the Lord unfolds it. Matthew knew perfectly well that the sermon on the mount was really uttered long after. He heard it himself. Yet Matthew's own call is not given till chapter ix. It was subsequently to the call of the twelve disciples that our Lord took His place upon the mountain; but Matthew records it long before. The object is to show, not the time when our Lord uttered this discourse, but the fact itself. There were first, all these mighty deeds that were witnesses to His being the true Messiah; and then we have His doctrine perfectly brought out. The sermon on the mount need not be considered, historically, as one continuous discourse, but may have been uttered at different times. It is nowhere said that it was all uttered at the same occasion. We have only the general fact that there He was upon the mount, and there He taught the people. It may have been broken up into several discourses, with the circumstances giving rise to this part or that omitted in Matthew. The human mind compares these things together, and finding that in Luke different portions of it are given to us at different times, while in Matthew all is given together,

instead of confiding in the certainty that God is right, jumps at once to the conclusion that there is confusion in these scriptures. There is really perfection. It is the Holy Ghost shaping all according to the object that He has in view.

Another time I hope, if the Lord will, to enter carefully into this most blessed discourse of our Lord's, to show its grand importance in itself, and its appropriateness in Matthew, where alone you have it so fully. In Mark it is not given at all, in Luke only in detached fragments, in Matthew as a whole. But now I merely commend to you the subject we have been looking at, trusting that the general remarks which have been made may prove an incentive to further and prayerful examination. May the hints thrown out help some to a more profitable reading of God's word, and more intelligent entering into His mind, besides giving a key to difficulties in the gospels.

Chapter 117

Remarks on Matthew 5:1-17

It has been already explained, though briefly, that one reason which seems to have guided the Spirit of God, if we may reverently venture so to speak, in putting the sermon on the mount out of its historical place in Matthew, and giving it to us before many of the events which, in point of fact, took place subsequently, was this: that the whole Gospel was written upon the principle of convincing Jews that Jesus was their real Messiah—a man, but Jehovah—the Jehovah God of Israel; that the nation had had the fullest proofs that He was really their Messiah, according to prophecy, miracle, moral principles and ways, both in His own person and in His doctrine. In order to give the greater weight to His doctrine, the Spirit of God, in my opinion, has been pleased, first, to give as a general sketch the deeds of miraculous power which aroused universal attention. The report went abroad everywhere, so that there was no possible ground of excuse for unbelief to argue that there was not sufficient publicity; that God had not sounded the trumpet loud enough for the tribes of Israel to hear. Far from that: throughout all Syria his fame had gone forth, and great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond Jordan. All this is brought forward here and grouped together at the end of chapter iv.

And just as there is this grouping of the miracles of Christ, which might have been severed from one another by a long space of time, so I apprehend the sermon on the mount was not necessarily a continuous discourse, unbroken by time or circumstances, but that the Holy Ghost has seen fit to arrange it so as to give the whole moral unity of the doctrine of Christ as to the kingdom of heaven; and to counteract the earthly views of the people of Israel.

Luke, on the contrary, was inspired of the Holy Ghost to give the questions that originated certain portions of the discourse, and the circumstances that accompanied it; and, again, to keep certain parts of that discourse back, and connect them with facts that occurred from time to time in our Lord's ministry, the actual incidents being thus interwoven in moral correspondence with any particular doctrine of our Lord. In some places of Luke the Spirit of God takes the liberty, according to His sovereign wisdom, of keeping back certain portions and bringing in a part here and there according to the object He has in view. The great feature of Luke's gospel, which rims through it from beginning to end, being a moral one, we can perfectly understand how suitable it was that, if there were circumstances in Christ's life which were a sort of practical comment on His discourse, there you should have the discourse and the facts put together.

Now, as to the discourse itself, the Lord here clearly speaks as the Messiah, the prophet King of the Jews. But besides, all through you will find that the discourse supposes the rejection of the King. It is not brought clearly out yet, but this is what underlies it all. The King has the sense of the true state of the people, who had no heart for Him. Hence there is a sweet tinge of sorrow that runs through it. That must ever characterize real godliness in the world as it is; a strange thing for Israel, and specially strange in the bps of the King, of One, too, possessed of such power, that had it been a question of using His resources, He could have changed all in a moment. The miracles which accompanied His every word, proved that there was nothing beyond His reach, if Himself

only were looked at. But you will find in all the ways of God, that while He always makes good his counsels, so that if He predicts a kingdom, and takes in hand to set up a kingdom, He will certainly accomplish it, since He never gives up a single thought that has proceeded from His heart. Nevertheless, He first presents the thought to man, to Israel because they were the chosen race among men. Man has thus the responsibility of receiving or rejecting that which is the mind of God, before grace and power give it effect. But man always fails, no matter what God's purpose may be. It is good, it is holy, it is true, it is that which exalts Himself, it is that which abases the sinner: this is enough for man. He feels that he is made nothing of, and he rejects whatever does not gratify his vanity. Man invariably sets himself against the thoughts of God, consequently there is pain and sorrow—rejection of God Himself. And the wonderful thing that the history of this world shows us, is God submitting to be rejected and insulted; allowing poor weak man, a worm, to repel the advances of God and refuse His goodness, to turn everything that God gives and promises into the display of his own pride and glory, against the very character of God. You will find that all this, as it is the truth about man; so the tinge of it runs through this blessed discourse of our Lord. And when He is now bringing out, which is the great purport of the early part of this chapter, the character of the people who would suit the kingdom of heaven. He shows that their character was to be formed by his own. If there was the dislike and contempt of men for what was of God, He shows that those who really belong to him, must have a spirit and ways flowing from knowledge of, and sympathy with, His own. I only say sympathy here, because you will find that the truth of a divine life which is given is not spoken of in this discourse. Redemption never is touched upon, not being the subject of the sermon on the mount. If a person, therefore, wanted to know how to be saved, he ought not to look here with the thought of finding an answer. It could not be found in it, because the Lord is bringing out the kingdom of heaven and the character of the people that are the subjects of that kingdom. It is clear that He is speaking of his own people, and therefore could not be showing the way for one that did not belong to His own people to be delivered from this position. He is speaking about saints, not about sinners. He shows what is according to his heart; not at all the way for a soul that is consciously at a distance from God to be brought near. The sermon on the mount treats not of salvation, but of the character and conduct belong to Christ—the true but rejected King. But when we examine these beatitudes, we shall find an astonishing depth in them, and a beautiful order, too.

The first blessedness, then, is a fundamental one—that which is inseparable from every soul that is brought to God, and that knows God. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Nothing more contrary to man. What people call ‘a man of spirit,' is exactly the opposite of being poor in spirit. A man of spirit is a person such as Cain was—a man determined not to be beaten; a man who would fight it out with God Himself. There was a proud spirited man that never would bend. Now, a man “poor in spirit” is the very opposite of this. It is a person who is broken, who is down, who feels that the dust is his right place. Now, every soul that knows God must, more or less, be there. He may get out of this place; for although it is a solemn thing, yet it is easy enough, to rise again, to forget our right place before God; and it is specially easy for those who have been brought into the liberty of Christ. When there is earnestness of spirit, a man is apt to be low, specially if not quite sure that all is clear between his soul and God. But when full relief if brought to his spirit, when he knows the fullness and certainty of redemption in Christ Jesus, and then looks away from Jesus, and takes his place among men, there you will have the old spirit revived, the spirit of man in its worst form: so terrible is the effect of a departure from God and a mingling with men. The first in order, the

Lord lays down as a sort of foundation, and which is inseparable from a soul that is brought to God:—he may not even know what full liberty is, but there is this thing that never can be absent where the Holy Ghost works in the soul—and that is, poverty of spirit. It may be encroached on by others, or it may fade way through the influence of false doctrine, or worldly thoughts and practice, but still there it was, and there, in the midst of all the rubbish, it is; and God knows how to bring a man down again, if he has forgotten his true place. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He is speaking about the kingdom, and he at once says, these are the people to whom it belongs. By the “kingdom of heaven,” He does not mean heaven; it never means heaven, but always takes in the earth as under the rule of Heaven. You will find that many persons are in the habit of confounding these things. “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” they think means “theirs is heaven.” Whereas the Lord is not referring to heaven, but to the rule of the heavens over an earthly scene. It refers to the scene of the ruling Messiah—those who are poor in spirit belong to that system of which He is the Head. He does not speak of the Church here. There might have been the kingdom of heaven and no Church at all. It is not till the sixteenth chapter of this gospel that the subject of the Church is broached, and then it is a thing promised and expressly distinguished from the kingdom of heaven. There is not in all scripture a single passage where the kingdom of heaven is confounded with the Church, or vice versa, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is the first primary foundation, the great characteristic feature of all that belongs to Jesus. “Blessed are they that mourn,” is the second feature. There is more activity of life, more depth of feeling, more entrance into the condition of things around them. To be “poor in spirit” would be true if there were not a single other soul in the world; but he feels it because of what he is in himself; it is a question between him and God, that makes lam to be poor in spirit. But “Blessed are they that mourn,” is not merely what we find in our own condition, but it is the holy sorrow that a saint feels in finding himself in such a world as this, and, oh, how little able to maintain the glory of God! So that there is this holy sorrow very prominent indeed in the second part. The first is the child of God that just shows us the earliest rudimental feelings of holiness in his soul; the second is the sense of what is due to God; a feeling it may be of great weakness, and yet of what should become the honor of God, and how it should be upheld by himself. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” There is not a single groan that goes up to God but He treasures and will answer it; “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.” Here, then, you have the sorrowing of the godly soul.

But in the third case, we come to that which is much deeper and more chastened. It is a condition of soul produced by a fuller acquaintance with God, and is especially the way in which God elsewhere describes the blessed One Himself. He was “meek and lowly in heart;” and this was what the Lord said after He had been groaning in spirit, for He knew what it was to have the sorrow we have been speaking about, over the condition of men and the rejection of God that He witnessed here below. He could only say “Woe” to those cities in which He had done so many mighty works; and then Capernaum comes in for the deepest condemnation, because the mightiest works of all were done there in vain. And what could Jesus do but groan in spirit as He thought of such utter spurning of God, and indifference to His own love? But at the same hour we find he rejoices in spirit, and says, “I thank thee, O Father.” There is the blessed proof of matchless meekness in Jesus—that the same hour which sees the depth of His sorrow over man, sees also His perfect bowing to God, though at the cost of everything to Himself. Conscious of this, He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take

my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Now, then, I think I may be bold to say that this meekness, which was found in its absolute perfectness in Jesus, is also what the gradually deepening knowledge of the ways of God, even in the sense of the abounding wickedness of this world, and the failure of what bears the name of Christ, produces in the saint of God. For in the midst of all that he sees around him, there is the discerning of the hidden purpose of God that is going on in spite of everything; so that the heart, instead of being fettered by the evil that it witnesses, and which it cannot set aside; instead of the least feeling of envy at the prosperity of the wicked, finds its resource in God— "the Lord of heaven and earth" as expression most blessed because it marks the absolute control in which everything is held by God. Jesus is the meek One, and those that belong to Jesus are trained to this meekness also. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The earth—why not heaven? The earth is. he scene of all this evil that had brought out such sorrow and mourning. But now, having better learned God's ways, they can commit it all to Him. Meekness is not merely to have a sense of nothingness in ourselves, or to be filled with sorrow for the opposition to God here below; but it is rather the calmness of leaving thing's with God, and bending to God, and thankfully owning the will of God, even where naturally it may be most trying to ourselves.

The fourth blessedness is much more active. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be tilled." Perfect soul satisfaction, they shall have it. Whatever was the form of the spiritual feeling of the sent, there is always the perfect answer to it on God's part. If there is sorrow, they shalt be comforted; if them is meekness, they shall inherit the earth, the very place of their trial here. Now, there is this activity of spiritual feeling, the going out after what was according to God, what maintained the will of God, specially as made known to a Jew in the Old Testament. Therefore it is called hungering and thirsting. after righteousness. We learn deeper principles in the New Testament still, which had to be brought out when the disciples were able to bear them.

This closes what we may call the first section of the beatitudes. You will find that they are divided, as the series of scripture often are, into four and three. We have had four classes of persons pronounced "blessed." All the traits ought to be found in one individual, but some will be more prominent in one than another. For instance, we may see great activity in one, astonishing meekness in another. The principle of all is in every soul that is born of God. In verse 7 we enter upon a rather different class: and it will be found that the three last have got a common character, as the first four have.

"Blessed are the merciful: be they shall obtain mercy." As righteousness is the key-note of the first four, so grace is that which lies at the root of the latter three; and, therefore, the very first of them shows you not merely that they are righteous, and, that they feel what is due to God, but they are found clinging to the will. of God, and maintaining it in the midst of surrounding evil. Yea, there is something more blessed still, and what is that "Blessed are the merciful." There is nothing upon which God more takes His stand as the active principle of His being in a world of sin, than His mercy. The only possibility of salvation to a single soul, is that there is mercy in God; that He is rich in mercy, that there is no bound to His mercy; that there is nothing in the heart of man, if he only bows to His Son, which can hinder this constant flowing spring of mercy. "Blessed," then, "are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." it is not merely a question of the forgiveness of their sins, but

of mercy in everything. It is a blessed thing to hail the smallest sign of mercy, to take the little and look for much more.

Blessed are the merciful." They will find, not that there is not difficulty and trial, but though they shall. know the cost of it, they shall know the sweetness of it; they shall taste afresh what the mercy of God is towards their own souls, in the exercise of mercy towards others. This is the characteristic feature of the new class of blessing; just as poverty of spirit was the introduction to the first blessings, so mercy is to these.

The next is the consequence of this, as in the former class. If a roan does not think much of himself, men will take advantage of him. If a man is bold, and boastful, and self-exalting, saints may suffer it. (2 Cor. 11.) If he does well to himself, men will praise him. (Psa. 49) But the contrary of that is what God works in the saint. No matter what he may be, he is broken down before God: he learns the vanity of what man; he is content to be nothing. And the effect. is, he suffers. Poverty of spirit be followed by mourning. Then there is the meekness, as there is deepening acquaintance with God, and then the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But now it is merry; and the effect of mercy is not a compromising of the holiness of God, but a larger and deeper standard of it. The fuller your hold of grace is, the higher your maintenance or holiness will be. If you only take grace as a wretched, selfish being, trying to find an excuse for sin, no doubt it will be perverted. And so He speaks at once of the proper, normal effect of tasting of this spring of mercy. They are "pure in heart." That is the next class, and it is, I believe, the consequence of the first, of being merciful. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." It is exactly what belongs to God; for He alone is pure absolutely. Thus also he was perfectly reflected in His beloved Son. For not one single thought or feeling over sullied divine perfectness in the heart of Jesus. in this case he is just showing us what He Himself was. It is clear that he puts his own characteristics before those who belonged to Him; because He is their life. It is Christ in us that produces what is according God by the Holy Ghost—this blessed One, whose very coming into the world was the witness of perfect grace and mercy on God's part; for it was God who so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son for it. And He was there, a man—the faithful witness of the mercy and of the purity of God. He, when He came with His heart full of mercy towards the vilest, was yet the very One who was the pattern or the perfection of the purity of God. "He that sent me." He could say, "is with me; for I do always those things that please him." The only way of doing anything to please God, is by having the consciousness of being in the presence of God: and there is no possibility of that, except as I am drawn there in the liberty of grace, and as knowing that what Christ was to God, in His own person, is given to me by redemption. Christ has, of course, a title to be ever there, because of what he Himself is: and we are there, through faith of Christ, because of the nearness that is given us by the perfect blotting out of our sins through His blood. But this is not revealed here; for the Lord is rather showing the moral qualities of those that belong to Him.

The third and closing one of these blessednesses is, "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." There we have the active side again, as we saw an analogy in the closing one of the first four. These go out making peace. If there is the smallest possibility of the peace of God being brought into the scene, they are sure to find out where it can be or may be; and if it cannot be, they are content to wait upon God, and look up to Him, that, he will make this peace in His own time. And as this peace-making can belong only to God Himself, so these saints that are enriched with these blessed qualities of the grace of God and His righteousness—His

grace, His mercy, and its effects—are equally round now characterized as peace-makers: “they shall be called the children of God.” Oh! this is a sweet thing! Sons of God: is it not because it was the reflection of his own nature—what God Himself was? They bore the stamp of God upon them. There is no one thing that inure shows God manifested in His children than this peace-making. That was what God was doing, what His heart was set upon. Here are found men upon the earth who shall be called the children of God. What belonged to them naturally is merged, and they have a new title, sons of God.

Then follow two exceedingly interesting blessings. They add much to the beauty of the scene, and complete the picture in a most interesting way. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is evidently beginning over again. The first blessedness is “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:” and these four were all marked by righteousness. It is the very first thing that God ever produces in a soul. He who is awakened takes up God's cause against himself. He is, in measure, broken down, poor in spirit; and God looks for him to grow in poverty of spirit to the last. But here it is not so much what they were, as what their lot was from others. The two last blessednesses speak of their portion in the world from the hands of other people. The first four are characterized by intrinsic righteousness—the last three by intrinsic grace. These two, then, answer, one to the first four, and the other to the last three. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This does not go beyond the blessed state of things that the power of God will bring in over the earth in connection with the Messiah. Being rejected, the kingdom of heaven is His, only, as it were, with a stronger and deeper title—certainly with the means of blessing by grace for the lost. A suffering and despised Messiah is still dearer to the heart of God than if we conceived Him received all at once. And if He does not lose the kingdom because He was persecuted, neither do they. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Persecuted, not merely by the Gentiles or by the Jews, but for righteousness' sake. Do not be looking at the people that persecute you, but at the reason why you are persecuted. If it is because you desire to be found in obedience to the will of God, blessed are you. You fear to sin—you suffer for it; blessed are they which suffer for righteousness' sake: they will have their portion under the Messiah Himself.

But now we have, finally, another blessedness. And mark the change. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.” This change to ye is exceedingly precious. It is not merely put in an abstract form—“blessed are they;” but it is a personal thing. He looks at the disciples there, knows what they were to go through for His sake, and gives them the highest, nearest place in His love. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, for my sake.” It is not now for righteousness' sake, but “for my sake.” There is something still more precious than righteousness, and that is Christ. And when you have Christ, you can have nothing higher. Blessed indeed to be persecuted for His sake! The difference is just this: when a man suffers for righteousness' sake, it is that there is some evil put before him, and he refuses it. He would have perhaps to subscribe something against his conscience, and he cannot do it—he dare not. He is offered a tempting bait, but it involves that which he knows is contrary to God. All is in vain: the tempter's object is seen. Righteousness prevails, and he suffers. He not only loses what is offered, but he is evil spoken of, too. Blessed are they who suffer thus for righteousness' sake! But for Christ's sake is a totally

different thing. There the enemy effects great execution. He tempts the soul with such questions as these: is there any reason why you should speak about Jesus and the gospel? There is no need for being so zealous for the truth. Why go out of your way so far for this person or that thing? Now, in these cases it is not a question of a sin, open or covert. For in the case of suffering for Christ's sake, it is the activity of grace that goes out to others. It is not a question of righteousness, but answers to the last three of the seven beatitudes. A soul that is filled with a sense of mercy cannot refrain his lips. He who knows what God is could not be silent merely because of what men think or do. Blessed are ye who thus suffer for the sake of Christ's name! The power of grace prevails there. Too often, alas! motives of prudence come in: people are afraid of giving offense to others—of losing influence for self—of spoiling the prospect of the children, &c. But the energy of grace looks at all this, and still says, Christ is worth infinitely more; Christ commands my soul for this—I must follow Him. In suffering for righteousness' sake, a soul eschews evil, earnestly, peremptorily, and commits itself at all cost to what is right; but in the other, it discerns the path of Christ—that which the gospel, the worship, or the will of the Lord call to, and at once throws itself with its whole heart on the Lord's side. Then comes in the comfort of that sweet word, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you. . .for my sake.” For the Lord could not refrain the expression of His soul's delight in His saints: “Blessed are ye. . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.” Observe, it is not now in the kingdom of heaven, but “in heaven.” He identifies these with a higher place altogether. It is not only the power of God, over the earth, and His giving them a portion here; but it is taking them out of the earthly scene to be with Himself above. “For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” What an honor to follow in earthly rejection and scorn those who preceded us in special communion with God—the heralds of Him for whom we suffer now! We may clearly, then, consider that these two final blessednesses, the persecutions for righteousness' sake and for Christ's sake, answer, respectively, to the first four blessings and to the last three.

In Luke, where we have these blessings brought before us, we have none for righteousness' sake—only for His name's sake. And in all the cases it is “Blessed are ye.” To some it may seem a delicate shade, but the difference is characteristic of the two Gospels. Matthew takes in the largest view, and specially that view of the principles of the kingdom of heaven which was suited to the understanding of a Jew, to bring him out of his mere Judaism, or to show him higher principles. Luke, whatever the principles are, gives them all under the form of grace, and treats them as our Lord's direct addresses to the individual soul “Blessed are ye.” Even if he takes up the subject of the poor, he drops the abstract form of Matthew, and makes it all personal. Everything is connected with the Lord Himself, and not merely with righteousness. This is exceedingly beautiful. And if we pursue, further, the next few verses which give, not so much the characteristics of the people as their general attitude in the world the place in which they are set in the earth by God, we have it in a very few words, and strongly confirming the distinction which I have drawn between righteousness and Christ's name's sake. And if you examine the Epistle of Peter, you will find this remarkably corroborated there also.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” Salt is the only thing that cannot be salted, because it is the preservative principle itself; and if this is gone, it cannot be replaced. “If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?” The salt of the earth is the relation of the disciples here to that which already had the testimony of God; therefore the expression earth or land, which was

specially true of the Jewish land then. Now, if you speak about the earth, it is Christendom—the place that enjoys, either really or professedly, the light of God's truth. That is what may be called the earth. And this is the place which will finally be the scene of the greatest apostasy; for apostasy is only possible where light has been enjoyed and departed from. In the Revelation, where the closing results of the age are given, the earth appears in a most solemn manner; and then we have the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues—what we should call heathen lands. But the earth means the once-favored scene of professing Christianity, where there have been all the energies of the mind of men at work—the scene where the testimony of God had once shed its light—then, alas! abandoned to utter apostasy.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” They were the real preservative principle there: all the rest, the Lord intimates, were good for nothing. But more than that. He gives a solemn warning that there is a danger that the salt should lose its savor. He is not now speaking of the question of whether a saint can fall away or not. People go with their own questions to Scripture, and pervert the word of God, to suit their own thoughts. The Lord is not raising the question whether life is ever lost; but He is speaking of certain persons who are in a given position; and among them there might be persons who had taken it heedlessly or even falsely, and then there would be the fading away of all that they had once had. And He shows their judgment—the most contemptuous possible, to be passed upon that which took so high a place without reality. And so it will be still more evidently yet.

“Ye are the light of the world.” This is another thing. Bearing in mind the distinction drawn in the series of the beatitudes and of the persecutions, we have the key to these two verses. The salt of the earth represents the righteous principle. The salt of the earth involves the clinging to the eternal rights of God and the maintenance before the world of what is due to His character; and that was gone when what bore the name of God fell below what even men thought proper. You can hardly read a newspaper now but what you find scoffs against what is called religion. All respect is gone, and men think that the condition of Christians is a fair subject for their ridicule. But now, in verse 14, we have not only the principle of righteousness, but of grace—the outflowing and strength of grace. And here we find a new title given to the disciples, as descriptive of their public testimony— “the light of the world.” The light is clearly that which diffuses itself. The salt is what ought to be inward, but the light is that which scatters itself abroad. “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” It was diffusing its testimony everywhere. Man does not light a candle to put it under a corn measure, but on a candlestick; “and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” After this manner let your light shine before men, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Mark it well. When we have looked at these two striking sketches of the testimony of believers here below, as the salt of the earth, the preservative energy in the midst of profession, and, as the light of the world, going out in activity and love towards the poor world; and the danger of the salt losing its savor, and of the light being put under a bushel. Now we find the great object of God in this twofold testimony. It is not merely a question of the blessing of souls, for there is not a word about evangelization or saving sinners, but of the walk of saints. There is a grave question that God raises about his saints, and this is about their own ways apart from other people. Calls to the unconverted we find abundantly elsewhere, and none can exaggerate their importance for the world; but the sermon on the mount is God's call to the unconverted. It is their character, their position, their testimony distinctively; and if others are

thought of throughout, it is not so much a question of winning them, as of the saints reflecting what comes from above. This light is what comes from Christ. It is not, let your good works shine before men. When people talk about this verse, they are evidently thinking about their own works, and when that is the case, there are generally no good works at all. But even if there were, works are not light. Light is that which comes from God directly and purely, without admixture of man. Good works are the fruit of its notion upon the soul; but it is the light winch is to shine before men. It is the disciple's confession of Himself; that is the point before God. Confess Christ in everything. Let this be the aim of your heart. It is not merely certain things to be done. The light shining is the great object here, though doing good ought to flow from it. If I make doing good everything, it is a lower thought than that which is before the mind of God. An infidel can feel that a shivering man needs a coat or blanket. The natural man may be fully alive to the wants of others; but if I merely take these works and make them the prominent thing, I really do nothing more than an unbeliever might. The moment you make the good works the object, and their shining before men, you find yourself on common ground with Jews and heathen. God's people are thus destroying their testimony. What so bad in the way of a thing done professedly for God, as a work that leaves out Christ, and that shows a man who loves Christ to be on comfortable terms with those that hate Him? This is what the Lord warns the saints against. They are not to be thinking about their works, but that the light of God should shine. Works will follow, and much better works than where a person is always occupied with them. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Let your confession of what God is in His nature and of what Christ is in His own person and ways—let your acknowledgment of him be the thing that is felt and brought before, men—and then, when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven. Instead of saying, What a good man such an one is, they will glorify God on his behalf. if your light shines, men then connect what you do with your confession of Christ.

The Lord grant, then, that this, as it is the word and the will of Christ, may be that to which we surrender ourselves, and which we desire, above all things, for our own souls and for those who are dear to us; and if we see the forgetfulness of it in any saints of God, may we remember them in prayer, and seek to help them by the testimony of His truth which, if it does not carry the heart which it, may at least, more or less, reach the conscience, and be remembered another time!

Chapter 118

Remarks on Matthew 5:17-48

We have seen our Lord's statement of the character and then of the position proper to the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We have found him pronouncing those “blessed” whom man would have counted it folly to have so thought. Our Lord has shown us the perfect pattern of the same blessedness; for what could have sounded more unreasonable, specially to a Jew, than to hear One deliberately and emphatically call those blessed and happy, who were despised, scorned, hated, persecuted, yea, thought ill of, and treated as malefactors? No doubt, it was expressly for righteousness' sake and Christ's sake. But then, to the Jew, the coming and reception of the Messiah wore ever looked forward to as the crown of his joy—that most auspicious event on which all was to turn for Israel, both as to the accomplishment of God's promises made to the fathers, and the fulfillment of the magnificent predictions which involve the overthrow of their enemies, and the humiliation of every Gentile, and the glory of Israel. And, therefore, to suppose that the receiving of Him who was the Messiah would now entail inevitable shame and suffering in the world, was, indeed, an enormous shock to all their most cherished expectations. But our Lord insists upon it, declaring such and such only to be blessed—blessed with a new kind of blessedness far beyond what a Jew could conceive. And this is part of the privileges into which we, too, are brought by faith of Christ. The instruction of our Lord, in the sermon on the mount, only comes out in stronger forms now that He has taken his place in heaven. The enmity of man has also come out to its full measure. It has not been merely the world's enmity. The Jews themselves were the bitterest persecutors of the children of God. And so the last book of the New Testament shows us that those who take the name of Jews, without the present living reality, would remain to the end the most hostile to all true testimony of Christ on the earth.

In the portion before us, we enter upon a most important subject. If there was this new and amazing kind of blessedness, so foreign to the thoughts of Israel after the flesh, what was the relation to the law of Christ's doctrine, and of the new state of things about to be introduced? If Messiah came from God, did not the law—given by Moses, indeed, but from the same source If Christ brought in that which was so unexpected even by his disciples, what would be the bearing of this truth upon what they had previously received through God's inspired servants, and for which they had His own authority? Weaken the authority of the law, and it is clear that you destroy the foundation on which the gospel rests, because the law was of God as certainly as the gospel. Hence came in a most weighty question, especially for an Israelite: what was the bearing of the kingdom of heaven, of the doctrine of Christ respecting it, upon the precepts of the law? The Lord opens this subject (from verse 17 to the end of the chapter we have the question entered into) with these words: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.” They might have thought so from the fact of His having introduced something not mentioned in either; but “think not,” He says, “that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” I take this word “fulfill” in its largest sense. In His own person the Lord fulfilled the law and the prophets, in His own ways, in righteous subjection and obedience. His life here below exhibited its beauty for the first time without flaw. His death was the most solemn sanction which the law

ever did or could receive; because the curse it pronounced upon the guilty the Savior took upon Himself. Rather than that God should have dishonor there was nothing the Savior would not undergo. But, besides, our Lord's words warrant, I think, a further application. There is an expansion of the law, or δικα■ωμα, giving to its moral element the largest scope, so that all which was honoring to God in it should be brought out in its fullest power and extent. The light of heaven was not let fall upon the law, and the law interpreted, not by weak, failing men, but by One who had no reason to evade one jot of its requirements; whose heart, full of love, only thought of the honor and the will of God; whose zeal for His Father's house consumed Him; and who restored that which he took not away. Who but he could expound the law thus, not as the scribes, but in the heavenly light? For the commandment of God is exceeding broad, whether we look at the end of all perfection in man, or the sum of it in Christ.

Far from annulling the law, the Lord, on the contrary, illustrated it more brightly than ever, and gave it a spiritual application that man was entirely unprepared for before He came. And this is what the Lord proceeds to do in part of the wonderful discourse that follows. After having said “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,” He adds, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Our Lord is going to expand the great moral principles of the law into commandments that flow from Himself, and not merely from Moses, and shows that this would be the great thing whereby persons would be tested. It would no longer be a question of the ten words spoken on Sinai merely; but while recognizing their full value, He was about to open out the mind of God in a way so much deeper than had ever been thought of before, that this would henceforth be the great test.

Hence He says, when referring to the practical use of these commandments of His, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” —an expression that has not the smallest reference to justification, but to the practical appreciation of and walking in the right relations of the believer towards God and towards men. The righteousness spoken of here is entirely of a practical kind. This will strike many persons rather sharply. They may be somewhat perplexed to understand how practical righteousness is made to be the means of entering into the kingdom of heaven. But let me repeat, the sermon on the mount never shows us how a sinner is to be saved. If there was the smallest allusion to practical righteousness where a sinner's justification is concerned, there would be ground to be startled; but there can be none whatever for the saint who understands and is subject to God's will. God insists upon godliness in His people. “Without holiness I no man shall see the Lord.” There can be no question that the Lord shows in John 15. that the unfruitful branches must be cut off, and that just as the withered branches of the natural vine are cast into the fire to be burned, so fruitless professors of the name of Christ can look for no better portion. Bearing fruit is the test of life. These things are stated in the strongest terms all through scripture. In John 5:28, 29, it is said, “The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” or “judgment.” Clearly, there is no disguising

the solemn truth that God will and must have that which is good and holy and righteous in His own people. They are not God's people at all who are not characterized as the doers of that which is acceptable in His sight. If this were put before a sinner as a means of reconciliation with God, or having sins blotted out before Him, it would be the denial of Christ and of His redemption. But only hold fast that all the means of being brought nigh to God are found in Christ—that the sole way by which a sinner is connected with the blessing of Christ is by faith, without the works of the law—only maintain this, and there is not the least inconsistency nor difficulty in understanding that the same God who gives a soul to believe in Christ, works in that soul by the Holy Ghost to produce what is practically according to Himself. What does He give him the life of Christ for, and the Holy Ghost, if only the remission of the sins were needed? But God is not satisfied with that. He imparts the life of Christ to a soul, and He gives that soul a divine person to dwell in him; and as the Spirit is not the spring of weakness or of fear, “but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” God looks for suited ways and for the exercise of spiritual wisdom and judgment in passing through the present trying scene. While the disciples might be looking up with ignorant eyes to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord shows that this sort of righteousness will not do. The righteousness that goes up to the temple every day, that prides itself upon long prayers, large alms, and broad phylacteries, will not stand in the sight of God. There must be something far deeper and more according to the holy, loving nature of God. Because with all that appearance of outward religion, there might be always, as there generally was, in fact, no sense of sin, nor of the grace of God. This shows us the all-importance of being right, first, in our thoughts about God; and I can only be so by receiving the testimony of God about His Son. In the case of the Pharisees we have sinful man denying his sin, and utterly obscuring and denying God's character as the God of grace. These things were rejected by the outward religionists, and their righteousness was such as you might expect from people who were ignorant of themselves and of God. It gained reputation for them, but there it all ended; they looked for their reward now, and they had it. But our Lord says to the disciples, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Allow me to ask, How is it that God accomplishes this in regard to a soul that believes now? There is a great secret that does not come out in this sermon. First of all, there is a load of unrighteousness in the sinner. How is that to be dealt with, and the sinner to be made fit for and introduced into the kingdom of heaven? He is born again; he acquires a new nature, a life which as much flows from the grace of God as the bearing of his sin hung upon the cross of Christ. There is the foundation of practical righteousness. The true beginning of all moral goodness in a sinner is the sense and confession of his lack of it, nay, of his badness. Never have we anything right with God in a man till he gives himself up as all wrong. When he is brought down to this, he is thrown upon God, and God reveals Christ as His gift to the poor sinner. He is morally broken down, feeling, owning that he is lost, unless God appears for him; he receives Christ, and what then! “He that believeth hath everlasting life.” What is the nature of that life? Practically, perfectly, righteous and holy. The man is then at once brought into the kingdom. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” But when he is born again he does enter there. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The Scribes and Pharisees were only working on and by the flesh; they did not believe that they were dead in the sight of God, neither do men now. But what the believer begins with is, that he is a dead man, that he requires a new life, and that the new life which he receives in Christ is suitable to the kingdom of heaven. It is upon this new nature that

God acts, and works by the Spirit this practical righteousness; so that it remains in every sense true, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

But the Lord does not here explain how this would be. He declares that what was suitable to God's nature was not to be found in human Jewish righteousness, and that it must be for the kingdom.

Now he takes up the law in its various parts, at least which was to do with men. Here He does not enter into relation with God, but first of all takes up that which flows from human violence, and after this the great flagrant example of human corruption; for violence and corruption are the two standing forms of human iniquity. Before the flood such was the condition of men “The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” Here then in verse 21 we have the light of the kingdom cast on the command, “Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” The law took cognizance of this extreme form of violence; but our Lord gives length, breadth, height, and depth to it. “But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” That is, our Lord treats as now coming under the same category with murder in the sight of God every kind of violence, and feeling, and expression, anything of contempt and hatred, whatever expresses the ill feeling of the heart, any putting down of another, or annihilating other persons as far as character or influence is concerned; all this is no better than murder in God's searching eye. He is expanding the law; He is showing now One who looks at and judges the feeling of the heart, showing that it is not at all a question merely of the consequences of violence to a man—for there might be no very bad effect produced by these words of anger, but they proved the state of the heart—that is what the Lord is dealing with here. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” He is not yet showing the Christian in his entire separation from the Jewish system. These words clearly show a connection with Israel, though the principle of a Christian; for the altar has no reference to the Lord's table.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; least at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.” I believe that Israel was guilty of that very sin Israel as a people—that they did not agree with the adversary quickly. There was the Messiah, and they, being adversaries of Him, treated Him as their adversary and compelled God to be against them by their unbelief. The position of Israel morally, in the sight of God, was very much the one shown us here. There was a murderous feeling in their heart against Jesus. Herod was the expression of it at his birth and it went through all the ministry of Christ, and the cross proved how utterly there was that unrelenting hatred in the heart of the Jews against their own Messiah. They did not agree with their adversary quickly, and the judge could only deliver them to the officer to cast them into prison, and there they remain until this day. The Jewish nation, from their rejection of the Messiah, have been shut out from all the promises of God; as a nation they have been cast into prison, and there they are to remain till the uttermost farthing is paid. In Isaiah we have the Lord speaking comfortably to Jerusalem. “Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she

hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." That is, that, while we come into this now; while we through the grace of God receive the fullness of blessing through Christ Jesus now; yet I cannot doubt that there is this blessing in store for Jerusalem; that God in His mercy will one day say to her, You have had punishment enough: I do not mean to make you any longer the witness of my vengeance on the earth. And why is Israel not permitted to this day to amalgamate with the nations? There they remain, kept apart from all other people by God. But God has in store for them this great mercy. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem... for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins." This figure we find elsewhere beautifully set forth in the case of the man guilty of blood, who fled to the city of refuge provided by God. But the book of Numbers shows us that there the man abode, out of the land of his possession, till the death, not of the man-slayer, but of the high priest that is anointed with oil. The priesthood of our Lord is referred to there. When the Lord has completed His heavenly people and gathered them in where they do not need the activity of His intercession; when we are in the full results of all that Christ has wrought for us, the High Priest shall then take His place, not at the right hand of God, but as the Priest upon His own throne. Then will be the termination of his present heavenly priesthood, and blood-guilty Israel will return to the land of their possession. I have no doubt that this is the just application of that beautiful type. I cannot understand what proper interpretation there could be of the death of the High Priest anointed with oil, if you appropriate it to a Christian now; but apply it to the Jew, and nothing is more plain. Christ will terminate that character of priesthood that he is engaged in for us now and will take up a new form of blessing for Israel.

We have then the Lord closing this subject with the light that the kingdom of heaven throws upon the sin of killing, and the extension of the sin to every expression of the heart's anger. This is a very solemn thing when we know how little importance we attach to our words and how apt we are to excuse any explosion of strong feeling. They are clearly here shown in their full contrariety to the nature of God.

But there is another thing—the corrupt element that is in the heart of man—the heart lusting for that which it has not. This is taken up in the next word of our Lord. "Ye have heard that is was said by them of old time thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Ver. 27-30.) That is, whatever in our walk, or in our ways, or in our service, whatever it might be that exposes a soul to the danger of yielding to these unholy feelings, must never be spared. There must be the excision of everything that is hurtful to the soul, the members of the body, such as the eye and the hand being only used as showing the various ways in which the heart might be entangled. The cutting off of these members sets forth a heart thoroughly exercised in self-judgment; not prompted to excuse itself by saying that it had not actually committed the sin; but whatever exposed to it must be given up. Following this, our Lord shows as to the dissolution of the tie of marriage, "It hath been said whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Ver. 31, 32.) That is, our Lord shows that though there might be the most serious difficulties, still this human relationship receives the strongest

sanction of the Lord. Though an earthly relationship, the light of heaven is thrown upon it, the sanctity of marriage held up, and the possibility of allowing anything to interfere with its holiness entirely put down by Christ, save only where there was that which interrupted it in the sight of God, in which case the act of separation would be only a declaration of its being broken by sin in the sight of God already.

The next case (ver. 33-37) brings us into a different order of things: it is the use of the name of the Lord. Here the reference is not to judicial oaths—all oath administered by a magistrate. In some countries this might savor of heathenism or of popery, and no Christian ought to take such an oath. But if the declaration were simply the authority of God introduced by the magistrate to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I do not see that the Lord in any wise absolves the Christian from his obligation to competent authority. The matter here is expressly private communication between man and man. “Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white nor black.” None of these was a judicial oath; they were the asseverations of common life among the Jews. If our Lord had meant to forbid the Christian from taking judicial oaths, would He not have instanced the oath that was usual in the courts of those days? But it was not so. All the oaths that He brings before us were what the Jews were in the habit of using when their word was questioned by their fellow-men, not what was employed before the magistrate. For my own part, so far from thinking that a Christian is doing right in refusing a judicial oath, I believe that he is doing wrong not to take it, provided the magistrate required his testimony. If the magistrate does not acknowledge God in the oath, still the Christian is bound to acknowledge God in the magistrate. He is one who is, to the Christian, a servant of God in the outward things of this world. Even the Assyrian was the rod of God, all the while that he thought only of carrying out his own purposes against Israel. Much more the magistrate, let him be who or what he may, represents the truth of God's external authority in the world, and the Christian ought to respect this, more even than the men of the world, and therefore the oath is a holy thing and not to be refused. The Christian, doubtless, has no business with prosecuting another himself. On the contrary, he owes it to Christ and His grace to let the world, if it will, abuse him; he may protest by word against it, and then leave it with the Lord. When our Lord Himself was dealt with unrighteously, He convicts the person of it, and there it ends, as man would think, forever. There is no such thing as seeking to get present reparation of His wrongs. So should it be with Christians. There may be the moral conviction of those that do the wrong, but the taking it patiently is acceptable with God.

There is no way in which the Christian so shows how much he is above the world, as when he seeks not the world's vindication in anything. If we belong to the world, we ought all to be volunteers. If the world is our home, a man is called upon to do battle for it. But for the Christian this world is not the scene of his interests, and why fight for what does not belong to him? If a Christian fight in and with the world, (save his own spiritual warfare), he is a mere mercenary. It is the duty of men, as such, to fight, if need be, and repel wrong; and if the Lord uses the world in order to put down revolution and make peace, the Christian may well look up and give thanks. It is a great mercy. But the grand truth as to this, which the believer has to get firmly settled in his own soul, is this, “they are not of the world.” But to what measure are they not of the world? “They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.” In John 17 where our Lord repeats this wondrous

word, He speaks in view of going to heaven, as if He no longer were on earth at all. Thus, in the spirit of one away from the world, He says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” A little before He had said, “Now I am no more in the world.” This going up to heaven is what gives its character to the Christian and to the church. A Christian is not merely a believer, but a believer called to the enjoyment of Christ while He is in Heaven. And, as Christ our Head is out of the world, so the Christian is in spirit lifted above the world, and his business is to show the strength of his faith as above his mere natural feeling. Nothing makes a man look so foolish as having no side in this world. Christians do not like to be nonentities; they are apt to wish one way or another to have their power felt. But this is what the Lord delivers us from. To return, then, it is below our calling to indulge even in strong statements. “Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” It is worthy of note, as a practical proof of the distinction here drawn, how our Lord acted when he was before the High Priest, He was silent till the High Priest put the oath to Him, then at once He answers; and He shows us the right pattern there.

But He comes next to the case of any practical injury that may be done us. It is not that it is wrong for a man to punish according to the injury that has been inflicted upon another. “An eye for an eye, and a tooth For a tooth,” is perfectly righteous; but our Lord is showing that we ought to be much more than righteous, we ought to be gracious; and he presses this as the climax of this part of the discourse. First, He had strengthened the righteousness of the law, extended its depth, and put aside its license; but now He goes further. He shows that there is a principle in His own ways and life which teaches the Christian that he is not to seek retaliation. “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” It is clear the Lord has no reference here to what governments have to do. The New Testament is written for the Christian, for that which has a separate existence and a peculiar calling in the midst of earthly systems and peoples. It belongs to those who are heavenly while they are walking through the earth. We become such by the reception of Christ now, and to such the Lord says, “Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” There personal injury is meant. Perhaps the evil to the person may be ever so intended and undeserved, but it is to be overcome with good. Show that you are willing to take even more for Christ's sake. “And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” There the law is evoked;—that is, a man lays a claim, perhaps falsely, to one part of your clothing, and if he “will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” Here it was not exactly a man appealing to the law, but the public officers themselves. “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” The great principle our Lord shows is this—whether it is human violence, or the law applied ever so hardly or tryingly, that while, according to the law, you might go one step, according to the gospel you would go two. Grace does twice as much as the law, whatever may be the point in hand. Grace is never intended in any wise to supplant obligations, or to lower responsibilities; but, on the contrary, to give power and force to everything that is righteous in the sight of God. The law might say, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” Here there is not only the endurance of that which is positively wrong, but grace that gives more than is asked. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” And this is one way of practically showing how far we value grace. It is not a question of the mere letter of our Lord's words. If you were to limit it merely to a blow on the face, it would be a very poor thing; but the word of Christ is that which conveys to

me the spirit that pleases God, and gives me the reality of grace. And grace is not the vindication of self, nor the punishment of a wrong that is done, but the endurance of evil, and the triumph of good over it. Christ is speaking of what a Christian has to put up with from the world through which he passes. He is to receive tribulation as the discipline which God sees to be good for his soul; the great spectacle before men and angels—that there are men on this earth who are allowed and rejoice to suffer for Christ, because they have learned to give up their own will, to sacrifice their own rights, and to suffer wrongfully, looking onward to the day when the Lord will own whatever has been their sorrow for His sake, and when all evil shall be judged most solemnly at His appearing and kingdom.

But now a word as to what follows. It is most weighty, the very pith and essence of that which, concerns our relation towards others here below; the great active principle from which all right conduct flows. This is the question of the true character and limits of love. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.” (Ver. 43.) This was the expression that the Jews drew from the general tenor of the law. There had been the sanction of God for the extermination of their enemies; and from that they drew the principle, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” It was not a question merely about loving the neighbor, which was a duty of common righteousness. But here was a thing that no righteousness would ever have discovered, because it goes beyond the law—it is grace. In a thousand practical instances the question is not whether the thing is right. We often hear Christians asking, is such a thing wrong? But that is not the sole question for the Christian. He is never at liberty to do what is wrong, and most surely he does the thing that is right. But supposing there is a wrong done him, what is to be his feeling then? If there is enmity to him in another, what is he to cherish in his heart? “Love your enemies… do good to them that hate you… that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:” thus showing that they belonged to such a parentage in practical ways, “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Ver. 44-48.) This has no reference to the question of whether there is sin in our nature or not. There is always the evil principle in a man as long as he has got the flesh in him. But what the Lord teaches here is this: Our Father is the perfect pattern in His ways with His enemies now, and he calls upon us to be thorough in that smile grace and love in which our Father deals. It is in pointed contrast with the Jew, or with anything that had ever been introduced before. Abraham was not called to walk in this way. He was, I believe, justified in arming his servants for the recovery of Lot; and the Israelites in lifting up the sword against the Canaanites. But we are never so to feel or act under any circumstances. We are called on, as the rule of Christian life, as that which governs our thoughts, and feelings, and ways, and supplies us with true feelings for our guidance day by day, to walk upon the principle of gracious long-suffering. We are in the midst of the enemies of Christ, of our enemies too because of Him. It may not come out at once nor always. Persecution may pass out of fashion, but the enmity is always there; and if God were only to remove certain restraints, the old hatred would burst out with greater violence than ever. Nevertheless, there is only one course open to the Christian who desires to walk as Christ walked, “Love your enemies,” and this really, not by a show of smooth ways or words. A Christian might know very well that, in certain cases, to go and speak to an angry person would only draw out bitterness of wrath, and there the right course would be to keep

away; but under all circumstances there should be the desire of his good, to seek the blessing of our adversary. To do real kindness, even if it should never be known by a creature upon earth, to the one who has injured me, is the only thing worthy of a Christian man; and this we are called upon to do, specially towards those who despise and persecute us. We ought to ask the Lord to give us the opportunities of showing love to those that hate us. When the provocation occurs, we should have it settled in our souls that the Christian is here for the purpose of expressing Christ; for, indeed, we are His epistle, known and read of all men. We ought to desire to reflect what Christ would have done under the same circumstances. We are never at liberty to indulge in anything else.

May the Lord grant that this may be true of our own souls, first in secret feeling with Him, and then as manifested lowly and unselfishly towards others. Let us remember that there is no battle for us that is ever decisive with others, but what is an outward reflection of the secret victory over self with the Lord. Begin there, and it is surely won in the presence of men, though we may have to wait for it.

Chapter 119

Remarks on Matthew 6

There was one particular exhortation of our Lord, upon which, in the very cursory sketch given of the last chap., nothing was said; and as there was no intentional omission, and it has often raised a question of conscience, I may enter upon it a little now. Our Lord had said, in Matt. 5:22, “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.” It is merely a particular example of a great general principle that the Lord is insisting upon; and as He had shown violence used, so here He shows another thing—the solicitation that addresses itself to the kindness of heart of a Christian man. “Give to him that asketh thee.” Now, nothing can be more certain than that this is a comely and a gracious thing. But then it is perfectly plain that the Lord had not the least idea of pressing it as a moral principle upon His people, that the thing was to be done heedlessly, and as a mere gratification of their feelings, but with a conscience towards God. Supposing a person came to ask you for something, and you have reason to think that he would spend it improperly, you must limit it. Why not? he might say to you, Did not the Lord enjoin, “Give to him that asketh thee?” Certainly; but the Lord has given me certain other words of His, by which I judge as to the propriety of giving in each particular case. The asker might be going to do that which I am sure would be absurd or wrong: am I still to give? or is there not at once introduced another principle, namely, due discrimination? From what I have reason to believe, perhaps from what he that asks tells me, I find out that he has plans of his own which I believe to be worldly: am I to gratify his worldliness? It is clear that what the Lord has in view is real need; and as there was wont to be excessive indifference to this among the Jews more particularly, as indeed such is apt to be the case always and everywhere, the Lord not merely insists upon the Christian helping his brother, but takes up the broadest grounds, and urges the habit of generous giving, not, of course, for anything we may get by it, but out of a present energetic love according to God.

“Give to him that asketh thee.” We all know that there are those who would impose. This shuts up, and often hinders, pity; though it may be oftener still an excuse for it. The Lord is guarding against the snare, and shows the great moral value, for our own souls and for the glory of God, of habitual, considerate, ungrudging, kindness towards the distressed in this world. Not that I am always to give what a person asks, for he may seek something foolish; but still “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” Do you count up how often you have been deceived? Even then why be sore? You are entitled, at the word of Jesus, to do what you do to your Father. The receiver of your bounty may apply it to a bad use: that is his responsibility. I am bound to cultivate unsuspicious generosity, and this quite independent of mere friendship. Even the publicans and sinners are kind to those who are kind to them: human nature in its most degraded form is capable of this; but what ought a Christian to be? Christ determines the position, conduct, and spirit of the Christian. As was a sufferer, they are not to resist evil. If there was need, the Lord's heart went out to it. They might turn His love against Himself, and use the gifts of His grace for their own purposes, like the man who was healed, throwing aside the Lord's warning and the sense of His benefits. But the Lord, perfectly knowing it all, goes on steadfastly in His path of doing good, not in the mere vague thought of benevolence to man, but in holy service of His

Father. He did His Father's will; this was his moat and drink, and so it should be ours. That is, there is not the slightest thought of binding persons in a mere legal way, so that in every case absolutely we are to give what is asked. This the flesh might do to the uttermost without divine love, and without real profit. (1 Cor. 13:3.) Spiritual wisdom, the word of God, must be used by us to judge of each case on its own merits, and as before God. But still the general principle is to be taken in its fullest extent. We are to cultivate this habit and the spirit of mind that its flows from, looking up to its heavenly pattern and its source.

Now we come to another thing. Chap. 6 begins with what is higher even than that what we have had. The various exhortations of chap. 5 brought out Christian principle, in contradistinction to what was required or allowed under the law. Henceforth the law is dropped; there is no longer any allusion to it expressly in our Lord's discourse. And the first principle of all godliness comes out now in its sweetest shape, namely, the having to do with our Father in secret; who, if there is not another soul that understands us, sees all that is passing within and around us—hears us and counsels us, as, indeed, He takes the deepest interest in us. Here we have what the Lord calls “our righteousness.” It is not merely exhorting the saint against the evil of his nature in every form, and showing the holiness that the Lord introduces now. He was not only familiarizing the soul with the ways of love even in its outward dealings with the worst of men. Now it is our Father, and all takes the form of righteousness. It is the inner, divine relationship of the saint that comes out in this chapter—our spiritual bonds with God our Father, and the conduct that ought to flow from them. Hence says our Lord, “Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them.” I take the liberty of altering the word “alms” into “righteousness,” (ver. 1,) which last a few of the very best authorities support. There are, of course, always persons that differ here as elsewhere; but, at the same time, internal and spiritual reasons confirm the external grounds. Thus, if you use the word “alms” in the first verse, is there not a mere repetition in the next verse? On the other hand, take the word as “righteousness,” (so the margin,) and all is plain.

It will be observed, in the following verses, our Lord divides righteousness into three distinct portions; first, alms-giving; next, prayer; thirdly, fasting. That these are the three parts of the righteousness of the saints, as viewed by our Lord in this discourse, is evident. (1.) With regard to alms, which was a very practical thing. the principle of mercy comes in, as it might not in all cases of giving. It is a thing done seriously and solemnly, and the heart is drawn out. It is done in the sight of God. The universal admonition is this “Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” “Therefore,” founded upon this exhortation, “when thou doest thine alms,” which was one branch of this righteousness, “do not sound a trumpet before thee;” alluding to certain ways of notoriety and self-commendation then adopted by the Jews, the spirit of which belongs to men at all times. There are few things in which human vanity shows itself more glaringly than the desire to be known by almsgiving. And what is it that brings the true deliverance from this snare of nature? “When thou doest alms, (observe, he now makes it entirely individual,) do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.” (Ver. 2-4.) That is, it is not merely that one is not to blazon abroad what is done, but not to oneself even. It is not only that another's left hand is not to

know what your right hand does, but your own left hand. Nothing can be more cutting than the Lord's words to everything like self-granulation. The grand point is this that all be done to our Father. It is not a question of duty simply; but our Father's love has been brought out, and this is His will concerning us. He knows what is best, and we are ignorant of it. We might think to supply the greatest happiness by surrounding ourselves with what we most like; but the letting slip the means of personal enjoyment will open to us fresh sources of blessing. Besides, what we ought to desire is, that the alms may be “in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly.” We shall find this repeated at every point of what is here called our “righteousness.” Room is ever made for the flesh where there is not the cultivated habit of what is done being between our Father and ourselves. Nay, more, our Lord would have us dismiss the very thought into the bosom of the Father, who will not forget it.

(2.) We have the same thing as to prayer. The allusion is, it would seem, to the practice, that every day, when a particular hour came round, people were found praying in public rather than miss the moment. It is clear that all this was, at best most legal, and opened the door for display and hypocrisy. It utterly overlooks the grand truth which Christianity brings out so fully, that to do things for testimony, or as a law, or in any way for others to see, or for ourselves to think of, is totally wrong. We have to do with our Father, and our Father in secret. Therefore our Lord says, “Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” (Ver. 6.) This is in no way denying the propriety of public prayer; but public prayer is not at all referred to here. In the case of the Lord's Prayer, it was the prayer of those disciples each for himself, who knew not how to pray, and who required to be instructed in the very first principles of Christianity. For this is part of what the apostle calls “the word of the beginning of Christ” when he says, “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit.” The apostle allows that all these were very important truths; but they are only Jewish principles, i.e., they are truths that a person ought to have known before redemption was accomplished, and that did not bring in the full power of Christianity. They were quite true, and will ever remain true. There never can be anything to weaken the importance of repentance from dead works and faith towards God. But it is not even said, faith in Christ. No doubt there was that too; but still, till Christ died and rose, there was a great deal of truth that even the disciples were not able to bear. Our Lord Himself says so. Therefore the apostle tells them, “Leaving the word of the beginning of Christ,” that which Christ Himself brought out, and which was perfectly suited to the then state of the disciples “let us go on unto perfection.” There is no such thought as giving that up; but taking it as a truth settled, and that we do not always need to be repeating, assuming that as a settled truth, let us go on to the understanding of Christ as He now is, which is the meaning here of the word “perfection,” It is not a better state of our own flesh; neither does it refer to anything that we are to be in a future life; but to the full doctrine of Christ, as He now is glorified and in heaven. I have not the least doubt that it refers to the doctrine of Christ, as brought out in this epistle. Christ is in heaven—there is His priesthood. He has entered in by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. It is Christ as He is now above; there you have this perfection. In the same epistle he speaks of Christ as made perfect through sufferings. Christ was always perfect as a person; He never could be anything else. Had there been any flaw in Christ on earth, He would have been like

the offering that had a blemish in it, incapable of being offered for us. In the Jewish sacrifices, even if the thing died of itself, it could not be an offering And, as to our Lord, if there were the principle of death in Him at all, if He were not the living stone in every sense, without the smallest tendency to death, never could He be God's foundation, nor ours. He did, no doubt, suffer death, the willing victim on the cross; but this was just because He had it not in Him. Such is the truth as to Christ Himself. While it is perfectly true that Christ was always thus morally perfect—perfect, too, not only in His divine nature, but in His humanity—absolutely stainless and acceptable unto God; yet, for all that, there was everything that needed to be removed from us, and a new condition to be entered, in which He could associate us with Himself.

He had taken upon Him human nature, not in its liability to death, because that shows a connection with sin, but in its capacity of death, though incapable of sin; and there is the line that separates sound doctrine, as to Christ's person, from that which is abominable and fatal. Anything that admits the smallest thought or touch of evil, at once destroys His person. But Christ most truly was a man, and so capable of dying for us, or redemption never could have been accomplished. It was through death that He was to annul the power of him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. It is only a question of the will of God, and all the power of Satan will vanish into smoke; and the believer knows it—at least he ought to know it. It is the wiles of Satan that we have to guard against; his power is broken to faith as far as we are concerned. The means by which Satan might seek to ensnare the soul, must be watched against, but his power, we know, is null. But while this is true for us, till Christ had passed through death and resurrection, there was still that which was short of the full purpose of God. Christ was not yet in the state that was entirely according to the heart of God. He designs for man, for the saint, a condition that death cannot touch, and we shall enter it risen or changed. What God calls salvation is not only the soul's pardon, but the grace that sustains afterward and the power that completes all in the resurrection state. Even Christ, though absolutely sinless, entered this state after death. He was made perfect through sufferings; He passed through this course of sufferings into the blessedness in which He stands now as our priest before God. And while all that Christ taught while here on earth is as true as it can be, because it was uttered by him who is the truth, yet there was a great deal of truth that the disciples were not able to appreciate nor understand. The Lord told them so. This was one of these things. One danger afterward was, that the saints would simply receive what they had heard from the Lord while He was upon earth. How subtle is the enemy, turning the pretended honor of Christ into His dishonor and the hurt of His sheep! Satan's aim in this is, to keep their souls still earthly and hinder from apprehending their heavenly calling and position. Hence the object of that epistle, written to Hebrew Christians, was for the purpose of taking them away from what they were clinging to as the only truth. They were not to give it up, but the apostle desired to lead them onward into other truth. There is the same difficulty now in the minds of many children of God. Among a large portion of them, they are not beyond what a disciple ought to have been or to have known before the cross; and perhaps they would even think it presumption to suppose that they could advance, or that there is any further unfolding of God's grace. But why have we got other truth? We have not one word in the Bible but what is absolutely necessary; and, if “the word of the beginning of Christ” had been enough, God, with that economy that marks His dealings, would not surely have added to the bulk of the book He has graciously put into our hands: yet the Holy Ghost has largely revealed further truth, accomplishing thus the promise of our Lord, “He shall lead you into all truth.” This was to be when they were capacitated, by virtue of the Holy Ghost's presence and dwelling,

to bear and enjoy the full bringing out of the divine mind.

Upon the subject of the prayer I am going only to make a few remarks now. But again I would notice that it is entirely individual. Many might unite in saying, “Our Father,” but, although it was a soul in his own closet, still he would say, “Our Father,” because he thinks of others, disciples, elsewhere. Yet it is plain that the Lord does not anticipate the use of this prayer, save in the closet and for the condition in which the disciples were. We have no hint that it was employed formally after the day of Pentecost. There were other wants and desires, other expressions of affection toward God, brought out then, into which the Holy Ghost would lead those who were passed out of the condition of nonage by having Him sent into their hearts, whereby they could cry, “Abba, Father.” There is the key to the change, and the New Testament is perfectly clear upon it. (Compare Gal. 3:23-26; 4:1-7).

However, let us look at the prayer itself, for nothing can be more blessed, and all the truth of it, as of every other part of the word of God, abides for us. “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” (Ver. 7). Now it is plain that our Lord does not forbid repetition, but vain repetition. We find our Lord Himself, when He was in an agony in the garden, repeating the same words three times, and on certain occasions it may be most suitable, and according to His mind. But formal repetition, whether of words read out of a book or sentences framed extemporarily, he does most positively forbid. Again, let me press the plain fact, that our Lord here is not providing for the public wants of the Church; still less do we hear that it was so understood. There is not the smallest thought of such a thing after the gift of the Holy Ghost, when the Church, properly speaking, was formed, and at work in this world. So that while the Lord's Prayer was given as the most perfect model of prayer, and was also intended to be used as a form by the disciples previously to the death of our Lord and the gift of the Holy Ghost, yet it seems plain that afterward it was not to be so. The New Testament is, of course, the only test of this. When we come to tradition we shall find all sorts of difficulty on this as on other subjects, but the word of God is not obscure. In no way does it leave us uncertain as to what God's mind is: else indeed the very purpose of a revelation would be defeated. What then is the permanent use of the prayer? Why is it given in Scripture? The principle always abides true. There is not a clause of that prayer but what one can ask the same thing now, even to “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;” and this, because it is not at all putting the sinner upon the ground of prayer in order to acquire forgiveness of his sins. Our Lord speaks of the believer—the child of God. Our daily faults and shortcomings we need to spread before our God and Father, as He encourages us to do day by day. It is a question of His government who, without respect of persons, judges according to the work of each, and hence He will not own the petition of one who cherishes an unforgiving disposition towards others, even if they have done us ever so grievous wrong.

This habit of self-searching and confessing to our Father is a very important one in Christian experience; so that this clause it believe to be as true and applicable at the present time as it was to the disciples then. When the poor publican said, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” there we have another thing as appropriate in his case, as this was to the child that lisped, “Our Father.” Again, when the holy Ghost was given, and the child was able to draw near to the Father in the name of Christ, you have something different still. The Lord's Prayer does not clothe the believer with the name of Christ. What is meant by asking the Father in that name? It is not merely saying

“in His name” at the end of a prayer. When Christ died and rose again, He gave the believer His own standing before God; and then to ask the Father in the name of Christ is to ask in the consciousness that my Father loves me as He loves Christ; that my Father has given me the acceptance of Christ Himself before Him, having completely blotted out all my evil, and given me to be made the righteousness of God in Christ: this is asking in His name. (Compare John 16.)

When the soul draws near, consciously brought nigh to God, this is to ask in His name. There is not a soul using the Lord's Prayer as a form, that has a real understanding of what it is to ask the Father in the name of Christ. They have never entered into that great truth, and perhaps in their very next petition they take the place of miserable sinners, deprecating the wrath of God, and still under law. Is it possible for a soul that knows what it is to stand before God as Christ is, to be thus systematically in doubt and uncertainty? It was the case with the Jew; but if I am anything at all, I am a Christian; and as such my place is in Christ, and there is no condemnation; otherwise there cannot be the spirit of adoption, or the taking the place of priests to God. We are made priests to God by virtue of this blessed standing. It is on earth that the great testing time comes in. The conscience is brought to this; you cannot walk with Christ and with the world. It is a question of heaven or the world; and I say that the Christian is properly a man who enters into heavenly thoughts and relationships while he is walking through this world. This is the vocation wherewith we are called. Whether Christians know and do it or not, nothing less does Christ look for from them. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” This is true from the time that we receive Christ. From that moment we owe it to Christ, if we are to be true soldiers of His, to take our place as those who are not of the world, even as He is not.

This will suffice to show that while the Lord's Prayer always remains inestimably precious, yet was it given to meet the individual wants of the disciples, and that the further revelation of divine truth modified their condition, and would thus lead into another strain of desires, which, in fact, were not then given expression to. It is a most happy reflection that it is our Lord Himself who tells us this. “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.” What do I gather from that? That one may use the Lord's Prayer every day, and never have asked anything in the name of Christ. “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall ask in my name.” What day does that mean? A future time No, but the present; the day that the Holy Ghost brought in when He came down from heaven. It is this which is connected with that full revelation of truth which is so essential to Christian joy and blessedness, and to the unworldly and heavenly walk of the children of God; and where this is not entered into, the other cannot be. There may be vigor of faith, and personal love to Christ, but for all that a person must savor of the world in spirit and religious position till he have entered into this blessed place that the Holy Ghost now gives us of drawing near to God in the name of Christ.

I must now pass on to one of the most important practical exhortations which our Savior gives us in connection with prayer—the spirit of forgiveness. He has known little of prayer who does not know the hindrance which austerity of spirit brings with it. This was one of the things that our Lord had specially in view. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Verse 14, 15.) He does not mean that the disciples would not have their sins forgiven in the day of judgment, but is speaking of forgiving trespasses as a matter of the daily care and training of God. I may have a child guilty of something that is wrong, but does it therefore lose its relationship It is

my child still, but I do not speak to it in the same way that I would, had it been walking in obedience. The Father waits till the child feels its sin. In the case of earthly parents, we sometimes do not take sufficient notice of what is wrong, and sometimes we may deal with things only as they touch ourselves. We may correct, as it is said in Hebrews, “after our own pleasure,” but God for our profit. Our Father always keeps His eye upon what is most blessed for us, but for that very reason He does betimes chasten us. “What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” If we were not sons, we might perhaps get off; but as surely as we are, the Father's rod comes upon us for our wrongs though we may think them little; but though painful for the present, if it be His will, we may be assured that He will make the things that may seem most against us, to be unquestionably for us. To maintain the spirit of love, and specially of love towards those that wrong us, will cost pain, but blessing will be ours in the end, and indeed also by the way.

(3.) We now come to the subject of fasting. I believe there is a real value in fasting that few of us know much about. If on particular occasions which call for special individual prayer, we were to unite fasting with it, I have no doubt the blessing of it would be felt. Here there is humbling of spirit expressed. There are prayers which are most suitably accompanied by standing, others by kneeling. Fasting is one of those things in which the body shows its sympathy with what the spirit is passing through; it is a means of expressing our desire to be low before God, and in the attitude of humiliation. But lest the flesh should take advantage of even what is for the mortifying of the body, the Lord enjoins that there should be means taken rather not to appear unto men to fast than to permit any display. For although a true Christian would shrink from putting on false appearances, the devil will cheat him into doing it unless he is very jealous in self-watchfulness before God. “Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face: that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” (Ver. 17,18.)

Then follow the exhortations with regard to the things of this life. And, first of all, as to the laying up of treasure upon earth, the Lord brings in a principle, not of natural interest, but of spiritual wisdom and freedom from care, which the soul has that does not want anything here below. Supposing there is something that one very much values upon earth, there is proportionate fear lest the thief or some corroding thing, should spoil our treasure. Very different is that which the Lord enjoins that we should seek. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (Ver. 19,20.) A most solemn test for examining ourselves by. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Ver. 21.) We may detect where we are by that which our thoughts chiefly rest upon. If they are heavenward, blessed are we; but if earthward, we shall find that those very things upon which our hearts are set will prove a sorrow one day or another. The Lord traces all this to one grand root—you cannot serve two masters. You have not got two hearts, but one; and your hearts will be with that which you value most. Everything is thus followed up to its source: God on the one hand, and mammon on the other. Mammon is what sums up the lusts of the heart of man as to all things here. It may manifest itself in different forms; but this is the stock—covetousness. You cannot serve God and mammon.” “Therefore I say unto you, take no thought (be not anxious) for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on.” The great point is indifference to present things, or, rather, a peaceful trust about them; not

because we do not value the mercies of God, but because we have confidence in our Father's love and care about us. So the Apostle Paul shows us the most beautiful expression of this when he says, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” He had known changes of circumstances—what it was to have nothing, and what it was to have abundance; but the great point was his thorough content with God's portion for him. This was not a thing that he passed through lightly, but he had learned it. It was a matter of attainment—of judging of things in the light of God's presence and love. The blessing is, to be looking onward with this thought—our Father is dealing with us now with a view to glory; as the apostle adds, “My God shall supply all your need, according to His richness in glory by Christ Jesus.” How sweet that is! “My God” —the God that I have proved, whose affection I have tasted. I can count upon Him for you as well as for me; and He “shall supply all your need,” not merely according to the riches of His grace, but “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He has taken you as Christians from this world: He is going to have you the companions. of His Son above; and He deals with you now according to your place and position then. Whatever is suitable to this great plan of His glory and love, the Lord will give us to taste the consequence of that.

May the Lord strengthen us, that we may accept this with thankful hearts, knowing that we are not our own masters! The Lord will preserve us from the dangers, the snares, the pains, which haste or willfulness on our part as to outward things brings with it. He shows us in this chapter the exceeding folly of it, even as to the body. He takes an instance from the outward world, as to the utter uselessness of it; and shows how God may be confided in to accomplish His own purposes best. And more than that: He reminds us that these outward things, on which we are tempted to lay such great stress, are only the things that the Gentiles seek after. A Gentile was a term used in speaking of a man without God, in contrast with a Jew who had God in an outward manner in this world. A Christian is a man who has God in heaven. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Therefore, as our Father knows this, why should we doubt Him? We do not doubt our earthly Father; much less then should we doubt our heavenly Father. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” It is not that we are to seek them—first to seek the kingdom of God, and then these things; but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the rest will come. There is no seeking about it, except of what pertains to God and to God's righteousness. “Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” That is, He prepares us for this, that the anxiety which dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes, the evil may not be there; if it comes, God will be there. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge in our own wills; but if our souls are subject to Him, how often the evil that is dreaded never appears! When the heart bows to the will of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness! He is able to make even the sorrow to be all blessing. Whatever be His will, all is good. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Chapter 120

Remarks on Matthew 7

We now come to a very distinct portion of our Lord's discourse. It is not so much the establishing of the right relations of a soul with God our Father—the hidden inner life of the Christian, that which alone is the true source from which strength in our ways before men is found; but now we have the mutual relations of the disciples with one another, their conduct towards men, the different dangers which they have to dread, and, above all things, the sure ruin for every soul that names the name of Christ, if bearing and not doing His sayings. The wise man hears and does. And so the chapter closes. I would desire to dwell a little upon these various points of instruction which our Lord brings before us. Of course, it will not be possible to enter thoroughly into all; for I need not say, the sayings of our Lord are peculiarly pregnant with profoundness of thought. There is no portion of God's word where you find a more characteristic depth than here.

The point with which the Lord Jesus opens is this. He had before this shown fully that we are to act in grace as children of our Father; but that was more particularly with the world, with our enemies, with persons that wrong us. But then a serious and practical difficulty might elsewhere arise. Supposing that among the wrong doers were some that bore the name of Christ, what then? How are we to feel about and to deal with them? No doubt, there is a difference, and a very weighty one. Still there is a thing that we have to take care of, before we touch the question of another's conduct; and that is, to watch against the spirit of censoriousness in ourselves, the habit of tendency to impute evil motives in that which we do not know, and which does not meet the eye. We all know what a snare this is to the heart of man: and that it is more particularly the danger of some, through natural character and unwatchfulness as to the allowed habit. There is more discernment in some than in others, and such ought peculiarly to watch against it. It is not that they are to have their eyes shut to what is evil, but they are not to suspect what is not uncovered, nor to go beyond the evidence God gives. This is a most important practical safeguard, without which it is impossible to walk together according to God. People may be together as so many separate units, without any real sympathy or power to enter into the sorrows and difficulties and trials, and, it may be, the evil of others. All that has a claim upon the heart of a disciple. Even that which is wrong calls upon love to find out God's way of dealing with what is contrary to God. For the essence of love is, that it seeks the good of the object that is beloved, and this without reference to self. It may have the bitterness of knowing that it is not loved in return, as the Apostle Paul knew, and this too in early days, with real Christians, yea, with persons singularly endowed by the Spirit of God. And yet God has been pleased to give us these solemn lessons of what the heart is, even in saints of God.

Under all circumstances, this great truth is obligatory on the conscience: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” No principle, on the other hand, could be more easily abused by the selfishness of man. Were a person going on in an evil course, and using this passage to deny the title of brethren to judge his conduct, it is clear that he betrays a want of conscience and of spiritual understanding. His eye is blinded by self, and he is merely turning the Lord's words into an excuse for sin. The Lord did not, in any wise, mean to weaken the holy judgment of evil; on the contrary, He, in due

time, binds this solemnly upon His people: “Do not ye judge them that are within?” It was the fault of the Corinthians that they did not judge those that were in their midst. It is plain, therefore, that there is a sense in which I am to judge, and another in which I am not. There are cases where I should be sinning against the Lord, if I did not judge; and there are cases where the Lord forbids it, and warns me that to do so, is to bring judgment upon myself. This is a very practical question for the Christian—where to judge, and where not to judge. Whatever comes out plainly, what God presents to the eye of His people, so that they know it for themselves, or hear of it on testimony which they cannot doubt, that they are surely bound to judge. In a word, we are always responsible to abhor that which is offensive to God, whether known directly or indirectly; for “God is not mocked,” and the children of God ought not to be governed by mere technicalities, of which the cunning craft of the enemy can easily take advantage.

But what does our Lord mean here: “Judge not, that ye be not judged?” He refers not to that which is plain, but to what is concealed; to that whereof, if it did exist, God was not pleased to lay the evidence before the eyes of His people. We are not responsible to judge what we do not know; on the contrary, we are bound to watch against the spirit of surmising evil. It may be that there is evil, and of the gravest character, as in the case of Judas. Our Lord said of him: “one of you hath a devil;” and purposely kept the disciples in the dark about the particulars. Just remark, by the way, that it is only the Gospel of John which shows us that our Lord's knowledge of Judas Iscariot was that of a divine person. He says it long before anything came out. In the other gospels all is reserved till the eve of His betrayed; but John was led by the Holy Ghost to remember how the Lord had told them it was so from the beginning: and yet, though He knew it, they were only to confide in His knowledge of it; for if the Lord bore with him, were not they to do the same? If He did not give them directions how to deal with the evil, they were to wait. That is always the resource of faith, which never hurries, especially in so solemn a case. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” We need not trouble ourselves about that which is not certain. All is open to God, all is in His hands; and we can confide in Him. Patience is the word, until the Lord's time for dealing with that which is contrary to Him. The Lord lets Judas manifest himself thoroughly; and then it was no question of bearing with the traitor. While there are certain cases of evil that we are to judge, there are questions He does not ask the Church to solve. The worst of all are those that go out, not those who are put out. What more condemns a man than that he cannot stay in the presence of the Lord, even on earth? Of course, no evil can consist with the Lord's presence in heaven; nor can it, in the long run, on earth. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” These are characterized as being antichrists. It was not merely evil of a moral sort, but against Christ personally, and thus directly struck at the foundation of everlasting truth. “They went out.” Thus, wherever there is that which is decidedly contrary to Christ's personal glory, that He deals with. There may be cases, as in 2 John, which it becomes the saints to deal with too; but we generally find that such go out. God prefers, if I may say so, that Himself should dispose of them, even here below. They could not continue in the Lord's presence, though it were simply by the power of the Spirit of God that that presence was made known upon earth. But while there are these cases where the saints judge, and where the Lord judges, still there remains this word: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” We must guard against imputing motives, or pronouncing upon the absolute state of a person before God.

We have to take care that we go not before God, lest we might find ourselves in detail, if not in the main, against God. We must not break that which is bruised, by yielding to embittered personal or party feelings. What a danger this is! The inevitable effect of a judging spirit is, that we get judged ourselves. The soul whose habit is censorious is universally ill spoken of. “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.” Then He puts a particular case: “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” That is, that where there is this proneness to judge, there is another thing found still more serious: it is habitually unjudged evil in the spirit of a professor or saint of God which makes a person restless, and desirous of proving others to be wrong too. “Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye The mote of course was but little, but it was made a great deal of and the beam, an enormous thing, was passed by. It was the Lord bringing out, in the most emphatic way, This own truth, and the danger of a suspicious judicial spirit. And He shows that the way to deal rightly, if we desire the good of His people, and their deliverance from evil, is to begin with self-judgment. If we really wish to have the mote out of our brother's eye, how is it to be done? Let us begin with the grave faults we know so little corrected and confessed in ourselves; and this is worthy of Christ. What is His way of dealing with it? Does He say of the mote in our brother's eye, Bring it to the judges? Not at all; you must probe yourselves. The soul is to begin there. When I judge the evil that my conscience knows, or that, if my conscience does not know now, it may learn in God's presence—if I begin with that, I shall then see clearly what concerns others; I shall have a heart fitted to enter into their circumstances, an eye purged from that which makes the heart oblique, and which unfits the heart to feel with God about it. “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” This may be found in a believer in principle, though when the Lord says, “Thou hypocrite,” He alludes to the evil in its full form; but even in ourselves, we know it in measure, and what can be more opposed to simplicity and godly sincerity? The Lord skews that this very thing leads to the most hateful evil that can be found under the name of Christ—a hypocrite—a thing that even the natural conscience writhes under and rejects. “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” Often and often have we found that, when the beam is gone, the mote is not to be seen, having already disappeared. This is a great comfort; and where the heart is set upon the Lord, would we be sorry to find ourselves mistaken about our brother? Should I not rejoice to find the grace of the Lord in my brother, if I discover in self-judgment it is only I that am wrong? This may be painful to one, but the love of Christ in the believer's heart is gratified to know that Christ is spared this further dishonor.

This, then, is the first great principle our Lord here enjoins. The spirit of judgment is to be watched against solemnly; and this, too, because it brings bitterness upon the spirit that indulges it, and unfits the soul for being able to deal rightly with another: for we are set in the body, as Paul shows, for the purpose of helping one another; we are everyone members one of another. The Lord is inculcating the spirit of grace that seeks the good of others, even if it be in self-condemnation.

But there is another thing. In watching against hasty and harsh judgment, there might be the abuse of grace. And the Lord immediately couples this with the former— “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” We must carefully remember that the Lord is not here speaking

about the Gospel going out to sinners. God forbid that we should not carry out the grace of God to every quarter under heaven, because nothing less than that ought to be the desire and effort of every saint of God. All ought to do it; that is, to have the spirit of active love going out after others, energetic desires for the salvation and the blessing of souls: for it were a sad shortcoming, if it rested with souls being brought to Christ. The only thought worthy of a Christian is the glory of Christ; and therefore should one be seeking to grow up into Christ in all things, to know and to do the will of God. In this verse, the Lord is not taking up the question of the gospel going out indiscriminately; for we know that, if there be a difference, the gospel best suits those who have been dogs; which, in the language of the Jews, was a figure of all that is abominable. “Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The apostle had been speaking just before about thieves, drunkards, extortioners, &c. It might have been asked, is not the wickedness of one man greater than that of another? On an earthly platform, one might say, Much every way; but God does not, in saving souls, make these distinctions. So, speaking of believers, when Jews, Paul says, they were “children of wrath, even as others.” There may have been highly moral characters among them. Did this dispose them better towards God's grace? Alas! where the soul finds a justification of itself in what it is, nothing can be more dangerous. It is a hard thing for a man who feels this to bow to the truth that he can only enter heaven upon the ground of a publican and a sinner. But so it must be, if the soul is to receive salvation from God through the faith of Jesus.

The Lord, then, is not in any wise restraining the gospel from going out to every quarter; but He speaks of the relations of His own people with those that are walking unholily. The Christian is not to treat the worldly man on common ground; he is not to bring out for him the special treasures that are the Christian portion. The gospel is to be lavished; it is the riches of God's grace to the world. But, besides the gospel, I have the special affections of Christ to the Church, His lordship as regards His servants, His priesthood, the hope of His coming again, &c.

If we were to talk about these things, which we may, perhaps, call the pearls of the saints, with those who are evidently not Christians, you are on wrong ground. If you were to insist upon the duties of the faithful in worldly company, then it is giving that which is holy unto the dogs. There is blessed provision for the dog: there is that which the Lord intends for it—the crumbs that fall from the master's table. And such is the great grace of God toward us, that the crumbs which fall to our portion, poor dogs of the Gentiles as we were, are the best. What is there like that which falls from the Lord's grace? Whatever may be the benefits promised to the Jew, the grace of God has brought out in the gospel fuller blessing than ever was promised to Israel. What can Israel ever learn, compared to the mighty deliverance of God that we know now? the consciousness of being in a moment completely cleansed from all sin, and having the righteousness of God for ours at once and forever in Christ. As the Lord Himself said to the woman of Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Where Christ is received now, by whomsoever it may be, there is this fullness of blessing. We have not even to go to the well now, for the well is within the believer. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” So that I may see in many a word of God how wide and perfect is His grace, while it forbids certain things being thrown indiscriminately among worldly persons, as not being suited objects. Any act that implies fellowship between a believer and an unbeliever is false. Take, for

instance, the question of worship, and the habit of calling the whole round of devotions worship. But worship supposes communion with the Father and the Son, and with each other in it. There is not nor can be real communion in the usual forms of prayer. Indeed, you will find that evangelical people do not generally care for the prayers, but bear with them for the sake of the sermon. But the system which, founded on an easy rite which pretends to regenerate all, unites believers and unbelievers in one common form and calls it worship, is casting what is holy unto dogs. Is it not a thinly disguised attempt to put the sheep and dogs upon the same ground? In vain! You cannot unite before God the enemies of Christ, and those that belong to Him. You cannot mingle as one people those that have got life and those that have not. The attempt to do so is sin, and always ends in failure and disappointment, as well as in the constant dishonor of the Lord. All effort to have a worship of this mixed character is going in the very teeth of this 6th verse. Whereas, preaching the gospel, where it is kept distinct from worship, is most right and blessed. When the day of judgment comes upon this world, where does the worst judgment fall? Not upon the openly profane world, but upon Babylon, because Babylon is the confusion of what is of Christ with evil—the attempt to make communion possible between light and darkness. There is what we are responsible for, as the apostle says, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” It is the being partaker of her sins that is the grave affair with God. It is the acceptance of a common ground upon which the church and the world can join; when the very object of God, and that for which Christ died, was that He might have a separate people unto Himself; so as to be, by their very consecration unto God, a light in this world; not a witness of austerity, saying, “Stand by, I am holier than thou;” but Christ's epistle, that tells the world where the living water is to he found and bids them come: “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” The light of the church, reflected from Christ, shines upon the living water that Christ gives to him that will. Where we do not confound the religion of the world with the worship that goes up to God from His people, there you will also have the true line of demarcation—where we ought to judge, and where we ought not. There will be active service towards the world with the gospel, but yet the careful separation of the church from the world. This is also true individually. If there were only a single saint in the place, he is not to cast his pearls before swine; and if it be an assembly, they have to guard against it corporately. What a test is this for the heart! Thus persons take advantage of the word of God that says, “If an unbeliever bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go,” ; but take care how you go, and for what. If you go self-confident, you will but dishonor Christ; if to please yourselves, this is poor ground; if to please other people, it is little better; if it were really to serve God and please our neighbor for his good to edification, it would be with pain to oneself, with reverence, I may say, and godly fear, lest one might forget the living God, and that He is a consuming fire. For the God of the believer is a consuming fire; He is such in His dealings with us, and let us thank Him for it. He does not spare our evil any more than He wishes us to spare it. There may be occasions when the love of Christ might constrain a soul to go and bear a testimony to His love in a worldly company; and if we know how easily words may be said, and things done, that imply communion with that which is contrary to Christ, there would be fear and trembling; but where there is self-confidence there can never be the power of God.

But now the Lord, having finished the subject of the abuse of judgment and the abuse of grace, shows us the necessity of intercourse with God; and this is very particularly in connection with what we have been seeing. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it

shall be opened unto you.” Here we have different degrees, increasing measures of earnestness in pleading with the Lord: “for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

And then He gives them an argument to encourage them in this. “What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” There is a very interesting difference in the passage that answers to this in Luke 11, where instead of saying, “give good things to them that ask him,” it is said, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” The Holy Spirit was not yet given; it was not that He did not act in the world, but He was not yet personally imparted, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Scripture says this expressly; so that, until the time when He was poured out from heaven, it was quite right to pray for the Spirit to be given: and the Gentiles, in particular, being persons that were ignorant about it, this is expressly mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, which especially contemplates the Gentiles. For who can read that gospel without having the conviction that there is a careful eye upon those that have a Gentile origin? It was written by a Gentile and to a Gentile; and all through it traces the Lord as Son of man, a title which links itself, not with the Jewish nation properly and peculiarly, but with all men. This is the great want of man—the Holy Spirit which was about to be given, and He is the great power of prayer, as it is said, “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” Luke was led to specify that special good thing which those that pray would need in order to give them energy in prayer.

But returning to Matthew, we have the whole passage wound up by this word: “therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” This is in no way dealing with men according to their ways, but the contrary. It is saying, as it were, “You who know the heavenly Father, who know what His grace to the evil is, you know what is comely in His sight; always act upon that. Never act merely according to what another does towards you, but according to what ye would that another should do to you. If you have the slightest love in your heart, you would desire that they should act as children of your Father.” Whatever another person may do, my business is to do to them what I would that they should do to me: and that is, to act in a way becoming the child of a heavenly Father. “This is the law and the prophets.” He is giving them exceeding breadth, extracting the essence of all that was blessed there. There was this which was clearly the gracious wish of a soul that knew God, even under the law; and nothing less than this could be the ground of action before God.

But now we come to dangers. There are not only brethren that try, but now He says, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, add few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” There is a moral connection between the two things. One main feature of that which is false is the attempt to make the gate large and the road broad; to deny the special manner in which God calls souls to the knowledge of Himself. There is not an arrangement in the religious world that does not interfere with this. Take, for instance, the parceling out of those that belonged to God into different companies, as if they were the sheep of man: what people do not scruple to call “our church” or “such an one's flock.” God's rights, God's claims, God's calling a soul to walk in responsibility to Himself, are all set aside by such a state of

feeing. We never find even an apostle saying, “my flock.” It is always “the flock of God,” because that brings in responsibility to God. If they are God's flock, I must take care that I do not lead them astray. It must be the object of my soul, in having to do with a Christian, to bring his soul into direct connection with God Himself, to say, this is one of God's sheep. What a change would this make in the relation of pastors, if it were viewed as the fleck of God! It is the business of the true servant to keep them in the narrow path on which they have entered.

But there is also the broad-road-going world, who think that they can belong to God by profession of Christ and trying to keep the commandments. There has been the widening of the gate, the broadening of the road, and the Lord says in connection with this, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” There may be true teachers sent from God; but they suffer with the false ones, if they are mixed up with the world. Being all bound together for common objects, whether they belong to God or not, those that are really true are often drawn of the rest into what they know to be wrong. And remember another solemn thing. The devil never would be able to accomplish any plan in this world, if he could not get good people to join the bad in it. Unbelief constantly uses as an excuse, “such a good man is here;” “the excellent Mr.—does that.” But is the opinion and conduct of a Christian to be that by which I judge? If so, there is nothing that I may not fall into: for what evil thing is there that a man, and even a believer, has not done? You know what David had to confess before the Lord. There is nothing too bad; and this is the way that the devil takes to keep other persons quiet in evil. Presumption has nothing to do with the matter, nor is it a question about good men. The only question for the Christian is the will of the Lord; and therefore it becomes a matter of searching into Scripture. The sole standard for the believer is the written word of God; and this is the special security in these last days. When Paul was leaving the Ephesian saints, it was to God and to the word of His grace that he commended them. Grievous wolves might enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and of their own selves men might arise, speaking perverse things; but the sole safeguard, as a rule of faith and conduct, for the saints, is God's holy writ.

Mass is the most wicked act of the most corrupt thing under the sun; but if the grace of God could enter there, and work by his Spirit, spite of the elevated host, who shall put limits? But is that a reason why I should go to chapel, or pray to the virgin? God, in His sovereign grace, can go anywhere; but if I desire to walk as a Christian, how am I to do it? There is but one standard—the will of God; and the will of God can only be learned through the Scriptures. I cannot reason from any amount of blessing there, nor from any apparent weakness here. Persons might be allowed to seem very weak, for the express purpose of showing that the power is not in them, but in God. Although the apostles were such mighty men, they were often allowed to appear weak indeed in the eyes of others. It was that which exposed Paul to be thought not an apostle by the Corinthians, though they, of all men, ought to have known better. All this shows that I cannot reason either from blessing, that God's grace may work, or from the weakness of God's children. What we want is that which has no fault at all, and that is the word of God. I need it for my rule as a Christian man, and as walking together as all saints. If we act upon that word, and nothing else, we shall find God with us. It will be called bigotry; but that is part of the reproach of Christ. Faith will always appear proud to those that have not got it; but it will be proved in the day of the Lord to be the only humility, and that everything which is not faith is pride, or no better. Faith admits that he who has it is nothing—that he has no power nor wisdom of his own; and he looks to God. He is strong in faith,

giving glory to Him.

But, again, “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” The Lord does not here speak simply of men being known by their fruits, but of false prophets. (Ver. 15-20.) “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Where grace is denied, the holiness is hollow, or, at best, legal. Wherever grace is really held and preached, you will find two things—much greater care in what concerns God, than where it is not equally known; and also great tenderness, forbearance, and patience in what merely touches man. Winking at sin is one thing, but miscriptural severity is very far from divine righteousness, and may co-exist with the allowance of self in many a form. There are certain sins that call for rebuke; but it is only in the gravest cases that there ought to he extreme measures. We are not left to make laws about evil for ourselves: we are under responsibility to another, even to our Lord.

We ought not in this to trust ourselves, but learn the wisdom of God, and confide in the perfectness of His word; and our business is to carry out what we find there. Let the help come from where it may, if we can thus but follow the word of God more fully, we ought to be exceedingly grateful.

Solemn, most solemn, are the words that follow, as the Lord's eye scans the field of profession. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The Lord shows the stability of His word, for the obedient heart, from the figure of a man building upon a rock; He shows also, as none but He could, the end of every one who hears and does not His sayings: but I must not enter upon this now.

The Lord grant that our heart may be towards Himself! We shall be able to help one another, and we shall be helped of His own grace. Weak as we are, we shall be made to stand. And if through unwatchfulness we have slipped, the Lord will set us upon our feet again.

May He grant us singleness of eye!

Chapter 121

Remarks on Matthew 8

I can well understand a man who received and revered the Bible as the word of the living God, yet being at fault when he closely examines the gospels, which recount the Lord's ministry. A casual reader might find no difficulty; but at first, nothing would be more probable than that he who carefully compared the different accounts might be perplexed—I will not say stumbled, because he has too much confidence in the word of God. In comparing the gospels, he finds that they differ very considerably in the way in which the same facts are recorded in different gospels. Be finds one arrangement in Matthew, another in Mark, and a third in Luke; and yet all these he is sure are right. But he cannot make out how, if the Spirit of God really inspired the different Evangelists to give a perfect history of Christ, there should at the same time be these apparent discrepancies. He is obliged to cast himself upon God, and to inquire whether there be not some principle which can account for these changes of position, and for the different mode in which the same circumstances are displayed. The moment that he thus approaches these gospels, light will dawn upon his soul. He begins to see that the Holy Ghost was not merely giving the testimony of so many witnesses, but that while they thoroughly agree at bottom, the Holy Ghost had assigned a special office to each of them, so that their writings present the Lord in various and distinct attitudes. It remains to inquire what are these several points of view, and how they may both give occasion to and explain the variety of statement that is undoubtedly to be found therein.

I have already shown that in the Gospel of Matthew the Holy Ghost has been depicting Jesus in His relationship to Israel, and that this accounts for the genealogy given us in chapter 1, which quite differs from what we have in the Gospel of Luke. It is specially his genealogy as Messiah, which is, of course, important and interesting to Israel, who looked for a Ruler of the seed of David. At the same time the Holy Ghost took particular care to correct the narrow worldly thoughts of the Jews; and shows that while He was, according to the flesh, of the seed of Israel, He was also the Lord God; and if Emmanuel and Jehovah, His special work, as a divine person, was to save His people from their sins. He may go out far beyond that people, and bless Gentiles no less than Jews; but saving from sins was clearly an expectation of Christ that ought to have been gathered from the prophets. The Jews expected that when Messiah cause, it would be to be exalted over them as a nation; that they consequently would become the head, and the Gentiles the tail. All this they had rightly inferred from the prophetic word, but there was a great deal more that they had not discerned. Messiah is bent upon their spiritual, as well as their natural, blessing; and all present hopes must fade away before the question of sin, yea, their sins. Jesus accepts His rejection from them, and effects on the cross for them that very redemption that they thought so little about.

How thoroughly, too, it falls in with the Gospel of Matthew, that we should have a long discourse like that of the Sermon on the Mount, without interruption; the whole being given us as a continuous word from our Lord. All interruptions, if there were any, are carefully excluded; so as to bring Him out on the mount standing in antithesis to Moses, where God was bringing in an earthly kingdom: but now it is because He is bringing in a heavenly kingdom, contrary to everything the Jews were expecting.

The Holy Ghost proceeds in this gospel to give us the facts of our Lord's life still in connection with this great thought. The Gospel of Matthew is the presentation to Israel of Jesus as their divine Messiah, their rejection of Him in that character, and what God would do in consequence. We shall see whether the facts that are given us even in this chapter do not bear upon this special aspect of our Lord. From the Gospel of Mark, it would be impossible to collect it in the same way. In Matthew, the snore order of history is neglected, and facts are brought together that took place months apart. It is not at all the object of the Holy Ghost by Matthew, or even Luke, to give the facts in the order in which they happened, what Mark does. Those that examine the Gospel of Mark with care, will find notes of time, expressions such as “immediately,” &c., where things are left vague in the other gospels. The phrases of rapid transition, or of instant sequence, of course, bind together the different occurrences thus brought into juxtaposition. In Matthew this is entirely disregarded; and of all the chapters in the gospel, there is not one, perhaps, that so entirely sets aside the mere succession of dates, as the very one before us. But if this be so, to what are we to attribute it Why, we may reverently ask, does the Holy Ghost in Matthew disregard the order in which things followed one another? Was it that Matthew did not know the time in which they occurred? If he had been only a man writing a history for his own pleasure, could he not have ascertained with tolerable certainty when it was that each fact occurred? And when he first had published his statement, would anything have been easier than for the other evangelists to follow, and give their accounts in accordance with his?

But the contrary is the case. Mark takes up a different line of things, and Luke another, while John has a character to himself. On the very face of it we are driven to one of two suppositions. Either the evangelists were as careless men as ever wrote accounts of their Master, giving different accounts as if to perplex the reader; or it was the Holy Ghost who presented the facts in various ways, so as to illustrate the glory of Christ far more than what mere repetition would have accomplished. The latter I believe to be the truth. Any other supposition is, to say the least, irrational. For, even supposing that the apostles had written different accounts, and had made mistakes, they could very easily have corrected each other's mistakes but the reason why no such correction appears was not human error or defect, but divine perfection. It was the Holy Ghost who was pleased to shape these gospels in the particular form most calculated to bring out the person, mission, or other relations of Christ. The Gospel of Nark proves that the healing of the leper took place at a different time from what you might have supposed from this chapter—in fact, long before the sermon on the mount. In chap. 1 we have the Lord described as preaching in their synagogues through all Galilee, and casting out devils: “and there came a leper to Him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt thou canst make me clean.” (Mark 1:40-45.) Now, I suppose nobody doubts this is the same story as in Matt. 8. But if we read the next chapter of Mark, what is the first thing mentioned after this? “Again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house and they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.” Now there we have a fact, the cure of the paralytic man, which Matthew does not give us till chap. 9, after a storm which mark describes in chap. 4, and after the case of the demoniac, which only appears in chap. 5; so that it is perfectly plain that one of the two evangelists must have departed from the order of history; and as Mark, by his strict notes of time, shows that he does not, Matthew must be concluded to have so done. In Mark 3 we have our Lord going up into the mountain, and calling the disciples to Him; and there is the place accordingly in this gospel where the sermon on the mount would, if inserted at all, come

in. Thus, it was considerably after what took place in Matt. 8:2-4 that the sermon on the mount was uttered; but Mark does not give us that sermon, because his great object was the gospel ministry and characteristic works of Christ; and therefore all the doctrinal expositions of our Lord are left out. Where little words of our Lord come in with what He did, they are given; but nothing more.

It may make what I have been saying still plainer, if we observe, further, in Mark 1 the true order. Simon and Andrew are called, in verse 16; James and John, verse 19; and straightway, having gone to Capernaum, He entered on the sabbath day into the synagogue, and taught. There we have the man with the unclean spirit, which took place a little after the final call of Andrew and Simon, and James and John. The unclean spirit is cast out; “and immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her,” &c. There we have positive certainty, from God's own word, that the healing of Peter's wife's mother took place a short time after the call of Peter and Andrew, and considerably before the healing of the leper. Carrying this back to our chapter in Matthew, we see the importance of it; for here the healing of Peter's mother-in-law only appears in the middle of the chapter. The cleansing of the leper is given first, then the healing of the centurion's servant, and after that, of Peter's wife's mother; whereas from Mark, we know for a certainty that Peter's wife's mother was healed long before the leper. Looking at Mark again, we find that, on the evening of the same sabbath, after He had healed Peter's wife's mother, “they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils.... And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed,” which is clearly the same scene alluded to in Matt. 8, and would come in after the 17th verse. The fact of His going to the desert, and praying, is not mentioned here; but it took place at the same time. Then, in Mark, we have His going into Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils; and after that, He heals the leper. What I draw from this is that as Mark tells us the very day on which these things happened, we must take him for a witness of their order as to time. When I go back to Matthew, do I find that there is any intimation of the time in which these events took place? Not a word. It is simply said, “When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him,” and then we have the healing of the leper. There is nothing to prove that the leper came at that particular time. All that is said is, “And behold, there came a leper, &c.: an Old Testament expression. Whether the healing of the leper took place before He came down, or after, we are not told here. From Mark we learn that the sermon on the mount was given long after; and that the healing of Peter's wife's mother took place before the healing of the leper. Why, let us ask, would it not have suited this Gospel of Matthew to put the healing of Peter's wife's mother first, then the leper, and lastly the centurion? for you will find that in the order of time this was really the succession. The centurion came up after the sermon was over, and Christ was in Capernaum; the leper had been healed a considerable time before, and Simon's mother-in-law earlier yet.

But what is the great truth taught by these facts as they are arranged in the Gospel of Matthew? The Lord is met by a leper. You know what a loathsome thing leprosy was. Notoriously, it was not only most offensive, but hopeless, as far as man was concerned. It is true that in Leviticus we have ceremonies for the cleansing of a leper, but who could give a ceremony for the cure of a

leper? who take away that disease after it had once covered a man? Luke, the beloved physician, gives us the fact that he was “full. of leprosy;” the other evangelists do not state anything but the simple fact that he was a leper. That was enough. Because, to the Jews, the question was whether there was any leprosy at all: if there were, they could not have anything to say to him till he was cured and cleansed. The Spirit of God uses leprosy as a type of sin, in all the loathsomeness that it produces. Palsy brings out the thought of powerlessness. Both are true in the sinner. He is without strength, and he is unclean in the presence of God. Jesus heals the leper. This at once illustrates the power of Jehovah-Jesus upon earth, and more than that; for it was not merely a question of His power, but of His grace, His love, His willingness to put forth all His might on behalf of His people. For the whole people of Israel were like that leper. The prophet Isaiah had said so long before, and they were not better now. The Lord repeats the sentence of Isaiah: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy,” &c. And this leper was a type of the moral condition of Israel in the presence of the Messiah. But whether few or many, let them only present themselves in all their vileness before the Messiah, and how would the Messiah deal with them? The Messiah is there. He has got the power, but the leper is not sure of His will. “Lord,” he says, “if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” We may remember the distress of the King of Israel in the days of Elisha, when the King of Syria sent Naaman to him, that he might recover him of his leprosy how, when he had read the letter, “he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” Only God could do it. Every Jew knew that. This is what the Holy Ghost is desirous of showing. We have had the testimony that Jesus was a man, and yet Jehovah—able to save His people from their sins. But here comes out His presentation to Israel in particular cases, where the Holy Ghost, instead of giving a mere general and historical outline, as in chap. 4, singles out special instances, for the purpose of illustrating the Lord's relation to Israel, and what would be the effect of it. The leper in this first care, where we have, as it were, the microscope applied by the Spirit of God, that we may see clearly how the Lord carried Himself toward Israel; what ought to have been the place of Israel; and what was their real conduct. At once, when the leper acknowledges His power, and confesses his person, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;” when it was merely the question of His will, and of His affections, immediately there comes the answer of divine love and power: “I will; be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” But He put forth His hand, and touched him. It was not only God, but God manifest in the flesh: One who entered fully into the poor leper's anxiety, yet proved Himself paramount to the law. His touch—it was that of Jehovah: He was God. The law could only put the leper at a distance; but if God gives a law, He is superior in grace to the law that He gives. The heart of this leper trembled, afraid lest the blessed Lord should be unwilling to bless him; but He puts forth His hand, He touches him: none else could, none else would. The Lord's touch, instead of contracting defilement to Himself, banishes defilement from the leper. Immediately he is cleansed. Jesus then says to him, “See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.” There was no desire that he should publish what He was. God might tell His works. He says, “See thou tell no man; but go, show thyself to the priest,” &c. Nothing could be more blessed. It was not yet time for the Lord to be set aside. Jesus waits. The cross must come in before the law could be set aside in any way. We are delivered from the law by the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the great doctrine of the Epistle of the Romans—that we are dead to the law, of course in His death, that we might “be married to another, even to him who is raised

from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Up to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, there is the most careful guarding of the law. After resurrection, saints passed into another relationship with Him who was risen from the dead. Here we find there was a careful maintenance of the claims of the law of God; and it always was so, until the cross. Therefore He says, “Go show thyself to the priest.” Also, had the man gone telling it to everyone instead of the priest, the enmity of man might have found means to misrepresent the work, to deny the miracle, to try and make out that he was not the man who had been a leper. Alas! was it the wish of man's heart to show that Jesus had not wrought such a miracle: but Jesus says, “Go, show thyself to the priest.” Why? Because the priest would just be himself the authentic witness that Jesus was Jehovah. The priest that knew the man was a leper before, that had pronounced him unclean, that had put him outside, would now see that this man was cured. Who had done it? None but God could heal the leper. Jesus, then, was God; Jesus was Jehovah. The God of Israel was in the land. The priest's mouth would be obliged to confess the glory of Christ's person. “Offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.” When had there been the offering of that gift? They had no power to heal the leper, and they could not offer the gift. So that Jesus had bowed to the obligations of the law, and yet had He done what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. But here was one who was God, and “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” God Himself, and God's own Son withal, He was here working this mighty work that proved His dignity; and He made the priest himself to be the witness of it.

But now we are to hear a different tale—Jesus enters into Capernaum. When, we are not told. It has no connection with the story of the leper; but the Holy Ghost puts them together, because it brings in the Gentiles. We have had the Jew set forth in the history of the leper and the gift Moses commanded for a testimony to Israel. But now there is a centurion that comes and tells about his servant; and this brings in a new kind of confession of the Lord altogether. Here there is no touching—no connection with Christ after the flesh. That is precisely the way in which the Gentile knows Christ. The Jew looked for a Christ that would put forth His hand—a Savior personally present among them—bringing in this divine power, and healing them; as the Scriptures had said, “I am the Lord God that healeth thee.” And here He was come; but they did not know Him so; and the next witness that we have brought together in Matthew, but nowhere else, is the centurion; because it showed that the natural children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were going to be cut off. They would not worship Him as the poor leper did. The testimony to the priest would be disregarded. They become more and more opposed to His claims, and God would say, If you Jews will not have my Son, I will send a testimony to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles will hear. Upon the rejection of Jesus by the Jew, upon Israel's refusal of Him who had proved Himself to be their Jehovah-God, in forgiving all their iniquities, and healing all their diseases, what then follows? The door of faith is opened to the Gentiles; and immediately we have the story of the centurion, which is taken out of its place and put here purposely. And even in the details of the history there are very noticeable differences. You have not the embassy of the Jews in connection with the centurion. This is left out in Matthew, and inserted in Luke. Thus, while Matthew's gospel gives everything that might be calculated to meet the conscience of Israel, it abstains from giving anything that they might have prided themselves on. It was wholesome for the Gentiles that they should hear of the embassy of this good man. He was like the Gentile laying his hand upon the skirt of him that was a Jew, taking his place behind the Jew. But his faith goes beyond this; for we find that he comes and beseeches the Lord, and brings out his own personal faith in the most

blessed manner. When Jesus says to Him, “I will come and heal him,” at once his heart is manifest. He answers, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.” For just as he, the centurion, could say to one, “Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to his servant, Do this, and he doeth it,” how much more could the Lord “speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed?” He had indeed the authority over all diseases; but was it merely a question of His putting His hand upon the leper? Not at all. He had only to utter the word, and it was done. The centurion assumes the grand truth that Jesus was God: not merely Messiah, and therefore full of ability to heal. In short, he looks at Him in a still higher way, not as one whose presence must be connected with the putting forth of power, but as one who had only to speak the word and it was done. That brings in the character of the word of God, and the absence of Jesus from those who profit by His grace.

That is our position. Jesus is away and unseen. We hear His word, lay hold of it, and are saved. This is the beautiful way in which we have here the different bearing of the Lord on the Jew and the Gentile; but we learn, moreover, that the blessing would be refused by Israel, and the Gentiles would become the objects of mercy; as it is said here, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” That is, many Gentiles should come; but that is not all. “But the children of the kingdom” —meaning the natural children, of course—those that were the seed, but not the children of Abraham in a strict sense—the children of the kingdom that were so by birth, but who had no faith at all—these should be “cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The Jews as a nation were going to be rejected. There would only be a line of believing ones; but the mass of Israel should be rejected until the fullness of the Gentiles should be come in; so that we have here a wonderful view of our Lord, and this exactly in accordance with the general strain of the Gospel of Matthew. We have Jesus proving Himself to be Jehovah-Jesus, ready to heal, wherever there was faith; but where was it? The leper might represent the godly remnant; but as to the mass of Israel, we have their doom pronounced here, and that too in the very same incident which proves that the grace of God which Israel refused would find a larger channel for itself to run in. The Gentiles should partake of the mercies which the Jews rejected. This is just what we have put together in these two stories: Jesus giving proof to Israel that He was a divine Messiah. If they scorned it, the Gentiles would hear. But then there is another thing of great importance, and which shows why the healing of Peter's wife's mother is kept in this gospel till after these events, although Mark gives it us before. Mark furnishes the history of the ministry of Christ as it happened. Why does not Matthew the same? Divine wisdom is stamped upon this, as upon everything in the word of God. I believe it is reserved in Matthew for this place, because Israel might have the idea, that when the mercy of God flowed out to the Gentiles, His heart might be turned away from them. The maid was not dead, but sleeping: that is the state of Israel now. And as surely as the Lord did raise her up, so surely will He in a future day awaken the sleeping daughter of Israel. We have got better blessing and higher glory now. But it is necessary for the truth of God's word that Israel should be blessed too; because if God could break His word to Israel, I cannot trust His word to me. Now God positively promised the eventual final glory of Israel on the earth. The only thing needed is that we should not confound these things; that we should not be ignorant either of the Scripture or of the power of God.

In this case we have the beautiful story brought before us which proves that though the Lord knew the unbelief of Israel and predicted it; and though He knew also that the Gentiles were to come in now by faith; yet did His heart linger over Israel; and therefore, I think, the Holy Ghost, to illustrate this, brings in here the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. The Lord never wrought a miracle but what He entered in spirit into the circumstances of him whom he was revealing. If the miracle brought out His divine power, there was also the divine sympathy that entered into the depth of the need that He relieved. In this third incident, the healing of Peter's wife's mother, He did it, I think we may infer, for Peter's sake, whatever may have been the other reasons. It is a natural relationship, and you will find that the great scene for this is Israel. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision; so that I have not a question that one of the reasons why this event is brought in here is to show that the unbelief of Israel would not finally alienate the Lord's heart. There He was, still healing all their diseases, as was witnessed that even to the crowd around her door, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.”

Afterward we have the Lord preparing to go to the other side. But this gives occasion for certain persons to be brought out in their true character and ways, and for the Lord to manifest His own. Now when did this happen? This brings out a most peculiar feature of the gospel of Matthew, and shows how entirely the Holy Ghost was above the mere routine of history. Look at the Gospel of Luke, and you will find that the conversation with these men, which is recorded here, took place after the transfiguration. In Luke 9 we are told that after the transfiguration had taken place, the Lord steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem; and then in verse 57, it is said, “It came to pass, that, as He went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father,” (Luke 9:57-62.) Now, am I too bold in thinking that this was the same incident that we have recorded in Matthew? It would not be reasonable to suppose that our Lord should have the same things repeated at different times; nor could we hardly conceive of two distinct persons copying one another so exactly. But mark the importance if there be so. It took place a very long time after, and yet it is put in here in Matthew. Why? Because it illustrates this—that while the Lord had all this love in His heart towards Israel, spite of their unbelief, there was no heart in Israel towards Him. What was His condition now? He had not even where to lay His head. What a thing for the Messiah of Israel to be obliged to say, when a man offered to follow Him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” And, observe, this is the first time where He uses the expression “Son of man.” It is no longer “Son of David.” “Son of man” is the title of Christ as rejected and glorified. There is no question which of the two it was here. Even His own people will not have Him. And He is going away to the other side—He must leave them. He has done it now, as we know. But this man proposes to follow Him. The Lord knew all that was in his heart. The man was a mere carnal Jew, who thought by following Jesus to get a good place with the Messiah. The Lord tells him He had no place to give him. There was not even a nest for the Messiah. What was there for the flesh, offering to follow Christ, to find? The Lord unveils his heart; proves its utter corruption; shows it to be the more dreadful because the Lord Himself had not even the meanest spot that even the meanest and most mischievous creature that He had made, might possess. The foxes might have their holes, the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of man had not even where to lay His head.

If the flesh should pretend to follow our Lord, it only meets with a rebuke. To a disciple who had said, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father,” the Lord could say again, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.” Mark the difference. Where the call of life is, there may be great reluctance, trial felt, and struggling on the part of nature; still the word is, “Follow me.” When you get a thoroughly carnal man in the presence of the gospel, there is not this backwardness—none of this trial. He thinks it is all beautiful, but it does not lay hold of his soul; and very soon circumstances occur to draw his heart away to other things, and at last the man sinks down again to his own level. But where the Lord does say, Follow me, how often the soul, before or at the time says, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father!” It is clear there was this natural relationship which was a very solemn thing. His father was lying dead: he must go and bury him. One could hardly think of a duty more peremptory than that. People might say that a man must make the burying of his father so urgent that everything must give way to it. Not at all, says the Lord, Christ ought to be stronger still. If the call of Christ is heard, even at the very moment when the father lies dead, waiting for burial, we must leave even that. The world may say, There is a man that talks about Christ, and that does not love his father; but we must be prepared for this: and if we are not, it is because we do not understand the value of the Christ that we have got. You will find that natural ties and duties in this world are always apt to come in as a hindrance between Christ and the soul. The claims of nature are continually pressed upon one: but no matter whether it be father or mother, or brother or sister, or son or daughter, where the call of Christ is clear, take care that you do not say, Suffer me to do such and such a thing first. The word of Jesus is, “Follow me,” and “let the dead bury their dead.”

Then the Lord goes. We find him entering into a ship, and His disciples following Him. And there follows the history of the tempest, and of the miracle that Jesus wrought in calming the winds and the sea. Now when did this really take place? On the evening of the day when the seven parables of Matt. 13 were uttered, before the transfiguration, but long after the other events mentioned in this chapter. Mark lets us know this positively in the chapter that records the parables, (Mark 4) the very same that are given us in Matt. 13, with this addition, “With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it; but without a parable spake he not unto them. And when they were alone (when they had entered into the house, as it is given us in Matthew), he expounded all things to his disciples,” “and the same day, when the even was come, he said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.” Then follows the same history that we have in Matt. 8. And after they come to the other side, there is the man with the legion of devils. There need not be a question that this is the same scene that we have here, in verses 24-27: and then we have the healing of the men possessed with devils; but brought out in an entirely different connection. It did not really occur till a considerable time after; and the account of the conversation of our Lord much later still, has been given here, though it took place at a totally different part of the life and ministry of Christ. What follows from this? That the Holy Ghost in Matthew only gives us historical order where it falls in with the special object of the gospel. All this marks the perfect wisdom of God; and none but God would have thought of such a thing. But how few think of it, or even understand it now! Does it not show the slowness of our hearts to take in the full meaning of the word of God? What is the Lord teaching in these two scenes? He shows us here Himself alone with His disciples. The godly part of Israel are now separated with Himself and exposed to all that the enemies of God could do against them. But it only serves to enlist the power of the Lord for them. Everything is subdued at His bidding. So is it in our own experience. There never is a difficulty,

trial, or painful circumstance in which we appear to be utterly overwhelmed by the power of Satan in this world, but what, if our eye is towards Christ, and we appeal to Him, we shall know his power most truly put forth on our behalf. When they realize who they had in the same boat with them and cry, saying, “Lord, save us; we perish,” He arises and rebukes the wind and the sea; “And there was a great calm.” So that even the very shipmen marveled, saying, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” The disciples knew it in a still deeper way, but the others were astonished.

But this is not all. That might show what Christ is for the godly who were with Him. But there were two men far indeed from the Messiah, for they were among the tombs, possessed with devils, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way—just the picture of the most desperate power of Satan in the world. One of them, as we are told elsewhere, went by the name of Legion, because many devils were entered into him. You could not have worse than this. The power of Satan was stronger than all the fetters of men.

But the Lord is there. The devils believe and tremble. They felt His presence. But the day was not come for Satan to be dispossessed of his title over the world. As yet it was only the time of the proof of the power to do it: but the full exercise of that power was reserved for another day. I doubt not that one evangelist gives the casting out of the demons as a witness of Christ's power to deliver the Jewish remnant; and therefore the Holy Ghost, here only names the two men: as, on the other hand, the possessed herd of swine seems to represent the destruction of the unclean mass of Israel in the latter day.

Then, again, the history brings out this also—that Satan has power in a twofold way, not only in the dreadful excesses of those who are completely under his influence, but in the quiet enmity of the heart that could lead others to go to Jesus, in order to beseech Him to depart out of their coasts. What a solemn thing it is to know that the secret influence of Satan over the heart, that creates the wish to get rid of Jesus, is even more fatal, personally, than when Satan makes a man to be the witness of his awful power! But so it was then, and so it is that men perish now.

That is the history of the men that wish Jesus to depart from them. The Lord grant there may be that happy knowledge of Jesus, that entering into what He is to us now, which gives the soul calmness and rest in His presence—the certainty that there is the real presence of Jesus with those that belong to Him; “I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age.” May we know what it is to have Jesus to take care of us, and produce a great calm, whatever may be the effect of the stirring up of Satan's power against us! The Lord give us to look at Jesus. If it be from my first knowledge of what sin is, to my last trial in this world, it is all a question of whether I trust in myself or in Jesus.

Chapter 122

Remarks on Matthew 9:1-35

Whoever attentively examines this chapter with the following one can hardly fail to see that the proper break is at the end of verse 25, the last three verses of chapter 9 forming properly the introduction to chapter 10. What we have in chapter 9, as far as I have stated, is the effect of the presence of Jesus upon the religious leaders of Israel; I believe this is the great subject. The chapter before gave us the outline of the Lord's presence in Israel, and its results. That is, it was a general picture; and therefore we saw that the Holy Spirit entirely neglects the mere historical order, putting together passages in the life of Christ that were separated, in point of fact, by months or even a year. There is not the slightest attempt on the part of the Spirit of God, to present them as they happened; but on the contrary, the Holy Ghost goes out of His way for the purpose of culling from different times and places certain grand facts that illustrated the Messiah's presence amidst his people, His rejection by Israel, and what the result of this rejection would be. What we saw was that, first of all, He was proved to be God, the God of Israel—Jehovah; to whom the cleansing of leprosy was merely the question of his will;—for even the leper did not doubt his power. “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” None but God could do this. Now, none had so strong a feeling about this loathsome evil as a Jew; because God Himself had laid down so carefully the nature and proof of leprosy in his law. For it was a question of hopeless uncleanness—the solemn emphatic lesson of how horrible sin is, often in its effects and in itself. God can cure, and God can cleanse: nobody else can. It was not exactly a case of forgiving, but of cleansing—of putting away defilement; and the Spirit of God reserves the question of forgiveness, which is connected with the rights of God and with His judicial character, as the cleansing of leprosy is inure particularly connected with his Holiness—till the chapter we are about to look at now. In the first of these chapters there was the broad feature that the Messiah was there,—God Himself in grace, and not acting according to the law which would have banished the leper outside dwelling-place and people, and His own presence. A most wonderful fact to realize on earth and in Israel that a person was there, as plainly God in His power as He was God in His love. The law merely laid down that which was right, but could give no power, save to condemn the unrighteous. It must make the case of a sinner hopeless; just because it is God's law, which law can never mix with sin. But here was One who had given the law, and yet was above the law. Evidently indeed unless there be some principle in God paramount to the law, there can be no rescue for the guilty. But grace is that principle. And here was one who showed in His acts and words that He was in nothing more manifestly God than in the fullness of His grace. He touched the leper, and said, “I will; be thou clean.” The state of this man was just the picture of the true condition of Israel; and what the Lord did for the solitary leper, He was equally willing to do for the whole nation; “but He came to His own, and His own received Him not.” Would God then be baffled in His love? If the Jew refused Him, what of the Gentile? They should hear; and therefore we have immediately following the centurion and his servant. But I will not repeat the facts of chapter viii. In the chapter before us now, we have not the general picture of our Lord's presence and its results in Israel, but its special bearings upon the religious leaders of the people.

We begin again with the Lord's giving a remarkable case of healing; not the obvious case of leprosy, which ought to have struck any Jew; but another equally illustrative. “He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city” —that is, Capernaum. Thus we are upon narrower ground now. Capernaum was the place where the Lord lived and wrought His mightiest miracles, and which for that very reason afterward comes in for the most fearful woe that he could pronounce. This is always the case; and a most solemn principle it is. When the day of the Lord comes, the heaviest blow of judgment will fall, not upon the dark parts of the earth, but upon the favored ones, where there has been most light, but alas! most unfaithfulness. For my own, part I do not doubt our own land must suffer in a special measure; but, above all, Jerusalem, and Rome too, to which latter place the most remarkable of all the epistles was written, as laying down the foundations of Christianity, but where there has been the greatest departure. They will come under the judgment of God in a most emphatic manner, not only religiously but civilly. No matter who reigns, or who may be put down, this must be the case, wherever, in spite of the special favors of God, and the light of His word spread abroad, persons have remained unfaithful, and have even become more lax and superstitious or skeptical. The Lord will remove those that are His before the judgment, and the rest will remain to suffer his just displeasure. “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.” We have in this scene the Lord showing the moral necessity for such a judgment. Nor was it merely in the land of the Gergesenes, or of Nazareth. But take the very best—the people who ought to have known the Scriptures more than others, whose very profession it was to know and teach them—what was their estimate of Jesus? It is this which comes out in our chapter. “Behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer:” a most blessed word, meeting the whole “case of the man; a word to touch his affections and win his heart. “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” There too was a word to reach his conscience. His sins ought to have laid more heavily upon his heart than his palsy did upon his body; but this word met all his need. “And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.” In this chapter, it is not the scribe in his vain fleshly confidence, professing to show honor to Jesus; but it is the scribes judging and condemning Him. To their view Jesus was blaspheming, when He said, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” Awful delusion of the wickedness of man! “This man blasphemeth!” And these were not ignorant people; yet they said within themselves, “This man blasphemeth!” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?” And now he brings out a word of His that showed what ought at once to have told upon a scribe, who world be familiar with the Scriptures. This is not merely the language of a saint now, though we can take it up in a most blessed sense; yet when we come to such a verse as that, “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases,” can we say that this is the way the Lord deals now with Christians? Where He forgives a person's iniquities, does He necessarily heal all their diseases? Whereas here it is evident that the Lord contemplated the union of the cure of bodily diseases and the forgiveness of sins, in the same people and at the same time. When will this be? When God takes the government of the world into His own hands. When the One who was crucified will be glorified—not only in heaven, but here below; when that day comes, the outward world, the body of man, and particularly of God's own people Israel will feel the immediate effect. While we can take the pith and spirit of the Psalms, as far as they apply to our condition now, let us not forget that there is much more in the Psalms that we cannot adopt as applicable to

ourselves. We cannot honestly say, “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” The diseases there do not mean sin, because this was just spoken of separately. We have the forgiveness of iniquities, and the healing of bodily distempers, both promised; and so the Lord accomplishes both here. He shows that, in His person and by His ministry now in the midst of Israel, there was the witness of this power to do both. That they might know that the Son of man had “power on earth to forgive sins, (then said He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house.” There was a proof of the reality of the forgiveness, in the fact that the disease was healed before their eyes. The union of these two things ought at once to have struck a scribe. God's word had united them, and this, too, with the reign of Jehovah. The soul had been called upon to bless Jehovah, who should forgive Israel's iniquities and heal their diseases. But who was this? He had spoken of Himself as the Son of Man in the chapter before:— “The Son of Man,” He had said, “had not where to lay his head.” It is the title of a rejected Messiah. Afterward, He is the glorious Son of Man; but He is the sufferer before He enters into His glory. In this miracle we have the strongest testimony of what the glory of His person was. He had only to tell the palsied man, “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house;” and at once all powerlessness vanished from him, “and he arose and departed to his house.” This, then, was the Lord's answer to the real blasphemy of the scribes who charged Him with blasphemy. “But when the multitude saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.” Alas! they did not know that it was the power of God exercised by One who Himself was God. They saw that He was the vessel of the power of God, and that was all; and a man might be this, and not be God. The Lord might be pleased to work miracles even by a bad man. So that, while they gave glory to God who had given such power to a man, there was no real faith in the person of Christ. But the great object of the miracle is the bringing out of the true state of the heart in the ecclesiastical chiefs of the people. A solemn judgment to apply any time begins to dawn with this chapter; and before we have done with it, we shall find that the case is closed, as far as they are concerned. Jehovah-Jesus was intolerable to Israel; but, most of all, to those that had the highest reputation for learning and sanctity.

The Lord passes from this scene, and sees a man “named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me; and he arose and followed him.” If we compare the gospels of Mark and Luke we find that both the palsied man's case and the call of Levi took place long before many of the circumstances that we have already had; but they are reserved for two special purposes in Matthew's account. They are given at the beginning of Mark 2 as they happened in order of time. Mark was undoubtedly led thus to Act by the Spirit of God, but Matthew puts them out of that order for the purpose of giving large pictures, after a dispensational sort, of our Lord's presence upon earth, and its consequences for Israel; and all the facts that would bear upon their blindness for a time and future restoration are grouped together.

But here we see the effect of his presence upon the religions guides. Matthew's call was a most significant one; and we find that the Spirit of God led him to give his name here—the name by which he was afterward known both on earth and in heaven. Matthew accordingly shows the grace of the Lord, spite of the animosities of those scribes against Him, and the form that His grace took in consequence of their unbelief. He goes out and calls Matthew as he was sitting at the receipt of custom. Other people had brought the palsied man; but Matthew does not seem to have manifested faith before the summons of Jesus. It was not Matthew that sought Jesus, but Jesus

who called Matthew. Matthew was busied only about the tax, of which he was the licensed gatherer. The publicans were always classed with the sinners, and the Lord goes and calls the publican Matthew when he was in the very midst of the performance of his office, sitting at the receipt of custom. Obedient to the Messiah, Matthew not only follows him at once, but has Jesus sitting at meat in the house. “And, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?” It was a positive clean subversion of all propriety and order in the eyes of a Jew. To sit down at meat without the least feeling of contempt for these publicans and sinners was indeed strange in the eyes of the Pharisees. What was the Lord doing? He was showing God's grace increasingly, the more unbelief broke out from the merely outwardly-religious people—persons who had thoughts of God, but not founded upon his word (for men may be ever so earnest out of their own minds and hearts, but without the faith of God's elect). There were these men showing their total unbelief of Jesus and His glory; but, on the other hand, God, in the person of Jesus, was going further in His grace and more counter to the thoughts of these religious people in Israel. He calls Matthew, and He eats with these publicans and sinners; and when it is found fault with by the Pharisees to the disciples, the Lord at once produces that blessed word from the Old Testament, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” He vindicates this call, maintains it, not only as an exceptional case, but as a principle.

It was what God was come down to make good upon earth. It was not the law, but grace now. This gives rise to something further, and a very instructive word from the Lord is brought before us here. The disciples were found fault with, because they did not fast, like the disciples of John, and the Pharisees. And the Lord gives this reason for it: “Can the children of the bridechamber mourn so long as the bridegroom is with them?” That is, He shows the absurdity of fasting, when the source of all their joy was there. How utterly contrary would it have been to their faith in Him, the Messiah, to submit to this mark of sorrow and humiliation, in the presence of the spring of all their joy and gladness! But there was something deeper than that to be learned. There was not only the presence of One that the disciples understood, and that the others did not, but the Lord shows that you cannot mingle the prescriptions that flow from the law, with the principles and power of divine grace; a most important principle, and the very one that Christendom has practically destroyed. For what has brought about the present state of Christendom? Christianity is the system of grace in Christ maintained in holiness by the Holy Ghost among those that believe. Christendom is the great house of profession, where there are unclean vessels mingled with those that are to honor; where principles abound and reign that never came from Christ, and that are adopted, some of them from Judaism, others out of people's own wit, without respect to the Bible. But what the Lord shows is, that even if you take what God once sanctioned under the law, it will not do now. The same God who tried Israel by the law, has sent the gospel; and it is the gospel that He is sending now, and not the law. It is grace that we have to do with. It is Christ risen and in heaven that I am in relationship with, and not with the law. I am dead to the law if I am a Christian. Christendom has forgotten and departed from that; and, arguing from the premises that the law is good, and the gospel also, they say, Will it not be much surer to put them together? The result of this has been, that what our Lord said could not be done, men have been aiming at with the utmost diligence. They have tried to put the new wine into old bottles—that is to say, into the receptacles of legal principles which God has done with. He has brought in new wine, and He wants new bottles.

The inner virtue and power of Christianity must clothe itself with its own proper forms. The new garments were the due manifestation of the gospel, which totally differs from ways framed according to the law. Legalism was the old garb; and it was despising the goodness of God to be merely patching up the old one. And after all, it will never succeed. The attempt will only make the old worse. This is what Christendom has done. It has tried to mend the old garment with the new piece—to bring a certain measure of Christian morals into the old garment, as a sort of improvement upon Judaism. And what has been the result? Besides, there is the pouring of the new wine into old bottles. There is a certain measure of the preaching of Christ, but it is all in connection with the old bottles. These verses embrace both the outward development and inward power; and show that Christianity is entirely a new thing, and one that cannot be mingled with the law. If you find a man that thinks he has got some righteousness of his own, you can cut him down by the law. This is the legitimate use of the law. He is really ungodly, and you use the law to prove that he is so. But in the Christian, we have one who is godly; and the law, as Paul expressly insists, is not for him. I am not to put the new wine into old bottles, nor the old into new. This leads the Lord to bring out the entire newness of the conduct and principles that flow from Himself and from His grace. And all this was strongly opposed to the thoughts and prejudices of the scribes and Pharisees, who came in afterward with their questions about fasts. Not that fasting is not a Christian duty, (we have already looked at this in chapter v.); but, then, it must be on Christian principles, and not on Jewish ones.

Now we come to an incident of the deepest interest. A ruler of the synagogue sends for our Lord to heal his daughter, then comes and worships Him, saying, “My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples.” That was exactly an illustration of the Lord's attitude towards Israel. He was there with life in Himself. Israel was like the maid that needed Him; she had no life in her; that was Israel's condition. But the Lord is at once roused, and goes at the call of the ruler. He owns the claim of faith, let it be ever so feeble. The centurion knew that a word would be enough; but this Jewish ruler, with the natural thought of a Jew, wants the Lord to come to his house and lay His hand upon his daughter that she might live. He connected the Lord's personal presence with the blessing that was to be conferred upon his sick child; whereas we Gentiles walk by faith, and not by sight. We believe in, and love, One that we do not see. The Jews look for One whom they shall see; and they will have Him in this way. As Thomas, after eight days, was allowed to see the Lord, and to thrust his hand into His side, and see in His hands the print of His nails, so will it be with Israel. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” Whereas we believe in Him on whom we have not looked. So that our position is a totally different one from that of Israel. Now in this case the Lord hears the summons, and goes at once to raise up the dead daughter of the Jewish ruler. But while He is going, a woman touches Him. While the Lord's errand is to Israel—and so it was, and it only remains suspended—while He is on the way, whoever comes, whoever touches, gets the blessing. No unbelief of scribes, no self-righteousness of Pharisees, ever would or could hinder the Lord in His mission of love. He was about to bring in new principles which would not mix with the law—grace that would go out to all, that would meet the worst; which is plainly set forth by this woman who comes and touches Him. But first of all you have the pledge of the resurrection of Israel; for we have the warrant of the word of God for looking at the condition of Israel as one of death. Look for instance, at Ezek. 37, where Israel is compared to dry bones. “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost

behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land." So I believe in this miracle. It represents not merely the conversion of dead sinners, but the raising of Israel as a nation. The Lord was refused by the people who had the deepest responsibility to receive Him; but most surely as He raised up that young woman from the bed of death, so surely will He restore Israel in a day that is coming. But meanwhile, whoever comes gets healing and blessing. So it was with this poor woman. The Lord not only gives her the consciousness that she is healed, but lets her know that His affections were thoroughly with her. "Daughter," He says to her, "be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." There was at once the word of affection—the Lord putting His seal upon what her faith had done, though she had done it in trembling. Then, in due time, we have the raising up of the one who was dead, in whom it was not a question of faith, but of the power of God, and of His faithfulness to His own promise.

After this (ver. 27) we find that two blind men follow Him; elsewhere only one of them is mentioned; but I believe that both are mentioned here for the same reason as we had the two demoniacs. They cry and say to Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." It is the confession of Christ, as connected with Israel. They address Him as Son of David. The Lord asked them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." Then came the dumb man possessed with a devil; "and the devil was cast out, and the dumb spake; and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel." I believe that all this is brought together for the same purpose. The Lord was giving type after type, and pledge upon pledge, that Israel would not be forgotten, that Israel would be raised out of death: let them be ever so blind, they would see; ever so dumb, they would speak. Let the Pharisees and Scribes be utterly unbelieving and blasphemous, and ready to turn away all from Christ—let it be so now; but death would give way, blindness would be removed, speech would be given to Israel, in a day that was coming. The very confession of the multitude was, that it had never been so seen in Israel.

Let me repeat that, in thus applying these miracles of our Lord, I am not at all denying the blessing of any part of these for a soul now. But this is no reason to prove that the Lord has not an ulterior view which we ought not to forget. "But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." What could be worse than this? Was it not in principle blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? Such is the form which that sin took then. There was the power of the Holy Ghost that wrought in Christ and through Him; and they attributed this power to Satan. There could not be anything more determined than such hostility. They were not able to deny the righteousness of the man, nor the facts of superhuman energy; but they might attribute the power that was entirely above man, not to God, but to the adversary: and they did so. Their ruin was complete and final. What more terrible! Nothing could convince a man, where all these evidences and appeals had been lavished upon him; and the end of it all was that, not the ignorant only, but the wise, the religious, and the righteous according to the law, the Pharisees, the choicest part to man's eye of the chosen nation—even they said, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils."

Nothing more was needed. The Lord might send out a testimony through others; but as far as His own ministry was concerned, it was virtually at an end. He sends out the twelve immediately after, but it all comes to the same thing. The Lord is utterly rejected, as we see in chapter xi. And then chapter xii. gives the final pronouncing of the judgment of that generation. That sin of which they

had been guilty would ripen into blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and could not be forgiven them, either in this age or in that to come. The consequence is that the Lord turns from the unbelieving race, and introduces the kingdom of heaven, in connection with which He gives us all the parables in chapter xiii. He takes the place of a sower, no longer looking to gather fruit from Israel, and addresses Himself to the new work in this world that He was about to undertake, which He still carries on to the present moment, though now through the instrumentality of others. So that the beauty of all this arrangement of the gospel of Matthew cannot be surpassed, though the other gospels are for their own objects equally perfect. Each presents the facts of our Lord's history, so as to give a distinct view of Christ's person or service, with the effects of its display; and we ought to understand them all.

May the Lord grant that the effect of looking at these things may be not only that we may know the Scriptures but Jesus better. This is what we have most of all to cultivate—that we may understand the ways of God, the wonderful ways of This love in Jesus.

Chapter 123

Remarks on Matthew 10

At the close of the chapter before, our Lord, in looking upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel, speaks of them, in deep pity, as sheep without a shepherd. He was now feeling what the Pharisees really were: not but what He knew it before; but the circumstances of their entire rejection of Himself, and their hatred coming out more and more decidedly, brought up before His spirit the exposure of God's sheep. If their spirit was implacable against Him, in whom there was no sin, who was God's own Son, the Shepherd of Israel, what must not be the sorrowful lot of those who had infirmities and failures which laid them open to the malice of those who cared not for them for God's sake, who would have the keenest and most suspicious eye for everything weak and foolish about them! Let us always remember the grace of the Lord, that even that which is humiliating in us draws out nothing but His compassion. I am not now speaking of sin, but of that which is infirm: for infirmities and sins are two different things. We do not want the Lord's sympathy with evil. The Lord has suffered—died—for our sin. But we do want sympathy with us in our weakness, trembling, liability to anxieties, cares, trouble: in all these things which make us suffer here, we do want sympathy; and the Lord has it fully with us. This was also the case with Israel. Unconscious of their miserable condition, Jesus calls upon the disciples, in the love of His own heart, to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. It was His harvest, and His laborers alone could gather. But immediately after, and this is remarkable, He shows that He is the Lord of the harvest Himself; and He sends forth laborers. The next chapter illustrates this, and beautifully harmonizes with Matthew, who portrays Him as the One who should save His people from their sins—Emmanuel, God with us. Mark the circumstances. This takes place upon His rejection by Israel. His own ministry, full of grace as well as power, we have seen fully exhibited and terminating in the utter indifference of Israel, and the hatred of the religious leaders. Chapter viii. gives us the people; and chapter ix. their guides, thus severally manifesting themselves.

Now, chapter 10 shows that Jesus, as Lord of the harvest, sends forth laborers, and this too with full authority and power given to them. But mark, it is still in special connection with Israel; and the Lord is conscious from the beginning of rejection by Israel. Meanwhile it is a Jewish mission of the twelve Jewish apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I take this quite literally, and not as it were said of the Church, which is never spoken of as lost sheep; but the sheep of Israel in their desolate condition are most aptly so described. Before the Church is gathered, what we want is a Savior. We Gentiles were not sheep at all, but dogs, in our evangelist's point of view. (See chap. 15.) And after we have been brought into the Church, we are not and cannot be lost sheep. Whereas, these poor of the flock are spoken of as lost sheep of the house of Israel. For up to this time, the work was not done by which they could be put in the known position of salvation.

Again, when our Lord is sending them forth, it is said, “He called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease, and all manner of sickness.” That was peculiarly their mission. Not a word is said about preaching what we call the gospel, or teaching the whole counsel of God; but they were to go with Messianic

power against Satan, and against bodily diseases, as a testimony to Israel. No doubt they were to declare the kingdom of heaven. “As ye go,” said our Lord, “preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But the great characteristic feature of the mission, was the conferring upon them power against demons and diseases. The appropriateness of this, in connection with Israel, is manifest. It was a bright evidence that the true king, Jehovah, was there; One who was not only able Himself to cast out devils, but to confer that power upon His servants. Who but the King, the Lord of hosts, could do this? It was a testimony much greater than if the power had been confined to His own person. The ability to impart power to others, which was what Simon Magus, hoping to profit by it, so earnestly coveted, God here shows to be in His own Son. Now, the servants were to be sent out, and that in due order. There were twelve of them, in relation to the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. We find afterward the promise that they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. There need be no question, therefore, that this was a Jewish mission. When the Church was called, God broke in upon the mere Jewish order, by calling an extraordinary apostle, with a special view to the Gentiles; one who was called after Christ, dead and risen, had taken His place at the right hand of God. Then came in this new work in the calling of the Church, and the Apostle Paul became the characteristic minister of the Church, though the twelve had their place too. But in this case, the twelve apostles were, (what Paul was not) the ministers of the testimony to Israel of the kingdom of heaven. For, observe, the strictest injunction was given them that they were not to go outside the limits of Israel; not even to visit the Samaritans, nor to enter into the cities of the Gentiles. Their business was solely with the lost sheep of the house of Israel: the most positive proof that it means those of the Jews who had a sense of sin, and who were willing to receive the testimony of the true Messiah. With them, their business was exclusively. The calling of the Church was not referred to. This one thing is diligently kept in view by our Lord, It is the more remarkable, because in this gospel we are told that, after He had died and was risen, the Lord sent them out to the Gentiles; but, then, it was on the evident ground that death had come in. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” Christ upon the cross becomes the attractive center for man, as well as the foundation of all the counsels of God. Now, in this case we have nothing of the sort. The Lord's death is not even referred to. His rejection is brought out, but nothing is said as to the building of a new structure. There was the waiting for still further rejection before this could be disclosed.

But here the Lord Jesus sends forth the twelve, and commanded them, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” That is, they were to go just as they were, with the coat they had upon them, with the shoes they had then on their feet. They were not to provide anything, or to lay up any store as a means of support during the mission. This is not a universal rule for the servants of God at all times. It was a peculiar mission, for a special time, and with reference to Israel only. It was not the gospel of God's grace, but of the kingdom. The two go together now; but then it was not so. Israel did not receive the testimony of the kingdom an entire change comes in, and the kingdom of heaven, as an actual fact, remains in suspension. The whole calling of God, going out now to the Gentiles, comes in as a vast parenthesis, between the sending out of this mission and its full accomplishment in the last days.

Whatever the Lord sends out must be accomplished, but nothing is perfectly fulfilled till the Lord takes it in hand Himself.

Everything that is to be taken up by Christ in power and glory by and by, is first committed to man; and man fails, Israel as a nation breaks down, the Church has become worldly and scattered. All this will be to the praise of Christ Himself. Thus, no matter what you look at in the ways of God there is, as a rule, the first presenting of the thing to man, and it is made to rest upon him, to see if he can bear the responsibility and the glory; and he cannot. But whatever man has failed in, is destined to rest upon the shoulders of Christ in the day of glory, and all will then come to perfection. Not one of these things but what will shine out in far more than pristine brightness when Jesus appears in glory.

The twelve were sent out on this mission, and instructed that they were to be dependent upon Christ alone. He would provide for them. They were to announce the kingdom of heaven; and He, the king, would undertake all charges. They were to go with the fullest confidence in Him. Now, although His servants are not to look to the world, or to use means of acting upon men or saints; and although they may confidently look to God to provide for them, still they are not put in the same circumstances as these disciples. The difference is strongly shown. Let us take for instance, such a command as this, “Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy and there abide till ye go thence.” Think of a man going out with the gospel now, and asking, Who is worthy? He wants the unworthy. It is a totally different mission from that which followed after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was a mission to Israel: and Jehovah wanted the excellent in the earth, those whose hearts really desired the Messiah. Hence they were to ask who, in any city, were worthy, and there to abide. “And when ye come into an house, salute it; and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; and if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.” That is not at all the way in which the gospel goes out now. On the contrary, it is peace with God that the servant of Christ is entitled to proclaim to His enemies. It is on the wretched, the miserable, the base, the despised, on those who have got nothing at all, and whom God brings down to take the place of being nothing, that His peace now descends. The direct bearing of the gospel is towards those who are evidently wretched and vile, and outcast: because the gospel is the fullness of the grace of God where man has nothing whatever to give to God. Nothing can be more blessed. Whether old or young, if they are broken down to feel that they are utterly unfit for God, but that God has provided such a Savior as His word declares He has, then I cannot trust Him too fully or too simply. The essence of the gospel is this: it is what God gives to me, not what I owe to God. It is the gospel of God—the gospel of His Son: but here it is the gospel of the kingdom. You will constantly find that phrase in Matthew. This gospel goes out to those that are worthy. If the house were worthy, the peace of the messenger comes upon it; and if not, it returns. “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.” There was a spirit of judgment upon them— “Verily, I say unto you, it shall be snore tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city:” just because they had the messengers of the kingdom coming to them with a gracious message, and they would not receive them.

From verse 16 commences the Lord's warning of the circumstances in which the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” That is, He calls for prudence, heavenly

prudence, that God's grace would make good—calls them to be wise as serpents, but at the same time simple as doves. There was to be the most entire holiness in the object and character of the prudence, and that also which would evidently be free of all just charge of being injurious to men. “But beware of men;” do not suppose that, although you go forth with love in your hearts, you will not meet with wolves.

“Beware of men.” The Jews themselves are plainly intimated. “Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings.” This shows their degradation; but although they were under the yoke of the Gentiles, they would scruple at nothing, where it was a question of Christ's apostles. They would be quite willing to invoke Gentile authority where it became a question of Christ's followers. They themselves would drag them before the Gentile kings and governors, abhorred as they were. But our Lord adds this gracious word—for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. This is the only way in which the Gentiles come in. Israel might thus summon the disciples of Christ before the Gentiles, but God is taking care that this should turn for a testimony for them and the Gentiles. Thus God turns the weapons of the adversary against himself. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.” So that I feel that such a truth as this, though it has special application to apostles setting out on this mission, most surely remains living for us. The pith of it abides eternally true. “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour that ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” At the same time He prepares them for the most heartless conduct on the part even of relatives. The brother would know the habits of his brother, the father would know all about the child, and the child about the father: all this would be turned against the servants of Christ. “Ye shall be hated of all men” (it was a universal thing) “for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” “But when they prosecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” —a very remarkable statement, “Ye shall not have gone over,” or, as the margin has it, finished— “the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.” That exactly recalls the expression that I made use of before: the Church is a great parenthesis. The mission of the apostles was abruptly terminated by the death of Christ. They still carried it out afterward for awhile, but it was terminated completely by the destruction of Jerusalem: the whole thing was manifestly removed for the time being, but not forever. The calling of the Church was the only thing that remained. When the Lord has taken the Church out of the world to heaven, God will raise up witnesses to the Messiah upon earth. The earth is reserved for the Jew, when the Jew shall be converted; because God will never break His promise. God has declared that He would give His land to His people, and He will do so. God must give that land to that people, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. It is necessary consequence of God's faithfulness, that the Jewish people are not yet to be restored to their own land, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. The calling of the fullness of the Gentiles is the parenthesis that is going on now. When this is over, the Lord resumes His links with Israel. They will go back to the land in unbelief. The testimony of the kingdom, which was begun in the time of our Lord by the apostles, will be taken up in Jerusalem; and in the midst of their preaching, the Son of man will come, and then there will be a new means used: “He will send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The Lord will

accomplish fully in that day what was committed to man, and what broke down through man's wickedness. Then everything under the branch of Israel shall be glorious. That is what, I conceive, flows from the remarkable. expression that they should not go over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man were come. The whole period of the Lord's turning aside to call in the Gentiles now, is passed over in silence. He speaks of what was going out then, and of what will be resumed in glory, passing over what is being done meanwhile.

In the latter part of the chapter He gives sweet motives to encourage them. “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” He was proving this now, and they would have to feel it in their turn. “Fear them not therefore.” The first motive for not fearing is, I have traversed the same path; My path must be the right path through the world; do not be afraid. “Fear them not; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” You will understand the reasons and motives of people's unbelief another day, if not now. Every one that knows the truth, and does not follow it, must have a dislike to those who do. As it was with Me, so will it be with you: but do not be alarmed. Be full of good courage, and persist in the testimony. “What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.” He encourages them to the greatest openness and boldness. And now comes in a second admonition not to fear, on another ground: after all, what harm can they do? They cannot touch the soul; nor can they even touch the body, unless your heavenly Father knows it. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” They cannot injure you. There is nothing which a believer has to dread, except grieving and sinning against God. Therefore He immediately adds, “Rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” You may know your own deliverance; but it is a fearful thing to apprehend what is before God's enemies—the destruction of soul and body in hell! “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.” That is, the special care of our Father for His own children is drawn from this, that even the very sparrow, though so despised and trivial a bird among men, yet cannot fall to the ground “without your Father.” He might have said, Without God; but He preferred to say, Your Father. All belongs to Him. It is all measured by Him; everything even in the outward world.

From the 32nd verse to the end of the chapter, we have the importance of the confession of Christ and the effects of it in this world. The first great principle is this: “Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” We have had the Father's care; we have now the Son's confession by and by. The Father's care is known upon earth, whatever may be the trial. The Son's confession of us will be in heaven, when all the scene of trial is over.

Then He warns them they must not be surprised if they found the result of their testimony very painful—households getting into confusion, members of a family at variance one with another. Do not be surprised. “Think not,” He says, “that I am come to send peace on earth.” We know that the Lord gives us peace always by all means; but He is speaking here of the entrance of His testimony, through His disciples into a world that hates Him. Inevitably, then, the two principles

come into collision. It is not that He desires confusion, but it is the natural effect of the knowledge of Christ entering a house where either the heads or the inferior members of it reject Christ. As it is in the world, so in the house. There are those that believe and those that believe not. “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Dream not that everything is going to be triumphant. The day is coming when the Lord will cause peace to flow as a river; he shows that such is not the character nor the effect of His first coming. It will be so when He comes again. But meanwhile it is not peace, but a sword. It is the badge of war now, and must be so; because of the opposition which unbelief always creates against the truth. “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.” The Lord boldly meets the case. I am come to bring in my principle; and let it be a child, and he is against his father. Now this is the very thing, that turns out one of our severest trials—the effect that the testimony of God has upon families. People speak of households being broken up, and kindred disunited, The Lord already uses the same words, and strengthens us not to mind it. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.” He shows that He had come for anything but giving us a path of ease in this world. On the contrary, we must have trial, rejection, and scorn: we must make up our minds to suffer. But then He adds the other side, “He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” There would be those that would receive, as well as those that would reject. “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet,” (that is, as a prophet) if he knew it was a servant of God, and received him as such, in the face of shame and scorn, he should have the same reward as a prophet himself. “And he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man” —other people might call him unrighteous, but he receives him as a righteous man, and he “shall receive a righteous man's reward.” He proves that his own heart was right with God. We always show our real state of soul by the opinion we pronounce. Supposing I speak or act unwarrantably against a good man doing his duty, I show that I am not with God in that particular thing. On the other hand, if I have faith to discern what is of God, and to take my part with Him in the face of general desertion, happy am I indeed. God alone enables a man to do so. It thus remains true that we always show where our hearts are, by our judgments of, and conduct toward, others.

“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” It would be the evidence and proof that the Spirit was at work in his soul. The Lord was showing him mercy, and his own heart was drawn out in the path of mercy. He should in no wise lose his reward. It is the outward conduct springing from the inward principle. In all these cases it is clearly the Jewish mission of these disciples. I believe that we thus get the true character of the chapter and the place it occupies in the gospel. The point is, the Lord, as the Lord of the harvest, not only bidding them pray, but Himself anticipating the prayer. “Before they call, I will answer.” The Lord is acting in the very spirit of that which will be fully true in the last days. He is Himself sending forth the laborers. In Luke we are told that He refers to this very mission, and asks, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing.” Then the Lord tells them they were to provide themselves with purse, and scrip, and sword: the very things which

they were not to do before, they were to do from that time. The Lord abrogates what He had here enjoined-, as far as the special circumstances were concerned. His goodness and love to them, and their walking in wisdom and harmlessness would abide; but the peculiar character of this mission terminated at the death of Christ. It will, I conceive, be taken up again by others at a future day: but the disciples actually sent out were soon to be called to a new work, founded upon redemption and the resurrection of our Lord.

Chapter 124

Remarks on Matthew 11:25-30

The Lord, though deeply and thoroughly sensible of Israel's rejection of Him, bows completely to the will and wisdom of God in it. (See Isa. 49) “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” In this his blest supremacy was fully shown. “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The knowledge of God makes all necessarily good to us, for it comes from Him. It may be very contrary to our nature. To Jesus, men's rejection of His message was, of course, painful. It threw Him on the sovereignty of God His Father whom He knew, in the fact that His Father had hid these things from the sages of the world and revealed them to the despised and weak. He acknowledged the Father in the thing done, and in its suitableness to the whole order of God's dealings in such a world. That, of course, was all that the Son of God, or we taught of the Spirit, could desire; but it was in circumstances which required perfect submission of heart and way.

But this perfect submission of the Son gave rest and brought His person out to light. If He was thrown entirely on the Father, it was because He was Son, and because of His entire rejection in that character, in which, while perfect and showing who He was, He had not taken His glory and would have taken but the earthly dominion. The secret was that this was but “a light thing.” All things were delivered to Him of His Father, and by reason of the very glory of His person, being Son of God, no man knew the Son but the Father. His service now was to reveal the Father in the prerogative of grace. For none knew the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. “Come unto me,” says this only patient witness of love— “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Here I am, the rejected One, to whom in sure title all things are delivered of my Father; but One whose heart has bowed in all long-suffering of love, who has learned submission, who has felt what it is to be pained and scorned and outwardly to find no refuge but submission. Come to me. Men may have rejected me, but I am the Son, and none knows the Father but as I reveal Him. Whosoever is burdened and passes not on with this haughty world, whosoever labors and is heavy-laden, here I exercise my love. “Come to me and I will give you rest.” I have learned now to speak a word in season to him that is weary. (Comp. Isa. 50 and the end of Rom. 8., with its full extent of blessing to us.)

It was the Lord's submission under such circumstances, which brought the sense to His soul, and the revelation to others, of a much better portion than that of Messiah according to the law and the prophets. Into this, so to speak, He was rejected; and blessed be God for it. He had manifested patient gracious love to the nation, but they repented not even where His mighty works were done. The dispensation, although Messiah came in person, ended in failure. “Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain.” He had stretched out his hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people. When He came, there was no man. For His love He had hatred. Reproach broke His heart. His hopes for the people, the title that He had, the title of His own love, were cast aside. Still there were babes who saw what was bidden from the great. “So it seemed good in thy sight,” was the hinge of the Lord's comfort. This was enough. But what follows on this rejection? “All things are delivered are unto me of my Father;” a wider, fuller, and more real glory.

Yet, high as He is, He bids all come, and declares He will give them rest—the rest of the revealed Father's love.

There is none else to come to. All have proved faithless. Come to me! Who could say this but the Son of God? Who could give rest to all that come but the Son, Jehovah Himself? But One will give rest freely and bountifully, the meek and lowly Son of God. He gives rest supreme as one who knew what peace was in trouble as none ever did. He speaks the secret of it to others. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” It is not now “I will give.” That He could do as Jehovah and God the Lord; that He would do. But the word here is, “ye shall find.” I have learned the way. ("Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.") It is found in the path which Jesus has trodden. He alone trod it or could tread it perfectly in this world. And yet it is not violent or laborious. In one sense it is easy, as the Lord says. Submit! Say, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Such is His yoke, and thus we learn of Him, who ascribed all to the Father, not to the circumstances. Hence He gave thanks to the Father always for all things, as we may and ought to do in His name. “It seemed good in thy sight.” That was enough. It was perfect submission, and the Father beamed out in it. Its value hangs on the perfect knowledge of Sonship. The whole is most blessed and to be learned only in Christ. The infiniteness of the Son's divinity was kept up, in His humanity and therefore apparent humiliation and present inferiority, by His absolute inscrutability therein thus specially and signally maintained; while His oneness with the Father wait made known is His competency to reveal, and supremacy of will in revealing, the Father. Both hold their place most beautifully, maintaining the person in the glory of communion with the Father, and the inscrutability of God thus manifested while the Father was revealed. How wise, perfect, singularly divine is Scripture! There is nothing at all like it. No wit of man could have framed such a sentence as that.

Chapter 125

Fragment: Miracles: Powers of the World to Come

Miracles are called, in Heb. 6., “powers of the world to come,” because they were samples and signs of that energy of the Son of Man which will be so wonderfully displayed in “that day.”

Chapter 126

The Morning Star

CHRIST presents Himself to us as “the bright and Morning Star,” which appears just before the day. Whatever manifestation of glory there may be, all glory is connected with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For “to him every knee shall bow;” and that it should be so, He will come again. It must be the desire of our hearts to see the evil set aside which has desolated this lower world, that had gone wrong and been blighted by man's sin and unfaithfulness to see all set right.

In the seventh verse He says, “Behold I come quickly.” The Lord announces that He is coming, and gives the prophecy with “blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book,” —they who listen and take heed. But He applies His prophecy in a different way afterward in verse 12, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man,” &c. It is not in the sense of a promise, but He goes farther to pronounce what will be the character of His dealings when He comes, as a warning against negligence and indifference, and encouragement to those who have been faithful, that they might be patient and bear with the evil. “Be patient, brethren, for the judge standeth at the door.” “Behold I come quickly.” It is a solemn warning that He announces to every man's conscience: He is going to judge every man according to his work. The Lord would apply it to the saints also to keep their conscience alive to their responsibility. For as He executes judgment on the world, so the fruits of the works and ways of the saints will be shown out, but not as connected with condemnation, and not at all affecting, therefore, their salvation.

In the manifestation of a saint's life, two things are brought to light: 1st, the fruits of the operation of the Spirit of God in the walk and ways of a saint; and, 2ndly, the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which at the first makes him a saint, and which is alike to all saints, to the feeblest as well as to Paul himself, In this portion there is no difference.

Christ is as much my righteousness as He was Paul's when He made an apostle of Paul. We may be very little in ourselves, but still the righteousness is the same. We have the same life and are partakers of the same glory. The many brethren all go together in Christ's blessed redemption; but then there is the reward to each according to his works. I have said so much that we may understand what the Lord's grace is. “I Jesus have sent my angel to testify these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star.” All in which God is setting up glory on the earth will come out of that. He is the root—the source of all the promises; and He is the offspring or fulfillment of the promises, “made of the seed of David according to the flesh,” and this now as risen from the dead.

But we have a better portion as risen with Him—the same portion as Himself. He presents Himself as the bright and Morning Star. He is speaking of Himself— “I am.” It is what Christ is: what He presents to our heart and conscience, whether saint or sinner, is Himself. “I am the bright and Morning Star.” Now, it is I myself coming to put everything right. Is Christ precious to you? If Christ is not precious to you, you are at war with God. If He is not more precious to you than everything beside, then you are in a bad state as a saint. If you are tired of hearing of Him, then what God delights in wearies you, and heaven could have no charm for you. For heaven itself would not

make you happy. if you have no delight in Christ; for there He is the chief object of delight. Is it still true of, you, that you see no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him? In God's sight He was perfect beauty—all loveliness; and where there is anything of God in the soul, He is the desired one, to see Him, not that we may be charmed for a moment as with a beautiful picture, but to know Him, to love Him. He has laid hold of the affections. We may not have the answer yet, but there is the desire, there is the thirst in the soul after Him, which He alone can answer. If you have no desire after Christ, and can do without Him, then your heart is still alienated from God, who delights in Him alone, and there is not a common thought between you and God; for when He is saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” you have no delight in Him, and do not know Him as the desire of your heart. I am not speaking of duties, nor of victory over this and that; but I ask whether, day by day, Christ is the desire of your heart? Oh! how often when we desire to talk of Christ, the soul turns aside the conversation from the subject, because the conscience is uneasy and knows that Christ is not loved.

The Lord, calling Himself the bright and Morning Star, awakens in our souls blessed hopes before the morning comes that is to usher in the day, thus bringing in the blessedness of that time when evil is put away before the day comes in. It has not come yet; it is the night, but our proper position lathe world is as children of the day, during the night:—that is, as having nothing in common with the world. We ought to be gracious to the world, but we are not of it; we are children of the day. Hence all that is in the world is discordant with our hope, and must be all trial to the Christian, except when he is inconsistent with himself. As connected with the Morning Star, we are associated with Christ, hid in God, and we have our portion with Him before the day comes in which “He will arise with healing in His wings.” The world will see Him then, but to us He says, I have given you a portion with myself before the day come. That is, Christ revealed to the soul as the day-star which is to usher in the day. “I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken, and I will give him the Morning Star.” Besides all the rest, He has given us what Christ is. He will associate us with Himself. The morning star precedes the day—that is our portion with Christ—our sweet hope: a Christ revealed to the soul, before the day is come. This tells of the day coming, and is known to those who watch, who are awake in the night, they see this star, and know Him in a way the world does not. And they not only know Him in this way, but they know they have the same portion as Christ. “I will give Him the Morning Star” —thus associating us not only with the blessing of the day itself, but with Himself in the bringing in the day. It is not merely the thought that I shall have the glory, but have it with the Lord. If I am looking at the day, I shall have the glory. But if I am looking at Christ, I see Him in it and say I shall have it with Him. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” That is all that Paul need say to comfort the Thessalonians, and the necessary effect of knowing this is, the desire that He should come. That characterizes the saint. Christ is revealed to the soul, as He is not to the world, in the consciousness that we are to be with Him and to be like Him forever. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” The proper affection of the soul is to desire His coming. Christ having ascended up on high, and the Holy Ghost come down to witness of His exaltation, the eye is fixed on Him in the revelation of Himself; up there and having seen Him, the heart responds. The way He fixes the affections is by saying “I come.” In the next place, there are those in whom the Holy Ghost awakens the desire, and who can answer “Come.” That which stamps the power of the revelation of God is that the heart is really fixed on Him, and the soul desires His coming, if the world is not between our souls and Him,” to be with Him and to see Him as He is.” Can you truly

say, “All here is dross and dung compared with Christ?” What we have to do is to advance in the knowledge of Christ. Now it is the character of everything in the world—all that daily occupies my soul and spirit is that which hinders my soul's satisfaction with Christ—hinders my affections flowing out to Him—hinders my communion with Him. It is the character of all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, &c., not of the Father, &c.; so that the heart gets occupied with it and cannot advance in the knowledge of Christ, nor say, the one thing I desire is, “Come, Lord Jesus.” There must be an entire estrangement from the world to say, “Come.” The next thing, the Heart must be fixed on Himself. Another thing is, the conscience must be perfect. No one could desire Christ to come, if his conscience whispered he might be punished with everlasting destruction, &c. You cannot say, Come, if your conscience is not purged. How can we have a perfect conscience? I will tell you. “As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin,” &c. Then the coming of Christ is in connection with a perfect conscience. In speaking of a perfect conscience, I must have a perfect measure: I must look at God's judgment about sin in the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Are you in the light as God is in the light? for the light manifests all evil. What matters your conscience, if you have not been in God's presence? How often our conscience is not up to the measure which God requires! If you make a mistake, is your conscience up to the light as God is in the light? This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Christ has been presented to every man's conscience for life, and as the perfect pattern of life, like God, and always pleasing Him. There is the light. “The word that I speak unto you, it shall judge you in the last day.” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.” Christ did—are you like Christ? You know you are not up to that measure. Take Christ's life down here. He never did anything for Himself, and you never did anything but for yourself. Show me one instance in which Christ acted from mere natural affection. Was it when His mother and His brethren were without? No; for His reply was, “Who is my mother and my brethren?” Christ never did anything to please Himself, except in the sense of delighting to do the Father's will. Do you say God has sent His Son into the world to be the light of the world, and that He will after all judge by another principle`? If it be so, that the light has come into the world, have you that light? Are you like Christ? Or if not, are you condemning yourself that you are not? Have you allowed Christ His place and authority in your heart? Have you joined in the condemnation against yourself, saying, God is right—taking the judgment of God and siding against yourself? If so, the soul has taken the path of light and truth. Do you judge sin as God judges it? Not by saying, That is wrong, when it must condemn another. This is not conscience. But when you say, I am wrong, and God is right, and thereby condemn yourself, you so feel the need of grace. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. A perfect and effectual work is done. It was done according to God's estimate of sin; so that sin is put away in God's sight, and that makes my conscience perfect. I see here, in divine energy, Christ coming down and putting away sin according to the poor sinner's need. He did not appear without sin the first time, but with sin, in the sense of bearing it, not for Himself, but for us. Personally, He was ever without sin. When He comes the second time, it is without sin, having once borne our sins, and blotted them out forever. So entirely has He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, that He has nothing to say to sin, but, as He said, to “come again and receive you to myself.” Is there anything about sin there? No. The first time it was about sin; but He will come a second time, without sin—not to receive us in our sins, for sin is put away, but to receive us in our sins, for sin is

put away, but to receive us to Himself in perfect, divine love. What! am I to be where Christ is? Yes, but not to carry my sins in there. God could not bear it, for He is perfectly holy. No. If Christ is there, all my sins are put away. Thus, the conscience being purged, there is no hindrance to my saying in full liberty of conscience, “Come.” If Christ says, “I am the bright and Morning Star,” then I have nothing to fear; but it is the joy of my soul to look for Him, and to be with Him. The affections set on Christ, and the conscience being thoroughly purged, I say, “Come.” The soul desires Christ, knowing its association with Himself as the bright and morning star, and says, “Come.” Judah said, (not Iscariot) “Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” And according to this is the proper hope of the saint. “Let him that heareth say, Come.” There is the love of a known relationship. It is founded on a known relationship. One cannot love as a brother one that we do not know as a brother. I cannot love a man as my father, if I do not know him as my father, and that I am his son. It is founded on a relationship existing; so all the affections of a saint belong to a relationship already existing. Grace puts us in relationship that we may have the affections proper to that relationship. And unless I am walking in worldliness, or so as to grieve the Spirit of God, there will be the desire to see Christ, that I may be with Him, and be like Him.

When the relationship is known, there will be the love of the relationship. But you must be a wife and know it, to love like one. Well, you are one now. Conduct yourself like one. And this is true of every one who has heard the voice of the Shepherd and believed. And let him come in the consciousness of the relationship and join to say, “Come.” And I would say, if there be anyone present who has not yet got the consciousness of relationship, let him receive Christ and this relationship at once, that he may rejoice with us at the prospect of Christ as the “bright and Morning Star,” and say, “Come.” As long as we are in the world, we are where Christ is not known. I have not got my place yet in glory; but I have got the well of water springing up within me; therefore I turn in the consciousness of what I have got in myself and say, “Come.” It is the Spirit within me that awakens the desire. Why am I longing to see Him? Because I know he loves me. Why to be in the Father's house? Because it is my proper place and portion as a child. All the springs of joy are known as our own in that relationship: therefore I can say, “Let him that is athirst come.” That is, the joy I have myself in God, necessarily shows itself in love, and every desire for others to have it too.

Besides this, in Rev. 22:16, Christ is the bride's object; and the moment he says, I am the bright and Morning Star, she, directed by the Spirit, says Come. “And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” The bride is not the water of life, but she has it and can say, Come. It is Christ for the poorest sinner.

Chapter 127

Nature and the Spirit

Mark 10. and Phil. 3

THE Lord is showing all through this part of the gospel, that the flesh profiteth nothing. It must be crucified, or go through death. However lovely and amiable, it was all profitless—to Him utterly worthless. In comparing this passage with the other subjoined, we see the liberty that the Holy Ghost's coming has given. The cross is truly known, but yet liberty and power in the bearing of it.

God puts his seal, as it were, upon nature. The creation of His own hands is good; but it is of no profit in having to say to God. At the beginning of the chapter, when they inquire about divorce, the Lord said it was not so at the beginning. It was not according to the natural law, but because of the hardness of their hearts. Christ took delight in the infants that His disciples supposed He would have sent away. But no: He was full of human kindness and divine grace, and said, “Suffer the little children to come,” &c. Then with the young man, Christ saw he was a lovely character, and, beholding him, He loved him. He had run to know what he could do to inherit eternal life, having an idea of some great commandment there is to fulfill. And when Jesus tells him the commandments, he says, “All these have I kept from my youth. Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.” And so it ought to be with us. We must love the attractive, amiable, and agreeable. It has nothing to do with the conscience and God. (It is the mere animal. Take a dog's love, for instance.) It was only Christ who could separate between mere loveliness in nature and the wickedness of the will. The young man comes up to Him, and speaks to Him as Rabbi, Good Master, thinking himself something good all the while, (a grand mistake, which proved the evil of his heart and will.) “There is none good but one, that is God.” His heart is tested, and he cannot bear the test, and so he went away from Christ, away from the cross.

There are three such cases in this chapter: 1st, this young man; 2nd, the disciples who were going up to Jerusalem, (ver. 32,) but could not bear the thought of the cross; and 3rd, the last case is the sons of Zebedee, who desire to be greatest in the kingdom; but the Lord replies by asking if they can drink of the cup He is going to drink of.

The Epistle to the Philippians just takes up the difference the power of the Holy Ghost makes, presenting Christ as the one object. In Phil. 3. we see the different feeling's with which one there looks upon the cross. (Ver. 4-6.) “Touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.” This was exactly the case of the young man. But what did Paul do with all that when he saw Christ in glory? He could not, would not, have it when he got Christ. As he says, “not mine own righteousness, which is of the law"? What a contrast to the young man now! It is as though he said, No; I would not have my own righteousness, but that of God in Christ. We shall see presently that he got something that gave him energy and power to work for Christ.

To have to get a righteousness of my own is quite another idea from having it by faith, for that is God's righteousness. What I acquire of my own cannot be God's; neither can they be mixed. My own will not do, because I have got God's righteousness by faith. I can never work out God's

righteousness myself; therefore what was gain to me is all loss. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Take love and righteousness. How both were perfectly glorified in the cross! God must be perfectly righteous against sin—but perfect love to the sinner. The young man did not come rejecting Christ; but he was thinking about himself, and caring about his possessions; and this because of self. But look at Paul. It is all loss. He saw Christ in glory, and he cares for nothing else—all is gone besides. Paul had great advantages, too, of nature and religious privilege. Nor was it necessity made him give them up; but once Christ was seen in heaven, he could only count them as dung.

Whatever a man's heart desires most, he strives to attain. See a young man spending all his fortune to get honor, if that is what his mind is fixed upon. If money is what he cares most for, then he will keep his money. But whatever he spends for what his heart is set upon, he does not count a sacrifice. He who sacrifices a thing must set a value upon it, or he would not think it a sacrifice. With Paul, Christ was the object of his soul, and nothing else was counted worth anything. But this sets the soul at liberty. He had Christ for righteousness, and now he has Christ as an object to win.

The disciples again thought they had taken up the cross. “Peter said, We have given up all.” But when going up to Jerusalem, they could not understand it. They were amazed. They did not give Him up; but as they followed, they were afraid. The cross was a terror to them. But now look at Phil. 3. where Paul says, “that I may know.... the fellowship of His sufferings.” This was not being afraid; but it is the very thing he desires. The disciples, afraid and amazed, could not bear going up to Jerusalem; but Paul says, That is just the thing I want: I want fellowship with His sufferings, and conformity to His death. It was the very thing he saw to be desirable. He is just going to die too. Death is staring him in the face, and he did suffer for Christ's sake. Mark, he does not say, I want to suffer, I want to die; but it is the fellowship of His sufferings, conformity to His death, that I want—to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Death would be nothing but death if Christ were not with him.

Look at the disciples once more, who desired the best thing in the kingdom—the highest place next to the Lord, as though they had said. But do we find Paul (who deserves the best, if any did; for he says he “labored more abundantly than they all “) desiring the best place? No; he does not think of himself. It is to win Christ, not the seat of honor, that he cares about. His heart was purified filled with the Holy Ghost, filled for righteousness, and filled for suffering. He had seen Christ, as it were, on the other side; and by any means, he says, even through death, or anything else— “by any means,” he would attain to it. I want to possess Christ at the end, and all the way through; and so it must be by the cross. I am looking to be like Him in the end. Even this vile body will be changed, and made like unto His glorious body. I have not got Christ really yet, and shall not till I am with Him in glory; but by the power of the Holy Ghost, I may be nearer and more like Him as I go on—changed into the same image. (2 Cor. 3.) It is like a man going along a straight road, who sees a lamp at the end. He has not got to the lamp, but every step as he goes on, brings him nearer to it, and the light is more and more reflected on his path. Paul had seen Christ in glory. and this fellowship of His sufferings was just a part of the way to Him there. It was the way to the same glory. It does not matter whether it is a little or a great service in the Church—a door-keeper, or an apostle; but when Christ fills the heart, all is simple and easy. Spiritual energy made Paul like the cross: and as he was going on to the glory, he got his affections purified by the glory. A single eye is just having Christ the one object. Temptations, conflicts, things to overcome there are; but they

do not divide my heart if Christ is the sole aim of my soul. The Holy Ghost, filling it with Christ, gives righteousness, power, comfort—makes the Christian in the practical sense of the word.

Chapter 128

Scripture Query and Answer: New Covenant With Israel and With Judah

Q. Heb. 8:10. “a constant reader” (Ireland) wants to know the views entertained about the new covenant with Israel and Judah. Is it not made? If not yet, when and how is it to be ratified? The blood of bulls and goats is clearly unavailing to purge the conscience. (Heb. 10.)

A. The Mediator, Christ Jesus, has appeared. The work is done—the blood shed. But the new covenant is not yet made with the two houses of Israel and Judah. Hence, in Hebrews, it is remarkable how the apostle, writing for those who now anticipatively enjoy its spiritual privileges, constantly waves the discussion of its direct application. In fact, that is reserved for converted Israel by and by. There is really no difficulty. Those of the Jews, and we of the Gentiles, who now believe in Jesus, come into a distinct position as one body, but possessing all the moral blessings of the new covenant. The fulfillment of it pertains to the Jewish people in the last days, when Messiah reigns over them. Jesus died for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. His death will avail for both purposes: the time and order of applying it is another question. In fact, we know that Israel refused the message, and hence the blessing remains in abeyance till the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. Then, and when the Redeemer shall come to Zion and out of Zion, (for both are true,) “all Israel shall be saved.” Of course, all the efficacious value for Israel then, as for us now, is in the blood of the Lamb. If Israel will have sacrifices, as well as an earthly temple and priesthood, they will be only commemorative signs of the one great offering of Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews excludes these for the Christian. The question of the Jew by and by is answered by their own prophecies.

Chapter 129

New Testament Synonyms: Children and Sons

T■κνον appears to me, as applied to Christians, to set forth the family-name towards God; ν■■ς the character of the standing before the world. The latter therefore is rather the term of dignity and privilege, as contrasted (see Gal. 4:6, 7) with the servant or slave under the law (the heir, in his nonage, being ν■πιος, “infant,” no better in law,) the former is the expression of the nearest relationship to God, as really born of Him. Hence it would be well uniformly to distinguish, rendering the one always “child,” and the other “son.” This is often done in the Authorized Version, but not as thoroughly as might have been. Thus, passing over cases of a more natural kind, parables, &c, in John 1:12, and John 3:1, 2, the English reader should understand not “sons,” but children. In the Authorized Version there is much confusion of the two meanings under ν■■ς. Nevertheless, they are kept distinct in Rom. 8 where there is an interesting example of both words rightly rendered.

Hα■ς, again, though often used for a young person, male or female, is more vague, and is very frequently employed for a “servant,” as in Matt. 8:6, 8, 13; Luke 1:54, 69, 12:45, 15:26. It is evident, I think, that the latter is the only right rendering of Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27 30, as it clearly is of 4:25. There is admirable order in the unfolding of the testimony to the Lord in the Acts. Peter's preaching does not go beyond the Messiahship of Jesus, and hence views Him as the holy servant of God; though, of course, he well knew and believed Him to be the Son of God. Stephen goes a step father, and bears witness to Him as the exalted Son of man. Paul preached straightway Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. If acts 8:37 be cited as marring the symmetry of this, it ought to be known that the entire verse is wanting in the Alexandrian, Vatican, and Parisian MSS., of first-rate authority, not to speak of sixty more of inferior antiquity and worth, the best copies of the Vulgate, the Coptic, the Sahidic, the Syriac (save with asterisk in Syr. Pol.), with the AEthiopia The Laudian Greek-Latin MS. (of the seventh century, according to Wetstein), and about twenty more support it, though with singular variation; also the Armenian Version, and others of no great account. I am aware that Irenseus (Contra Heer. Lib. iii.) is cited in favor of its insertion; and certainly he does give substantially the same as the Vulgate text, though perhaps in better Greek. But that little stress can be laid on this appears to me manifest, if we compare his citation of Acts 9:20, in the following section. He may have depended for both on his memory. On the whole, I cannot doubt but that the great majority of the ablest critics are right in rejecting the verse.

As to the difference between παιδ■ον and τεκν■ον, in their spiritual application in 1 John 2, nothing can be clearer. Both have the diminutive form, as expressive of endearment; but the τεκν■α, throughout, mean the entire family of God addressed, and embrace fathers, young men, and παιδια, i.e., babes, or the least ripe in experience of that family. Hence, as has been often observed, when all are meant, τεκν■α is employed, as in chap. 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21. The distinctive use of πα■δια for what we may call the infants of God's family, appears only in 1 John 2:13, 18. Elsewhere the word is used generally as in John 21:5; but this or any other use of it, in no way weakens its special bearing in 1 John 2. The reader may conceive what confusion is

introduced by those, like Alford, who take παιδια, no less than τεκνια, as designative of all Christians. Besides its doctrinal moment, the distinction is important critically; for, in my judgment, this is one of those cases where very strong internal evidence turns the scale of scanty external testimony in favor of γρ■ψω for ■γραφα, in the last clause of verse 13.

Chapter 130

Notes of a Discourse

1:4-7; 22:16-17

THE character in which God is presented in this book is not that in which He stands to the Church. If we speak of God as connected with the saints, it is as Father; with Abraham, God Almighty; but now He is made known as Father. Then when Christ had gone up on high, He further declared it. (John 17) Now the Father's name is not that on which this book is founded at all. It is as Jehovah, God supreme in power. The names of God carried a meaning with them. If to Abraham He was the Almighty, it was Abraham's business to trust in His Almightiness. To Israel, “thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” (Deut. 18:13.) God was putting the first man to the test, trying what could be made of Adam. It has been done—He has pronounced on the tree—He has dug about it, &c.—He came for fruit and found none. Then, seeing all the leaves on it, He said, “no man eat fruit of thee henceforth forever.” Then, man's righteousness being nothing, God brings in His own righteousness. If they had to walk rightly, we have to walk rightly. If I am calling in question whether I am a child of God, I have no power to walk as one. If I am not owning Him as Father, I am not on the proper ground of a Christian. I say you are not taking up the name in which believers stand with God. So John, speaking of little children, says, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” That is a settled thing, otherwise you are under law. Tube under law is to judge the flesh. Grace begets children, the law does not. The moment I get on the ground of law, I am making myself responsible to God for what He put Adam on to. If I were to say to my child, ‘I command you to love me, and if you do not, I will whip you,' could I ever expect to get love? The law is able to judge, but never to make a child. One is the test of the old man, the other is the gift of God to the new. If you think you can be under the law without being destroyed, you destroy the law. What brings me out of law, is the consciousness that I am cursed under it.

Then I come to another thing. Has God done nothing? Christ is the end of the law, has taken all the curse, died under it, and I enter into an entirely new place, Christ having gone through all this. I am a child after redemption is accomplished, or else I would be destroying the law. Christ has magnified it. He has gone and taken away the weight of the sin, and I am called a child. You cannot take the responsibility of a Christian unless you are a Christian. I have no claim of duty until I am in relationship to God. Law says, Do and live; but I have tried that. God brought the law in with a definite purpose. Take law now, and see how long you will love God with all your heart. The law must have righteousness; but I have a better one, cleansed from sin, made a son: then duties come from the relationship from which they flow. You say you abide in Christ: then you must walk as Christ walked. Now this brings us on the ground that the government of the world is outside the particular relationship in which you stand to God. Besides having the consciousness of the relationship, I have this care in providence also; “a sparrow falleth not to the ground without your Father.” I cannot get out of the consciousness of being a child. I may fail as a child, but I must be a child so to fail. Now there is a government of the world, but it is not directly applied to make a measure of good and evil. There was a direct dealing with a people; hereafter He will deal with the Jews by law, with Gentiles without law. If I have given my child no orders, I cannot punish him for

disobedience. God will judge this world in righteousness; He says not so to the churches. When the great white throne comes, (chap. 20,) there will be the direct application of judgment to soul and body. Besides the final judgment, we get God coming out in this book to punish the world for their iniquity. (Chap. 29.) Nothing in it relates to the Father and the Son, because the Spirit here is giving a title of God, which is to be the groundwork of the whole book. It is God in judicial dealings. Even when he is styled “Father,” (as in chap. 1. and 14.,) it is in relation to Jesus Christ, to the Lamb.

Thus, too, I find in chap. 1:4, not the Holy Ghost, but the seven Spirits of God sent out and judging all things. Then, when I hear of Christ, it is as the “Faithful Witness,” not as the sacrifice, or being at the right hand of God, but “Prince of the kings of the earth.” Where am I in all this? Am I only to be under the Almighty? That is not the way I know God—not the way I know Christ. Kings are of the earth, I shall be in heaven. I get nothing here which tells me what He will be for me; and yet so distinctly conscious is the heart of a believer of what Christ is for him, and he to Christ, that the instant He says, I am the Faithful Witness, we hear “unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” &c. I have got, through grace and redemption, into the relationship. I know Him; He is mine, He has made us kings and priests; if He reigns, I shall reign with Him. What is left out is the Revelation, is answered in the heart of the saint. Let me ask you, in passing, Have you got that? Let Christ be named in any way, is the link in your heart so plain, so distinct, so happy, that you own the relationship? Just as a child hearing his father is coming home after a long absence, his heart immediately responds to it, and he says, Oh, that is my father! Are you living in the consciousness that He loved you and washed you, and has made you a king and a priest? He washed me: that is the way I know Him.

We never get this by law. You may command yourself till you are tired, but you will never get into it thus. The law never forms any relationship with God, never gives any faith to the heart: not a fiber that hangs down from God can attach itself to a soul under law. The law gives no object. What does it tell use to look at? Why, at myself! It gives me nothing to trust in. We want something that will take us out of our wretched selves. I see Christ come down; I see that He loved me in all my sins. But how do you know God will have you? Have me! why, Christ came and died for me. I have One, who is just what I want, to take me out of myself. If He did come to me, as the blessed God, when I was a poor wandering sheep, there is something more: He laid down His life for me, and took me out of the place of death I was in, and put me into Himself. I am now in the second Adam, entitled to say I am not in the flesh but in the spirit, and so saved I stand as one alive from the dead. What would it be if I were not this? I should be in the flesh and lost. But I am not.

When you say your hope is in Christ what is it you mean! Is it in a living Christ who has not died? Is it a hope that He will die for you? You say, no. Is it in a Christ that has died for you? You may say, plea! Are you washed from your sins? because that is what He has done by dying. Do you say you are washed from some of your sins, but not all! That is nonsense, because He died for you before you ever committed any one sin. He gave Himself for you, stock and fruit and all. Perhaps your feeling is, I cannot say He died for me; I hope. Well, what Christ do you hope for? Believe in Him with all your heart, and there is not a single charge against you. If you can say he loved you, and washed you from your sins in His own blood, then you believe in Him and would not give Him up for all the world. Still you maintain you cannot say He died for you. But God says He has, and you must believe God. It is not the belief that you have an interest in Him that you are called to believe,

but to believe in Him. I do not say you will take it in at once. God may leave you awhile without the consciousness or enjoyment of it: that is quite possible: but, then, I say there is not a single sin against you. You may not be conscious of it from pride and self-righteousness. He smashes us to pieces that we may know there is no good in ourselves. You say, I do not know whether I have accepted Him. I tell you, God has accepted Him. Where the need is not felt, He may go on to break down the heart till we do feel it.

Turn to the end of the last chapter, verse 16, and you find the same thing. “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

Here He is in a peculiar and hidden way; not as Son of Man, as in that passage, “Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” How many would wail now if they saw Christ coming? Those to whom, when we bring Christ in, it is a terror to their consciences. The thought of the Lord's coming is terrible to a bad conscience or a selfish heart. “The bright and morning star!” How many would hail Him if He came now? The morning star is seen before the sun rises, seen by those who are not here for the sun to rise on. They are awake in the night, and being so, they have the knowledge of Christ in heaven. It is when Christ is hidden in God, where we by faith see Him as the morning star, while the world is asleep. We see Him inside the cloud, but when He comes out, “every eye shall see Him.” It is not merely the fact of being saved; that was at His first coming, but this is at His second coming. It is known in the heart of a child of God, I should say more properly of the Bride, in virtue of the relationship.

Having finished this book, all at once, the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Not only does the bride say it: if only she said it, he might not come; but you have the authority of a Divine Person for saying, Come. The Holy Spirit is down here; and He being in us, we have the very thing that gives the full value of the relationship; not as the seven Spirits governing, but as the Holy Ghost dwelling in the bride. And the effect of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us is also the Spirit of adoption. But now the peculiar character of Christ is as the Bridegroom. The moment Christ is named, she desires Him. It is Impossible that you can satisfy the heart of the believer without Christ. The more I know Him, the more I desire Him. As a Christian I have the consciousness of living in Christ. I have known Him on earth—I have the blessedness of a present relationship—I belong to heaven I am only a stranger on earth, taking a journey. Christ was in the world, not of it. The home and affection of that life were in heaven, to which it belonged. This being so, I should earnestly insist on the enjoyment of this relationship. We get out of this consciousness if we are not walking with God. You who have got out of the seventh of Romans cannot get back into it. You cannot be under the law if dead unto law. You cannot say, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” I either believe I am risen; or if my shield of faith is down, I may get into despair.

We find here the consciousness of relationship. Do you think we can say, Come, without that? He comes to set me before the judgment-seat, where all will be brought to light, and there will be nothing not manifested. I shall be in glory before then. Are all saints saying, Come? Where does the heart go? I ask why are saints not saying, Come? He does not blame, but says, “Let him that heareth say, Come.” First take the place of the bride, then say, Come. The moment you love Him, you will long for Him to come. The first thought is Christ; the second, the coming glory. There are precious souls to be saved, so we can wait for them to be gathered in. Quite right it is to wait, but

should you not like to see Him? Christ comes Himself. He wants us, not for anything in ourselves, but because He loves us. And is there nothing in your heart that echoes to His voice?

Prophecy concerns the government of God on the earth; but it does not touch the affections of my heart. I am not longing for Jerusalem to be built, or for Babylon to be destroyed, but for Christ. You may go first; better to wait there than here. But are you looking and longing for Christ? The Spirit of God has given to the conscience and then to the heart the consciousness of the relationship. What next? Am I indifferent to the world? Not so. That would not be the Spirit of Christ. I believe in One who loved and gave Himself for me, when I was a miserable sinner. When I was lost, I found this blessed One. But that is not all. That I might know and enjoy the consciousness of his love, He sent down his Spirit to dwell in me. I have not got Christ yet, but I have got the living water. Believers have the Spirit, but not the Bridegroom. There is a want in the heart that this world can never satisfy. I know what it was to be athirst, but I have got what satisfied my thirst. We long for more because we like it, not because we are athirst. Having the Spirit, I therefore say to the poor world, You may be seeking like Noah's dove to get rest, and cannot. The soul may try to hide its nakedness, but it will not do. Now there are many things which may satisfy the old man—vanity, and a variety of other things. When I look at the poor world, if I have a heart I long for their salvation. here I am enjoying Christ—His love a spring of joy in my own soul everlasting, because He is everlasting. How did I get it? It is all the free goodness and grace of God. I look at Christ, and feel I am the bride, and long for the Bridegroom. Therefore I say, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” If I have the Spirit, which makes me look for the Bridegroom, I have that which makes me say, Come. To say that earnestly, I must have the consciousness of having my own thirst quenched. I shall be a sorry witness for Christ if I have not peace myself. That would not do at all; because He does give peace. And I will tell you how perfect the peace. It is “my peace” — “my joy” — “my glory.” “The glory thou hast given me, I have given them.” The way Christ gives, is giving us Himself, and all that he has in Himself, making us partakers of the divine nature. That is the Christ we have to do with. We are in the world to be a witness of what He is: that is our responsibility as Christians. All our thoughts and feelings are to flow from the relationship to Him into which we are brought. Can I think God would have me unhappy When I believe that Christ drank that cup of wrath, was it to leave my peace uncertain? We want warnings, but what for How to behave as children—as Christians. They are addressed to Christians, not founded upon any doubt or uncertainty as to what Christ has done for us, but on the contrary, his word is, “a little while and I will come,” and fetch you home, and my joy will be to make you happy. Meanwhile, the Holy Ghost in our hearts gives us the present, living, conscious enjoyment of relationship. He will have His Bride in the house He has built for her—in the Father's house.

The Lord gave us not only to know it, but to abound in thanksgiving and praise for what he is going to display. And if there is a poor heart not knowing Him, to it I say, “Come,” and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin.

Exeter.

Chapter 131

Object of Prophecy

In ordinary works on prophecy it is assumed as an admitted, incontestable truth, and the church is specially regarded in Daniel; and now, many believe that a Godly Jewish remnant is in question, and cite the word in proof. This is a capital point. Why not discuss it g Why preserve a silence so absolute? It is necessary to their system that it should be the church; but they cannot demonstrate and assume it without proof. In truth, it is an utterly false principle, that God guides the world in view of the church. Christ and His glory are the end of God's counsels. The church will share his glory, and consequently it also enters into His counsels.

But the difference is complete, because, if Christ is the end, the Jews, of whom He will be head and chief, are the object of God's government as to the world, and even the arrangements of the nations. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Now, this revealed end of God's arrangements on the earth is set aside, and the church, or heavenly people, are substituted for Israel. It will be readily understood how completely all is changed thereby. For example, the greatest part of the prophecies apply to a time when Israel is more or less owned on earth. This fact is overlooked and shut out of the common system. Now, when Israel is owned as the object of God's dealings, the church, where there is neither Jew or Gentile, is necessarily out of the scene. It is no longer a question of long years, but of “a short work” of God on the earth, of days whereof it is said, except they were shortened “no flesh could be saved” —a passage where the Savior Himself directs our attention to Daniel and the predictions of the time, times, and an half, or 1260 days.

This, then, goes to the bottom of the question in dispute between the two great schools. The historicalists in general avoid it carefully. They talk of the approaching tribulation as if it must needs be for the church's portion to pass through it. They leave aside the Jews, as if they certainly were not concerned in such predictions; and thus the whole subject is involved in endless perplexity. Now this confusion of the church with Israel, profoundly injurious in spiritual things, becomes capital in prophecy, and most questions treated by these writers depend on the solution of this; because if Israel means Israel, the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, &c., have an application which is not admitted or seen, and the system of interpretation, save certain analogies, is unsound from one end to the other. To omit the Jews, and apply all to the church, is confusion; to do so without discussing the point, is to build without any foundation whatever. If the predictions of Daniel refer to the time when the Jews enter the scene of prophecy, all is overthrown. Nov the Spirit says so several times in the last chapters of the prophecy, (Dan. 10:14; 11:14, 30, 31; 12:1, 7. 11,) where these numbers occur; and the Lord, in speaking of Jerusalem and the great tribulation, sends us to the prophecies of Daniel, where these numbers are given.

These men talk as if the statue in Dan. 2 were the key of prophecy, and the abridged plan of God's government of the nations. On the contrary, God's government, of the nations properly called,

ceases during the duration of the powers represented by the statue; though, of course, His providence always acts. It. is the time of the Gentiles, during which Israel is set aside, and God's government of the Gentiles, with Israel as the center and pivot of his rule. Before the statue, there were various independent nations which were the fruit of the judgment of Babel, and Israel occupied the central place, and God has established His throne there, whence He governed all the nations in relation to His people. Then came Israel's sin, ruin, and judgment, and at the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldean king, the divine glory visits the city, and leaves it for a season. (Ezek. 1:11.) Then God set up imperial unity in the hands of a Gentile chief over the known world, His own people being in bondage, and Jerusalem trodden down by them till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Then He will resume His direct government, and judge the imperial power, which will have rebelled against Him. Is God's government of the earth confined to the time during which He has delivered His people to His enemies? Clearly, the period of His people's captivity is not properly, still less exclusively, the period of His government, and the system which considers it as such and which takes neither of this people nor of the mass of the prophecies which apply to them, is necessarily false. Daniel was of the captivity, and God gave His servant the divine light, which showed He had not forgotten His people, and to Daniel speaks naturally and only of this time. But his most detailed prophecy was after the Jews returned to Jerusalem—a circumstance which shows that the true captivity, the times of the Gentiles, still existed. Daniel just goes up to the judgment and the beginning of God's covenant, and there always he stops. He never describes that government or its effects; he abides prophet of the captivity.

The system of the nations and of Israel chosen, then, subsisted till Nebuchadnezzar. It will be renewed in a more excellent manner when the beast is destroyed. The interval is the time of the beasts, of the Gentiles, in contrast with the government of God.

Scripture Query and Answer: Offerings

2.

Q. What is the difference of the offerings of sweet savor, those for sin, &c., and those of atonement-day?

A. The sacrifices spoken of in the first chapters of Leviticus present to us, 1-3, the intrinsic value and character of the sacrifice and self-offering of Christ, as estimated in communion. In Chap. 4 - 6, 7, the case is put, “if a soul sin?” that is, it is to meet the positive need of a soul, its positive sin, of whatever character; and he is, or they are, if it be all the people, forgiven. Atonement or forgiveness is not spoken of in the sacrifice for the high priest. The statement may be carried on, as all intercourse is interrupted for the people, to verse 20; if not, it is an exceptional case. In the 16th chap of Leviticus, its seems to me more the establishment of relationship with God; or, more accurately, the ground of relationship. We do not hear of forgiveness. Sin is put away; the character of God is made good and glorified, and the sins all borne away—uncleanness removed, so that things are clean. The priest goes in within the wail, so as to give God the ground of a relationship with the people by blood when sin was there, and the tabernacle was sprinkled so as to be suited for God's dwelling, and then all the sins carried away into a land not inhabited. Thus God could be with the people. Personal, individual forgiveness was made good by the sin and trespass offerings. This double character was partly connected with the imperfect character of the sacrifices which required repetition, and the van not being rent. But we acquire thus the knowledge of the double aspect of the work; relationship, sinless, righteous relationship and forgiveness. This subject is treated in Heb. 9; 10, where the day of atonement having been stated, as in chap. ix., as once for all, leading God's people to look for Christ, for whom He will come apart from all sin, because He has put it away for them, chap. 10. applies it, and shows that the yearly sacrifices (Lev. 16.) served as continual remembrance of sins, that they were not put away. That Christ has offered Himself, setting aside through the body, prepared for Him, all the sacrifices of Leviticus of every kind, in the work that He did as accomplishing the imperfect figure of Lev. 16., because, by that work which He wrought, to reconcile us to God, He bore and put away all sin for those that believe on Him, so that there is no more sacrifice for sin. The general statement of chap. 9:12-14 takes up the day of atonement and the red heifer, and shows the purging of the conscience by Christ. This is opened out in application in chap. 10.

Chapter 133

Oh That My Bark Were Safe on Shore

Oh! that my bark were safe on shore,

Lodged in the port where Jesus is;

Where neither winds nor waters roar,

And all the tides are tides of bliss.

But while my floating bark shall ride

And boat on life's tempestuous sea,

My dang'rous, course may Jesus guide,

May He my constant pilot be!

Though surges swell as mountains high-

Though death and dangers threaten me-

Though sleep may seem to close Thine eye,

Stay faithless fear from waking Thee.

On the dark wave may I behold

Thy Spirit form, my Lord Most High.

And with these words my heart enfold,

"Be not afraid; 'tis I! 'tis I!”

Thus have I found that blessed shore-

That port whose tides are only bliss;

And though the winds and waters roar,

Know Him, my pilot and my peace.

Scripture Query and Answer: Others

3.

Q. 1 Cor. 14:29. —Does “the other” mean the rest of the prophets? —G.

A. The question is a mistake. The prophets are not considered as a distinct body of persons at all. It is not of ο■ προφηται, but such. In verse 31 it is stated, “You can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” “Let the prophets speak” is a false translation; so is “the spirits of the prophets.” It should be, “the spirits of prophets.” Hence the whole question falls to the ground. The passage is the same as if the apostle should say, “(As to) prophets, let two or three persons speak and the rest judge. If there be a revelation to another person sitting by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets; (i.e., he can control himself, and stop, if another has anything to say.) For God is not the author of confusion, (two or three speaking at once), but of order, as in all assemblies of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the assemblies, for it is not permitted to them to speak.” To all others it is permitted, if the Spirit gives them anything.

Chapter 135

Scripture Query and Answer: Partakers of the Divine Nature

1.

Q. 2 Peter 1:4. J. V. desires to know what is meant by being “partakers of the divine nature,” and how and when this is effected. Does any other Scripture speak of it?

A. Our partaking of the divine nature is a real thing. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. All are born of God. Christ is become our life. He is that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. And hence it can be said, “Which thing is true in him and in you.” But that life was the light of men. Christ was the image of the invisible God. This life was a true, moral, subsisting thing, which could be communicated. There is a divine power in it which contains and unfolds all things that pertain to life and godliness. It is faith which lays hold, by the power of the Spirit of God, on that which is life—that is, Christ. We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Christ is the Word—the expression and revelation of all that is in God; and we, in knowing Him, are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. The Word, as a testimony, is the seed of life when brought into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost; because it is the revelation of Christ, and the bringing in, by that power, of Christ livingly there. It is Christ, by the word, by faith, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the operation being the operation of God. But it is by the revelation of Christ. Hence, we are said to be “begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word.” (1 Peter 1., and James). “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” And so it is expressed here. Grace and peace are to be multiplied, “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” “According as his divine power path given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us by glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by him we might be made partakers of the divine nature.” It is not a law to flesh, calling them to walk rightly where man already was; but a call by glory and virtue to get on to this new place of peace in which Christ is, and that by the revelation of Him glorified, and the assurance of our portion in it. But thus, by divine power, it is livingly communicated to the soul. But this is the glory of the divine nature in a man, into which we are to be formed. But we are livingly formed by its revelation in the power of the Holy Ghost now. It is the real communication of the divide nature. Only Peter looks at it, even in its affections, desires, qualities as under the impress of the revelation of Christ, rather than as the simple fact of life. But all Scripture tells the same truth. For every nature has its own character, knowledge by which it lives and is formed, its tastes, and spirit, and objects, which make it what it is, though its existence is the first and wonderful truth.

Chapter 136

The Passage of the Jordan

(Josh. 3)

We often lose a good deal of the practical value of the teaching that is given us in this book, from thoughts that we have probably received from the days of childhood. Thus the passing of the Jordan is often thought to mean passing the boundary that divides us from earth into heaven when we die—that it is entering into the heavenly Canaan through death. I do not doubt that it is passing over the boundary of death, and entering into Canaan; but it is not when we leave this world, but while we are still in the body. It is that which God has given us in the resurrection of Christ, and in His present taking possession of the heavenly places for us. And what will make this plain to all is, that when we get to heaven, we have not got to fight with the Canaanites, nor with anything answering to them. Fighting is not the business of heaven; but it was the special business of the people who passed over Jordan. It was more their business than any other thing. It was not so much the work before them in the wilderness. There, the great lesson was dependence upon the living God, and, in the next place, the learning of self. There God was proving what the hearts or His people were; and, what was infinitely better, the people were proving, or ought to have been proving, what the living God was who had taken His place in their midst. But conflict with enemies was not the great thought of the wilderness. And therefore we only find them meeting with the Amalekites, at one time, or with the Midianites at another. The wars that they had in the wilderness were comparatively few: whereas, when they passed the Jordan, for a time there was nothing but war. The passing of the Jordan, therefore, does not mean the literal death of the body, but the death of Christ, and our union with Him; whereby we are even now planted in heavenly places—and that too for the purpose of our wrestling not with flesh and. blood; for, as the Apostle Paul tells us. “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.”

Now there is a good deal of the meaning and power of this lost by the children of God, front the idea that the main part of our conflict is with ourselves. That is not at all the case. Self-judgment is a different thing from conflict. Daily self-judgment is most right and needful—the constant review of our ways and. judgment of self, and of the flesh. But there is a restless, indefatigable, subtle enemy, that makes it his main business, not merely to entice the Christian into sin through the flesh, but, by darkening the truth, to hinder souls from enjoying the fullness of the blessings of God's grace and God's glory in His beloved Son! That is the main work of the devil, as far as the Church is concerned, and that is the special thing which we have to watch against. We may examine and judge ourselves day by day, and it is a very right thing. But if the soul is ever so jealous about that, it is not enough. It may, at the same time, be hindered from the full enjoyment of the Lord Jesus. One main reason is this: the Lord has put before us an inheritance of blessing—“all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” But we are slow to take advantage of it. We think, perhaps, that it is presumption; or some may fancy that, instead of venturing on such a subject, it would be more practical to be dwelling upon our ordinary duties in life. But this would not be enough, because it is not Christianity. It is not the measure of what the Lord has called us to

now. There are certain things that all saints from the beginning of the world have walked in. It never was right at any time for a saint to he, or to be dishonest, or to do anything immoral. In all dispensations there are certain moral duties that necessarily are inseparable) From life in God. But this is not Christianity. A saint may do all that, and yet not enjoy what I call Christianity. To be thoroughly Christian is to enter into the calling that is now ours through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what is represented by the passing of the Jordan. It presents the same death and resurrection of Christ that had been previously given us in the passage of the Red Sea, though in a different point of view. The death and resurrection of Christ as seen there is Christ separating us from the world—Christ bringing us out of Egypt. But all that may be, and we may not have the least enjoyment of our heavenly blessing's.

We may thank God that we are delivered—that we are not going to be cast into hell. But is that enough? It is not. If we stop short there, if we do not enter further into our blessings, Satan will be sure, at one time or another, to gain a complete victory over us, as he did over the Israelites. For instead of their conquering and driving out their enemies, we read of Canaanites, Perizzites, Jebusites, &c. who kept their possessions in peace, in spite of Israel. And so it is with many a child of God. They are kept in evil that does not appear to be such, and is not considered so, because it is not moral evil. For even a mere man is bound not to sin morally. But a Christian is a person who has his eyes upon the Lord. Any one can judge an outwardly immoral thing, but very few know that what even godly people are doing, is entirely contrary to the Holy Ghost and to God Himself. There are many so-called religions practices that are sins, and these are what the Christian ought to have his eyes open to. The Lord works this in us by giving us to know that we have got a heavenly inheritance. The Lord Jesus, by His death and resurrection, not only has brought. us out of Egypt and into the wilderness, but into heaven itself in spirit. We are even now seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We have got now the stamp of heaven upon us, and God is looking that we may walk in the sense of this great privilege, making advances, gaining victories, and wresting what Christ has given us out of the hands of the enemy. Supposing a person truly converted to God, and made happy in the knowledge of his sin being forever put away, the next thing is—he does not know what to do to please God, or how to worship God. If he simply goes on as he was before, assuming that what he did when he was unconverted as to these things, is what he is to do now, (save only, of course, with a new aim and power,) he cannot make any progress; and it is thus that the devil keeps possession of the place of blessing, and shuts out the heir of glory from his calling and inheritance. Of course, I only speak of the matter of practical enjoyment. The! enemies are still undisturbed in the land. But we ought to be seeing what the inheritance is that the Lord has assigned to us, and whether our worship and our walk are really according to God, and suitable to the place in which He has set us. If you make morality your standard, you will be sure to fall below what you propose. Whatever we put before us as our criterion, there will always be a falling short. If we have Christ risen and Christ in heaven as our object, we shall prove the power of His resurrection, not only in lifting us up when we are conscious of our exceeding shortcoming, but in strengthening us “to press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

In the beautiful scene before us, we find that the people passed dry-shod over Jordan. And what made it so remarkable was, its being the very time when the river was overflowing its banks; it was fuller then than at any other season. So in the death of Christ there was the fullest possible

outpouring of God's wrath; and upon his beloved Son, sin—our sin has been judged to the uttermost. And. as in the type, they passed over as if there had been no Jordan at all, so, in the realty for us, there remains no judgment, but fullness of blessing. We are passed from death unto life, and are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

And now, when they have entered the land. what do we find? The manna ceases—they must eat of the old corn of the land. The food that had sustained them in the wilderness does not any longer suffice. And what is the old corn of the land. It is Christ, as the manna also was; but Christ in another way: it is the food of resurrection. The corn of the land was the fruit of the seed that had been sown in the land, and that had died and sprung up again. It was Christ in resurrection. The Lord grant that our souls may feed upon Him thus! To say that Christ thus known is too high for us,—to be content without enjoying Him thus, is thus far to be content without Christ.

Chapter 137

A Few Words on Preaching

(FROM A LETTER)

I BELIEVE we ought to preach the love of God to sinners and appeal to them more than we do, though I do so much more when addressing a mixed crowd of probably careless people than in the assemblies where you would hear me. In these you must remember that the great body are believers and want rather to be better founded than called. All I look for is that the preaching should be such that it should convict of sin, and the impossibility of sin and God going together, so that it should be well understood that there is need of reconciling. And here Christ at once comes in, and atonement, and righteousness. Holiness precludes all sin from God, righteousness judges it. This, I believe, the sinner should understand; so that he should know what love applies to, yet that love should be fully preached. It does itself often convict of sin, for the conscience has often its wants already, and this draws them out; so that men find consciously where they are. But conviction of sin under righteousness is a very useful thing if grace be fully preached with it, and both unite in Christ. I think it very important that preachers should go to the world, especially now, with a message of distinct love to them. All I desire is that it should be love manifested in Christ, so as to bring out the sinner's condition to himself; that it should not be mere easiness as to sin; that it is a gracious love to sinners—grace abounding over sin—grace reigning through righteousness, than which nothing is more perfectly grace. Sometimes I think the love of God is so preached, as if it was a kind of boon of the sinner to accept it. It is God's joy. Still as a sinner, his being a debtor to God ought to be before his soul. I count evangelizing the happiest service. Yet my heart yearns over the saints and the glory of Christ in the truth too. Happily there is One above who does all.

Chapter 138

The Presence of the Comforter

John 14

Having spoken on other occasions, first, of the quickening of the Spirit, secondly, of the Spirit as a “well of water springing up to everlasting life,” and, thirdly of the Spirit as rivers of living water flowing out from us, I now desire to look at the further blessings connected with the Spirit of God dwelling in and with us, the personally-present Comforter, no less than the power of life, communion and communication.

We have seen how the quickening is connected closely with Christ; and not only so, but entirely and singly with Him—born anew of the Second Adam, in contrast with the first. Then we saw the Spirit of God become a spring or source of divine refreshment in us; and there are the blessings flowing from it. There are also blessings and relationships flowing from this—there is not only power given through the Spirit dwelling, but there are relationships resulting from the redemption accomplished. There are not desires only, but development and power of union and communion.

We have the Holy Spirit in virtue of the work of Christ, which gives perfect rest. In Christ we are set in the presence of God. The Spirit unfolds all the consequences of our being thus brought into God's presence by the work of Christ—the consequences in glory, the glory to come. And, more than that, the Spirit of God becomes the power for the exercise of those relationships. No man can learn the blessing of a relationship, except in the exercise of it. As in nature it is so, so with the divine relationship. All depends on the presence of the Holy Spirit down here. Two great truths are connected with this—first, the accepted man, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, (not only man in creation,) is in heaven. The One who came down is gone up, and is in the presence of God. Secondly, the Holy Ghost down here associates us with all that Christ is in heaven. All that the Church has here is founded on this.

Thus we have three important truths as the result. First, the Holy Ghost makes my person His temple; therefore it is said, “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,” &c. I must use my body as a vessel, an instrument of the Holy Ghost. His presence is the measure of my condition: His dwelling in me is the measure of my conduct. It is joy to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Power also is the result of being anointed with oil. “We have an unction from the Holy One,” &c. “Led of the Spirit.” The fact of the Holy Ghost being here is the immense principle of the Christian's life. The next thing is, we are brought into fellowship with the Son; and the next is fellowship with the Father. When Christ ascended on high, by virtue of His having become man, He could say, “I ascend to my God and your God;” and in virtue of His being God, He could say, “to my Father and your Father.” His having made us children by adoption, we have this special relationship with God: and so true, so deep, so real a thing is it, that it is said, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,” &c.

Thus “being rooted and grounded in love,” that we may “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” be filled with all the fullness of God. This is the amazing, infinite sphere and measure of blessing which we are brought into by the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost dwells in us. He

becomes the spring of affections and feelings suitable to the relationship. It cannot be otherwise. A man feels it in his prayers. He finds his heart going out after the Lord. He has desires he cannot help expressing about earthly circumstances and the Church, &c. (See Ananias, Acts 9:13.) There is that kind of intimacy between him and Christ that he can reason as it were with Him. “Lord, I have heard by many of this man.” Again, if it is a question which concerns me as a child, I naturally ask my Father for certain things I want; but the soul cannot have freedom of intercourse with God in His majesty, unless our hearts are clear before Him as our Father. We want, in certain things, to go to God, as God, and in others as Father, and in both we have this blessed freedom of intercourse through the Spirit as well as that or the members of the body, with the Head, Christ. All are the free gift of God. When I fail, I fly off to my Father to get help, for I cannot have communion with God when I have failed; and as a member of the body I need the Holy Ghost to take of Christ's and make it mine, because His. This is not community. All is gift to us, but all that Christ has is in glory, as man is ours, for He has given it to us. The Father gives another Comforter that He may abide with you forever. This is consequent upon Christ's going up to the Father. Christ goes up and receives the Holy Ghost, because of what He has done for others. As Head of the Church He receives it, that the members may share it with Him. Jesus received the Holy Ghost down here for service. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. (Acts 10) But what is said in Acts 2:33? Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,” &c. In the one case He was sealed by the Spirit at His baptism; in the other He received the Holy Ghost, to shed abroad in us at His ascension to the Father, “The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father.”

He calls Him “another,” because Christ Himself was their Comforter while He was with them. Christ was to go away; He could not abide here; He must ascend into heaven. By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place.” Christ being our Advocate there, the Spirit comes to advocate our cause here.

It is said “The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.” The world having broken with Christ, can have nothing whatever to do with this Spirit of truth.

(Ver. 17.) They were not merely to have this Comforter as they had had Christ, who only abode as their companion, and then went away, but He was also to be in them, and not only with them.

In verse 16, it is, “I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter.” Here Christ is obtaining the Holy Ghost for them.

In chap. 15:26, it is, “the Comforter whom I will send unto you.” As divine head of the Church, though a man, He had a title to dispose of everything., and He sends the Holy Ghost. See also chapter 16:7. Then, another thing is, the Father sends Him in Christ's name, because of His acceptance of His work. John 14:26. The immense, the unchangeable resting place of all blessing is the name of Jesus.

As to its present condition, all connection between the world and God is closed. (I do not speak of providence.) The world then sees Him no more but Christ says, “Ye see me.” What an immense difference between the church and the world! We see the blessed one—He is the object before us. The Son having been rejected from the world, all communion between the world and the Father is closed. They say, “'This is the heir; come, let us kill him.” Now is the judgment of this world. “Upon

us the ends of the world are come." "But ye see me." When the world sees nothing, we, in the power of faith, "behold him who is invisible." Our eyes thus always resting on One in whom the Father finds delight (not the natural eyes, of course,) I know that my affections are set upon the One in whom the Father is fully satisfied. There was an adequate motive for the Father to love Christ. It is undiscerned by us in our natural minds, but the Holy Ghost brings us into blessed communion with the Father's mind. Because I live ye shall live also." Believing in Him makes me know what His estimate is of Christ, and it is also by virtue of believing in Him that I have life. Not only is the object the same as the Father Himself has, but the life is the same. "Because I live, ye shall live also." He unfolds this connection afterward, ver. 20— "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

This is not said at the beginning of the chapter. It could not be said, until there was union through the Holy Ghost being given. They ought to have known the Father by Christ's being with them, but they could not know this farther thing "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father," &c. When the holy Ghost was sent down, the Church knew not only the union of the Father and the Son, but also their own union— "ye in me." The Holy Ghost then leads to Christ as the object of our souls—to Christ as our life, and to our knowledge of Christ in the Father, and we in Christ. This source of life is in us. "Because I live ye shall live also." This is more than the fact of the security of life, but that the very one in whom He lived was to be the source of life to them. We have then the Spirit of adoption crying, Abba Father, instead of bondage. Viewed in connection with the Father Himself, and with the Son it is "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

All this is in virtue of accomplished redemption. The Son having taken His place at the right hand of God, my relationship then is founded on Christ, and in all the perfectness of Christ's standing before God for me. But the power to enjoy it is the Holy Ghost. Christ takes His place on high. Sin is all gone, for He has borne it away, perfectly atoned for it, in having been made sin. He has glorified God about this very thing—sin. The holiness and the love of God have been made known by the dealing with sin upon the cross in a way in which nothing else could have revealed them. Having done it all, Christ enters the presence of God, the new man; and where He is, we are. Therefore the place of the Church involves entire deliverance from all fear, because having "the Spirit of adoption". I am not before God now as my Judge, because I am His child. My very existence as a Christian flows from this. I am born of God—a child in the house. In virtue of being thus born, I have my existence before God as His child—the work of Christ, of course, being the foundation. He has borne the judgment: law, sin, &c., are all gone; and I am free from every charge before God.

The reasoning goes on, (Rom. 8:18,) If children then heirs, &c. All we have and are will be manifested in glory; but we are now speaking of the position, before the Father, with Christ, the model-man, "the first-born of many brethren." Have we lost anything of the majesty of God in all this? Certainly not. Christ has brought God to us in all His glorious attributes, instead of taking from them. The soul has all the holiness, majesty, as well as love, brought home to it. Reverence and adoration are wrought there by the Holy Ghost. A son does not the less admire the excellence of his father, because he is his father.

All. true worship is the returning back to God from us of all that the Holy Ghost has revealed to us of God. (Chap. 14:26.) "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." It

is said, “The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.” This is the full character of our relationship with Christ. “He shall bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you:” not only what He is, but this is the remembrance of all that Christ expressed on earth; and it is a delight to my heart. Every word that came from Christ's mouth was God speaking through a man. Comfort, wisdom, love, all came from Him in perfection. “Thou hast given me the tongue of the learned,” &c. The Spirit does not, of course, reveal to me Christ as now on earth; but I have not lost Christ a bit, as to what He was down here. He brings all that He was to our remembrance now. The Holy Ghost gives me Christ as the manna that came down from heaven, as well as what He is now as the hidden manna and that is giving me to feed on Christ. Mark the difference between Christ's commandments and those under the law. Christ was life, and all His commands were the expression of that life which He had in Himself. So with us; for we have the life in Him. Christ is our life, and His precepts are the guidance of the life which we have in Him. Did life result from what we are doing, all would be over with us. I see the ensnaring world all around me; but I have not only the word of Christ to direct me, but I have the power of divine life Christ Himself—to help me. (1 John 1) There is an object before me; but there is more—direction for my feet in what He is.

Chap xvi. 13. “I have many things to say to you,” &c. It is not here the path, and teaching in general as we have had, but when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth.” This is a present thing; “He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you” —different from His being the remembrancer of what He had said while He was with them on earth. What He hears He speaks; these are the things in heaven brought down to earth, by the Spirit who is on earth. It is the revelation by the Spirit of all that Christ is. Having taken this place on earth as the servant, what He hears He makes known to us; and Christ is now in heaven for us.

The Spirit also shows us “things to come.” He brings out all the glory before us, the future hope. I thus look forward to the time when God shall unite all in Christ as head— “in the dispensation of the fullness of times that he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” In the future all the glory is to be Christ's and we are heirs of it. It is to come, but the Holy Ghost makes it known as ours. Thus I look forward to the time when all is manifested, and I am to share it with Him. The glory belongs to one who has identified Himself with and suffered for me. It belongs to Him who “loved me and gave Himself for me,” and all His glory is ours, and this is not all, for He says, “All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.” Thus I am to know what that is—yes, my soul is to know all the glory which this humbled Christ is to have. “He will guide me into all truth.” Everything is set in its right place in the soul, Christ being the center of all and all centered in Christ. All is our own as members of His body, &c.. If God has set Him to be head over all, it is to His Church. The Holy Spirit leads us not only into the hope of the future glory, but also into the consequences of union with the Lord Jesus Christ now in the most intimate relationship possible. The Holy Ghost shows us in Christ all the affections of Christ in exercise towards us, by virtue of that union as the bride of Christ the Son, as Ephesians goes on to show; not only how the head is connected with the body, but the husband with the wife. “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church.” This is enjoined not only as a duty, but according to the example of Christ Himself. “No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.” There is this ministry of Christ towards us because of the relationship. Mark the double character of holiness and power there is in this. Take care you do not grieve the Holy Spirit who brings you

into the enjoyment of all this. Whatever is of the world and of the flesh grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed, &c. It is the measure of what becomes a Christian—a spiritual man.

Then, as in power, we are to be filled with the Spirit—so filled, that as to our place in heaven, we shall be all joy. In the fullness of communion the soul gets its place in the heavenly choir, singing, and making melody to the Lord: But, then, I am in this world of sorrow, and what am I to do? See God in it all, “giving thanks always for all things unto God and our Father,” “rejoicing in tribulations.” It naturally takes some time to work this thankfulness in us, but of Jesus it is said, when He was rejected by Chorazin and Bethsaida, “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee.” He saw God in it—and so, when we can see sorrow coming from God, that His hand is in it, we can say, Oh! then I will thank thee for it. It is not so directly with us sometimes, but it is wrought in the soul afterward, when the risings of the flesh are subdued.

Being filled with the Spirit is having Christ the actual source of all that arises in us of thoughts and feelings. A luau's spirituality is measured by this. When there is nothing else but Christ, we are filled with the Spirit. What liberty is this! What freedom from sin and all besides to serve God! The liberty of the saint must be a holy liberty. “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death.” We have the spirit of adoption, founded on redemption; thus we have liberty towards God and from Satan. What would have been taking Christ's liberty from Him if it had been possible, would have been hindering His doing the Father's will.

There are two things for us to think of from this subject—first, the amazing grace which has set us in such a place, even as the temple of the Holy Ghost; secondly, how we are called upon not to grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, that we may not occupy Him with our faults and failings, instead of with those blessed things which are ours in Christ.

May He keep Our affections fresh and happy in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Psalm 8

In Psa. 1 we saw the righteous man, delighting in the law and the normal results of the earthly government of God as to just and unjust. Then, Psa. 2 declared that, in spite of all the world, He will bring in His incarnate Son, and set Him as king on the holy hill of Zion; the latter exhibiting the counsels, as the former did the governmental principles, of God. Psa. 3-8 express the exercises of the godly amongst the ungodly who are in power. In these psalms, consequently, we hear the righteous remnant looking for the Lord's coming in judgment to sustain their faith and make good His word; but they pass through every sort of trial, for the circumstances suppose that Christ is not reigning over the earth, and that evil is not yet judged. God is standing back as it were; nevertheless, He turns these trials of circumstances and exercises of heart of the godly to their profit, a blessing much deeper than if the judgment fell at once on the ungodly.

Psa. 8 is of another character. Jehovah is to be glorified in the earth, as well as His glory to be set above the heavens. As a whole, we know this has not been yet. The Father's name has been declared, and is now, to the hearts of the children. The Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. But never yet has the name of Jehovah become excellent in all the earth. One psalm announces that it is to be universally glorified here below. It will be when Christ takes the government of the universe. But this depends on His coming, (1 Cor. 15.) when the dead saints rise, and the living saints are changed. He is head over all things to the church, which is His body. (Eph. 1) This we do not yet see with our eyes; but we do by faith see Jesus already crowned, the witness and pledge of all the rest. (Heb. 2) The Church meanwhile is being gathered. When He enters on the kingdom, we shall come and reign with Him. The only thing in which, as a Christian. I can separate myself from Christ, is where He was made sin. To look at His glory is to look at our own; and He, the glorified man, is exalted above all creatures, and has dominion over all the works of God's hand.

From Luke 9. we learn, that being morally rejected as the Christ or Messiah, Jesus would not set Himself up as king. Then, He takes another title—Son of man," and as such, He must suffer. he does not permit that He should be proclaimed any more as the Christ of Psa. 2, but falls back on the name of "Son of Man," as in Psa. 8 He must mire) before the glory, and be exalted in heaven, before He takes the earthly crowns. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." As Son of man, He is to have all things under Him, and not merely the throne of Zion. That is to he accomplished too, but, according to Isa. 49, He is to have the Gentiles also. Yea, God will gather together in one all things in Christ, whether things on earth or things in heaven; and we shall be the heavenly Eve of the last Adam—the Lord from heaven. In the Psalms we find the Christ we are associated with, but not our association with Him. The scheme of divine government there supposed has not yet begun. Christ is to be king, and this over the earth. Psalms 2 and 8 are prophetic. He has not yet broken the nations with a rod of iron. His anger is to fall on the rebellious kings before the predicted reign of blessing commences. We are now, as it were, associated with Aaron in the sanctuary, before He comes out to the deliverance and salvation of His earthly people.

Chapter 140

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 1-4

(Psa. 1-4.)

My purpose in this series of papers is not to interpret the Psalms, but to draw from them some portion of the spiritual instruction and edification they afford our souls. The interpretation has been sought to be given elsewhere. The Psalms afford us special light on the government of God and the sympathies of the Spirit of Christ with his people. This, in the first instance, has the Jews for its object and center of display. Still, in making allowance for the difference of their state and ours, and of the relationship of a people with Jehovah and children with a Father, God's ways in government apply to us Christians also. If it is not the highest ground on which a Christian is viewed, for that is heavenly, it is a most important and interesting one, and brings out all the tenderest displays of divine care, the care of Him who counts the very hairs of our head, and the seriousness and vigilance required in walking before God, who never swerves from His holy ways, who is not mocked, nor withdraws His eyes from the righteous, though all be the ministration of His grace for perfecting us according to their ways before Him. Of this application of the Government of God to the Christian's ways, the Epistles of Peter are more especially the witness. See, for example, 1 Peter 1:17; 3:10-15, and the spirit and tenor of the whole Epistle. This government in the 2nd Eph. is carried on to the consummation of all things. The first is more the government of the righteous, the second the judgment of the wicked, though that judgment, as closing the power of evil and the deliverance of the just, be alluded to in the first also. He was the apostle of the circumcision, and this subject came specially under his eye in teaching.

I. This government in the earth is plainly pointed out in the first Psalm and the character of those whom that government blesses. He it is who keeps separate from the wicked in his way, and delights in the law of Jehovah and meditates on it. Submission to the Christ, as the depositary of this government in God's counsels at the close of this time of trial, is the subject of the second. Only a few words on the first of these two Psalms, which lay the basis of all the rest. The counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful are avoided. While here connected with human responsibility in walk, yet it is being kept from the evil. I do not desire to spin out the force of the words, but a few remarks may be made on these words. The ungodly have plans, counsels of their own will, their own way of viewing things and arrangements to obtain their purpose. There the just is not found. The sinner has a path in which he walks, pleasing himself there: the just does not walk with him. The scornful are at ease, despising God. There the just will not sit. Judgment will come and such will not be allowed to stand in the congregation of the just then brought to rest by the glory of God.

II. The second Psalm announces the establishment of Christ's earthly triumph and royalty in Zion, when the heathen shall be given Him for an inheritance. This is not fulfilled. The government of God does not secure the good from suffering as it will then, but turns suffering to spiritual blessing and restrains the remainder of wrath, giving a glorious reward for our little sorrows. But for us a Father's name is revealed in them. We call on the Father who, without respect of persons, judges

according to every man's work, and we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed. Here kings are called on to submit before the coming judgment of the earth. But this is not yet executed and we have to learn our own lesson in patience. This the Psalms will teach us.

Let us see the lessons of the first Psalms which follow. Troublers are multiplied, but the first thought of faith is “Lord.” There the spirit is at home and looks at troublers from thence. Jehovah is thus trusted. When “Lord” comes in the heart before those that trouble me, all is well. Our spirit sees him concerned in matters and is at peace. He is a glory, shield, and lifter up. Another point is, it is not a lazy, listless view of evil and good, nor listless confidence. Desire and dependence are active, the links of the soul with Jehovah. “I cried and He heard.” That is certain. That is the confidence that if we ask anything according to His will He hears, and if He hears, we have the petition. We do not desire, if sincere, to have anything not according to His will; but it is an immense thing, in the midst of trial and difficulty, to be sure of God's hearing, and God's arm, in what is according to His will. Hence rest and peace. I laid me down and slept: I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. How emphatic and simple! Is it so with you, reader? Does all trouble find your heart resting on God as your Father that, when it is multiplied, it leaves your spirit at rest, your sleep sweet, lying down sleeping and rising as if all was peace around you because you know God is and disposes of all things? Is He thus between you and your troubles and troublers? And if lie is, what can reach you! The thousands of enemies make no difference if God is there. The Assyrian is gone before he can arise to trouble or execute the threats, which, after all, betray his conscious fear. We are foolish as to difficulties and trials, measuring them by our strength instead of God's, who is for us if we are His. What matter that the cities of Canaan were walled up to heaven, if the walls fell at the blast of a ram's horn? Could Peter have walked on a smooth sea better than on a rough one? Our wisdom is to know that we can do nothing without Jesus—with Him, everything that is according to His will. The secret of peace is to be occupied with Him for His own sake and we shall find peace in Him and through Him, and be more than conquerors when trouble comes, not that we shall be insensible to trial, but find Him and His tender care with us when trouble comes.

IV. The fourth Psalm affords us another most important principle, the effect of a good conscience in calling upon God in our distress. It is not here a good conscience as justified from sin, but a practically good conscience, giving confidence towards God. If our heart condemn us not, says the apostle, then have we confidence towards God. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. He does not say, Justify me, O God of my righteousness; but hear me. The soul is in trouble, yet had been enlarged, had had experience of God's faithful lovingkindness. His glory and honor was from God. How true this was of Christ! Man turned it into shame and sought after vanity. Still it remained unalterably true, in the divine government of Him who cannot deny Himself, that he has set apart the godly for Himself. They are thine, says Christ. We are a peculiar people to Himself. Now this is always true, but in walking in godliness we have the present confidence of it, and our eye sees God brightly, and we know then He will hear us. We have not lost the perception of what He is at the present moment for us. Our soul is not beclouded, and nothing is so soon clouded as present dependence on and confidence in God. Integrity, when there is dependence, gives courage. It is not that God will not hear us from the depths of contrition—but that is another thing. Integrity of heart gives confidence in the day of trouble, because God is seen by the spirit. The eye

is then fixed on Him across all the trouble. And so it is here: Commune with your own heart and be still; worship God in integrity, without fear, and trust in Him. In what is around us many might say, Where is any good to be found? and discouraged and disheartened, despair of finding any; but in and through all circumstances the light of God's countenance is the secure and unchangeable good. His favor is better than life. Besides, it secures good. The power of evil is below the power of God. He disposes of it, removes it, turns it to blessing, annuls it as He sees fit. The light of His countenance does this for faith. And the soul rises above evil and rejoices in God. Hence there is more joy than in temporal blessings. They may be taken away: besides, they are not God Himself, and the light of His countenance in trouble is altogether Himself, and gives the secret to the soul of His being for us. Hence he lays down in peace and sleeps—does not disquiet himself in anxious watchfulness against evil, for after all it is God only that secures him in joy or trouble.

Chapter 141

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 5-8

THE fifth Psalm furnishes the occasion of saying a word on the calls for judgment which are many times found in the book, and with that I shall pass it over. There is constancy of cry in the presence of enemies. It is to Jehovah the tried one looks; but it is on the ground of that righteous character and government of God which makes it impossible for Him to look on evil complacently. He will destroy the violent and deceitful man. And this is right. The Christian feels God ought not to let successful evil go on forever. When his mind rests on the government of God, he looks for the removal of evil by judgment, and rejoices in it; not in thinking of the evil doer, but of the righteousness and the result. Vengeance belongs to God. But it is in no way the element He lives in. The Jew having his portion in the earth— “for the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” —looks for the removal of the violent and deceitful man in order to his own comfort and rest. Not so the Christian. He leaves the violent man here and goes to heaven. He walks, as to his personal walk, in the time of grace and leaves it for glory. Even in the millennium, when government will be exercised and the wicked cut off, his distinctive place is grace. The river of water flows out of the city; the leaves of the tree of life, of which he eats the full ripe fruit, are for the healing of the nations. Now his place is wholly grace and patience. He does well, suffers for it, and takes it patiently, and knows this is acceptable with God. He would overcome evil with good. He sees the evil, knows it will be judged that the judgment shall devour the adversaries, and, viewed as adversaries, can be glad that they are removed from hindering good. Righteous judgment, I repeat, his soul owns and acquiesces in. But he looks not for it for his own gain or liberty. He is above this in grace. And this was Christ's place. He will execute judgment. His Spirit calls in these Psalms for judgment. But as walking on earth, in which he was a personal pattern for us, He did not call for judgment on His enemies.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” was His word when their violence was directed against Himself; and in judgment He opened not His mouth.

Now the fifth Psalm takes up the call for judgment according to God's government of the earth, founded on Jehovah's immutable character, and looks for the happiness and joy of Jehovah's people flowing from it. And so it will, but not ours, because our joy is in heaven, where such deliverances are not needed. We leave the earth. Hence while the spirit sees and feels the rightness of this Psalm, I do not give it as in any way the experience of a Christian, save that his cry in difficulty and trial is undividedly and actively directed to the Lord—we may say to the Father.

The sixth and seventh Psalms both partake of this character and call for judgment. But the sixth is on very different ground from the fifth, and in certain respects will afford us experimental light for the Christian. When the believing soul is under trill, the recurrence to God as its resource and hope is the natural movement of faith. The great grace of God in being for us and the sense that there is nothing like this love, the confidence which accompanies submission of heart, draw out the heart towards Him. Nor is there a sweeter time for the soul that trusts Him than the time of trial. This supposes indeed the will to be broken, and the heart subject, and God's love to be known.

When this is not the case the trial through grace works submission and is then removed, or the soul finds its happiness in the wise and holy will of God, and in the fruit it bears. But there is another case where trial, though ever salutary and gracious, has another element in it which makes confiding love to God more difficult. I mean where the trial has its

source in the conduct of the person suffering. If I have brought trial on myself by sin, how difficult to see love in it! how difficult not to groan in the consciousness that it is the fruit of sin and just rebuke for it, and hence that we have no right to think of love in it! Yet where can we turn but to Him, and how look to Him to deliver whom we have offended? Such is the real and distressing difficulty of a soul which, feeling that it has brought sorrow on itself, feels it has no right to look for deliverance. It is indeed almost tempted to despair and sink under the sense of hopelessness. This was the force of our Lord's intercession for Peter, that his faith might not fail, his confidence in Christ, and his love and hope of divine favor not be lost or he might fall into the hands of Satan through despair and remorse. In his case it was not trial or chastening, but the danger was the same. Faith hinders this despairing feeling, but it does not take away the sense of sin nor of the justness of rebuke; but it trusts God and His love and goodness, which now take the character of mercy to the spirit of the sufferer. The sense of sin is deeper, the dread of consequences less, and God is trusted with a humbler heart in spite of all. Still it is felt that rebuke is deserved—nay, the soul may be in a measure under it. This is the state brought before us in the sixth Psalm. It pleads the distress and desolateness under which it is lying, and looks for mercy, and pleads that the rebuke may not be in anger. It has confidence in God, though in presence of the thought that the rebuke of His anger would be but the natural consequence. It owns the justness of this, yet resting in faith on grace says, How long? God cannot cast off forever those who trust in Him: light will spring up. There is relationship with God, and faith counts on it. So that the heart can plead its extreme sorrow and trial with a God whose compassions are known. The last three verses express this confidence fully. We see how the government of God applies to this world, so that death has the character, in that government, when so falling on anyone, of cutting off. This was fully true with the Jew, as we see in Hezekiah and even in Job. But it is true in a measure as to the Christian. There are sins unto death, and death may have the character of discipline, as 1 Cor. 11 and may be arrested, as we read in James' and John's Epistles. The Psalm does not look beyond it, save into darkness, nor does the government of God either. When the believer has peace, he looks at discipline, even when justly severe, in the sense of certain divine favor. Hence his horror of sin is of a much purer kind, for it abhors the sin and not its consequences. It may be that the fiery darts of the wicked reach him or that dread threatens him at least. He looks through it to God's mercy and faithfulness. His faith through Christ's intercession does not fail. Still this is a terrible state; but the heart clings to God and can say, How long?

Psa. 7 is a full and elaborate appeal to righteousness and vengeance, and faith in that judgment. Thus the congregations of the peoples of the earth will own Jehovah and compass Him about.

He looks for God's anger on the wicked as he deprecated it for himself, and he expects it with a certain faith. This we do and own it all to be most right and excellent; but I cannot give the Psalm as presenting anything of the experience of the Christian, save the consciousness of integrity and the fact of trusting God. It is all true and certain; but it is for those who are in the distress produced by the haughty wicked, and look for deliverance, and not to suffer like and with Christ that they may be glorified together, that the Psalm provides an expression of feeling.

Psa. 8 is the celebration of Jehovah's millennial dominion and the glory of the Son of man in connection with, and in the mouth of, the Jewish people.

Chapter 142

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 9-11

I PASS over the 9th and 10th Psalms—the former celebrating the judgment of the enemies of Israel, the latter descriptive of the wickedness of their oppressors. They express the consciousness during the oppression that God does see it, and does not forget the humble; and then, on the deliverance, celebrate the faithfulness of Jehovah. The world is judged in righteousness, and Jehovah known by the judgment which He executes. I have only to draw the reader's serious attention to the judgment of the world here spoken of, and the main scene of it in the land of Israel; while, in every case, the humble soul in oppression and trial may walk in peaceful assurance that God sees it, and that its cause is in the hands of God. Yea, what is more difficult, that when it has brought it on itself, if truly humbled, it may count on God. I now turn to the expression of the feeling of those who are in the trial before the deliverance comes, and while they have to possess their souls in patience.

The eleventh sees distinctly—as is always true, though not publicly manifested as at that time—that there is no hope from, no reliance on, man on the earth—that nothing earthly is stable, and that evil has brought in ruin. The foundations are cast down, and what are the righteous to do? This for faith, is true, since the time that Christ was rejected on earth; only the restraining hand of God checks the power of evil, as long as patience can be exercised, and there are souls yet to be drawn out to the fellowship of Christ. It will be openly the case when the wicked one wields power in the earth, before God arises to judgment, and to help all the meek of the earth. Cases of peculiar trial bring us often into analogous circumstances in our own little sphere. Only we must remember that we have to do with a Father known as such, who disciplines us for our profit, for our heavenly and eternal gain, with a well-known love which has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us.

The question put in the Psalm is: If the foundations be cast down, what can the righteous do? what they might refer to as of divine stability; for good does not exist, and the wicked are disturbed by no scruple of conscience and with fraud of heart seek to destroy the righteous. There is a time when the Lord warns to flee, when no action and no patience is of any avail. This is not the case here. It is only so when God delivers up all to the wicked for a time. Fear and unbelief would urge flight, as a bird, away from the scene to a place of refuge and human security. Faith looks higher. “In Jehovah put I my trust.” Trust in the Lord, who is above all, to whom nothing is unknown, whom nothing escapes, whose faithfulness is unchangeable, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, who, after all, orders everything, whatever man's plans are, who is our Father. Trust in Him is the resource and peace-giving feeling of the righteous. This in its nature gives a perfect walk and calmness at all times; because circumstances do not govern the feelings, and the soul has no motive to lead it but the will of God, and can have boldness to do it when called on, through confidence in Him. It gives calmness, too, because God is trusted for every result.

But the simple fact of this confidence is not all the Psalm teaches us. All is subverted and in confusion on earth. No security for the righteous there. But Jehovah is in His holy temple. His

throne is in heaven. And His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. He does not slumber nor sleep; the righteous may leave his cause to Him. But there is, besides this, an explanation of God's ways in the time of sorrow. Jehovah tries the righteous. When His eyelids, who sees all things according to His own purity, try the children of men, He has an object as regards the righteous: He proves and sifts them. This is a most important truth—the activity of God in dealing with the righteous, to accomplish His own gracious purposes as to them, to manifest His own character, to judge, and lead them to judge, all that is not according to it, and thus give them the intelligence of what He is, and conform them morally to it—at the same time subjecting their will, and engaging their affections, by the sense of His faithfulness and love. The breaking of the will is a great means of opening the understanding.

But His temple and His throne govern all this. In His temple everyone speaks of His honor. It is the place where man approaches Him, where His nature and character are revealed, for man to be associated with Him according to them. And the throne orders all things, to associate us rightly with the temple. The flesh, of course, cannot always like it; but this dealing with it is just what is profitable in the matter. He tries the children of men. Their actions do not escape His eyes. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, and He judges of them all. But more particularly He tries the righteous. This is in contrast with His hatred of the wicked, on whom He will pour out judgment. In His trial of the righteous, one must first think of God's own character and glory. This He maintains. For, however His countenance beholds the upright, however much He delights in them in love, He cannot deny Himself. He will conform them to what He is, but not relinquish that. He maintains this character in government. he has let the earth know, in Israel, that He will not have wickedness. The nearness of a people to Him is only an additional motive for this. “Thee only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.” And now, whatever His grace, God is not mocked: what a man sows he will reap. The passages are numberless in which this principle is applied to Israel. It is carefully maintained. (Rom. 2:6, and following verses.) The epistles of Peter particularly unfold this righteous government of God—the first, as regards the righteous; the second, as against the wicked. In trying the righteous, God vindicates and maintains His character in those near Him.

But it is for the profit also of those who are tried, the precious proof of the constant, watchful care of God. “He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous,” says Elihu. It is, if need be, that we are in heaviness through manifold temptations or trials. We are to count it even all joy (James) when we fall into divers temptations, seeing that they work patience. And mark the fruit: “Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete in all the will of God.” We are to glory in tribulations; (Rom. 5;) they work patience; and this brightens, in its result, our hope, the love of God being shed abroad in the soul—the true key to all that comes.

The love of God in the chastening itself leads to two conclusions, expressed in Heb. xii.—not to despise the chastening; for there must be a reason for it in us, if love does it; and not to faint, because it is love which does it.

There are two causes which, as we are taught in the Book of Job, bring trial on the saint. First, God shows the transgression in which man has exceeded, that is, positive faults. Secondly, He withdraws man from his purpose, and hides pride from him. (Job 33:16, 17; 36:7-9.) This book gives us full divine instruction as to God's way in trying the righteous. There we learn another truth,

important to exercised souls, who often dwell on secondary causes: that God is the cause and moves in all these exercises. The origin of all Job's trials was not Satan's accusation, but God's word, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” God had, and saw that he needed this. The instruments were wicked, or disasters caused by Satan; but God had considered His servant, tried the righteous, but measured exactly the trial—stayed His rough wind in the day of the east wind, debated in measure: and when He had done his own work, (which Satan could not do at all) and shown Job to himself, blessed him abundantly.

He humbles us and proves us, that we may know what is in our heart—feeds us with the bread of faith. But it is to do us good in our latter end.

When the trial is met in the truth and power of spiritual life, it develops and brings out much more softness and maturity of grace—a spirit more separated from the world to God, and more acquainted with God. Where it is met by or meets the flesh, the will of this, its rebellion, is brought to light, the conscience becomes sensible of it before God, and, by the discipline itself, the self-will is, even insensibly, destroyed.

Trial cannot in itself confer grace; but, under God's hand, it can break the will, and detect hidden and unsuspected evils; so that the new life is more fully and largely developed. God has a larger place in the heart, there is more intelligence in His ways, more lowly dependence, more consciousness that the world is nothing, more distrust of flesh and self. The saint is more emptied of self and filled with the Lord. What is eternal and true, because divine, has a much larger place in the soul; what is false, is detected and set aside. There is more ripeness in our relationship with God. We dwell more in the eternal scenes into which He has brought our souls. We can look back, then, and see the love which has brought us through it all, and bless God with deepest thanksgiving for every trial. Such only purge away the dross, and confirm us in brighter, fuller, and clearer hope, and increase our knowledge of God—self being proportionately destroyed.

Chapter 143

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: 12-16

IT is evident that Psa. 12 is written under the pressure of extreme wrong and violence and the feeling of being isolated. Human power, and those that have confidence in it, are all against the soul. It is rare to be in such a case rightly—that is, to have occasion to suffer as is here described. But it may come. Individual Christians may find themselves isolated and pressed down. The fifth verse introduces Jehovah's judgments, which will put an end to it. This He often does still in His government, but it is not the direct proper hope of the Christian. For him to do well, suffer for it and take it patiently, is acceptable with God. his rest is elsewhere, where God is perfectly glorified; so it was with Christ, and, therefore, with us. He surely did well, suffered for it here on the earth—was not delivered. How acceptable it was with God I need not say. It behooved Christ to suffer. It is our profit; so that we can glory in tribulations also, because of their fruits, a far higher fruit than ease or repose here, and which ripens in heaven, in our being fitted for enjoying God more deeply; and if we suffer for righteousness' and Christ's sake, we can say, happy are we. The Spirit of glory and of God rests on us. But in many cases of detail, deliverance, if we wait patiently for it, comes even here. At any rate, and this is the point of the psalm, the words of Jehovah are pure words; they prove all that is in man, but they may be thoroughly relied on as genuine. He will hold good in holiness, but make good in power all that His mouth hath uttered. Our wisdom is to hold fast by the word of the Lord, come what will. Outward trials are but instruments of purification and of trying the heart as to faith. The word is the test of all for the soul, the inward measure of its condition before God, and the infallible ground of confidence. If it tries the heart, if the circumstances we are in try the heart, it is only to free it from all that would hinder our leaning on and appropriating every word that has come out of the mouth of God. We shall surely live by it.

Psa. 13 continues the expression of the workings of a soul under the trials we have seen referred to in Psalm 10. We have, comparatively speaking, less to do with it. Yet the Christian may be tried by the momentary and apparent triumph of the power of evil. And in such, can look to the Lord for deliverance, not to be left as if God did not care for him. We see the difference of the Jewish remnant here and Christ, for outwardly He was left in the hand of the wicked; whereas, (though, indeed, some of the wise will fall by the hand of the enemy in that day, obtaining a better resurrection, but,) in general, they will be spared and delivered; but our object now is the moral lesson. In the midst, not only of heartless and conscienceless enemies, but apparently forgotten of God, the soul trusts in His mercy, counts on Himself in goodness and faithfulness of mercy so as to rejoice in deliverance by His power before it comes. So we thank God, when we pray, before we receive the answer, because knowing in our hearts, by faith, that God has heard and answered us, we bless Him before His answer comes outwardly, and this is just the proof of faith. This confidence gives wonderful peace in the midst of trials; we may not know how God will deliver, but we are sure He will, and rightly. He has all at His disposal. It is Himself we trust, and in looking to Him the heart receives a real answer on which it relies. The circumstances and the word try the heart. Confidence and divine deliverance rejoice the spirit. One knows, and before the deliverance comes, that God is for us. The taking counsel in the heart is very natural, but not faith. It wears and

distresses the spirit. The sorrow tends to work death. The soul, even though submitting, preys on itself; it is turning to the Lord which lightens the soul. The consciousness that it is the enemy who works against us, helps the soul to confidence. It is a solemn, and for man would be an appalling, thought, but with the Lord is a ground of being assured of deliverance.

Psa. 14 is an eminent example of the principle of very frequent application: how psalms, or other passages of scripture, clearly applicable literally to the Jews in the last days, and events then occurring, are used as great principles, deciding morally on important truths at all times, truths which are then publicly and judicially brought to light. The apostle applies this psalm as the expression of the divine judgment on the state of the Jews, as declared in their own scriptures, and proving the need of a righteousness not their own. I have not much to remark on it here. We may expect to meet with difficulties which arise from a total absence of the fear of God in those with whom we have to do. It is hardly credible for one that fears God, that this can be so, that there should be no compunction; nothing that stays the heart in wickedness, at least, in deliberate wickedness. But we must expect this sometimes, where we should least expect it. But the Lord sees all this. This is our confidence. He may take time, be patient with evil, or, at least, with evil doers, and exercise us, but He sees it all. Not only so, but God Himself is in the generation of the righteous. There is an influence produced by the presence of God with the righteous, which the enemies of the Lord feel, and which in the righteous is known only by faith. We may see all example in what Rahab evidently saw among the Canaanites, Josh. 2:9. The same feeling is referred to in Phil. 1:28. This feeling of fear, in those who oppose the truth, may be accompanied with boasting and violence; but when faith has confidence in the Lord, the wicked, even if they succeed, have always fear. So even the Jews, when they had crucified Christ, feared lest, after all, His absence from the tomb should make matters worse than before. But there must be the sense of God's presence for the righteous to be thus sustained.

Psa. 15 shows, evidently, that the direct application of these psalms is to the Jews in the last days. Still, there is a present government of God which it is well for saints to remember. It is developed in the Epistles of Peter—in the first in favor of the righteous, in the second in the judgment of the wicked. (See 1 Peter 3:10-15, showing the Christian application of the principles on which God dealt with the Jews as a people, and will still more absolutely in the last days, but which have their application to the time of our sojourn here below.)

Thus, though this psalm be strictly Jewish in its character, we have principles to act on. Thus, ver. 4 gives what, in principle, pleases the Lord at all times. With these few remarks, I pass on to Psalm 16, which applies directly to Christ, but in which we shall find the sweetest instruction also for ourselves. It is essentially Christ taking the place of a man, and pointing out the path of life before him through death, since He came for us, but trusting in Jehovah, into His presence, where is fullness of joy. We must not lose sight of the direct prophetic character; still this path is an example for us. The Good Shepherd has gone before the sheep. The great principle proposed in the psalm is trust in the Lord, even in death—the place of dependent obedience, and the Lord Himself's being the whole portion of man, excluded all inconsistent with this. We may add, having Him always in view. These are the great principles of divine life, and of divine life come into the scene of sin and death. No doubt we should speak of communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ in this path of life; but the great moral principles, the subjective state of soul, is brought out before us here, and that in Christ Himself. And note here, it is His perfection as man and before

God and towards God. It is not divine perfection—God manifested to man; but what He was as man dependent on God. We have not even His offering Himself, in which we have also to follow Him; (1 John 3:16;) but His place as man in perfection. It is perfectness before God—the principle that governed Him. Hence, even the word, My goodness extendeth not to thee, has its application also to us. That our goodness does not actually reach God it might seem almost absurd to affirm; but when it is applied to Christ as man, who was absolutely perfect, it affords us an apprehension of the nature of this goodness, a principle which we can apply to ourselves, and which puts us in our place. It is man's perfection towards God—the new path of which Christ is the perfection and example in the earth. But this thought shows the unspeakably blessed place which we have as Christians—though in our own case in the midst, not only of weakness, but of internal conflicts, which were not in Christ, in whom was no sin. But Christ's place is the perfect expression of our place before God. This is fully unfolded at the close of the Gospel of John, and particularly in the 17th chapter.

The Epistle of John, too, which first presents Christ as the manifestation on earth of that eternal life which was with the Father, its manifestation in a man whom their hands had touched, teaches that this was true in Christians as in Him, (1 John 2:8) and unfolds the character of this life in righteousness and in love, adding the presence of the Holy Ghost, through which we can dwell in “God and God in us. We have this eternal life which is come down from heaven, but is only said to be in the Son; and he who has the Son has it. Indeed, this gives it all its value. No doubt the Epistle of John unfolds it in all its extent and value, as it cannot be unfolded in the Psalms: still in this psalm we have Christ taking the place itself as amongst the excellent of the earth. 1 may remark here, that the writings of John, though intimating it, and just showing that we shall be with Christ above, do not pursue this life to its presentation in glory before God. This is Paul's office. Indeed, he had only so seen Christ. John presents the life in itself, and manifested on earth. The life is the light of men.

I have already made some allusion to a restriction which we must put, in speaking of this psalm, to the development of the life of Christ on earth. But this restriction only brings out more directly and blessedly in its place, that part of Christ's Life, which is the subject of the psalm itself. Christ was the manifestation of God Himself (I speak of the divine traits of His character, not of His divine nature and title) in His path in this world. Perfect love was seen there—perfect holiness and righteousness. He was the truth in the revelation of all that God is. And this is most blessed. And in this we have to imitate Him. (See Eph. 4:3; 2:5:1, 2; Col. 3:10.) But this is not the aspect in which the psalm views Him. It depicts His place as the dependent devoted man. It depicts Him as taking his place among the remnant of Israel, in contrast with the idolatry of that people. But on that I do not dwell now. The character of the blessed Lord's life will alone occupy our thoughts.

The expression, My goodness extendeth not to thee, would not suit the divine manifestation of goodness on the earth. But taking His place entirely as a man here, the Lord shows us the true place of man living to God—not in his innocence, not surely in sin, but the very opposite; but perfect, in a world of sin, in righteousness and true holiness, having the knowledge of good and evil, tempted, but separate from sin and sinners, not made higher than the heavens, but fit for it in the desires of his nature, and in the path towards it dependent, obedient, taking no place with God, but before Him as responsible as man upon earth, and looking towards the place of perfect blessedness as man with God by being in His presence, which would be fullness of joy for him, a

place which, when having His nature, we can have with Christ. It is man trusting God, deriving his pleasure and joy from God, living by faith and in that sense apart from Him—not God manifested in the flesh, which we know was also true of the blessed Lord. This, while it is our place on earth as sanctified through the truth, is above the place of the Jewish remnant. We have another in the consciousness of union with Christ through the Holy Ghost. The Lord takes the place we are considering when He says to the young man, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Thus far it went outwardly well with the young ruler, but there was more than this to characterize this life where divine life was, in a world of sin and sinners, in its path towards the place of the fullness of joy—what had been shown in Abraham and in the saints of God, in the Davids and the prophets. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Having the Lord Himself as that which governed and led the heart, Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me. But the Lord was not, at any rate then, the portion of his inheritance. Only one knows not what may have become afterward his state through grace.

The state described in this psalm is that of man considered apart from God; (I do not mean of course morally separated, nor touch upon the union of the divine and human natures in Christ;) but it is man partaker of the divine nature, for so only it could be, but having God for his object, his confidence, as alone having authority over him, entirely dependent on God, and perfect in faith in Him. This could only be in one personally partaker of the divine nature, God Himself in man, as Christ was, or derivatively as in one born of God; but, as we have seen, Christ is not here viewed in this aspect nor the believer as united to Him. The divine presence in Him is viewed not in the manifestation of God in Him, but in its effect in This absolute perfection as man. He is walking as man morally in view of God. Christ here depends on Jehovah for His resurrection. He says, Thou wilt not leave, though He could say, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Yet He could say, as perfect man, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. As Peter among the Jews could say, He hath made Him, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ; while Thomas could say, My Lord and my God. Indeed Peter never leaves this ground—the rejected man, the Messiah exalted by God—nor preaches the Son of God as Paul did at once in the synagogues, though the first, by divine revelation, to confess Him such. Hence Christ is a perfect model for us—shows what the perfect man is. The first great principle, and that which characterizes the whole psalm, is the referring Himself entirely, and with confidence, to the care of God. He does not preserve Himself, take care of Himself, nor depend at all on Himself: He refers to God. “Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.” But this goes far. As God, Christ could have preserved Himself; but He did not come for that. In that sense it was impossible. He came in love to suffer, obey, and so by grace also save—but glorify God. From this, morally speaking, He could not swerve; but as to power, He could have preserved Himself, or as to title to favor as Son, He could have asked and had twelve legions of angels. But thus, as He says, He could not have fulfilled the counsels, the revealed counsels, of God.

It was free submission and dependence, but perfect submission and dependence—the one right thing in the position which He had taken. This was perfect faith. He was the leader and completer of faith, absence of self, dependence, and confidence: and we may add, the word of God was the revelation on which He acted, that which He obeyed, the weapon He used, as we see in His temptation in the desert. He was the word and the truth personally, and all He said expressed what

He was. (John 8:25.) But it is not less true that He used and acted on and obeyed the Scriptures as man. But here He takes the place of dependence and confidence. As man He says, “Preserve me, O God. In thee do I put my trust.”

The next point, partly necessarily anticipated in what I have said, is entire subservience to the will of God. There to God, as revealed among the Jews, Jehovah: to us it would be the Father and the Son—one God, even the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord.” Remark, “Thou hast said.” He had taken this place. He was Jehovah, but not taking that place at all here in His path. In the form of God, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He had taken the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. Freely taken, perfectly preserved in, through death, His taken place is humiliation. Freely to take it is a divine title and action. Creatures have to keep their own; though when not kept by God, none have done so. His given, but deserved, place as man is glory. (John 17) He humbles Himself, and is highly exalted. He had said to Jehovah, “Thou art my Lord;” that is, I am subservient to Thee. He had taken a place, while never ceasing to be God, and which Godhead alone could fulfill the conditions of, outside Godhead; but in which as man to satisfy God, to glorify God in an earth of apostasy and sin, indeed with all on earth, and Satan's power against Him—at the close, even God's wrath, if to fulfill His glory in righteousness. Hence He says, My goodness extendeth not to thee—up to thee. He was to fulfill man's place in the condition in which God's glory was now concerned in it.; A perfect man, when a perfect man, was alone in perfectness; none to sustain—none even to have compassion on Him. He must trust God in life and through death—yea, through wrath. But here it is in the path of life, and even this shown Him. (Ver. 11.) But, further, there were objects of divine favor from which He did not dissociate Himself. But He does not speak of them as chosen by Himself here—as in John of His disciples, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,” —(though there also for service,) nor as chosen of God in grace, but as objects of divine delight in the path they trod, as manifested morally—those who were in the path He had to tread in—the saints that are in the earth, the excellent. This is full of interest. It is still His moral place as man, delighting in what God delighted in, as becomes one perfect with God, as we see in full figure in Moses. (Heb. 11:24-26.) He takes His place with the saints—those really sanctified to God. This we see in fact, and in the way of the most perfect obedience and humiliation, in that the Savior went to be baptized with the baptism of John, when those moved by the Spirit of God to humble themselves went there. In the first and lowest step of divine life, that of the heart giving itself up to God in the acknowledgment of sin, He who knew no sin went with those who owned it; for their owning it was divine life, and it was consecrating themselves to God. They were the true excellent of the earth. How sweet and consoling in the wilderness to see Christ treading this path, victorious over all temptation in it, as shown directly after His baptism by John; binding the strong man, in life possessed and victorious over all the power of the enemy. One sees easily here, that though it be the divine life, the fruit of grace, it is not in se God manifesting Himself, a goodness in its character in itself reaching to God; for it was owning sin, though it was divine grace in Christ to do it. Just as it was not properly of God, as such, to die; though nothing but the perfect love, that is, one who was God Himself could have died as Christ did, given Himself, laid down His life, given a motive to His Father to love Him, for what He did. We see one acting as man in man's place, (only absolutely, perfectly, and freely as loving the Father, which He could not have done if not divine), before God and towards God as men had to act. That a divine person should do this has a value beyond all thought, and it is what, as much else, the blessed Savior did for us, a man in our place,

that is in the perfection of it as God's delight, and according to what it ought to be, in the midst of this sinful world, what glorified God in it. And it is of all importance for us to see Christ thus an object of delight, adoring delight, for instruction and confirmation to the soul. It is a path the vulture's eye has not seen and that no man's thought could have traced, if Christ, the perfect One, had not walked in it. We have it in life—in a person—as it only so could be, the path of life in a living one who was the thing to be loved. No doubt the written word gives us the elements of this life in all details, but at the same time it gives much of it, however many blessed precepts direct our path, in the life of Christ Himself; so that this life is understood according to the degree of spirituality which apprehends that life as depicted in the gospels or other parts of Scripture, its motives or rather its motive and nature. Even in precept we find a direction to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing. How evidently does this require the true knowledge of what He is. The view which we have taken of this divine life, perfect in itself, but displayed in a knowledge of good and evil and proved in the midst of evil—in us renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him that created us—is brought out distinctly in positive separation from evil, but especially in the motive and spring of life, the confession of Jehovah. He (ver. 4) repels all that can be called another God. He will have nothing at all to say to it. It is absolute rejection. He cleaves to Jehovah. Fidelity to Jehovah characterizes the life of Christ as so walking on earth. We can say fidelity to Christ Himself. Christ is all and in all. Jehovah is not only Lord to obey, He is the portion of his inheritance. He sought naught else; as of the priest of old and yet better, as in heart and desire, the Lord was his inheritance and the portion of his cup, his lot here, which he had to drink. His enjoyment in hope, his portion by the way. This I apprehend is the difference between heritage and cup; the inheritance is the permanent portion of the soul, the cup what its feelings are occupied with, what comes to a man to occupy his spirit by the way. He gives the cup of wrath to the wicked to drink; the blessed Lord had to drink the cup of wrath on the cross. My cup runneth over—was filled to overflow with blessing; so we say, habitually, it was a bitter cup. It is not merely the circumstances we pass through, unless the soul be subject to them; but that which we taste in the circumstances, what our spirits feel, that which presses on them in the circumstances. Thus, in Psa. 23, the circumstances were all sorrowful, but the Lord being shepherd all through them his cup ran over with joy and blessing. Thus Jehovah was the permanent portion of the heart of Christ, and, as walking through this world, that on which His heart rested; what formed and characterized His feelings more than the sorrow He went through, save on the cross. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Man, no, not even His disciples, never entered into His thoughts. One who sat at His feet once in affection felt that to which He could give a voice but only to bring out more sadly the failure of all else; but He had meat to eat they knew not of. Jehovah was the portion of His cup, nearer than all circumstances which otherwise could have pressed upon His heart as man, and which He fully felt, if we except the cross, or rather, indeed, more than ever there, for it was the wrath of Jehovah Himself that pressed upon His soul in the cup He then drank. But otherwise so truly was Jehovah the great circumstance and substance of His life in and through everything, that He could only wish that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. But, then, it was from Jehovah only, and therein His perfection; the world was absolutely a dry and thirsty land, where no water was, but Jehovah's favor was better than life; and was His life, practically, through a world where all was felt, but felt with Jehovah realized; Jehovah and His favor, the life of His soul, between Him and all. So the Christian, forsaken, perhaps, and imprisoned. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and, again I say rejoice. Nature has circumstances between itself and God; faith has

God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference! No peace like the peace, which hiding in the tabernacle from the provokings of all men gives. But this is a divine life through the world. Jehovah—we say the Father and the Son, a brighter development through the Son Himself—the permanent portion of the soul, its inheritance. Jehovah, the present joy and strength that fills the soul and gives its taste to life. (Comp. 64. and 23.) And, thirdly, the blessed confidence that Jehovah maintains our lot; we trust not ourselves, not favorable circumstances, not a mountain which the Lord Himself has made strong, but Jehovah Himself. Delight thyself in the Lord, He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Faith leans on Jehovah, on the Father's love and Jesus'; for the securing infallibly happiness and peace we need not look to circumstances, save to pass through them with Him. This was perfect in Christ. He had only this, nor looked for aught else. We see it brightly manifested in Paul. In principle, it is the path of every Christian; and some time or other he is exercised in it. The life of faith is this: God Himself the portion of our inheritance and of our cup: He maintaineth our lot. This is blessedly developed for us in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. But the great principle is the same. It is the life of Christ, and this is enjoyed in contrast with and to the exclusion of all else that could become the confidence or the portion of the heart; expressed here in Jewish relationship, but always essentially true.

Chapter 144

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: 16

I may here remark a distinct characteristic of this psalm which comes into greater relief by the contrast of the one which follows. It touches on no circumstances, though it supposes them. It is divine life with God and knows and lives in the present consciousness of only Him. We find that there must have been death, hades, and the grave, but they are only mentioned as the occasion of the power and faithfulness of Jehovah. The psalm is man living through, with, and in view of God in this world, and so enjoying Him forever in spite of death. Circumstances are but circumstances, and not the subject of the psalm; divine life never passes away. “While we look not,” says the apostle, “at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.” Such is the Christian expression of this. The former part of the phrase, which I do not cite, tells the effect of this as to circumstances, and is to be compared rather with the following psalm. The apostle beautifully expresses life itself in one word: “for to me to live is Christ: to die,” no wonder, was “gain.” But it is important to remember, that there is an inward divine life which dwells and joys in God, having nothing to do with circumstances, though enabling us to go through them, and in us helped by them, because annulling the flesh and the will, so that we live more entirely of the inward life with God.

But the consequence in the soul, is the deep consciousness of blessing. “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” Christ could not have said that in the same way, had He had the kingdom living on earth; nor could we, were we in the garden of Eden, or the world at our disposal. This living relationship with God casts a light, a halo on all; lights the soul up with such a direct consciousness of divine blessing that nothing is like it, save the full realization of it in the presence of God. A man with God, enjoying Him in a nature capable of doing so with all the necessary conscious result where it shall be fulfilled without a cloud, a man as Christ was in this world with God—is the most perfect joy possible, save the everlasting fulfillment of all known and felt in it. It is not Messiah's portion, it is that joy of which Christ speaks when He says: “that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” No doubt, He will inherit all things: but I do not think this to be the thought here. This was not the joy set before Him for which He endured the cross and despised the shame. There is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.” That is known in joying in God. Life has its delight there. In God's presence is fullness of joy.

The lines fallen in pleasant places, I believe to be His joy as man in God, and in what was before God. Compare Col. 1:1-3. In what follows we have the active expression of this life, in reference to God. “I will bless Jehovah who giveth me counsel.” We need in divine life the positive instruction of wisdom—counsel; wisdom, a divine clue and direction in the confusion of evil in this world—to be wise concerning that which is good. Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time; not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Jehovah gives counsel. So if any man lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally and upbraideth not. There is the immense privilege of the positive direction and guidance of God. The interest He feels in guiding the godly man aright, in the true path suited to God Himself, across the wilderness where there is no way.

For innocence enjoying the blessings of God, there was no need of a way. In a world departed from God, what way can be found? It would be to return, but that is impossible; no sinner ever returned to innocence. The way of the tree of life is shut up on that side—but how a way in the world without God? But God can make a way, if He gives a new life, with a new object to that life—Himself as known in heaven—if there is a new creation and we are new created. Now Christ is a new life, and passes through the world, according to this life, to a new place given to man, and He does so as man, dependent man. God has prepared the path for man endowed with this life, and so for Christ, who was this life, and so the light of men. He has even prepared the special works suited to it— “good works which He hath afore prepared that we should walk in them.” This last thought indeed goes somewhat beyond our psalm. It, at any rate, includes the activity of divine nature in man, and is not limited to the right and holy path of man having this life before God, a thing as important in its place as the other. So Moses asks not, “Show me a way across the desert,” but “Show me thy way that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight.” What Moses sought Jehovah gives—the counsel and guidance of His love. So Christ walked; so He guides His sheep, going before them: and now we are led of the Spirit of God, as ourselves sons of God. It is the divine path of wisdom which the vulture's eye has not seen: the path of man, but of man with the life of God, going towards the presence of God, and the incorruptible inheritance, in an uncorrupted way—the path of God across the world; but God gives counsel for it. There is dependence on God for this, and Christ walked in it. “Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel,” says even the remnant of Israel; and, Psalm 32., “I will guide thee by mine eye.” I repeat, He is interested in the guidance of the man of God, and the soul blesses Him. In this path Christ trod. The written word is the great means of this; still there is the direct action of God in us by His Spirit. But there is also divine intelligence. “My reins instruct me in the night season.” The divine life is intelligent life. I do not separate this from divine grace in us, but it is different from counsel given. We can be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Col. 1:9, kO. “Why even of yourselves (says the Lord to the Pharisees) judge ye not that which is right?” Thus, when removed from external influences, the secret workings and thoughts of the heart show what is suited to the path and way of God in the world. A man is spiritually minded and discerns all things. It is the working of life within (in us through grace) on divine things, and in the perception of the divine path, what is well pleasing. In Christ this was perfect, in us in the measure of our spirituality; but that to which the Christian has to give much heed, that he neglect not the holy suggestions and conclusions of the divinely instructed life when freed from the influence of surrounding circumstances. It may seem folly, but if found in humbly waiting on God will in the end prove His wisdom. It can always be discerned from an exalted imagination.

In the first place, the state of the soul is exactly the opposite, for pretension to special spiritual guidance is never humble. But besides, the controlling judgment of God's word which overrules the whole divine life is there to judge false pretensions to it. To this divine life is always absolutely subject. Christ wise was this life, yea, was the Word and Wisdom; yet (and because He was) always wholly honored the written word as the guidance and authority of God for man. But guidance by the Lord is not quite all the practice process of the exercise of divine life. It looks entirely to the Lord. “I have set (says Christ, walking as man on earth) Jehovah always before me.” He kept Him always in view. How have our hearts to own that this is not always so! how withdrawn from all evil—how powerful morally in the midst of this work should we be, were it always so? There is nothing is this world like the dignity of a man always walking with God. Yet nothing is

farther from failure is humility: indeed it is here it is perfect. Self-exaltation is neither possible nor desired in the presence and enjoyment of God. What absence of self, what renouncement of all will, what singleness of eye, and hence bright and earnest activity of purpose when the Lord is the only object and end! I say the Lord, for no other such object can command and sanctify the heart. All would go against duty to Him. He alone can make the whole heart full of light when duty and purpose of heart go together and are but one. Indeed this is what James calls “the perfect law of liberty” —perfect obedience, yet perfect purpose of heart, as Jesus says, “that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do.” We say, as Christians, Christ is all, and He that loves Him keeps His commandments. Thus Jesus set Jehovah always before His face. This is man's perfection as man. This is the measure of our degree of spirituality, the constancy and purity with which we do this. But if Jesus did tins, surely Jehovah could not fail Rim nor us. So walking, He maintains the saint in the path which is His own. “I set Jehovah always before my face: He is on my sight hand, so that I shall not fall.” This is known by faith. He may let us suffer for righteousness' sake—Christ did so—be put to death—Christ was; but not a hair of our head can He let fall to the ground, nor fail in making us enter into life according to the path in which we walk, but here it is confidence in Jehovah Himself. It is faith, not the question of righteousness in Jehovah, which is in the next psalm. Faith in walking in the path of man, according to God's will and towards God solely as the sanctifying end and object, knows that God is at its right hand. Jehovah will secure. How, or through what, is not the question. It will be Jehovah's security. What strength this gives in passing through a world where all is against us and what sanctifying power it has! There is no motive, no resource but Jehovah, which could satisfy any other craving, or by which the heart desires to secure itself in seeking aught else. Hence come what would, Christ waited patiently for Jehovah, looked for no other deliverance. Nor have we to seek any other, and this makes the way perfect. We turn not aside to make the path easier. And to this the psalm turns. Death was before Christ. As Abraham was called to slay his son, in whom the promises were to be fulfilled, Christ as living on the earth had to renounce all the promises to which he is entitled and life with them. The sorrow of this to Him—for He felt all perfectly—is depicted in the 102nd psalm; but as Abraham trusted Jehovah and received Isaac from the dead in a figure, so the Lord here, the leader and finisher of faith, trusts Jehovah in view of His own death—is perfect in trust in it. He had set Jehovah always before Him. He was at His right hand, therefore His heart was glad and This glory rejoiced.

His flesh rested in hope, for the Jehovah He trusted would not leave His soul in Trades nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Holy One is not here the same as “saints in the earth.” Saints are those set apart—consecrated to God. Thy Holy One is one walking in piety, agreeable to God. It is Christ known in this character. He is also given this name! in psalm 89:19. where read “of thy holy one.”

Remark that it is thy Holy One, One who morally belongs to God by the perfection of His character. Christians are such, only full of imperfections. They are saints, set apart to God, but they are also—and are to walk as—the “elect of God, holy and beloved:” and as such to put on the character of grace in which Christ walked. The former part of Col. 3. displays this life at large in us. Eph. 1:4 shows it in its perfection in result. This confidence of the pious soul in the faithfulness of Jehovah, the reasoning of faith from this nature that it could not be otherwise, and the consciousness of relationship with God as His delight, is very beautiful here. It is not, “thou wilt

raise me," but it is not possible in the thought of One in whom is the power of life, that Jehovah should leave the soul that has this life in hales, far from Him in death; and the object of His delight to sink into corruption. This moral confidence and conclusion is exceedingly beautiful. "It was not," says Peter, "possible that He could be holden of it." This may include His person, but His power cannot be separated from this grace. The same confidence, flowing from life, is manifested as to Jehovah's showing Him the path of life. It is the perfection of faith as to life, but in Jehovah. "Thou wilt show me the path of life," perhaps through death; for there, if he was to be perfect with God, this path led—but not to stay there, or it were not a path of life. Jehovah could show Him no other. Man had taken, in spite of warning, the path of death—the path of his own will and disobedience; but Christ comes, the obedient man. There was no path for man in paradise—no natural path of life in the desert of sin. Man had not life in himself; but what path of the new divine life in man could there be for man in a world of sin, amongst men already departed from God? The law had indeed proposed one, but it only brought out the sinfulness of man's nature. The knowledge of sin was by it, and its exceeding sinfulness. Christ, who had life, no doubt, could have kept it; yea, did so, because in Him I was no sin, but there he was in this wholly dissociated from us who are sinners. He was alone, separate from sinners. But in a path of faith, He could be associated with those quickened by the word—confessors of sin, not keepers of law, judges of all evil, separated by quickening grace from sinners, and treading the path of faith across the world, not of it, towards the full issue of this divine life, which was not here, which must go through the death of flesh. He had nothing to judge, nothing to confess, nothing to die to or for in Himself; but He could walk in the holy path of faith across the world in which they, as renewed, had to walk. But for them this holy path was necessarily death, for there was a life of sin. He could have abode alone, and had twelve legions of angels, and gone on high; but, speaking reverently, though this would have been righteous as to Him, there was no sense in His becoming a man for this. And not only does He die for them, (for expiation is not the subject of this psalm, but life,) but having set out to go with, yea, before, them, He treads this path through death, that He may destroy its power for us, and treads it alone, as He had overcome Satan's power in this world, and now destroyed it in death too—treads it alone. The disciples could not follow Him there, till He had destroyed Satan's power in it. "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after." No earnestness of human will, no affection could abide there. But when dead to sin, and strengthened with the strength of Christ, he could let another bind him and carry him (as Jesus did) whither nature would not. Christ then associated Himself from John's baptism with these saints in the earth—trod the path, only perfectly apart from sin, and only with God, doing His will, showed this path of life in man; then, having died to sin, and the full result of this life in its own place, where no evil is, lives to God. He did so, by faith, when down on earth always, but as man, in a world apart from God, and taking the word as His guide, living by every word that came out of the mouth of God, as we have to do. The resurrection demonstrated the perfectness of a life which was always according to the Spirit of holiness; but now He lives in it in its own place, and this is what, though through death, in an undiscontinued life, He anticipates. "In thy presence is fullness of joy." This, always His delight, was now His perfect enjoyment, "and at thy right hand." (Divine power had brought Him to this place of power and acceptance—the witness of His being perfectly acceptable to God) are "pleasures for evermore."

Such is life as life is with God—life shown as man in this world, associating itself with the saints on the earth, and treading their path; not Christ uniting them to Himself. Life before God, and looking

ever at Him: a life which, though free from sin, neither innocence nor sinful man could know—which, in fact, had not to be lived in paradise which could not be lived as belonging to the world, but which was lived to God through it: setting Jehovah always before it as its object. Such is the life we have to live. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Christ, as the psalm shows us, lived the life of faith, and never of anything but faith; and this was His perfection. In this world there is no other for a man. A life which has no object but the Lord Himself. This is a wonderful point—not one object in the world at all. For otherwise, it is not faith, but sight, or lust. Innocent man had no object: he enjoyed in peace God's goodness. Man departed from God—had many objects: but all these separate his heart from God, and end in death. Morally separated from God, he may find a famine in the land, but has no way God for his object. But the new life which comes down from the Father looks up with desire to its source, and becomes the nature in man which tends towards God, has the Son of God for its object—as Paul says, “that I may win Christ.” This life has no portion in this world at all; and, as Life in man, looks to God, leans on God, and seeks no other assurance or prop, obeys God, and can live only by faith. But this is a man's life, does not extend to God. God as such is holy, is righteous, is love; but cannot, it is evident, live by faith. He is its object. Nor is it exactly an angel's life, though they are holy, obedient, and loving. It is man's life, living wholly for and towards God in a world departed from Him hence, towards Him and by faith; for it is not merely that they serve in it. That angels can do; but though not morally of it, for the life is come down from heaven, “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.” Yet, as to their place as man, they are of it, and hence have to live in order not to be of it morally; objectively entirely out of it; thus having to say to God, or it would be idolatry. But, thus, while it is a man's life, and no more as such, yet it must be absolutely for God according to His nature: and it lives, in that it lives, to God. The living Father had sent Christ, and He lived, (δια τον Ηατερα) for the sake of the Father: so he that eats me shall live for me. God is the measure of perfection in motive—hence, hereafter in enjoyment, and a heart wholly formed on Him. This life of man Christ led and filled the whole career of. Out of this Satan wanted Him to come in the wilderness, and have a will, make the stones bread, distrust, try if the Lord would fulfill His promise or fail him, have an object—the kingdoms of the world. This last destroyed the very nature of the life, and Satan is openly detected and dismissed. Christ would not come out of man's dependent, obedient place of unquestioning trust in Jehovah. His path here was the excellent of the earth, perfect in the life which was come down from heaven, but which was lived on earth, looking up to heaven. Whatever our privileges in union with Christ, it is all-important for the Christian to live in the fear and faith of God, according to the life of Christ. It is not man's responsibility without law or under law as a child of Adam: it is all over with us on that ground. It is the responsibility of the new life of faith, which is a pilgrim and a stranger here—a life come down from heaven. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life; “but a life which man lives in passing through this world, but wholly out of it in its object—a life of faith, which finds in God's presence fullness of joy. A man's life does not extend to God, though perfect for God, and in its delight in God. Such was Christ, though He was much more than this. Such are we as far as we are Christians; only we have to remember that the development of this life in us is not, as in the psalm, in connection with the name of Jehovah, but with the full revelation of the Father and the Son. The blessed one who thus lived as man on earth is as man at God's right hand, where are pleasures for evermore, with Him in whose presence is

fullness of joy. His flesh saw no corruption, and His soul was not left in hades. He despised, for this joy set before Him, the shame and endured the cross, the leader and finisher of faith.

(Continued from page 133)

Chapter 145

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalm 17

Psa. 16 gave the inward spiritual life of Christ and so ours, ending in the highest joy of God's presence. Psa. 17 considers this life practically here below, and in respect to its difficulties with man opposed to what is right. The state of the soul is still marked by entire dependence on God, but as to integrity towards God, and as against man, the soul can plead righteousness. Still. it does not avenge itself, but casts itself entirely on God, and thus gets the fruits of His righteous dealings. This is a great secret of practical wisdom, not avenging self—the patience of the new life in the midst of evil, and looking, and leaving all to God. This supposes the righteous path as man of the divine life, which therefore can appeal to God's necessary judgment about it, knowing what He is and also trusting in Him; but even here deliverance is sought, not vengeance, only the disappointing the plans of wickedness. If we have not walked uprightly, still confidence in God is our true place. He spares and restores in mercy most graciously; but this, though other psalms take it up, is not the subject of this psalm. Here it is the righteous life which God looks at and vindicates against the men of this world, for it is Christ and Christians as far as they live the life of Christ. Immediately, as ever, it is Christ and the remnant. Jehovah hears the righteous and the prayer which goes not out of feigned lips. Remark that in this psalm the life of Christ is supposed and found to meet opposition and oppression in the world from the men of this world. We have seen how separated it was, associated with the excellent of the earth, passing as a stranger through it, though humanly in it. But then faith—and this shows how entirely Jehovah is still looked to—sees that the men of this world are the men of God's hand. They serve to prove the heart and, in us, who are ever in danger to slip into the world, to keep us strangers in it. Still God delivers from them. Christ for blessed reasons was not delivered; yet as freely giving Himself. The heart has the sense of righteousness here and hence counts on deliverance; but there is no spirit of vengeance.

It is the Spirit of Christ Himself, and hence above the spirit of the remnant, and much more the Christian spirit. There is the consciousness of righteousness and of integrity, but entire dependence on the Lord in respect of it, not as regards justification—it is not the question here—but confidence. I know nothing of myself, says Paul, yet I am not hereby justified. Again, if our heart condemn us not, then we have no confidence towards God. So Jesus: “the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.” There is the consciousness of righteousness and confidence in God. And the heart appeals to him, because of righteousness. And all this is right, thinks rightly of God, and trusts to God that He will not be inconsistent with Himself and cannot be. If there be desire of vengeance, we have sunk below this. Remark the further traits of the conscious life. It is not merely righteous walk, but a proved heart, where the secret movements of the heart are alone with God. When the reins instruct, God proves, but nothing is found. This, absolutely true of Christ, is true of the Christian as to the purpose of his heart, and so far as he keeps nothing back, nothing reserved from God. This can be, though then in utter humiliation, where even there has been failure. “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” So in Job. He held fast the consciousness of his integrity—not that he had not failed.

The short-comings of nature had to be checked and judged, and this he only did when humbled in the presence of God. He had for a long while, as God witnesses, held fast his integrity in every sense. He did as with God all through, but did not know himself as this was needed. Christ ever walked so and the provings of His heart only found integrity to God. There was purpose. His mouth also should not transgress. He was a perfect man, as James says. Next, as regards the works of men, for He walked as a man in this world, this word was His absolute rule. By it He kept Himself from the paths of the destroyer. But there is no pride, but entire dependence on Jehovah in the right path. “Hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” Such was the practical life of Christ in this world. This was His life and walk in itself.

In what follows from verse 6, it is shown in looking to God as regards the opposition and oppression of the wicked. He looks. for Jehovah's loving-kindness as his sole stay in presence of his enemies. This, again, is perfection. His path was with God; no yielding to please men and be spared; no complaint that he had not his portion in this world. He sees the success and prosperity of the men of this world, without envy. Faith fully tried is faith still. If we trust the Lord and have Him for our portion, we have courage to walk in His path and not find nature satisfied; but this is faith. If there be not so, there will be some craving after what the natural heart could have, and so danger of yielding, in order to have what nature craves and the world gives after all, husks that perish. But the human heart must have something. If it has the Lord it suffices, but this tests it. Here we have perfection in respect of the heart and path in this world. The great secret is to have the heart filled with Christ, and so be in the path at God's will. Thus there is no room for will and acts which harass the soul, and of which self is always the center, as Christ is in the heart walking in faith. Hence His presence in righteousness is what is before the soul as the blessed result. It is in righteousness. It is not the absolute joy in God of Psa. 16, but the righteousness which gives joy in His presence for those who have suffered for it and by it here below in God's paths, in an opposing world, and absence or denial of self. “God is not unrighteous to forget.” “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense to you rest with us.” And the heart, too, is satisfied, not here exactly with what God is, but with what we are. “I shall awake up after thy likeness,” so “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. Holy delight in God, having him always before the face, leads to perfect delight and joy in God, when His presence makes it full. Faithfulness, internal and external, to God in the midst of an opposing and perhaps oppressing world, leads to righteous recompense of glory and God's presence in righteousness. Both are perfect in Christ, and through Christ, the portion of the saints. Verses 7 and 11 give the general application to those associated with Christ; still, though applicable to the remnant, the psalm gives the proper perfection of Christ and so of the Christian. Deliverance now is looked for in this psalm, not in 16. There it was the perfect passage of life with God through death, up to fullness of joy in Him in His presence. Here righteous deliverance from men is looked for. And for this—though we may be honored with martyrdom, according to the pattern of Christ's sufferings—the Christian may look. “The Lord shall deliver me,” says the apostle, “from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.” The soul may confidently and entirely trust God, as against all the machinations of the wicked, as walking in the path of righteousness. God saves such by His right hand. He may trust for restoration, if it has failed; but there is a path of righteousness which Christ has traced here below in a world of sin, and left the blessed track of His steps, and the witness of the movements of His heart, for us to walk in and live by.

Chapter 146

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 18-21

Psa. 18 is of the deepest interest, as regards the interpretation, presenting, as it does, the sufferings of Christ as the center of all the deliverances of Israel. His cry there called out upon. Israel all the favor of God in power. But I have not a great deal to say upon it, for that very reason, in its application to us. The great principle developed—and it is a precious one—is the cry to a trusted God in distress, which He surely hears. Of this Christ is the example, as elsewhere. “This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him.” Only that here it is not, as in psalm 34., tender commiseration towards the suffering poor; but the interest that Jehovah takes in a suffering Christ, who has walked in perfect obedience to the law. The psalm is a psalm of praise, because He has been heard and Jehovah known as a rock and a deliverer; but this, as often remarked, is the result expressed in the first verses, and what leads to it is then pursued.

“I will call upon Jehovah,” for His name it is, and His alone, the God of His people, which inspires confidence. It is His name which is celebrated, but what has drawn all this praise out is the answer to the cry raised to Him in distress in the midst of enemies, in the sorrows of death. In that distress Jehovah heard out of His temple. This associates it at once with the earth, and deliverance and triumph there. But another point of the highest interest does so too—obedience to the law laid as the ground for his living, heard in the day of distress. (ver. 20-26.) The righteous obedience on earth and dependence of Messiah on Jehovah, calling on him in distress, brought Him earthly deliverance and earthly triumph. The two previous psalms look onward to heavenly blessing, though the latter of them for the disappointment of the enemy also; but the hope held out is heavenly, the righteousness not legal; but in the former the heart set on Jehovah, in the latter a heart right with God, and in this world, and looking for righteousness.

Here in psalm 18, there is obedience to His statutes, a cry in distress even to the pains of death, and deliverance, and triumph on the earth, Such is the result of the legal righteousness of Christ, when in distress, in the midst of the floods of ungodly men and His strong enemy. Note, it is the power of men and death, and His crying thus to God, and His cry comes before Him—in no way God's hand upon Him as suffering for sin. Messiah's legal righteousness and distress bring earthly triumph and supremacy to David and to his seed. It is the government of God, (see 25-26) having regard to righteousness on the earth which in Christ was perfect. But this, perfectly accomplished when Christ's enemies are put under His feet, is not actually so how, because God prepares His saints for a heavenly dwelling and joy, and, during all the proving of the first Adam, shows by their trials that their rest is not here. Still there are some precious points for every soul. In uprightness and suffering through it, he can surely count upon God; and remark here that the interest and sympathy of God, awakening in us the blessedest affections, are sweetly shown. The Lord hears when we call in distress, and in the greatest depth we can have confidence, and what ought to seem to shut us out from it is just the occasion of it. The psalm instructs us thus to call upon the Lord in distress, come how or why it may—to call on the Lord; and thus not only the deliverance is known, but the Lord is known in His sympathy, and kindness, and interest in us. I love the Lord, he says; or rather the heart turns to the Lord Himself and says, “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,”

and then the heart thinks of all He is for us. “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” The heart enlarges in the sense of what He has been for us. And so He is. Though our deliverances may not be exactly of the same kind, yet difficulties and distress often beset us, and there is deliverance in crying to the Lord. Note also, there are holy affections drawn out by the dealings of the Lord, as by His eternal salvation—holy and confiding affections, piety; not merely praise, because He has redeemed us forever, but daily exercise of sympathy and tender thoughts of compassion. He cannot bear to see us suffer, save when needed, and there are trials which draw out love to Him. Surely, He says, “Ephraim is my dear child; for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.” There indeed it was the remembrance of him when under chastisement. Here it is suffering in integrity, but at bottom there is integrity in the Christian and in Christ. He can cry in that distress. The psalm however is the cry of a holy and calm spirit, confiding in God and finding the abundant results in His faithfulness. The heart is drawn to Himself.

In 16, 17, 18, we have found Christ Himself—His personal position, the joy set before Him in heaven, and His final triumph on earth as suffering when legally righteous. In 19 – 21, we have the godly remnant contemplating the different testimonies presented to the responsibility of man. A few remarks on each are called for. First, there is the testimony of creation, and in particular the heavens, for the earth has been given to man and is corrupt. Here, remark, God is spoken of, not Jehovah—His hope in God as such. Hence the Godly man sees that the witness goes out into all lands, and that the Gentiles are the objects of God's testimony. This is a very important point, which the Jews ought to have understood, and which Paul, by the Holy Ghost, did understand, citing this psalm to show it—not resting on what the testimony was, but on the fact that the testimony of God went out into all lands to the ends of the earth. The godly man can delight in this testimony to the glory of His God; And he sees it reaches out to all. He enters into and understands the penetrating, pervading character of this testimony, and that it is God who is witnessed to by it. Such, I add, will be the estimate of the restored remnant in the last days. (See psalm 148.) But the godly man estimates the experimental excellence of the law of God also; and though, of course, for Israel it was the law as given by Moses, we must take it here as the testimony of the word of God to the conscience. I say the conscience, because it is not the revelation of the riches of grace, or the unfolding of the person of Christ and the ways of God in Him, but the testimony of God's word respecting man, to the conscience of man, even when it is taken in the largest sense. He does not say the law of God here, but “the law of Jehovah,” a God known in covenant relationship. His law is given to His people, to His servants. It is perfect, the exact mind of God as to what man ought to be before God, according to God's will, now that evil is known; but man's mind is not such, even when the law of God is delighted in. It sets the soul therefore right. One has the consciousness of its doing so: for the soul having life, appreciates it when revealed, (though it may not have had it in mind,) and is livingly susceptible of its truth. It has living power as the word of God for him who lives. But where it is not forgotten, there is enlightening and direction. It is pure and enlightens the eyes, gives to see clear where we were obscure in heart and spirituality. But the psalm connects this with the state of the heart. There is a reference, not merely to the law, but to the Lord Himself—the effect of the sense of God's presence in the conscience—the fear of the Lord—the introduction of God into everything, and the reference of the heart to Him, and the judgment which he has of everything. This is clean; no spot can remain there, and it is an eternal principle, for it depends on the nature of God Himself.

Further, God's dealings and ways as pronounced (for judgments include that, as well as judgments executed; He does show His judgment of timings in His chastisements;) but in general every judgment He forms, however shown, is true and righteous altogether. But they are not only this, but as gold and the honeycomb to the faithful.; they are the expressions of God's mind, and that is infinitely precious and sweet to the saint. But, besides this, the heart is in the midst of dangers and human tendencies, which draw us far from God. The judgments of the Lord on all human conduct warn us: for the joy of the word, and, in the case of the Christian, of heaven, do not suffice. We need the wisdom and prudence which can point out a divine path in the confusion of evil, to guide our steps out of the reach of evil here. God's word meets us even here. And in keeping His judgments there is great reward: great positive blessing and peace of heart here. The soul is happy with God, and walks in peace through the world, and, as a Christian, the heart is thus wholly free to serve others. Remark that it is not merely what the law is, but what the heart knows it to be: the servant of Jehovah is warned by it. There is delight in it, according to the new nature, and the consciousness of relationship; for we are servants of God, though we have higher, more intimate and glorious relationships. But in this confidence, the effect of this nearness is to turn the eye to another point: the want of full self-knowledge, distrust of self. “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.” In many thing's, although delighting in the word, and appreciating it when thinking of it. I may not have judged my own heart, or be able morally to prove it, so as to judge it according to that perfection: for there is growth in spiritual judgment. But there is integrity and confidence in the Lord, and he demands to be cleaned from his secret faults, and to be kept from all presumptuous faults—what one would commit with open disregard of God. Thus he would be undefiled, and be kept with God, not turning aside to idols or vanity. For small and neglected sins and unjudged confidence of heart lead to forgetfulness of God, and denial of Him in the truth. I do not speak here of security by grace, but of the path in which these evils lead. Finally, the true desire of the heart is shown: that the words of the mouth, and the meditations of the heart may be acceptable in God's sight. This is the true test of a. godly life, when good is sought inwardly, when only in God's sight: the research of good with God, not before man or in the knowledge of man. I speak not of hypocrisy, but of walking with God. But in all true righteousness God is owned as our Rock and Redeemer; for we cannot be “with Him, with the real apprehensions of a new life, without feeling our need of Him in both characters.

Psa. 20 and 21, as remarked elsewhere, present to us the third witness presented to time responsibility of men—Christ. But this is not our only subject here: psalm xx. shows us the profound interest which the heart takes in. watching the Faithful One in His sorrows—in a Jewish form no doubt. Still, as elsewhere, the substance is the same for us. It is still confidence in Jehovah which characterizes the feeling of Him who speaks; for time God of Jacob is before His thoughts. There is faith in Him in this relationship. Yet Messiah is seen in the trials and questions of His life here below, walking but in piety towards Jehovah, and in dependence on Him. Nothing can show Christ more completely as a man than this. The Anointed is saved, i.e., delivered, and heard. The whole heart of the godly is wrapped up in this. But the remnant see yet further here, as Israel ought to have done; they see Him answered in His demand for life, by a most glorious one forever, in the immediate light of God's countenance, with which He is made glad, and after that, His right hand finding out all His enemies, and destroying them. But, even in all this, (as in John 17. where one sees at the same time that he must be one with the Father,) Messiah receives all from Jehovah as a man, and is so viewed by the godly. And so was He presented by Peter. His

privilege is the favor of Jehovah; His piety, confidence in Jehovah. This link is what occupies the godly, who are thus profoundly attached to Messiah, and this was in effect what characterized Christ—seeking His Father's glory, and in nothing His own. So Jehovah associates Himself entirely with Him as 21:9, as the godly does on his side also. And as Messiah is exalted by Jehovah in spite of His enemies, so is Jehovah exalted in His glory in doing it; and so it is, the remnant, equally interested, exalt and praise the power of Jehovah. This linking up the interests of the godly, bound in heart to Messiah—Messiah and Jehovah, as characterizing the piety of the godly, is full of beauty and interest. Yet, in His life, Christ never took this title with His disciples. He would lead them further. He was Son of man, and spoke of His Father as being Himself Son of God. “My Father,” said He to the Jews, of whom ye say that He is your God. All the moral qualities of Messiah, Son of God, He had, but He was weaning His disciples from the earthly associations to higher and heavenly ones; and this shows us the need there is in all our use of the psalms to make this difference. We see with the profoundest interest the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, but it is from a higher point of view; we look not at his official place and then humiliation, but the divine and perfect love in which He emptied Himself and came down and took the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and passed with a purpose of love across the trials and sorrows of this world of sorrow, and we see His glory in it. The truth is much more deeply taught in the New Testament. Still the way Christ is presented as a true dependent man, and His piety in this dependence is most instructive to us who can add the deeper truth from the revelation of the Son of God. The word of life in it is seen.

Chapter 147

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 22-24

In commenting on Psa. 22, our part here is not to unfold the blessed doctrine contained in it, in the introduction of grace on a wholly new footing, (viz., redemption, and the death of Christ,) winch rose above and closed all mere human responsibilities in grace. We have rather to pursue the feelings and thoughts of Christ. For the piety of this part of the Psalms is the piety of Christ Himself. Nor is anything more instructive or sanctifying. Nothing deepens our on piety so much.

This, then, shall be our subject now. The Lord enable us to tread reverently here!

We find what called out the special cry of the Savior—a cry which, till that bitter cup had been fully drank, could not be beard. There is progress and completeness in the utterance of these sorrows. Violence, unrestrained and full. of rage, surrounded Him—bulls of Bashan—ravening and roaring lions. It was no haughty strength of man which met this. He must meet and feel it in the meekness of His nature, and know the weakness, though never the sin, of human nature, save in bearing it. He was poured out like water—all His bones as out of joint—His heart melted like wax in the midst of His bowels. His strength is dried up like a potsherd; His tongue cleaves to His jaws. lint here there is no stooping, nor could He do so, at second causes. He is down in the dust of death; but Jehovah has brought Him there. The point here is His state—the dust of death: only He looks at the real source of all, at the thoughts and counsels of Jehovah, This is perfection in this respect: entire sensibility as to, and moral perception of, the character of the enemies, who are the instruments of our suffering; but looking, through it all, to the ways and wisdom and will of God, and God in faithful relationship to us, the true source of all. But besides the violence which instrumentally, had brought the gentle and unresisting Savior, dumb as a sheep before His shearers, to the dust of death, had violently dragged away and mocked Him whose simple presentation of Himself had made all fall to the ground—there was the manifestation of the character of men, when, through His own giving Himself up, He was in their power. Dogs encompassed him—creatures without heart or conscience—without shame or feeling, whose pleasure was in the shame of another, and in insults offered to Him who made no resistance, in outrages to the righteous. They were wicked as well as violent. They stared and looked upon Him. How must the Savior have felt their shameless and heartless insults—His exposure, naked, to the hardened eye of those that rejoiced in iniquity and in His shame! They amuse themselves with appropriating His garments. The vesture of the Innocent was an affair of dice or casting lots. No eye to pity—none to help. Trouble was there; He looks on Jehovah, entreating Him not to be far from Him, and, if He has no strength, Jehovah as His strength to be near.

And here we approach the deeper part of this solemn hour. In the utmost trials from man, when no eye was there to pity, no hand to help, He looks to Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel's and Messiah's faith. But here, O mystery of mysteries I there was no help either, but only infinite perfection (for infinite it now must be) in the Blessed One. He is still associated here with Israel as to His place in the psalm, whatever the efficacy of that work in which, in this great turning-point of divine history, this central definition and solution of the question of good and evil, that in which it

was settled for eternity. The God of Israel was to leave Him and destroy the enmity, and rend the veil which, in Israel, concealed God; that, in the full result of divine love by righteousness, grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for every believer, Jew or Gentile, and for the complete glory of God in heaven and earth. We still, remark, find the necessary difference of Christ in the psalms and in the gospels. There it is as Son (save in His forsaking) He speaks, saying, “Father, forgive them;” and afterward, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Here it is: “Be not far from me, O Jehovah.” He seeks help for Himself from the God of Israel, His God. And such is the result. It is the remnant gathered, and then all Israel, the millennial nations and the people to be born—those who are the called and blessed fruit of this work. We do not rise up to heaven. Having made this remark, as important to the right use of the psalms, which we find has its place even in what is said of the cross itself in the Psa. 1 turn to the character of faith and piety found here in the Blessed One, in His trust as come in the midst of Israel, in Jehovah. “For of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for evermore.” There is the deepest consciousness of His own outwardly-abject state and desertion, and that in painful contrast with every faithful soul—a circumstance wonderfully calculated to produce in the human heart irritation and despondency, i.e., a forgetfulness of what God was—if this had been possible with Jesus. “I am a worm, and no man—a scorn of men, and despised of the people.” Nor was this all. The blessed Savior, He who had been cast upon Jehovah from the womb, whose hope Jehovah had been from His mother's breast, who had sought His will and glorified His name, had to declare before all, and in presence of the taunts and mockery of His adversaries, that God had forsaken Him. How deep this trial was morally, none but He could tell who passed through it. It was in the proportion of the love He enjoyed and lived in, and His faithfulness to it. We speak of trial and piety, not of expiation here. In all this, and through all this, the blessed Savior is perfect towards Jehovah. First, His trust is perfect. He says not Jehovah; for the relationship was not then in exercise as it was with His Father in Gethsemane; but He says, “My God, my God.” Whatever the dreadful forsaking was, His perfect faith in God and devotedness to God, as the only one He owned, remains absolute and unshaken. He is perfect, absolutely perfect, as man, subjectively. But this is shown in another point. Whatever the sufferings of Christ—notwithstanding the fact, that in His path, there was no cause for His being forsaken,—His testimony to God, His sense of the perfectness of His ways and nature, remains the same, yea, more elevated. “But thou continuest holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” Let God abandon the righteous, the righteous One is sure He is perfect in doing so. Nothing can express more completely the perfection of Christ as man, His position as such—how He had taken the place of “my goodness extendeth not to thee.” He is not here contemplating the counsels of God, and understanding their accomplishment, which He had Himself undertaken. It is the dependent man feeling the trial as it reached himself as Elan, but perfect and faithful when, as regards His feelings, there was no answer of God in trials, wherein He counted on it, and it alone was to be counted on.

We can answer the question, “Why hast thou forsaken me? We shall answer it, who believe in Jesus, with everlasting adoration. But it is of the last importance for us, not only to know that Christ has, by Himself, purged our sins, having drank the cup of wrath, but to know Christ as suffering personally under this forsaking of God—His own entrance as man into the sense, as regards Himself, of this forsaking—His own personal sorrow in it; because, though He were wholly alone in it, it leads us to that joy which He felt in entering, again and more than ever, into the full, unclouded

light of His Father's countenance—consequent on, and according to, the value of redemption, and the full resting of the necessary delight of God in Him, and His acceptance, as having perfectly glorified Him, when sin had put all in confusion. So that all that God was, as brought out by sin, (for sin brought out sovereign love, righteousness, truth, vindicated majesty,) was perfectly revealed and glorified. His own sufferings, I say, lead us to that joy into which Christ entered with His God and Father as man; and which, as all this was accomplished in a work wrought for our sins, He communicates to us, introducing us into the full blessedness into which He is entered as man. In the work, He was alone; but it was for us, while for the divine glory; and He introduces us into the blessedness, as that which He enjoys in consequence of it.

This is the second part of the psalm, as to which I will only now refer to the sentiments of Christ. He has been heard from the horns of the unicorn, transpierced by the power of death; God's judgment against sin being executed and passed. I have remarked, elsewhere, the very instructive fact, that Christ never speaks in the gospels, during His life, of God as His God, but always as the Father. This was the impression of His own personal relationship, the name, too, that He revealed to His disciples. He never directly calls Himself the Christ, in the gospel history; not that He was not presented as such to Israel, for He was, but it is not the place and name He takes himself with God and His Father, which is the way we have to know Him. When the Jews say to Him, “if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly,” He says, “I have told you already;” but as revealed to us, He is Emmanuel, the Prophet that should come, the Son of man, the Son of God. The word He uses with, and of God, is ever, Father, and My Father; with His disciples, Son of man. In the psalm we are studying, we read, My God, My God. He is man with whom God deals in judgment, but man, even if forsaken, perfect in his own relationship with God in faith: He says, My God. Now He declares the name of God to His brethren, and employs both these titles—man gone to the extreme of trial with God, standing as regards all that God is in righteousness, truth, majesty, love. My God—all that God is in His Own perfection and majesty, and claim, He is necessarily and obligedly, though in the delight of His love for us as in Christ, doubtless according to His own counsels, but righteously, and thus necessarily, and unalterably for us. What He is as God, He is as our God, for through Christ—Christ proved on the cross—He is for us, and that, sin being put away by Christ's sacrifice of Himself. The cloudless perfection of God shines out on us, in His OWN proper blessedness; as on Christ in virtue of His having glorified Him, in the perfection in which He thus shines out. This name, (that is the true reality of this relationship,) is declared to us. The gracious name and nature of God was declared on earth by Christ, who was the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. But with that, sinful man, at enmity with God, could have no part or association. The light shines in darkness; the darkness comprehended it not. Yea, man saw and hated Him, and His Father. But Christ was made sin for us, stood as man responsible before God, with God in all these attributes in which He dealt with sin, but was perfect there; that love might righteously have its free course. Hence He says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” For He was that love—God, in Christ, reconciling, till it could flow out according to the perfection of God, in righteousness; but it could not slow out freely where sin was. This, through the cross, through Christ's perfection, when He was made sin for us, it could; yea, love was exalted and the very character of God made good in and by it—His name, the very name which was to be revealed, made good by it. Hence Christ could say “therefore doth my father love me.” But then Christ entered in a still more supreme degree, into the joy of His father's love, and all this as man. He does so when heard. It was publicly made good and evident

in resurrection He was raised by the glory of the Father. Then He declares this name to His brethren. For now sin being man's only place with God, out of Christ, he who believed had, in Christ, Christ's place as raised from the dead, in the relationship in which He stands with the Father; and, death having come in, no other. Go and tell my brethren, said the Lord," I ascend to my Father and your Father and my God and your God." Now He employs both titles and applies them both to us, both because all that God is, He is in righteousness for Him as man in glory, and He is re-entered into the joy of his father's communion, and places us, in virtue of this work, wrought for us, in the position in which He is; as His brethren, partakers of the favor and heritage which is His, through grace.

I have entered more into the doctrine connected with the psalm, than I intended, though it has been practically; for the feelings and affections of Christ are my object now. Remark that the first thought of Christ, when heard from the horns of the unicorn, is to declare the name of God and His Father, to His brethren—now glorious, but not ashamed to call us brethren. Perfect in love, attached to these excellent of the earth, He turns when once He is entered into the position of joy and blessing, through a work which gave them the title to enter, to reveal to them what placed them in the same position with Himself. Thus He gathered them; and then having awakened their voices to the same praises as that which He was to offer He raises the blessed note as man and sings praise in the midst of the assembly. Oh! with what loud voices and ready hearts we ought to follow Him! And note he who is not clear in acceptance, and the joy of Sonship with God, in virtue of redemption, cannot sing with Christ. He sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Who sings with Him? He who has learned the song, which he has learned to sing as come out of judgment into the full light and joy of acceptance. The first chapter of Ephesians shows us this place, in verses 3 and 4. Here we have the saints led by Jesus in praise, according to His own joy. The grace of this position is perfect. The further results of the work, I do not enter on here save to remark, that all is grace, no judgment (it is founded on it,) and that nothing goes beyond earth here.

Psa. 23 is so ordered by the Spirit as to apply to a dying Christ, or saint who follows His footsteps, or the preserved remnant. It does not consider the sufferings of Christ from God, or from man, nor those of the faithful, save as mere facts and occasions of Jehovah's care. Its subject is, Jehovah is my shepherd,—the constant, unfailing care, exercised by Him. It is a life spent under His care and eye, come what will, the experience it affords, and the assurance that Jehovah's love gives to the end and forever. It is not what He gives, which assures the heart, but Himself. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Power, grace, goodness, interest in the faithful one, all assure; and assure in all circumstances and forever, and always. He has undertaken and has charged Himself with the care of His faithful ones. These cannot want. We have not to think of what may come, or what means may be employed. The Shepherd's care is our assurance. The natural fruit of this care is fresh and green pastures in security, the peaceful enjoyment of the sure refreshings of goodness. But in fact man, especially the remnant, and Christ Himself, are in the midst of oppression, sorrow, and death, and in presence of mighty enemies. Is the soul troubled and bowed down? He restores it. Does it go through the valley of the shadow of death? Does death cast its dark gloom over the Spirit that must go down into its shade? He is there, greater than death, to guide and sustain. Are powerful and relentless enemies there to alarm and threaten? They are powerless before Him. He dresses a table for His beloved, where they sit down in safety

and secure. Divine unction is the seal of power when all is against us. Human weakness, death, and spiritual powers of wickedness, all are only the occasions to show most evidently that Jehovah, the Shepherd, is the infallible safeguard of His people. Christ was not, of course, a sheep, but He trod the path the sheep have to tread, and trusted in Jehovah. He is the Jehovah-Shepherd of them that are His. He loves us, as Jehovah loved and cared for Him. It is, then, the sure care of Jehovah through all that besets human nature in its path through this world. The natural proper fruit of this care is green pastures in the security of peace; but in man's ruined state, and the path he has to tread in the midst of the powers of evil, an infallibly sustaining power. Hence the heart, as it trusts in the unchangeable Jehovah reckons on the future. It is as certain and secure as the past. Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and the house of Jehovah receive me forever. Confidence is in the Lord Himself, and therefore all circumstances, and the whole power of evil, and difficulties of mortal man included in them, are but occasions of Jehovah's power, interested in infallible faithfulness, in carrying the faithful through.

It is interesting to see this care of divine power, holding its place in infallible certainty over all the special suffering and trial and death of the Lord. This is the faithful man's blessing, when the earth is not the Lord's when the power of evil and death and mighty adversaries are before it. Jehovah is the secure dwelling-place of faith. When the earth is the Lord's who shall ascend His hill, or stand in His holy place? Here remark the door has become open to all. Only Jacob has the place of acceptance and proximity to Jehovah; but blessing and acceptance in favor from God; who is their salvation are the portion of every one who has purified himself to seek God, who has placed His blessing in Jacob. The character of such is given, but the Gentiles who have it, have access in Jehovah's holy hill. Christ himself enters there in triumph as Jehovah. Psa. 24 closes the whole series which speaks of the association of Christ with the excellent—time saints that are in the earth. We have in it, Christ in the path of life with the saints; Christ in the path of righteousness in the midst of an evil world; Christ suffering, the center of all Israel's history, and the object of Jehovah's interest when identified with Israel; Christ suffering as witness to the truth, object of the remnant's thoughts and affections; Christ suffering as forsaken of God; Christ taking personally the path in which the sheep had to walk, and so unfolding to them the care of Jehovah; through Himself the true shepherd; (compare John 10;) and Christ, when all own Jacob and the God of Jacob, entering into the temple as the triumphant Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts. Though the blessed One be largely a pattern for us in much of this, yet the true effect on the piety of the heart is wrought in seeing Himself truly man, treading the path before our eyes, and engaging every affection of the soul in the contemplation of it.

In what follows, we have again the thoughts and feelings of the remnant in their sorrows, in connection with this place of Christ: but we shall find large instruction for our hearts in a path which is always one of sorrow, and essentially the same as long as evil reigns. In looking back to the psalms which we have studied, there is, I think, progress in their character. Thus in the first Psalms—from iii. to vii. we have the general principles and condition, showing that righteousness does not yet reign by judgment. This is founded on the great foundations of psalms i. and ii. The righteous man in the midst of the wicked; judgment yet to come; and the counsels of God as to Messiah announced but not yet fulfilled in viii. In psalms ix. and x. the circumstances of the land and the Jews in the last days; and, then, xi. - xv. the relationships, judgment and principles of the remnant looking towards Jehovah in this state of things; having giving the whole position of Christ

in respect of Israel, introducing Him amongst them, and showing the result, we have now much more of the experimental exercises of the saints in that day. This we have now to consider. These could not be but founded on the intervention and sacrifice of Christ. It is not meant thereby that they are clear as to this, or that the expressions of the psalms suppose it, or suit a soul which is in liberty. But such exercises could not have place without that intervention and sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit, in the remnant, and in every soul, works in virtue of them, and with a view to their full recognition.

Chapter 148

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 25-28

In Psa. 25 we have, for the first time, the definite confession of sin. This, with 26, the declaration and consciousness of integrity of heart, form the subjective basis of all their experiences: the two following the objective. Jehovah, light and salvation, and present distress, through the pressure of the wicked, still here with confidence of heart in Jehovah. But the more we study the Psalms, the more we shall see that they apply properly to the Jews, and that almost universally; referring to the godly, righteous man of the remnant, animated according to his position, whose thoughts are furnished by the Spirit of Christ speaking in the prophet. Many parts of them can be applied to Christ Himself, when all cannot. But this shows what I have already remarked, that the possibility of referring passages to Christ does not make them exclusively prophecies of Him, nor prove that all the Psalm applies to Him; and, further, the real danger of taking the Psalms as the expression of Christian piety. They are not so. Often they furnish blessed instruction on confidence in God; but he who would take the form of his piety from the Psalms, as a whole, would falsify Christianity. Having said this, I turn to details. The soul is lifted up to Jehovah in its difficulties—the true secret of overcoming them, and having peace in the midst of them. The true heart has no other refuge. Another distracts it from this. It says, my God, in them—it can now, through Christ, and trust in God; and looks not to be ashamed, nor its enemies triumph over it. This in difficulties is the first desire of faith. But it cannot confine itself when real to self. It is linked up by grace with God's goodness, felt in this very hope; but then with all those who wait on Jehovah. It desires that the wicked—causeless transgressors, i.e., those who love iniquity, not who fall in it, may be ashamed. This, as a general principle, is no way unchristian. The Christian cannot desire that an individual enemy come under judgment; but he does desire that evil be set aside, and that the adversaries of good be made ashamed: he loves and desires righteousness, and that the oppressor of righteousness, and of the lowly, and meek, and just, be put down, and put to shame. In his own case he can desire it as to result, without wishing evil to the individual. His trust in Jehovah prevents his taking the smallest step for the injury of his enemy; but he refers his case to the Lord, and leaves it in His hands, looking for His deliverance.

But there is another characteristic of the saint whose heart is turned towards the Lord in repentance. He seeks Jehovah's ways, His paths—to be led in His truth and taught. Remark this very definite character of good in the upright soul. It is not simply a right way, but the Lord's way he seeks. His spirit is returned to the Lord, thinks of Him, estimates His character, is conscious of owing allegiance and service to Him, belonging to Him, and that all does, and delights in and seeks only His way. But this psalm presents a returning man, (the Jew,) not one first converted. Israel (and so the saint) does remember and recall, but looks to Jehovah's remembering his faults no more, and according to His mercy to remember himself, to remember him in that way; for He knew Jehovah to be merciful, and it was for the glory of His own name, he could ask it for His goodness' sake. This shows, not known pardon, but the confiding of grace. This is not a purged conscience, yet it flows from the answer of God. But it is an acceptable way of approaching God. So the poor woman that was a sinner in the gospel. She came thus, she went away in peace. But

there is a faithfulness of the Lord to His own goodness—His own character, which is above evil, which (a ransom being found which maintains righteousness) makes Him act for the true blessing of the sinner thus looking to Him. As it is said even of Joseph, “He was a just man, and not willing to make her a public example.” No doubt other motives come in with man; still, as far as he has to act like God, this principle comes in. Good and upright is the Lord. Good to us, He loves uprightness, loves to see it, and so will teach it in grace to those wandered from it. It is sweet to one that has wandered to count on this. Remark, it is not here His way. That was the expression of the state of the saint's heart—this the revelation of (or, rather, the confidence of) the saint in what was in Jehovah's. What the way was not exactly the question—of course a good one; but He would teach them in it. His active love would be occupied with them for good. Yet the character of the way is not left out when the true character of the renewed saint is brought in. The meek will He guide in judgment, in the path which expresses God's mind. The meek will He teach His way.

But there is progress in other respects in this psalm. It divides itself into three parts, 1-7, 8-14, 14-22. In the first part, the oppressed and tried soul judging its past sins, but trusting God and looking to Him, pleads with God in respect of its wants and difficulties, in presence of the power of evil. In the second part, this reference to God has led the soul to speak about Him, dwelling on and declaring what He is in His ways. In the third, the soul looks personally to the Lord, as assured of His interest in it, and calls down the eye of God on itself and on its enemies and circumstances, looking for forgiveness in that, but confiding in conscious integrity; and, finally, applies its request to all Israel. But there is also progress in detail, as to the condition of the soul in speaking of God. First, His goodness and uprightness lead Him to teach sinners uprightness in heart. They had wandered in their own ways; how terribly are God's forgotten. But the good and gracious Lord will not leave them unguided; their state draws out His compassion. He loves the right way, nor can He bless elsewhere. He teaches sinners in the way. But the effect of acknowledging sin and knowing the goodness of God, is meekness, subduedness of spirit, and lowliness; the absence of haughtiness, of self, of what the heathens considered the spring of virtue. In this state God guides in judgment and teaches His way. Not only the way is taught to one who had wandered far from it; but where there is lowliness and submission to God, He guides in the intelligence of His ways, in their own spirit and mind. They are formed by His instructions to judge of what God's own way is. This is an internal and moral conformity which applies itself to discern and judge circumstances. And this moral conformity and discernment is very precious. But verse 12 goes further. We have one fearing God, walking in the consciousness of His presence, and responsibility to Him, referring in heart to Him as subject to Him. Here is not merely moral discernment, but knowledge of the chosen way of God. The man who is guided in judgment will know what is right and do it, and avoid what is wrong, but the man of Issachar had understanding of the times. There was a way God chose in the midst of prevalent evil, and he who feared Jehovah, should be taught in this way. He would find the path which issued in full blessing. This is a great privilege, and of which no surrounding darkness or confusion can deprive us. It is the way Jehovah chooses in the midst of it—a special covenant way for those who fear Him. So surely there is for the Christian in the confusion in which the Church of God is. This is shown with additional evidence in the words which follow. The secret of Jehovah, for He has a secret for the ears of those who hear, is with them that fear Him—His friends to whom He makes known His mind. It is wonderful that Mary knew more of it than Martha. She could anoint Him beforehand for His burial, had the Lord's mind in the scene which was before. His word is always a guard against false pretenses to this, but it remains ever

true, that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And however all seems to run against His sure promise, they see the result and progress towards it by faith, and will see it in full accomplishment further on when His ways are accomplished. This is a great blessing and gives a tranquility, a calm, in the path, which nothing else does. One has the Lord's mind in it. This closes the second part. In traversing the evil, the trust of the soul is in the Lord, and His faithful love. “Mine eyes are ever to the Lord, he shall pluck my feet out of the net.” This is the secret of the Lord. One looks out of all the evil and trusts in Him who is above it all. Knowledge of the Lord's secret is not insensibility to present evil, even as it affects self; nor coldness as to the Lord's interest in ourselves, not only in righteousness, (though He be ever righteous,) but in ourselves. The secret of the Lord, through His fear, tends to give this intimacy and confidence. Turn thou unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am afflicted and desolate. There is a truth of heart with the Lord. But this supposes integrity, and such is found here; and such in Christ is found in the true of heart, though they confess themselves in themselves the chief of sinners, and in their flesh no good thing. The heart can present all the hostility of its enemies to God, and leave that also with Him. It looks to be not ashamed, for it has put its trust in Him. Christ only had to go through the contrary for us, the upright soul never will. But the heart, though having this intimacy with, and confidence in, God, does not forget His people—Israel, then; for us, the Church. The heart is there and, if it is intimate with God, must be. I have entered somewhat into the detail of moral feelings exhibited in the psalm, but it must be held in mind that all are founded on the presence in the heart of a deep consciousness of what Jehovah was for it, that the thought of Jehovah predominated, and is the source of all that is felt.

In Psa. 26 it is, as already remarked, the consciousness of integrity rather than the confession of sins, but here, also, all refers to Jehovah, and draws from what Jehovah is, and the attachment of the soul to Him, the principle of separation from evil doers, and final joy in His congregation when there shall be full deliverance from them. The spirit of the psalm is that integrity which has kept the soul by its own affections, and this attachment to Jehovah, and trust in Jehovah in presence of the power of evil (and for the time, as between them and the saints, evildoers are always the most powerful, because they can act according to their will without restraint or conscience,) apart from evildoers; and the conscience in presence of Jehovah looks to God's not gathering it with sinners, when He comes in in power, and on this it counts in faith. It is the expression of the path and desire of integrity in presence of evil.

Psa. 27 shows the heart confident in Jehovah, yet exercised before Him in the presence of the outward manifestations of evil. What would create fear more than distress of spirit? The connection of confidence in thinking of the enemies, and exercise of heart when looking to God, I think instructive, though at first sight it seems strange in this psalm. Confidence is not indifference or insensibility; but true exercises of heart with God, even when fear accompanies those exercises, spew themselves in confidence and boldness in presence of the hostile action of evil. Man would have spoken of fear when in presence of the enemy and confidence when with God. Whereas grace, working in true exercises of heart with God, gives boldness with the enemy. There is a real power of evil. The rightly taught heart feels it in its inward sources and reality (more or less spiritually,) but feels it with God, and then is at peace in the midst of, and as to, the conflict itself. So Christ sweat, as it were, great drops of blood in exercise of soul before God, and was of perfect calmness in the presence of his enemies, yea, they fell to the ground at the mention of His

name. This is full of instruction as to the difficulties and pains of Christian life. Where the heart, conscious of the power of evil, is exercised with and before God as to it, the evil itself, whatever its power, is powerless when it comes, assuming the exercise to be complete. “This is your hour,” said Christ, “and the power of darkness.” But He had felt all that with God, and took the cup, as to the fact, out of the Father's, not the enemy's hand, who had, as to Christ, no such power. The psalm shows us the working of this in ordinary men according to His Spirit. Jehovah is the saints' light by faith, lightens up all around. There is no power of darkness for the spirit, when darkness is there in power. It rules in the enemies, but light is in the heart from the Lord, and it walks thus in the light. This is a great consolation. But the Lord is more than this—He is actual deliverance. This, till the cup was drank, He could not be for Christ; but He is known to be so for the redeemed soul in the midst of the trial. The same revelation of Jehovah which gives light, gives us in the light to be assured of the deliverance: I do not say necessarily to see the deliverance, for the how may be obscured, but to be assured of it. Because Jehovah is there in light, He will deliver; so the Father for us, and in His place of government, the Lord. But if it be God Himself, clearly there is nothing to fear. This is celebrated in thinking of the wicked, whom no conscience restrains—of war, where will is unbridled, however violent and mighty; if the Lord is there, all is provided for. But an important principle, or state of soul, is associated with, and is the basis of, this confidence—entire singleness of eye and desire, the looking to Jehovah for, and seeking one thing, to be with Him, in His presence where He is, and can be adored; to behold His beauty, and learn there His will and mind. But this, on the other hand, is connected with confidence in His goodness. The soul, defenseless in itself, knows the Lord will hide it in the time of trouble in His pavilion. Who shall hurt or disturb it there? And what love in the Lord, what interest He takes in those He loves! The soul dwells with Him, and dwells in safety. It is not apparent deliverance, but the secret of his tabernacle. And it is wonderful how the Lord does when evil rages, and there seems no resource; the soul seeks none, it confides sweetly and quietly in the Lord, sure of security in Him. The 6th verse counts on full deliverance and praise in His tabernacle, now not a hiding-place, nor a secret, but the blessed place of open praise. In the following verses we have the exercises of soul with the Lord, while waiting on Him for help. The Lord had called to seek His face. He could not turn it away. The soul recognizes here the possibility of anger, and deprecates it, and counts on grace. This is important for the soul, for one might think it could trust in the Lord if He had nothing against it. But not so: the heart may recognize that it ought to expect anger, yet trust grace. It has known a helping God, and looks not to be forsaken of one who is a Savior God. This confidence is complete; more than the nearest ties of nature can give, and so indeed it is for him who knows the Lord. It takes up its own matters between itself and God, looks to be taught His way, and led in a plain path, because its enemies watched for its getting out of the way. The pressure of enemies was great, and there will be such for the saint. There is a will of evil—false witness, then cruelty. The goodness of the Lord—no human means—is the resource of the heart, the goodness of the Lord in His government. The result is: wait on the Lord. He strengthens the heart. “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” This, indeed, is the secret of strength in the time of evil. There is, nothing to fear. We may have learned that it is a Father's love in our path of children, and the care of Christ, that good Shepherd, but the principle of our confiding in the Lord is the same. It is remarkable how entirely absent is the thought of any other resource or help, than that of the Lord. And this it is maintains integrity, for the Lord cannot help otherwise than in maintaining truth of heart. The wile of enemies is there. The soul knows nothing, (no human means or strength, or wisdom, or plan,) but seeking

Jehovah's face; with Him all is settled, and so in truth in the inward parts, and integrity. The enemies are then Jehovah's concern. This is the secret of our security and comfort in trial. Thence, grace being there, we can reckon on the Lord at all times. If we have erred, bring it to Him. It is a true exercise of soul in His presence. He deals with it according to truth, between itself and Him, but grace and This secret place, and their deliverance are its position.

Though Jehovah be the great subject of Psa. 28 as of all these, as regards the faithful there is a special point—his cry to Jehovah, and the supplication addressed to Him. The heart connects itself with the Lord in crying to Him. The cry implies the Lord's interest in us, and our having this for our starting point; also our avowed dependence on Him Thence, crying and prayer to the Lord are important, and an index to the state of soul. We may desire from the Lord, have faith in His goodness in giving, but crying to Him identifies us avowedly with Him, even before others. Here the soul is spoken of as in extreme distress—the pit of sheol open before it. But the principle is ever true, even in interceding for others. Here faith is shown in crying, when all seemed to man's eye hopeless. This connection with the Lord is distinctly marked here, in its being made the ground for not being drawn away with the wicked in judgment. In psalm xxvi. it was the integrity of the believer in his ways, which was laid as the ground for not being so drawn away: here it is this connection with the Lord, shown in calling upon Him. And though the wickedness of evildoers be the ground on which their judgment is looked for, yet their disregard of Jehovah is declared to be the ground of their destruction. The righteous has trusted in Him and been helped. But there is more, and much more, in the Lord's deliverance of us than the fact of being delivered. He has delivered us. The heart was attached to Him, adored Him, looked up to Him, believed Him, and He has not failed us. Oh! how true this is! and how it attaches afresh the heart to Him. So here, (ver. 6, 7,) “My heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him.” This looking with confidence to the Lord is a real entering into His character and conformity to it, in the sense of estimating, delighting in, and honoring it, in counting it impossible to be otherwise. It appreciates the Lord; and he who appreciates anything morally excellent is in a dependent way like it. I have a friend, of a noble, faithful, self-devoting character. I am in circumstances where all is opposed to the probability or possibility of his coming in to help. I am sure he will. I count with affection on what he is. It is evident that I hold fast in my appreciation of him. He is to my mind superior to all circumstances, governed by his own excellence; and this is what I appreciate and reckon on. Whatever circumstances may be, my heart goes with his in his conduct, though in the way of dependence, and his with mine. When he has acted, I rejoice in him, in my estimate of him. I say, I knew my appreciation was just: I knew him, and what he is. I rejoice in his excellence: I have reckoned on it as certain, and above all the circumstances. He has proved his interest in me in intervening. Thus, when God shall deliver the remnant, and when He delivers the Christian, they can say, “This is our God; we have waited for him.” This is what we can see in Job through all his culpable irritation. He reckons on God, and knows what he would be and do if he could find Him. The heart has trusted God's heart, and found it, and rejoices in it—has really honored God, though only in waiting, in assured confidence for Him. It is satisfied in what its mighty Friend is, and in His love. It rejoices in deliverance, for it suffered and was oppressed in weakness; but rejoices in heart—delight in the deliverer. It has a friend that has formed the heart after His own excellency, and formed it to confide in it. In the Christian this will be calmer, because he is more instructed in heavenly things, knows God better, and leas less anxiety as to what is here below, does not look on the things that are seen. But the principle is the same.

Chapter 149

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalm 29-32

Psa. 29 does not call for much remark connected with the way we are now viewing them. It is a summons to the mighty of the earth to own and give glory to Jehovah—the honor due to His name. The only point I would notice is the connection of worship with this, and here owning Him in His temple, where He has placed His name. His name has been revealed. Glory is due to Him as revealed, to His name; a name which, while the revelation of Himself, is that also of His relationship with His people. There He has placed His name, so as to form a center of association and revealed place of worship. Thus, while His voice may proclaim the majesty of that name, they who know it are drawn together by it as a place of common worship. The glory of this name is made good by and revealed in what is declared in the last verses. Jehovah sitteth upon the floods, is above, and rules to His own purposes all the tumultuous movings of the mass of peoples. He sits, too, King forever. As He is above the swellings of men, so He sits in sure, unmoved government forever. But, then, there is the connection with His people. He gives them strength. He blesses them with peace. Verse 10 is the possession of power over all and in Himself. Verse 11, what He is for the people. It is the invitation of the mighty to own Jehovah, and the sure blessing of Israel.

The great truth of psalm 30 is the practically deeply-interesting one, that the joy flowing from the deliverance the Lord (in this psalm Jehovah) affords is greater and deeper than the blessing of prosperity, even when acknowledged to come from God. It may be that the deliverance is from sorrow occasioned by faults. With the remnant of the Jews it will surely be so; but it is complete and full; and when the sin or evil is fully acknowledged, the restoration and blessing is absolute in communion with God. Forgiveness, or the thought of it, in an unhealed soul, may have regrets. When the soul is healed, it will learn judgment of the evil, assuredly, and a sense of humbleness, if it be recurred to—always more tenderness of spirit, more grace; but if the healing be full, the soul wholly searched out, no regrets, because what God is for us, as such, will possess the soul. The soul will abhor the flesh, and the principles which led to evil; but self will be taken out of the abhorrence when the evil is really hated, and peace will be there. I do not say the psalm pursues these thoughts to this depth. It is more occupied with the outward circumstances, with the hand of God upon it for evil, than with the evil for which His hand is upon it. But these are looked at as His anger. The effect is, that circumstances are looked at as a matter of His anger and favor; and on this the soul rests. It had been in prosperity, had owned its coming from God, but saw in circumstances its ground of confidence for happiness, though looked at as given and established by God. But, in so doing, however much it owned God in giving and assuring the blessing, it rested on the blessing, and that blessing ministered to self, instead of taking out of it. “I shall never be cast down. Thou, Lord, of thy goodness, past made my mountain to stand strong.” Though piety might be there, it might degenerate into “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The psalm, however, supposes true piety. Only that God's favor has made the mountain—“mountain” —to stand strong, instead of the favor itself being the blessing. Jehovah hides His face, and direct dependence is felt, direct blessing looked for. Chastening and exercises for faults come,

and divine favor itself is felt to be the blessing needed. And what Jehovah is Himself is the source of joy. When His anger is on the people that is felt; not merely the circumstances it is expressed in, but the hiding of Jehovah's face for sin. The soul is brought into an immediate relationship, though it be by anguish and distress. It is brought to think of itself, not as a self to be caressed, a center of its own blessing, but as sinful, and God's favor is needed. Thus, though painfully, a most useful and important work is done, through grace, when this self-judgment is wrought in the soul, so that there is spiritual integrity. The favor of Jehovah shines in upon it, and is enjoyed, and is become itself the blessing, while positive deliverance accompanies it in God's good time. The true nature of God in holy worship is entered into. He is not merely a God to serve man in blessing. The enemy does not rejoice over us, and the soul itself is healed. We see that if His anger be there, it is but a moment of discipline and instruction for the saints; and then they, being purified, enjoy Himself more fully. Here, literally, we see the remnant at the verge of the grave, and there delivered; but the true work is, even for them, with God.

I add these conditions of soul in which we may see saints now, of which this psalm gives an occasion to speak. First, what we may call, in a comparative sense, innocence, when a converted soul has no acquaintances with corruption, and no great inward conflict. Here the grace of forgiveness is enjoyed, and the soul is cheerfully happy in the known kindness and love of Gad its Savior. Such a soul, if walking close with God, may attain to the real judgment of self and deep acquaintance with God. Otherwise, the soul is superficial, and the man of self little known, separation from flesh's sphere, the world on its amiable side, little realized. The next is where it has failed, and, gone through deeper exercises, has been brought thus to the knowledge of self in a humbling way. This is more the case of the psalm. Then forgiveness may be known, and there is the rest of this; but a certain shame of sin and want of open confidence with God, as naturally in enjoyment of Him, if there have been anything base or trifling with God. This is more difficult to attain. But self, at any rate, is not set aside. Thirdly, when the root that has produced the evil is really judged, the point of departure from God, (not merely the evil itself: and self thus set aside practically, then divine favor is everything. The heart is so far whole with God. and, while humble, bold with men. It has its conscious link with God, His favor—God known to be with it in moral unison, and in positive sustainment am: strength. The present is its place with Him, not the past.

Psa. 31 is the expression of entire confidence it Jehovah—God known in our relationship with Him in the most terrible circumstances of trial and distress and that where sin has brought it on; yet where faith is at work, and the known name of God counted on and therefore His righteousness in making it good It is not reckoning upon God with pride. It Jehovah trusted in for what He is—His name—but with the fullest confession of failure, and that it h through sin that trouble has come upon Him that cries to Him. It is not so much the confession of iniquity. but that the sorrow out of which the cry is sent up is due to iniquity; but the extremity of pressure cast the soul in confidence on God according to His revelation of Himself. The special character of the psalm is trust, and, from personal knowledge of Jehovah, the committing one's case to Him. This is a deep principle of true piety—such a knowledge of the Lord such faith in what He is, that the soul can trust Him and cast all on Him, when distress and hostility comes to an extremity. And it is a principle of utter righteousness, because the soul cannot look thus to God but in righteousness. The Lord is known am having considered the distressed one's trouble. He has known his soul in adversities. The sufferings were not God's forgetting the sufferer. God has known, recognized, followed, His heart

owned, the sufferer's soul, and thought of it in the midst of adversities; and the sufferer as an owned soul, (however faulty,) looks through the suffering to the Lord. It accepts the punishment of its iniquity, but in this righteous feeling trusts Jehovah; and in this spirit, in what is perfect in principle, commits itself entirely to the Lord, and knows and is content that it should be so, that all is in His hand. (Ver. 15.) It looks hence for His face to shine on it; but that through His appearing for it, it should not be finally ashamed, nor will any that trust in Him. He has laid up goodness for them that fear Him, and trust in Him before the sons of men. His presence is a sure unfailing sanctuary, which makes human malice vain in its attempts. He admits that, in the pressure of distress, he had for a moment spoken as cast out of God. Still faith was shown in the cry to the Lord, and he was heard. The Lord preserves the faithful, so that the saints may love Him, and be of good courage, whatever come. It is not every one that has to pass through such sorrows, as those referred to here; but when it is the portion of the saint, it gives great intimacy and confidence. What a known God is, is the ground of the psalm, and the cry founded on faith in it. I should not say that such is the brightest exercise of faith. This will be found, for example, more in the Epistle to the Philippians, the bright expression of normal Christian experience. Nor is it the commonest: but God, in His rich mercy, has in His word met every need, and made provision in His word for every state. And the state of soul here is one of much exercised depth and intimacy of confidence in God only, learned through needed distress.

Psa. 32. But in the midst of all the exercises of heart which belong to a renewed soul in the midst of its difficulties here below, there is one point which is the center of all, a need to which an answer is craved alike by the heart and conscience—its relationship to God when it thinks of its sin before Him. It has need of confidence for trials, of deliverance and help. It is cheered by promises, and bowed in heart and will as to the ways of God. But it needs reconciliation with Himself above all, the unclouded light of This countenance; as regards its own state forgiveness, and the absence of guilt. The entire removal of all guilt before God, and His complete forgiveness, is beautifully connected here with purifying the heart and inner man, the taking out guile, and this in the confession of actual sins. But it begins, as it must, with God, and finds its satisfaction in His thoughts towards it. And this is right. Thus only can the heart be really purified, and sin have its true character, and God His right place, without which nothing is right. Yet it is the conscious state of its forgiveness which first affects the soul, after conviction and distress for sin has been wrought and the soul brought to confession. “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven.” He has sinned against God, transgressed. It is all perfectly forgiven. But it was sin before God and evil—a thing itself hateful in God's sight, and now in the soul's. It is expiated, covered; propitiation has been made. The present state is then put absolutely:—Jehovah imputed no iniquity to it; and now the whole heart is open before God. There is no guile in it. Why should there be when all is open with God, all cleared, and sin gone out of His sight? And oh! what a blessing it is to have the perfect light of God on an unsullied soul, not an innocent one. That is a far less thing, and, indeed, the in shining of perfect light would be inapplicable then; but with a knowledge of good and evil, and knowing what light is (in contrast with darkness,) and to have it shining upon one as white as snow, is infinitely blessed. I do not deny that it is more personal relationship here, into which also I will enter; but for the Christian this is implied in forgiveness, and covering, and non-imputation of sin. As yet, of course, it is by faith, but not the less true for that. The ways of God in bringing the soul to it, and His ways after it, are also gone into in the psalm: no rest to the proud will which would not confess! (how gracious to pursue the soul thus!)—the most intimate guidance for the

soul reconciled in communion, care in the midst of trial.

The psalm, then, is the expression of conscious blessedness in the sense of being forgiven. And how sweet it is to be in the sunshine of God's favor in the sense that His love has been active towards us! The undeservedness of the favor, though it is not the brightest joy, gives great deepness to it, because it is God Himself who forgives; for so it must be in forgiveness when the soul is restored to Him. Then there is the consciousness of the sin being out of God's sight. This is a very great blessing indeed, and the consciousness of it most sweet, the thought that not one sin appears in the sight of God. But there is the special sense, not that there was no sin, but that God imputes none, that He has a determined fixed judgment—He does not impute it. The sin is not denied; that would be guile. In this part the feelings are not so much engaged, but there is the judicial certainty of non-imputation necessary for truth in the inward parts. This connects itself with confession. But it is not only uprightness in word and confession, but in spirit. There was truth in the inward parts. No desire in the soul to hide, to conceal from itself the evil, it presents itself before forgiveness, before non-imputation; that is its connection with sin, not hiding it. He sees the sin truly, but sees, and because he sees, it is not imputed. But the phrase is absolute and general— “to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” It is an absolute condition of the individual; it is not his iniquity or particular fault forgiven, though, doubtless, that is so too, but absolute non-imputation of any. The man exists before God as having no sin, according to the judgment of God. Then my heart is open and free before God. I have the consciousness of this, and look lip to God as having no sin, with the consciousness that He sees none. Hence there is no cloud, nothing to hide. This is not so, however, when confession is not made. Absolute non-imputation—that is God's actual judgment of me and manner of looking at me. No sin is there; none between me and Him. lint, in arriving at the consciousness of this blessed truth, there has been confession. Till then, the pressure of God's hand was upon the soul, to force it to come to this. How gracious this is, God's watching over a nail, and a surd going wrong, too! to bring it to Himself. But he was brought by grace to this point—acknowledging sin to God, no excuse, giving it its true character, real spiritual uprightness, however humbling it may be. This was morally important, but is not all. “I will confess my transgressions” —the acts are brought up in memory. He resolved to take this course, and all was right. “Jehovah forgave the iniquity.” 1 John 1 opens this out Christianly. There, also, we cannot say we have no sin, and we confess our sins. The connection of the absence of all sin on the conscience and no guile in the heart, because it is entirely open through conscious non-imputation, is very instructive. It can be in no other way, only man is brought to it in truth by confession, and to confession through confidence. Thus only is the heart opened to God through grace, thus only is truth in the inward parts, though forced to the humiliation as regards our will, by forgiveness being known by promise. “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared.”

This revelation of God awakens the thought and feeling of all the upright and gracious minded to look to God in the time when He reveals Himself as the forgiving God, when He can be found. So for Christ Himself in Isa. 49; it was the accepted time. When He had been perfect, when perfectly proved before God, then He was heard, for He had been made sin; and the apostle cites it thus, “Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation.” The revelation of forgiveness and the joy of such relationship with God awakens the desire after and delight in such a God in gracious souls, and they seek unto Him. Supposing they have not the sense of sin at the moment, they know they

are sinners, and God is so revealed, has a character which is their delight, and their soul links itself with Him. They seek to Him, not simply for forgiveness. It is in their character of graciousness they are spoken of here, but it is such a God—a God of this character, and these ways—which draws their heart; and note, God so acting, so revealed, makes the time the finding time. This connection of the graciousness of the heart with the graciousness of God, and the power of attraction it has, is very beautiful, and it is very deep in the gracious mind. There must be the sense of need, of dependence, and in us of the need of grace as such in the whole character of our relationship with God. But it is withal a deep realization in proportion to godliness, when the conscience is not bad, of the perfect and divine grace, the loveliness, yet the sovereign goodness of God's ways in this. Happy in goodness, we feel that this grace suits us and suits God; it draws us, as godly, to God. Hence we are there sheltered, come what will. If we think of the remnant, the principle will be plain. Israel, the Jews, have been deeply guilty in every way. God holds out, as in this psalm, and everywhere in Moses and the prophets, forgiveness. This is felt; God is so revealed; the godly remnant are touched by this: sins, no doubt, are confessed, but the heart of the godly draws to God. When the flood of judgments break in, they are preserved. In every case, the soul thus acquainted with goodness can count upon God. God Himself, thus known, is its hiding place. In the end songs of deliverance will be its portion.

But then promises come. We have to go through a wilderness in which there is no way; and in the midst of snares and dangers of false ways, God guides and teaches. The eye of God rests on us and guides us. It is not a way marked out and left; it is God Himself who watches over and guides us in a way that suits Him, and is the fruit of His wisdom, a divine way for us. God Himself it is that is brought before us here: God's goodness, God's leading, God interested in us to forgive when needed, to lead with the undistracted eye of love. But then it supposes that the heart pays attention to the eye of God. It is attention to Him, and the following it with understanding that is the way; and thus the soul is inwardly taught in what is agreeable to Him, and is formed after Him in knowledge. This the New Testament largely unfolds. (Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9.10; 3:10; Eph. 4:24.) Even Moses says, “If I have found grace in thy sight, teach me thy way, that I may know thee and find grace in thy sight.” It is the spiritual learning of God's way through His guidance, and communion with Him founded on His favor. Hence they are warned not to be like an unintelligent beast, who must be outwardly held. God can guide us thus, does graciously sometimes by His providence; but there is no spiritual understanding, no moral assimilation to His nature and growth of the delight of our new nature in Him; no increased capacity, by this means, for knowing God. The result is declared in the judicial ways of God in the last two verses: only that we have to remark, that it is in Jehovah Himself that the soul has to rejoice, not in the consequences, though they that trust in Him be compassed about with mercy. He Himself known by forgiveness, known by ever accessible kindness and goodness, as a hiding place for the soul, as one that guided with His own care, with His eye, was the one in whom the soul thus taught was taught to rejoice. So Paul. “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.” We joy in God through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have received the reconciliation. He fills the soul, and He is above all.

Chapter 150

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 33-36

Psa. 33 I have only a few principles to note in speaking of this psalm. All the psalms to the end of 39. unfold the moral state of the Jewish remnant in the last days. I say the moral state, more than their condition under oppression, and the thought of forgiveness gives in general a brighter tint to the coloring of them, though the sense of their condition is found also, as elsewhere. Psa. 33 follows on the last verse of 32, and the thought of forgiveness having put a new song in his mouth, he can look out with clearer confidence on the principles on which men should act, looking to the word and works of God. The earth is viewed as under God's eye and direction—His government as applied to it. This, fully displayed at the end, has its application to the lower part of a Christian's life, too. (Compare Psa. 34:12-16 Peter 3:10.) We get some general principles. “The works of the Lord are done in truth.” I may perfectly reckon on His acting on the known principles of His holy will. Hence His word, which is essentially right, can judge me now. This is always an important principle. The Lord, though not visibly and publicly, does govern all things. Hence I can act on His word, and be sure of the consequences. I may, no doubt, suffer for Christ—that is a still better blessing; but the result of acting on God's word will be blessing. From the 6th verse the power of the word is shown in creation. The earth should fear Him, “for he spake, and it was done;” again, He subverts the counsels of men, His stand fast. Another principle then comes in, the blessing of being the chosen people of God, His inheritance. This is Israel: still faith has to walk in the strength of it now. “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved.” We are not God's inheritance, but heirs of God; but the greater elevation of the position does not destroy, though it may give a deeper application to, the principle. We have to walk through the world as the elect of God; and this is a most blessed position. It is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; but we walk in the consciousness of being the elect of God. He orders and fashions all hearts. What a thing to say, if I have to say to men! And He makes all things work together for good for me. Thus, while all human strength is naught, I can wait on the Lord with sure confidence. His eye, too, is never withdrawn from me. (Compare Job 34:7.)

But, Psa. 34 goes further. It takes up the case of sorrow and trial in the most beautiful way. Jehovah Himself, as ever, is the blessed burden of the psalm. In the first four verses, it is the spirit of Christ in an especial way which speaks, but as for the heart of every one so tried, and belongs to every one who has this faith, that every one may have it. The point of the psalm is, “at all times.” It is easy to praise the Lord when He makes all flow softly for us. Yet the Lord is not as much praised really for what He is. In the midst of trouble the soul is seen humble and subdued in spirit. He has sought the Lord, and he found Him a ready friend. This made the Lord intimate and precious to him. The saint's heart was tried, exercised; difficulty and wrong pressed upon it, and his will did not rise up in pride and anger, but he lays his matters with confidence on the kindness of the Lord, and He interests Himself in him. It is not high and sovereign providence making things flow for outward blessing—no doubt, we should be thankful for this—but the gracious interest of the Lord in his tried heart. This is much nearer, the interest greater, the link more sweet and stronger. It was not pride of will in trial or in success, but an oppressed and humble heart finding

the Lord's ear and heart open to it. Thus consoled himself, he could console others with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God. He was delivered from all his fears. Oh, how often this happens, even as to the removing not unreasonably expected evil entirely. This knowledge of the Lord leads to the exercise of love in encouraging others, while the heart experiences it, and is filled with it. It is applied to the remnant by the Spirit in verse 5. They recall the case of Christ, in verse 6. In verse 7, we have it as a general truth; in 8-10 his own blessed experience enables him who has trusted the Lord, to assure others of the certainty of finding this help.

The experience of the Lord's kindness is very precious. It is not only that one is assured of it for all trials, but Himself is known. He is blessed and praised. The heart dwells in Him, and finds its joy and rest in Him, and in the goodness of one who is alone, and none like Him in what He is. The blessedness is infinite and divine in its nature, as He who is the source of it, yet as intimate as what is in the heart can be—more intimate than any human being who is without us. We dwell in Him, and the Lord is our stay and the rest of our heart. There is nothing like it. None can be so intimately near us as God; for He is in us. Yet what an intimacy it is!

But there is another principle brought out here—what the walk is in which this blessing is found. (ver. 7-10.) We have fearing the Lord, trusting the Lord, and seeking the Lord. Ver. 11-16 take up what the character of this fear of the Lord is, in a passage most of which is quoted by Peter only. The end of 16 is left out as inapplicable now, though the general fact of government for the Christian is not. It is important that we should remember this. Not only is it true that God is not mocked that what a man sows he will reap—that God has governmentally attached certain consequences to certain conduct; but He also watches over and directly govern His children—may cause them to be sick, to die; may deliver them from it, on confession or intercession. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, his ears open to their cry.” Not only that, but “nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Then there is a path marked out by God as the path of peace in a world like this; not simply in itself the path of spiritual power, but of quietness and peace in this world, going peaceably through it under God's eye. And that is very precious for us. Grace is a means of doing it, as the heart is elsewhere than in idleness and passion. The feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. As far as in us lies, we live peaceably with all men. This is true even of unconverted men. Those who walk in this way, in general, see good days, because such is the consequence of the public government of God. It becomes the Christian so to do, but others may do it. This government of God is always true, as we see in Job; only the saint should understand it. But there is yet a word which remains. This government is not such now as that the righteous should not suffer (comp. 1 Peter 3:14-17), still more for the name of Christ. But Jehovah watches over him. Not a sparrows falls to the ground without our Father. It seems strange to us to hear, “Some of you shall they put to death; but there shall not a hair of your head perish.” But the government of God now is, not the public government applied to the suppression of all evil, but to the case of the righteous under and through the power of evil. When Christ appears, there will be this suppression of evil. In general, they who live peaceably will live in peace; but in a world where Satan's power is, the righteous will suffer—have many afflictions, but none without the watchful care of the Lord. And in some way deliverance will come. Who would have said that, in the seemingly unbridled rage of men, when all, Jew, priests, or Gentile, were united against Christ—when, to appearance, they had all their own way, this

psalm should be literally fulfilled in Christ? Not a hair of our head but is counted. I doubt that this verse, 20, in the psalm is exactly a prophecy, though literally accomplished in Christ. I should rather suppose that the passage in John's Gospel referred to Ex. 12:46. But Christ is a perfect example in any case of the declaration made in the psalm, as a great general principle, if the passage be not cited. God's care never fails, and is shown in the smallest circumstances, and in spite of all man's thoughts, though God may allow many afflictions to come upon those that trust Him. These, too, will surely be a blessing. The soul, thus learning the Lord's ways and trusting Him, can bless Him at all times. Christianity, indeed, can teach us deeper fruits of spiritual life in this respect. But it is precious to know the Lord as one that watches thus over us in love—a Father's tender care, in which we can confide, and in which we can walk peaceably in this world, seeking the good of those around us.

Psa. 35 is the direct demand for judgment of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, so that I have not much to remark upon it. But Himself was the first to suffer what here will be judged; but, as we have seen, never personally looks for judgment. Still this psalm shows us the spirit in which judgment is demanded. It was after patience and unwearied grace, and when this grace was of no avail, when there was no self-revenging, but casting themselves on the Lord, that at the end the Lord is looked to for deliverance. This is important to remark, as regards the judgment looked for. (See verses 12-14.) And it was only when he would be swallowed up that he looks to the Lord Himself to interfere, and so He will. The poor will not always be forgotten, nor is it right that heartless, unjust, and cruel evil should always have the upper hand unhindered. It is right that the saint should be patient, bear all till the Lord Himself interferes; and this is the spirit of this psalm, and then it rejoices in the Lord's salvation. There is a righteous feeling that the Lord's recompensing the cruel wickedness is right, and so it is; besides this, what we have is the character and way of the wicked, and the preceding entirely gracious walk of him who found the wicked too strong for him. Verses 26 and 27 have a special application to Christ, but the whole psalm, in the mouth of any one forward in faithfulness, was to bring the tide of evil on himself. I would refer to one or two passages to show the working of this spirit, and how far the Lord points to it as to the remnant. As to Himself, save to prophesy the fact, He did not ask for it. He never does. See 1 Sam. 24; 25; 26—the spirit in which David was kept, though weak, yet still, then, the instrument specially fitted by grace to attune the mind of Christ in these psalms to the circumstances in which the remnant, cast out like him, will be, and rising up, when God pleased, to the prophetic declaration of what Christ Himself should pass through, and provide words, wonderful honor! in which Christ could express Himself, (see particularly 24:11 - 13, and the end of 26.,) for so many of the psalms. So Abigail keeps him in this spirit through mercy, but there is no self-avenging, but casting himself on the Lord.

The way in which the Lord directs His disciples in Matt. 10. marks the spirit, too, in which the remnant are to bear witness for His commission, and goes on to His return. (ver. 13-15. Comp. Psa. 35:13.) It is important that the Christian should understand that while the Spirit of Christ in his own walk in the world was quite different, and so ought the Christian's, from the desire of judgment expressed in the psalms, yet that that desire is righteous and right in its place, and that the desire of judgment is not self-vengeance, but an appeal to a delivering and righteous God after the perfect patience of the heart under unrighteous oppression, as bowing to the will of God, and learning the lesson He had to teach. (Comp. Psa. 94:12, and following.) Still the Christian is on

quite different ground. In this point of view this psalm is an important one. It is one in which the spirit of the remnant is exercised before God by trial, and, inwardly subdued, is cast upon God to look for deliverance, according to the way in which it was promised to Israel and to the remnant under the divine government revealed in the law and the prophets.

Psa. 34, while spoken in connection with what is a very great trial, is yet, and indeed, for that very reason, full of very deep comfort. The trial is this, that the ways of the wicked prove to the heart of the servant of God that there is no restraint of conscience, nothing to reckon on in them, no check to malice by the fear of God. Flattering himself in his own sight, he is devising mischief; has no abhorrence of evil. How often does this, alas! come before the saint when in conflict with the power of the enemy. It is hard to believe this absence of conscience and planning mischief; malice reflected or advisedly; yet so it is. The heart knows it is true. The word points it out as characteristic. But then the consolation is very great and blessed, while it casts the soul entirely on a faithful and all gracious God, who is above all schemes of man, so that we can be perfectly peaceful. “Thy mercy, O Jehovah, is in the heavens.” What can malice do, then? Its schemes cannot reach there, nor frustrate the plans of government which are established there, nor come between the soul and their effect. Mercy is out of the reach of the wicked's devices. But there is another quality in God—faithfulness. Mercy is the spring of and disposes His doings. That is a comfort. Upon his faithfulness I can count. It lifts its head above the machinations of the wicked. The immutable principle of God's government in faithful love, His dealing in righteousness, is as firm and towering in strength as the mountains; his ways of judging and dealing as profound but as mighty as the great deep. Not fathomable beforehand by us as to how or why, He is working above the power of evil, but beyond the reach of puny man, so that He can bring about His purposes of blessing by the malice of men. He preserves man and beast. The moment we introduce the Lord so known, all the effect of the malice of men, unrestrained though it be by the conscience of God in the wicked, is to make us trust God and not man. This is a real trial, but it is perfect peace; a breach with man, i.e., of the saint with man, as alienated from God, but a knitting of him to God in confiding cleaving of heart. And this has the highest moral effect. This effect is unfolded in verses 7, 8. “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.” It is not merely now a defense against unconscientious malice that is found, but the positive goodness of Him in whom it is found. The children of men put their trust under the shadow of God's wings, because His loving kindness is excellent. This is the right and fitting condition of the creature, but yet supposes evil and the need of this goodness, but this goodness as a resource. But this carries the saint yet further. The goodness which has sheltered and protected him becomes his portion. Such is the blessed effect of being entirely cast on God and driven away from man. Brought under the shadow of God's wings, they enjoy the fatness of His dwelling place. “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” There are joys and pleasures that belong to God's house, yea, to God Himself. This is characteristic of the joy of the saints, and can only be when we are made partakers of the divine nature. This must have its joys where God has His; and this is the special proper blessedness of the saints. And God gives us this in the fullest way. He gives us His own presence, He gives us Christ. How rich is this blessing, to receive a nature capable of enjoying divine joys, and these having the fullest divine objects in every way, for it is in every way to enjoy! Looking up, our calling is to be holy and without blame before Him in love, to enjoy God and be His delight according to the divine nature imparted to us, and in relationship to be adopted as sons to Himself; our place of inheritance God's own

house, our home: and as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, all that is subject to Him. But this is the inferior part; but as it is as redeemed and made perfectly happy under Christ, it is a divine joy. We have it, too, in fellowship one with another. All this the Christian enjoys in the highest way, because Christ is become his life, and that in the highest and nearest relationship with the Father. Hence—and that through the power of the Holy Ghost—we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Our joy is full. I have referred to this on Christian ground. The principle is stated in the psalm, and, in principle, it is true of all saints, though not in the Christian degree, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. But in principle it is true. The psalms continues, “With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.” Up to this it has spoken rather of what God is for us, looked at as shelter, and protection, and comfort—in a word, a resource; but having brought us into the fatness of His house and the rivers of his pleasures, it refers to what God is more intrinsically in Himself in blessing; still more as what He is for us than in us—that belongs by the Holy Ghost to Christians. What is in us is here seen in Him as its source. “With thee is,” says the psalm; “it shall be in him,” says the Lord of the Christian. God is that, however, and so revealed here and known. With Him is the fountain of life—the word of great import, though never fully revealed till Christ came. In Him was life. There was a tree of life of which man never eat, an instrumental ordinance of man's life. In the patriarchal times life is not the subject, but what the Almighty is to His beloved and blessed ones. The law connects life as a promise with man's doing, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was to be one. Life is a living connection with the source of blessing, or at least a living enjoyment of His favor—not necessarily heaven. No law could give it or was it. God promised it to him who kept the law. God is the fountain of it, but the law given to a sinner on the principle of his responsibility could be no means of life, but a ministry of death and condemnation. It spoke of life—was with life in view, as promise on obedience; but in fact was found to be unto death. The psalms are where, though heavenly things are spoken of, the connection of the heart of the remnant with God is brought out, and all its throbs and beatings in its need, and what God is for it are felt; and that according to the working of the Spirit of Christ, though temporal deliverances are, as for the remnant, the main desire. Life and resurrection as the hope of faith necessarily come in, though it be but in the depth of their most intimate thoughts; and they will meet the need of those who may be slain. It is not life and incorruptibility brought to light by the gospel; life in a man, the Son of God, a quickening Spirit; life in us by His becoming our life. Still as Christ's Spirit speaks in the Psalms, He who had life was sure of the path of it in this world; and, as it lead through death in the purpose for which He came into this world, of the resurrection too, that His soul would not be left in hades nor His flesh see corruption—but here in dependence on God as being man. So here, where the saint's heart is separated from man, as wholly separated himself even from the fear of God, not only protection and lovingkindness are looked for, but the fountain of life is seen to be with God. We know death is overcome, its power rendered void, καταργουμενη. We know that the eternal life which was with the Father is come down from heaven. We know it is communicated to us, that Christ is our life, that having the Son we have life, that we are quickened and made alive according to the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His might power, in which He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at This own right hand in the heavenly places; so that life for us and in us, (for Christ is our life,) is final triumph over death, and reaches into heavenly places. This has been brought to light by the gospel, John giving us life descending and manifested here in Christ and communicated to us; and Paul life more fully completed in result up

there, according to the divine counsels in glory. All this, of course, is not here entered into, and could not be till Christ's resurrection. There could have been even no righteousness in it. Who had a title to be in a heavenly place till Christ entered into it? In whom could it be displayed in glory till the Head so entered into it? Still the principle, source, root of it is seen and revealed here. The Psalms are not law, though law be yet owned; but the working of the Spirit of Christ and of life, in those who are under it or in Christ Himself, and in those too who have to confess themselves sinners under it, could not hope for life therefore by it, but whose eye is opened on mercy, forgiveness, and grace, if not on heaven, though this, so far as the sense of the joy of God's presence expresses it, is reached while life is must fully expressed, as in Psa. 16 Hence the source of life is seen—a blessed thought—when all was condemnation and death under law. They could not say, The life has been manifested, and we have seen it; still less, our life is hid with Christ in God; but they could say, and are taught to say, and know, With thee is the fountain of life. Hence, there is a drinking of the river of His pleasures. For where should this life be satisfied, or the cravings of the heart even unconsciously animated by it, if not at that river, the river that makes glad the city of God? We have in us who have drank, come to Christ and drank, have drank of the water He gives, a well of water in us, springing up into everlasting life; yea, through the Spirit, rivers flow out from us, and that from the inmost consciousness of blessing. But all this is the power of life in the Spirit. But it is equally precious to know its nature is divine. I have remarked else where, that what is spoken of as life and nature in Colossians, is referred to the Holy Ghost in Ephesians. Here we have God as the fountain, a blessed expression: blessed to know that the fountain is God Himself. The Father hath life in Himself; that is true of Christ as man; then we that have the Son have life. It shows, I think, that it is looked at something flowing forth. What our hearts have to rest on is, God being the source of life, that we may feel and know what life is—how divine a joy it is, that, having a life which is divine in its nature, this is capable of rejoicing. It is its nature to rejoice in what is divine. It can, indeed, enjoy naught else, save, as the expression of it, in goodness or truth, but finds its joy in these rivers which flow unexhausted from divine love, and in which we drink the blessedness which is in His nature—in a nature which, being Virtually the same, must and can enjoy it according to that nature itself in its own perfectness. We joy in God.

But there is another thing. “In thy light we shall see light.” God shines out, as well as He is a source. He has life in Himself, but with Him is the fountain of it. He is light, but He shines forth, gives light. So Christ; in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And even we, Christ is our life, and we are light in the Lord. Here, no doubt, light is looked at more as comfort in the darkness of trial, when man, under Satan's power, was in the fullest sense manifested darkness; but this as we have seen, has led to the discovery of what God is Himself. In the abstract principle, nothing indeed in the Psalms leads us more to what was fulfilled in Christ. Only here it is seen in Jehovah as its source, and the one in whom it is displayed. But this gives it its divine perfectness. “In thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.” It is the confidence, in the midst of darkness and trial, that Jehovah in grace was a source of life, and that in His light they would see light. In Christ we get every way deeper truths; because, when the life was the light of men, not for mere outward help, but shining in moral darkness of this world, the darkness was darkness still, did not comprehend it. As long as He was in the world, He was the light of the world. Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The closing verses return to the present hopes of deliverance by the government of God, and the assurance of its accomplishment. What characterizes the righteous here, is the knowledge of Jehovah and uprightness in heart—the

enemies, pride and wickedness. He sees them, by faith, all fallen and unable to rise.

Chapter 151

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 37-39

Psa. 37 is very distinctly in connection with the display of the direct government of God in this world, as it will be made good when the meek shall inherit the land and the wicked be cut off. We have already seen that the epistles of Peter especially furnish to us the application of this to the Christian estate as far as it is so applicable. The beginning of Matt. 5 gives us also, only with a much fuller evangelical character, though not going farther than the kingdom of heaven, the application in the way of promise, as far as the temper pleasing to God goes. But there are some most interesting and instructive exhortations in the psalm as to the spirit in which the believer is to walk and the character of his confidence in God in the midst of the evil which surrounds him. For though the time of the direct display of God's government be not come, and no doubt the power of evil will be displayed more oppressively just before it is put down, still it is even now the time of patience, and the evil is there. Till Christ comes, it is in principle the evil day, and the patience and kingdom of Jesus Christ go together in the heart—not His own kingdom and glory. They are all founded on the certainty that after all Jehovah is above all the evil, loves judgment, does not forget the righteous and those who trust in Him, and that, in the end, His way would have the upper hand. Meanwhile, faith is exercised and all that is in the heart judged, which would, by self-will, mar the spiritual character and hinder the confidence in the Lord which becomes the saint.

The first exhortation is to peacefulness of spirit, (and it is general and applies to the state of the mind.) “Fret not thyself.” When self-will and the desire of present satisfaction mingles itself with the love of righteousness, when one desires righteousness and partly, sometimes, through fear of the power of evil, and is selfish though peace-loving interests, one is apt to fret oneself, because evil has its way. All this is the same spirit of unbelief as that of the wicked—God hath forgotten—though with other desires. But it is unbelief and self will. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. We are neither to fret, which is distrust; nor be envious, which is even worse and self-interest. Then comes the positive direction in what spirit we are to walk. What is the resource against the power of evil? “Trust in Jehovah and do good.” You will reap the fruit of it according to promise. Next, delight thyself in Jehovah: He will give the desires of the heart. Holy desires, which have Himself for their object, will be satisfied. But opposition, shame, perhaps calumny, is there. “Commit thy way to Jehovah.” How true is this! He has always, as men speak, the last word if we have only faith to wait for it. He will bring the result the righteous heart desires and make evident its righteousness. Next, patient waiting for Jehovah in heart and desire, the surest character of trust. Circumstances may thus be in turmoil around one—violence and efforts. The soul waits for Jehovah's coming in when He will. The wicked may prosper; Jehovah has His own time, a time which is always right and sets all right. He may chasten for good, have plans bringing to maturity, patience Himself with the wicked, His own glory to bring out, which is our everlasting joy. Hence, no auger, no wrath, no fretting, no uneasiness. It leads to doing evil, indulging our own will in evil to meet evil. This is not the patience and faith of the saints. Evil doers shall be cut off (the saint must not be among the number). They that wait on Jehovah shall inherit the earth. So of the meek, so of such as are blessed of Jehovah. This is Jewish undoubtedly, but

as we have seen, the government of God is still exercised, though not in public manifestation; and when the soul has waited on Him in patience, it has its blessing even here. The latter part of the psalm is a careful declaration of this sure government of the earth to he publicly manifested in connection with the Jews, more secretly carried on in the time of heavenly grace—still ever true. There are one or two points of blessing to note in it. The steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah. This is a vast and precious blessing, to think that in this wilderness, where there is no way in the midst of confusion and wickedness, our Father directs our steps. A young Christian may, in confiding zeal, not so much see the value of this, but through how many experiences will he pass? But when one has seen the world, its snares, what a pathless wilderness of evil it is, it is beyond all price that the Lord directs our steps. Also the humble young Christian is directed through grace, if he waits on the Lord, though he may not see the wisdom of it, nor the greatness of the privilege and mercy, till afterward. But this is not all. Being so directed, the path is a good, a divine path. There is indeed no other, and the heart is directed in it. For the Christian is led by the spirit of God. His heart is in the ways; as Moses says, Show me thy way, not a way, but thy, that I may know thee. If I know a person's ways, I know him. God leads by His Spirit acting on and in the inner man and the word sanctifies. Then God has delight in the saint's way. He delights in seeing a divine path trodden by a man in this world of evil. This Christ did perfectly and God delighted in it. So far as we follow Him, the Lord delights in our way, has positive delight in it. It meets His heart.

Remark that there is no way but Christ. Adam did not need a way: he had to abide, enjoying God's goodness where he was. In a sinful world there is no way—all is confusion and sin. But Christ was Himself, according to God, in the world, and in passing through it manifesting divine life and its path through the world when not of it. This was a wholly new thing, partially manifested in every saint in his walk of faith; but existing in itself and perfectly manifested in Christ. This is our path: We have to follow His steps and He is the way to the Father, and it is to Him we are going. It is an immense privilege to think our steps are ordered of the Lord, as a guarding from evil and guidance; and, then, that the Lord delights in our way. What a path in a world like this: How fast should we hold it, and seek none else, and seek to keep it! Here the precepts, as in Col. 3., or Eph. 4:5., come so preciously in. There is another mercy—God watches over him. He may fall, i.e., in trials, not carnally, (comp. 2 Cor. 4:9 and following,) but he is not utterly cast down; the Lord upholds him by His hand. It may be a part of this government of God that he should be brought low, set aside, but the Lord's hand is in it, not he out of it, and that hand upholds him. The vessel may be broken or put to dishonor by men, the power is of God.

There is a moral reason for God's ways—He loves judgment; besides that, there is the assurance of sovereign love. He loves his saints. They are preserved forever: but, then, according to the ways of this judgment, we have besides some traits of the righteous. He speaks wisdom, that is, the mind of God; and talks of judgment, the uprightness of the divine ways in God's sight, how God judges of right and wrong; his heart is in the walking in God's known will: his steps will not slide. We have then to wait on the Lord, and to keep His way. The end of the perfect and uprightness is peace. And so it is, practically, with a Christian; he may be chastened for particular faults, for God's ways are, through mercy, unbending and right; but when a man walks with upright purpose of heart in his life, that life closes if it close this side of glory—in peace. The fear of God and walking in His presence is a great means of peace. I speak not of peace for a sinner's conscience through the precious blood of Christ, but the peace of God filling the heart when all comes before

Him. Finally, the Lord is the strength of the righteous in the time of trouble. That cannot fail. He shall help and deliver them, save them from their enemies because they trust in Him. This is always true.

Psa. 38 presents to us a special state of soul. The relationship of the heart with God is known and felt, and that even in confidence, as the soul pursues the expression of its feelings. “In thee, O Jehovah, do I hope. Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.” Yet the soul is in the depth of sorrow and distress, and this looked at as the chastening of the Lord. It is under it, but deprecates it; that is, being in profound distress and sorrow, in loathsome disease, and friends abandoning, and enemies lively (as Job's state partially), Jehovah is looked to in it. The heart attributes it all to sin, but first of all looks to Jehovah and His hand. It is that shows faith and a right mind. The order of thought is thus remarkable. First, Jehovah judging, then sin as the cause, then personal misery, then abandonment of friends, then liveliness and of enemies, and the consciousness of all resulting in the heart confiding in Him that smote, turning to Him that smiteth it; and then comes out what at bottom was in the heart—hope in Jehovah, the consciousness of such belonging to Him as that the triumph of faith's enemies could not be, and that in the sense of the need of His intervention, because the poor sinning soul had no strength in self. All this leads to the expression of unfeigned integrity of heart; acknowledgment of sin, not merely owning it to be the cause of judgment, but judging self for it before a trusted Jehovah, and thus able freely to look for help from Him. The soul, in disengaging sin from itself, through grace, in judging it can disengage, so to speak, its enemies from the pressing judgments of Jehovah, and seeing them only in their own malice and hostility to the servant of Jehovah, and what was right, can now look for Jehovah's help against them. For the believer, though he had grievously sinned and been brought righteously low for it, yet really followed what was good. And though Jehovah used the malice of the wicked as a rod, it was not the evil which the wicked hated in the saints, but their connection with and owning the Lord. Yet the judgment was righteous. This will be the true history of the remnant when, under the terrible chastisement of Jehovah, they earnestly turn to what is right. But what an instruction also for us when under chastisement for what is wrong! Perhaps complicated chastisement for an extreme case is supposed here.

But what instruction for us when discipline comes upon us, where to look, where to begin! There may be the sense of God's chastening hand for sin and deserved wrath, but the reference of the heart to God's faithful love in relationship with us will lead just to deprecate wrath and His hot displeasure. There is a government of God according to His nature, and though the chastening hand of God does not destroy the faith and knowledge of our relationship, (to us of Father,) nor the reflective certainty that there can be no imputation to the believer, yet the soul does not quiet itself with this under the. sense of the governmental hand of God in it. It is of immense consequence; no doubt, and is at the basis of confidence, is a real sustaining directing power to the soul, but it is not directly objectively thought of. God's holy nature, with whom we have communion, and what He is necessarily as regards sin, is before the soul. And the government of God is according to that nature; which indeed has been glorified by the work of redemption as to the imputation of sin. And though this last be true, the former point is what is rightly felt at the time: not a doubt of redemption but a sense of the way God, in His very nature and as Lord in His government, looks at sin with wrath, not reasoning about it, but because one has a nature that knows Him and an awakened conscience, one feels it, and feels it as to self, the goodness of God making self judgment more

terrible. It is not despair, it is not doubting justification: but it is not using this to screen the soul from the sense of the aspect sin has in the sight of God. It deprecates, because it knows the Lord, wrath and hot displeasure, which its sin had deserved, and, because it knows Him, looks to Him of whom it has deserved it. In the circumstances of the trial one looks to the hand and thoughts of Him who inflicts it, and interprets the ways of God because all comes from His hand, and looks to His thoughts in it. And hence, the conscious relationship being present, the heart gets into the power of it as a purifying, more than a wrathful, process. It can say, Lord, all my desire is before thee, my groaning is not hid from thee. This introduction of the Lord into His own chastisements, according to the full love and the relationship in which He is to us, is very beautiful. He is, according to these, the key for the heart of His own ways. And the heart recovers its equilibrium, as we see in the end of the Psalm, where there is the consciousness of God being for it, as its resource against what before pressed on it, and as to which, in the sense of the sin which had caused it, it was deprecating wrath and hot displeasure. This is the effect of looking straight to Him, and confessing simply, and in true depth of soul, the evil as against Himself, settling it between the soul and God; then it settles matters between the heart and the enemies with God. The secret of all is looking directly to God Himself as He is in relationship with us, and this is the true confession of sin, but looking to and casting all on Himself. Confidence in Jehovah is the spring of every thought in all these psalms. The relationship of Father in which God stands to us, and which is realized by faith, modifies, in a measure, the kind of feeling which the heart has. We have more sense of tenderness and graciousness in His thoughts towards us when we look towards Him, more of compassion and love; but this does not hinder its being substantially the same, and God as a God of government, according to the holiness of His nature, being before the soul and conscience, though This love be trusted. It will be remarked that the soul, with its desire before God, is entirely submissive, and silent as to the mischief and wrong of the enemy; and that because it referred to God and hoped in Him, trusted in Him as having carried the whole matter in the spirit of confession to Him, and looks at it as coming from His hand. It would not otherwise have put him between itself and the enemies. (Ver. 13 and following.)

Psa. 39 is more the nothingness of man in presence of all the evil, and the pretensions of power in which it showed itself, the heart referring itself to Jehovah. The heart kept a check on itself in the presence of the wicked, lest it should speak foolishly so rise up against it, as if it had strength, too, where are all in man was vanity. Then God's hand is seen in what the heart was undergoing, and He is looked to for deliverance, and all the pretensions of the wicked disappear, so to speak. Jehovah was correcting for iniquity. The believer in this world is a stranger, sojourning with God—for how long He alone can say. It does not depend on, nor is it to be vexed by, the bustling pretensions and arrogance of the wicked in their success. This would be to make ourselves of this world with a claim to something in it. Is that true Ver. 12 takes this place of Abraham and David, and all the walkers by faith, though looking, as the believing Jew would, for present sparing, though of God and as from God, and this is in chastening, (see 9, 10,) the soul can now do. As to the government and ways of God, it is a New Testament wish.

Psa. 40 In all these psalms we have had the failing saint (the remnant) looking to a God known in relationship and faithful grace, though in failure. In psalm xl. we have Christ taking the place of patience without failure, and so furnishing a ground for confidence even for those who failed, by taking His place with them (who, after all, were the saints upon the earth, the excellent) in their

sorrows, and the path of integrity on the earth. Nor does He fail in this to place Himself under the burden of evil and sins under which Israel had brought itself. We, though this be in every sense true for the redemption of Israel, know it in yet a deeper way—such a glorifying of God as gives a heavenly place. This is not looked at here; but the way in which Christ identifies Himself with Israel, though in the integrity of the upright remnant, is profoundly instructive, and leads us into a wonderful apprehension of a special part of His sorrows. His death, and the sorrows of His death, are not viewed as atoning, bearing of wrath, but as sorrows and suffering and grief. And so they were; though, besides that, atonement was in them, viewed as the drinking the cup of wrath. But there Christ does not bear sorrow with, but for His people; here God. is viewed as helping Christ when in sorrow, in which He is, and in which He waits on the Lord. It lay on the remnant, as in Israel's opposition, because of their faults and departure from God. Christ, who had been, as He states in this psalm, faithful to God in everything, enters into this sorrow in heavenly grace. It is not His own relationship to God, but His entering into the remnant's as connected with Israel. His own had been perfect: theirs, though founded on Jehovah's faithfulness on one side, actually the fruit of sin. It is further at the close of His life. It is morally closed as to service. During that He had being doing God's will in the body prepared for Him, and faithfully declaring God's righteousness in the great congregation, i.e., publicly in Israel. Now, and as regards man, (and so it will be with the remnant: their trials will come upon them from the proud, because of their faithfulness and testimony, only they will have deserved it, as themselves involved in the sins of the people,) because of this faithful testimony, the evils come upon him. So we know it was with Christ historically. His hour was come for it—the hour of His enemies and of the power of darkness. Here (as it is not the atoning character of His suffering and sorrow, but His association with the remnant—with, as I have said, not for), we have not, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” as in psalm 22., where the foundation of righteous grace was to be laid. It is Christ's perfect life, and sorrows at the close of it, in which He refers to the faithfulness and goodness of Jehovah, so as to lead His people to confide in it, instructing them in this in which His perfection was shown. “I waited patiently for Jehovah;” patience had its perfect work—an immense lesson for us. Flesh can wait long, but not till the Lord comes in, not in perfect submission; and confiding in His only strength and faithfulness so as to be perfect in obedience and in the will of God. Saul waited nearly seven days, but the confidence of the flesh was melting away—his army; the Philistines, the proud enemies were there. He did not wait out till the Lord came in with Samuel. Had he obeyed and felt he could do nothing, and had only to obey and wait, he would have said, I can do nothing, and I ought to do nothing till the Lord comes by Samuel. Flesh trusted its own wisdom, and looked to its own force, though with pious forms. All was lost. It was flesh tried and which failed. Christ was tried: He waited patiently for Jehovah. He was perfect and complete in all the will of God. And this is our path, through grace.

This is the great personal instruction of this psalm, save that Christ's own perfectness is always the greatest of all. Here He gives Himself as the pattern. “I waited patiently for the Lord” —for the Lord—that is, till Jehovah Himself came in. his own will never moved, though fully put to the test. Hence it was perfectness. He would have no other deliverance but His. His heart was wholly right—would not have a deliverance which was not the Lord's. This is a very important point as to the state of the heart. It would not have another than the Lord's. Besides, it knows that there is no other, and that the Lord is perfectly right, when His moral will has been perfectly made good, and His righteousness vindicated when needed. There is the known perfectness of His will—His only

title, and then perfectness of submission and the desire of only Him. As this is a pattern for the saints, trial is looked at as such, and death is not spoken of save as it may be trial—a horrible pit, miry clay—images of distress, terror, and, humanly speaking, danger. The resource was a cry to Jehovah, and He was heard in that He feared. Here Christ speaks in His own person, but in verse 3, deliverance enables Him to speak to the remnant— “a new song in my mouth” —even for deliverance from what had come upon them because of their sins. “Praise unto our God,” “many shall see it and fear, and put their trust in Jehovah.” This would let in Gentiles. God had come in to deliver out of the effect of evil, and set His feet upon a rock above it and all its effects. This sure faithfulness of grace—the deliverance of God manifested in one who had gone to the depths of trial, would be a resting place for the faith of others, the rather as He had gone into it as the consequence of the state of the people in the sight of God. Hence it is applied to the condition of the remnant, though thus true of every saint in trial by others' wickedness and the power of evil, perhaps brought on himself. “Blessed is the man that maketh Jehovah his trust, and respecteth not the proud,” the high pretensions of man, and apparently successful wickedness, “nor such as turn aside to lies,” abandon God for other false refuges, and the falsehoods of infidelity. Then, as man, Christ begins to recite how this most excellent proof of God's faithfulness to His people came in, though owning them to all others. They were numberless towards His people, “to us-ward.” He puts Himself with them. Verse 6, the special and glorious One comes in view, He who could discourse with Jehovah in eternity. The Son and Word, who was with God and was God and in the beginning with God, according to what was written in the roll of the book, has the place of obedience prepared for Him, ears dug, a body prepared, and, according to the divine counsels (and love for us), freely and willing undertakes the same place, the place of obedience; His delight when He has taken it and is man—has taken the form of a servant, is to do God's will. God's law is within His heart. Such is Christ as man; obedient; who in free-will had come, taking the body prepared for Him, and entered into the willing servant's place, the place of willing and glad obedience. Verse 6 presents the thought and counsels of God, ver. 7. His willing corning to do God's will according to these counsels. But we must remember He speaks when man, and verses 6 and 7 are the revelation of what passed in the everlasting world (wonderful thought!) telling us how He became a man. But, as in verse 5, so again in 8, Christ speaks again as actually in the place on earth. “I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart;” that is, His perfectness as man. In ver. 9, 10, we have the perfectness of His service. He has preached righteousness before the whole people of Israel; He has not shrunk from it, nor hid it within His heart—a lesson to all of us, though to be used with divine guidance. It was God's righteousness, His ways, nature, judgments, judgment of evil, what He was in judging it, His faithfulness, too, and salvation—for Jehovah was this to Israel—His lovingkindness and truth. He had preached righteousness to man, and that perfectly; and he had fully declared what Jehovah was, in all the perfectness of His nature and character towards Israel. All this was accomplished. He appeals to its full accomplishment. But now, He who had freely undertaken this service for God's glory towards Israel, finds Himself in another position. It has brought the hatred of the nation upon Him, the wishers of evil against Him. But this great controversy, and the need for the saints' deliverance, raised the question of the state in God's sight of those that were to be delivered. And without entering here on the ground of atonement, the governmental expression of the view God took of Israel's sin, in which the remnant had been involved, comes pressing on the soul of Christ, as it will really on the remnant; the iniquities of Israel will take hold upon them as reaping what they have sowed—not condemnation

(the burden of that Christ indeed underwent for them in atonement,) but trial, distress, and felt (or, rather, making them to feel the) displeasure of God, but in which true faith looks for the lovingkindness, and truth proclaimed and trusted—in the righteousness proclaimed is felt as a witness against sin, through the distress flowing from it, as Joseph's brothers before Joseph.

Chapter 152

Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 42-44

In the early part of this second book of the Psalms there is an element which gives a very distinct character to its spiritual as well as its prophetical import—the absence of the covenant—name of God (the transition to Jehovah, is in psalm 46). Whatever the distresses and sorrows of the first forty-one psalms, the heart of the psalmist always looked freely to Jehovah in them, was in fuller relationship with Him and the enjoyment of public services, in which His name was celebrated. Here he is cast out. he remembers these things. He is an outcast and can only, in the secret of his soul and in wilderness circumstances, look to the nature and essence of what God is. We have still to remember the difference of the nature of relationship of Jehovah and the Father, and the looking for outward deliverance and judgment in order to have that deliverance. Still this change will furnish deep religious instruction. Psa. 22 furnishes us with the expression of this difference in the strongest way. There Christ Himself was out of the enjoyment of His own relationship with the Father, having been made sin for us. In human sorrows He for once does not find divine comfort. Now as to present wrath, no godly soul, of course, ever goes through this; but as to sorrow, God's face is hid from Israel, and when they are awakened they feel that it is because of sin, and though faith is at work, which is just what these psalms describe. It is faith looking at God when all circumstances are against him who exercises it and they are driven out from the present enjoyment of revealed communion and covenant relationship; it is the position God sets His people in when covenant relationship is broken—as it will be, and is—with Israel, or not known: and faith, acknowledging the justice of this, looks through all to God's own faithfulness as such. It is, so to speak, naked faith, without anything to sustain it, of what God gives to His people, as the witness of conferred favors. The result is, a full trial of the soul. The question for the soul here is not how far it is enjoying His gifts, but, how far its state can link itself with what God is in Himself, and count on that. This probes it to the bottom, because all flesh is completely judged; for it can have no connection with God at all. It is true that this is never understood but by a new nature—that nature which can understand what God is, and, through grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, cleave to promises; but the flesh is thereby fully judged, and the difference of that and the new man known and discerned, but redemption is not known. Because of this new nature there is the consciousness of the desire to do good, and of God's favor, but no peace. It is a searching process that we may be cast in naked dependence on grace. It is practically as to principle Rom. 7

In speaking of Psa. 42, we can only take the great principle, unless in a very special case of Christian experience; because the psalm supposes the person's enjoyment of common blessings, he remembered them. The special case is this: when a soul has believed in forgiveness, owning, no doubt, its sinfulness, but not really searched out, or the entirely sinful nature of the flesh discovered, the first joy may be lost, and the soul only know enough of God to feel the dreadfulness of not having the light of His countenance; but this gives the earnest desire to enjoy it. It may also happen when a soul has supposed itself Christian, but finds out, through the operation of God's Spirit, that it is not. In either case, the true blessed effect of the position in

which we are placed by redemption is not known. The psalm goes no further than hope, but it is a hope much deepened and made more true by the trial. It expresses more the result of the trial than the process; and hence it is we have so blessed an expression of the state of the soul, however forlorn it is. It thirsts after God Himself—the difference of the Christian state is that, as in Rom. 5, he joys in God. Still, this state of thirsting is, in certain respects, deeper than the first joy, because the joy is partial in its realization: the want is complete, and God Himself, in Himself, the thing desired. No doubt the psalm refers to the circumstances, and it is the souls' loss of God in happy circumstances which supported the soul, more or less, which obliges it to lean on and look for God Himself more absolutely: and, as we shall see, draws its joy thence. And it is this the spiritual soul has to look to in this psalm. His soul is athirst for God. He had lost the joy of the multitude, but he now panted after God Himself, where there was none of this. The change was sensible; but what he felt the loss of for his heart was God Himself. That was what he panted after. People and happy circumstances disappear from the mind as from the scene, though they were enjoyed with God. The individual heart wants God for itself. The divine nature in us craves after its delight in God, the objective fullness that satisfies it, because it is the divine nature. Its thirst is perfect after that—that one great, blessed object, which fills all the desires and excludes every other. Previously the soul had enjoyed the blessings from God and God Himself in them. Now God Himself becomes consciously and necessarily the whole blessing itself. The trial has judged all flesh as to the subjective state of the soul, all mediate enjoyment of God in circumstances; and the divine life, in order to its full blessing and consciousness of what that blessing is, has its perfect delight in God only and God Himself. This is a wonderfully deepening process. It is not that the soul will not have joy; but that the source of joy, pure, moral blessing, has a much fuller place in the heart, and, as we shall see, henceforth characterizes it. Hence it is that we see persons who have been deeply tried by the loss of blessings, which in their place were given of God, far more calm, possessed of a deeper consciousness of God being their portion; and hence more withdrawn from the influence of circumstances to that blessed center of rest.

The enemy, though in a painful way—and so is it even in God's discipline—contributes to the furtherance of the soul in this path. They said, Where is thy God? They have driven them out from the public enjoyment of conferred—and in Israel covenant—blessing. (So Job.) And where was the sign of their having blessings from Him? But as they had ascribed it to God and proclaimed His faithfulness and power to secure, they taunt them with it now and say, What can you say now?—where is thy God? This, really, the unhappy Jews did to Christ. But this only casts the soul on Him. There was nothing for it, but what God was Himself. The enemy had driven them away from all else—from mercies which by abuse tended to shut God out. These the enemy succeeded in depriving the soul of, and left it only God. And the soul hoped in Him; but what was the consequence.? Crying out for the blessing? No. Often the soul, by seeking joy, cannot get it, this would not purify and bless it: and to bless God must purify. When emptied of self and seeking God, we find joy. So here, while remembering the past joy, he says, I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. But some other traits must be noticed here. Pride and stoical resistance to sorrow will not do. That does not draw the soul to God, but effectually and specifically keeps it from Him—teaches it, or pretends to teach it, to do without Him, as the stoics held in fact that the virtuous man was God's equal. Here the soul had felt the sorrow and was dependent, and now can be open with God, because of His goodness and faithfulness. Sorrow, when it is complete and helpless, gives intimacy with him who is willing and able to help, and this is now with God. He tells

his sorrow to God. (Ver. 5.) He reasoned with himself. Now he says, “Oh my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee.” But this leads to another point. The troubles themselves come from God. Inward self-judgment and looking to God bring Him and Him alone into everything. Enemies have disappeared with blessings. Thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. God began the matter with Job and told neither Satan nor Job what He was about, and uses Satan's blind malice to break Job's unsubdued, and of himself unsuspected, nature, and bring about a blessing. Deep called to deep, but it was at the voice of God's waterspouts. But this seeing God's hand in purpose leads to the consciousness of covenant relationship; to us of Father, here of Jehovah; and he is reckoned upon according to that for the future. Jehovah will command His lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night shall His song be with me and my prayer unto the God of my life. Confidence is thus acquired—boldness with a faithful God. “I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?” He does not say, forsaken here. That Christ alone was, and faith knows it never can be. But because of this confidence in the unfailing love of God, he asks Him who is his rock—why He has left him in the power of the enemy. Note how when once we see the hand of God in our sorrows we can look for deliverance, because it is God, and His hand is on us in love. And now the reproach of the enemies becomes a plea with God; for when they say, Where is thy God? the only answer is, God's manifesting Himself. Meanwhile the soul has been deepened in its desires after God Himself. All carelessness of heart removed, so that manifestation has infinitely more value. Here the assurances of blessing are enlarged, before the distressed soul has said that he was assured of the help of His countenance as the. theme of his praises; but we have seen that his heart, purified and exercised, had been drawn up into confiding in the sure faithfulness of God in known relationship. The heart, though not yet outwardly freed, is fixed on God in desire and in confidence. Hence he says now, Who is the health of my countenance—his countenance reflects in joy the outshining of God's in love—and my God. Distress and the deprivation of all given, even religious blessings, had cast the heart upon God and drawn it to look to Him as the alone source of joy, and with the confidence which must spring up when the soul is near God, known in His own relationship by faith. It cannot be otherwise. There may be delay as to full peace of heart and enjoyment, if the Lord sees purifying and sifting still necessary; but there will be a confiding leaning on Him, and the soul then is brought to thirst evidently for Himself. My soul is athirst for God. It addresses itself to God, but it is the soul panting after Him. We do not get the answer here, but the state of the soul looking purely for God Himself, brought to do it, and assured of the shining of the light of His countenance and of the joy and health it would give. Remark as to the detail that it is when the soul has been broken down and its force of pride has given way, that it then remembers God. (Ver. 6.) So when God's hand is seen in his trials, (ver. 7,) he sees that Jehovah, God as known in relationship, will command His lovingkindness, and God is the God of his life and God his rock.

In psalm 42 we have seen the soul internally restored and animated to an earnest thirsting after God Himself, seeking all its joy in Himself. Being brought to that, psalm 43 is looking out for a deliverance, which shall enable it to enjoy God freely and fully. God has become, for the heart, its exceeding joy; and it will be recalled, thus restored, to free worship of Him, to express its joy and thanksgiving fully. God is not here characterized as the living God, but as the God of his strength. Till the soul was fully fixed on God Himself as its delight, this cry for deliverance, though natural and not wrong, if subject to His will (yet it would rather desire purification than escape from affliction), was yet more a reference to comfort and ease; though from the hand of God this is not

to be slighted. But now it is identified with the desire to praise and glorify God. This change has to be noted, when under trial, righteously and graciously from God, perhaps unrighteously from man. The heart naturally desires freedom; but, as Elihu says to Job, if it is not as subject to God's gracious dealings, it is choosing iniquity rather than affliction—there is a want both of uprightness and submission. When once the heart is fully restored, (and with an upright conscience we shall pretty well know this, and God will perfectly, that if there be subjection to Him, and the desire of perfectness of heart, the deliverance will be surely at the right time) the desire of deliverance has its fully right place. It is the desire to be manifestly with Him in peace, and to glorify and praise Him openly. Outward enemies had been reproaching in psalm 42, but they were God's waves and billows. But “where is thy God?” was the terrible thing. His soul became athirst for Him. Now he desires judgment of his cause and deliverance. There was a nearer trial than outward oppression, though he was still under it, the direct wickedness of injustice with which he had to do. He looked for God's light and truth to come out and lead him and bring him to God's holy hill. It is not the consciousness that God was his secret delight to which he had been brought, but that He who was would, by His power, lead him now to open praise and worship. The God of strength would bring him there; he would be present with Him who was his exceeding joy. This hope encourages his heart and brings him back, too, to that which was the secret and fullness of his joy, and which he possessed in hope that God would be the health of his countenance. He was morally his exceeding joy—now it would shine forth in glad worship, and be reflected in the gladness of the countenance of him who enjoyed it. The panting after God was the result in the last psalm, though looking out for blessing. Here this is wrought in the soul, and, though not restored yet to outward public blessings, God is his exceeding joy, and God—his God; and the outward restoration is presently looked forward to.

Psa. 44 We have certainly in this book of the psalms moral exercises more deeply and fully developed. The soul has to do with God; but the application is not the easier to the Christian state, for this simple reason, the exercises flowing from relationship under trial are not the theme of this book, but exercises of soul with God, when the enjoyment of known relationship is lost. Hence, while in the former part, in order to apply it to the Christian, it was only needed to apprehend the change of relationship from Jehovah to Father; having in Christianity a relationship founded on the destruction of all in flesh; one in that relationship has passed beyond the whole position in this book. The state of the Christian reveals, and is known in, the exercise of a heavenly one. Hence the proper state of the Christian is found less here even than in the first book. But the relationship of an exercised soul with God, on the other hand, comes out into relief. In this psalm the faithful one recognizes that through divine favor and power alone they had enjoyed the blessings of which they were now deprived, the signs of God's favor. The direct government of God is owned, “Thou art my king, O God,” in the language of Israel, but always true, though the authority now, without being less absolute, is infinitely sweeter. He is our Lord by redemption. We do not deny the Lord that bought us. This was still the faithful one's trust. In Elohim he made his boast, and praised His name forever; but they were given up, and their enemies had the upper hand; yet they held fast, and did not forget God, nor were unfaithful to the Covenant. Two great principles, faithfulness to the will and authority of God, whatever disaster and seeming desertion there may be, and looking for no other help than God Himself, who seems to have deserted the faithful, are here in play. This puts integrity utterly to the test, and personal faith, and that is just what is needed for the soul to be in the state in which it can be restored to the full joy of positive blessing. The fact that God thus

tests His people, and He does so now spiritually before peace be obtained, is one of deep import. It brings out what we have seen characterizes this book—absolute trust in God, in Himself; and it shows that uprightness with Him is before all comfort or ease for the heart: for if nothing is got from it they hold to Him for His own sake. He Himself is the object, and Himself morally, and in This claim upon them. Hence the heart cannot turn to anything else for it is not God—nor help which would relieve it from His ways, This brings in another point which this psalm leads us to, that the trials which accompany this apparent desertion are attributed to God's own hand. “Thou makest us to turn our back. . . Thou hast given us like sheep.” There is another thought connected with this psalm besides the individual application. When God confounds and rebukes His people in their public conflicts with the power of evil, when, in the exercise of His government, He allows the power of evil to get the upper band, and so orders it, this is a deep trial for His people, not only for their own sorrow in it, but because the name of God is dishonored. The enemy triumphs in this; but surely the government of God is shown in it. Here we learn the meditations of the upright soul in these circumstances. It had not forgotten God, nor behaved unfaithfully as regarded His covenant, though smitten down in the place of dragons. On the contrary; though it might be the needed public government of God, as regarded the profession of His name, and to separate out the faithful, who may be in the midst of His professed people; yet, as regards those faithful, it was for God's name they were suffering. This is still, I judge, somewhat different from Jehovah's name. Of course, it was Jehovah, as with the Father, but here it is for what God is as such. Not only faithfulness in not denying the revealed name is there, but it was for what God is that they were suffering. There was no turning in heart to idols. They preferred suffering anything, or suffer what they might, for owning the true God; they would do it for His own sake, for the attachment of their heart to Him, for what He was when they got no blessing; because the God who was in covenant with His people was the true God, and they would be tried, not only for the covenant blessings, but for their heart-attachment to what He was in His nature: and so in principle with us. And this is joy; because the love of integrity, the partaking of the divine nature, by which we delight in what is good, in what is of God, gives the consciousness of itself, the conscious delight there is in that nature in rejoicing in what is good and right. It is not self-righteousness, but the conscious delight in good of the divine nature, proper divine joy in its nature, only in our case it must have an object, God Himself, and this is tested in us by suffering for God. Hence the true case is—for the enemy hated God— “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” To test it fully, and make it real suffering for God, the blessings which belongs to His power must not be there. Hence the upright are left for the time to the oppression of the enemy. This, while it searches the heart, if there be any false way, makes it here suffering for what God is; and on the cry for mercy in due time brings in the answer from Him; for He cannot leave what answers to His nature—integrity towards Him needlessly in the power of evil. And so it ever is, though our joy may be in another world altogether. Yet, as a rule, God as to His covenant, delivers in this. As regards the earth, this cry brings in Messiah. There is progress, I think, in psalm 44., as compared with the two preceding psalms. There was deprivation, and the light of God's countenance looked for; and all right. Here God Himself is held to in heart-integrity, in spite of everything. It is the same in principle, but more absolute. And this is what is needed. This clinging to God Himself in spite of all is to be learned. And the heart is herein fully tested for God.

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Chapter 154

Scripture Query and Answer: 1 Corinthians 14:21-31

Q. 1 Cor. 15:21-31. Is verse 30 an injunction to the second prophet to wait till the first has held his peace, or to the one speaking to be silent, because of something revealed to him that sitteth by?

W. N. T.

A. The first was the notion of Grotins; but to me it is clear that the latter is the true thought. The point appears to be the paramount importance of a revelation. (Compare 5: 6, 26) Ordinary teaching must yield to it. It is not supposed that the first prophet was speaking by revelation.

Chapter 155

Scripture Query and Answer: the Word Redemption

Q. T. E. asks if it is right to say of those who die in their sins, that they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The purchase of a slave, he remarks, is never called his redemption, unless he is bought for the express purpose of being set Free.

A. T. E. is arguing from the application of our English word “redemption;” not from the meaning of the original, which simply means “bought,” and is so translated in 2 Peter 2:1, of the lost, and in 1 Cor. 6:20, 7: 23, of the saved. The same word occurs upwards of twenty times in the gospels, and is applied to the purchase of land and cattle, food and raiment, &c. In fact, only in the Revelation is it rendered “redeemed;” and even there, the same word bears the sense “buy” exactly the same number of times. It will thus be seen that the argument fails. For if in Greek the same word is translated either way, it is clear that the term in itself does not involve the ultimate destiny of the purchased, or the purpose of the purchaser. But the passage already referred to in 2 Peter is decisive, that false teachers, enemies of the flock of God, are said to deny the Lord (δεσπ■την) that bought or redeemed them. The difficulty is owing to a not sufficiently large view of God's ways and of Christ's work. The reader will do well to weigh John 17:2, and Heb. 2:9, 10. It is the difference on the one hand, between Christ's authority over all flesh, and His giving eternal life to the elect; and on the other hand, of His tasting death for every one, and His bringing many sons to glory; in both, a twofold—relation to men generally, and to the saints.

Chapter 156

Reality

THE power which draws saints into communion, by the faith of a once crucified but now glorified Lord is the Holy Ghost. It will be found that it is the purpose of the haul to walk with God alone, which is the inward: fitness for communion of saints, and not intellectual intelligence as to the doctrine of the church. Intellectual intelligence about what the Church was, and should outwardly be may lead to narrow sectarianism; and knowledge of the principles of the Church. without reference to the Form, may lead to multitudinism (as it is called); but to blend principle with practice, in this matter, is the result of walking with God. A common purpose gives a natural and a happy association; and when that purpose is the glory of God and the honor of Christ, in a self-denying walk with God, the holiness and the self-devotedness of the purpose will bring and keep hearts and minds together; and, thank God, nothing else can do it.

In the promise of Matt. 18:20:— “Where two or three are together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;” the words, in my name, must not be forgotten. The gathering must be according to the power and character of the Savior God,” otherwise it is not in the name of Jesus.

We used to mourn man's dishonoring of God, in the power which Satan, had through the worldliness and fleshliness of unbelieving believers in our day, — and how, in consequence of this, the dear children of God were divided one from another, and some found in the Roman, and some in the reformed, and some in the various dissenting churches; but no manifested visible oneness. This is just as true now as it was twenty-five years ago. But some, who thought to work deliverance on the earth, set themselves up, and have been broken. Do I mourn this their breaking, then? No; though I do mourn that, instead of having humbled themselves for the state common to the Lord's Church upon earth (which would have been godly and humble), it new comes out that they thought that they were to work deliverance upon earth. Well the heart (my heart) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked Who (save God) would have thought that the discovery of irremediable ruin would have been so used. A bit of knowledge as to “what the Church was, and what it is not,” turned to mean, “The temple of the Lord are we; come with us, and we will do you good.” I bless God the bubble is burst. Blow it a second time—let who will do it.

Many of these disappointed ones have returned to evils they formerly deplored; some of them have set up their own union (be it multitudinous or sectarian, or both together), and are so angered with God's breach upon them, that they will never forgive those from whom they are broken, until their own idol is mended. A few (would they were more!) have acknowledged the just judgment of God upon pride and folly—have accepted the chastening at His hand, and their broken idol—have not returned to the evils they once left; but have sought to return to Bochim, and there to walk humbly with God.

When I think of the break of “ourselves” (as some speak), I say. “Thank God! True and righteous art thou!” When I think of how little the children of God, in our day (in church and dissent, and everywhere), respond to the glory of God and the honor of Christ as the Church should do. I mourn; and yet if, as to the Church on earth; the Spirit of God is a grieved and quenched Spirit,

may I find grace to have my spirit in sympathy with God's, and to feel aright and as He does, as to the present state of things on earth among His professing people.

Chapter 157

The Rest That Remaineth: 2 Samuel 7

It is a natural thing for the heart of man to seek present rest; it is a snare even to the saint in one form or another. And happy are they who, by the power of the Spirit of God., are able to detect and watch against it. But it often comes in a very subtle guise, and takes the shape of piety itself. Where it is not connected with anything that seems of the world or self, as with one's family, and the like, it may be to seek present rest for what bears the name of Christ upon the earth. Now, it was particularly this that was at work in David's heart. For he was a blessed man of God, and earnestly desired that God Himself should have a house worthy of His name in the midst of Israel. It was unnatural to his mind, it did not seem right, that he should be so favored of God, and that God Himself should have only a tent to dwell in. But this chapter brings out that the portion of faith is the best portion of all. Whatever might be the harvest of joy in circumstances; whatever even the power of God appearing for His people, putting down every obstacle, and creating a scene glorious and bright here below, yet, for all that, the portion of faith in patience is better still.

Now, this is a most wonderful truth for our souls to learn. Because, no doubt, nature would greatly prefer the place of Solomon to that of David. But David's lot was, morally, far superior. Outwardly, Solomon had everything that the human heart could wish, and it came from God, who Himself was crowning Solomon with every natural blessing. What was the issue? There are very weighty things for our souls to take heed to in this, because we all know what it is to have some exercise of heart about that which is precious to God. It may work in many ways, so as, perhaps, to trouble our hearts, and damage our confidence in the Lord; or it may weaken our affections towards the people of God, in whose ways there is, doubtless, much that is trying and sad. But this is not the question. These are things that the enemy of souls has always sought to stir up against the name of the Lord. We have to consider, not only what is His side in each question, but what is the temper of soul that He would have cultivated in us, in respect to the evil that we see around, and that we cannot set aside. It is of the greatest importance, because, in one or other form, you will find the same feeling at work among saints now as there was in David—the desire for God's rest before the time. And it is striking to see that Nathan was not able to judge it. He thought it was perfectly good. He was a prophet of God, yet he did not understand. It is only God Himself who can give the happy conviction that the portion of faith is the best of all; and this must now, in Christ's absence, find itself in the midst of evil, which it abhors. Nothing would be easier for God than to set everything right at once by His power; to put an end to all that disturbs and causes sorrow. But He does not, because He has something better in store for us. There will be judgment, no doubt—God's sentence executed on everything that is contrary to Him; and then there will be a bright time for the earth as well as for the heavens. But we have to remember that the heart of the saint should enjoy a far better portion now, by faith, than even if the days of heaven upon the earth were come. For those days will not be so bright as that inner, higher, light which is in heaven, in the presence of God Himself. And it is the drawing out of the tender love, the restoring mercy, the long-suffering goodness of God, through all this time of weakness and need, that brings out the depths of His character—His grace.

And faith has to learn, in the midst of a scene of contradiction and difficulty, and apparent frustration, too, of all that our hearts desire for the Lord's sake, not to doubt God, but to be sure that everything is in His hand, and working onward, strange as it may seem, for the glory of His Son. Many of these things cause the utter crushing of all that is dear to the heart. Everything that pertains to man, or that springs from him, is withered up by this word of the Lord that alone abideth. But God exalts Himself, blessed and blessing, above all, forever.

So David had to learn on this occasion. In one sense it was a very pious thought of his, and not unworthy even of a godly spirit. He felt rebuked at his own dwelling in a house of cedar, and where was God to be? But God must give us what is worthy of Himself if our hearts desire Him. And He knew David, the man after His own heart, and gave him accordingly. It might be by no means that which we should choose, but what God chooses for us. When Nathan had told David, “Go and do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee,” that very night the Lord comes in, saying, “Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?” Then, in the most touching way, He shows how He has been a pilgrim Himself, how He had wandered about from one place to another. “I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar?” He never sought a place of rest then. “Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel.” And further on: “Also the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee an house.” The Lord always must take the place of the better. He would not allow such a thought as that David should be building the Lord a house. He must build a house for David, and better far than anything that Solomon could raise.

Thus, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, did David learn the deep feeling and love of God towards him. There was, also, no doubt, the circumstance that he was not a suitable person to build the house of God, because he was a man of blood. But grace ever comes in and triumphs. It was not so much to hinder David from doing good that the Lord thus dealt, as for the purpose of giving him something better. Wherever the heart is towards God, and the desire is for what is according to His mind, if He takes away any thought of ours, it is always to accomplish a higher counsel of His own. And so it was on this occasion. The Lord brings out before David the divine future of His house. David goes in and sits “before the Lord;” and a more beautiful and touching rising up of David to the thoughts of God never was seen before in all his history. “He said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” All that the Lord had hitherto done! and was it a little thing? “And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come” —yea, it was for evermore. “And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” It was the manner of God.

As bearing upon our souls and what is before us, is not this full of instruction? We might desire a reign of the gospel, and union among all saints; and it would be a great comfort to us in one way, supposing everything were going on in the Church, if not in the world, as we might value and find rest in. Assuredly we ought to feel every departure, and judge, specially in ourselves, wherever we fail, not only in our personal walk, but also in grace and wisdom to meet the difficulties around us. Certainly we ought to feel for and groan with the Church of God.

But while all this is true, have we not to remember that the heart which desires present establishment, would be too glad to hear that, if not all the church, at least the part we have to do with was going on prosperously? But what would be the consequence? We should forget the present lone state of the church altogether. So narrow are we that we should cease to mourn. If David had had that beautiful house to build and adorn, would he have realized as he did how such a God was dishonored in Israel and all over the earth? Whenever things go on according to our desires and feelings in the little circle that surrounds us, we are apt to think that it is all well. We ought to be thankful for it; but if we are in any way resting there, it shows that we fall short of His mind, who never fails to look onward to the full glory of Christ. On the other hand, the heart often wastes itself in querulousness about things around us, and is thus taken away both from the truth and from the hope, our thoughts and exercises being more about others than Christ. The effect of having Him before us more simply is, that we are able to meet the case of others more fully and deeply. Thus everything will be thoroughly and holily judged; but it will be in a spirit of intercession, because it is along with Christ.

The Lord takes a far deeper and fuller judgment of evil than any of us. But how does He act towards His beloved ones What God would give us, is the portion of faith while things are trying; that so, spite of the sense of all present contrariety, our comfort may be in God—not our rest yet, for that will be entirely heavenly, when the Lord will come and take us to be with Himself in glory. But even now, the place into which the knowledge of this would bring us, is one of quiet, and peaceful, and humble waiting upon God. Had David ever such lowly thoughts of himself as when the Lord had thus spoken, and he sat before Him? Had he known before how precious he was to God? Never. Instead of having our best affections undermined by constant suspicion and anxiety, if we understand God's thoughts and desires, we shall know deeper lowliness, but more simplicity and confidence in God in our souls. And all this comes from a fuller acquaintance with Christ.

Chapter 158

The Resurrection and the Life

(John 11.)

The Lord had been now rejected, both in His words and His works. In chap. viii. He convicts by His word. “Before Abraham was, I am.” There was in that the full manifestation of who He was; but they rejected it. In chap. 9., He shows His works; but this testimony is also rejected. And then He shows how all is in grace, and in chap. 10. speaks of gathering His sheep. When He said “I and my Father are one,” they took up stones again to stone Him; and then He goes again beyond Jordan, In chap. 11, in connection with the raising of Lazarus, He is spoken of as the Son of God; afterward, in chap. 12, as Son of David and Son of man.

What is here specially brought out is, Christ's exercising power—life-giving power. Not so much His holiness or His love; though they were there as perfect as ever, but not what He was specially manifesting. He has come where death was; and He was going to raise out of it, first, the soul and then the body. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This brings out something of the character of Martha. Martha loved the Lord, and the Lord loved Martha. She received him into her house. He made His home there, as it were. There was confidence in His kindness, and that kind of care and interest between them, that directly Lazarus was sick, they sent to tell Win, taking it for granted, He would come, because of the intimacy they had. “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” They were a believing family; and we find that, when people are believers, there are different characters. We see here what Christ delighted in—what fruit of the Spirit was acceptable to him. He said of Mary, “She hath chosen that good,” &c. God may make men as active as possible, like Paul or Boanerges, when He wants them; but communion is the most precious thing to Him. There is a difference between Peter and John. His heart rested with satisfaction on him who leaned on His bosom.

Christ had come into this world when moral death reigned, to bring in blessing from Himself. But here is a death which could come in and take a man out of the reach of the blessing of healing which He Himself came to give.

Death was a harbinger of judgment. No man could recover from it; no man could cure it; no man could escape from it. And they knew that it would carry on to judgment; for it brings with it the testimony of sin. God could kill and God could make alive. Nature always shrinks from death, because there is this consciousness of its being the effect of sin. Christ comes into this place of death; and the mere relieving man's misery down here, which He did, never could touch death. Man having now rejected Him, it was needful to show that, if man was a murderer, and would even put Him to death, He had a power which could deliver out of death. Death had lost its power in His presence who was come to bring in life. During all His course He had been ready to heal the sick with a word, and they expected He would do so with Lazarus. But now He would let the evil go to its fullest extent, that we might see His title to do it all away. The Lord, though He heard that he was sick, remained in the same place. When He was coming, He said, “Lazarus sleepeth.” The moment we see death coming to believers we can say, This is no judgment; “this sickness is not

unto death, but for the glory of God.” In connection with Christ, no evil can triumph; but even death can turn for the glory of God. And, mark, it was not for some vague good at a distance, but “that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” The power of life has come into the very place of judgment. We have not to wait till we get to God, but God comes in delivering power to us who were “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Chap. 8. is the truth of God and the Son of God connected; “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” And, besides that, life came by the Son. He could have healed Lazarus and remained safe in Jerusalem: but now he does this miracle in the most public way. And He did this that all the purposes of man might be brought out. (Contrast the way in which He raised Jairus' daughter—in private.)

The foundation of the faith of God's people is in resurrection “for your sakes.” (Ver. 15.) They were to believe in Him, “the resurrection and the life.” “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The law was not truth. The law put man on his responsibility; but now man was taken up as dead already—this was truth. The law put a man on doing— “do and live.” It told him the rightness of what ought to be, but did not tell him what he really was. It answered the purpose for which it was sent; for it made the “offense to abound.” The law did not tell man what he is, nor what God is to man—love; but when I get the truth, it sets me free. While I am under a yoke, I am made to toil, toil, toil. The yoke draws me down, and I have no power under it. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?” There is no deliverance in that; but if One comes in who says, You are a wretched sinner, dead in trespasses and sins; but I can deliver you by bringing in a righteousness of God—that sets me free in heart and conscience. I can stand in God's righteousness before a God of truth and love. “If ye continue in my words;” these words He addressed morally to all.

There is another thing. “The servant abideth not in the house forever, but comes in on the condition of conducting himself well in the house, and if not, to be turned out. “But the Son abideth ever.” We are made free, and may “go in and out and find pasture,” as children in the house. “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Christ is the proof of God's love—righteousness the proof of what Christ is. I have a place as a son, because of what Christ is as a Son. He came in the power of life; not dealing with man as he is, and trying to mend him; but giving life, thus treating him as dead. Martha said, “I know that he shall rise again,” &c. But Christ spoke, neither of the resurrection of believers, nor of the resurrection at the judgment. he would show her that death was nothing in His presence. “I am the resurrection and the life.” She said a true thing when she said, “He shall rise again at the last day.” But that did not touch Lazarus' case. If you have to be called up at the last day, you do not know but you may rise to be condemned then. Besides, his mere natural life would be subject to death again if he were raised up now, unless He who raised him were “the life” as well as “the resurrection.” He does not say, I am the life and the resurrection, but, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Death has come in; therefore He roust bring in resurrection first. He is the life-giving One, who has come in and destroyed the power of death. Death shall have no more dominion. Death had dominion over the first Adam; but the Second Adam gained dominion over death. And He hath quickened us together with Him, and has taken us out of that state, as having nothing whatever to do with it.

Lazarus remained over three days in the grave—thoroughly dead under the power of death. But Christ says, “I am the resurrection and the life;” not, I shall be. Therefore it is more than the mere

fact that there will be a resurrection. “I am,” &c. “Though he were dead, yet shall he live.” “He that believeth on me shall never die.” This is a life nothing can touch. It is victory over sin, and over death, when they have done their worst.

The life in which the believer now lives is an entirely new thing: it is of God and from God. What Christ is I am; and by His power is an entire deliverance out of all connected with self. It makes free from sin. A man in jail is tried and put to death. There is no trial after that, no hope. So with the sinner. He is under sentence of the fire that is never quenched and the worm that never dieth—the worm the worst part. Nothing like the horror of being forever separated from God—everlasting destruction But when I believe in the Son, I am taken clean out of all this. Christ is my life as well as resurrection; and instead of there being a taint of sin, it is all holiness and love— “he shall never die. Believest thou this?” Here was present deliverance. But Martha did not understand it a bit. “Yea, Lord, I know,” &c., she said. She loved the Lord, and was going on nicely in many respects; but there was no entering into the mind of the Lord in her. Her mind was ill at ease in the company of Jesus; and if your affections do not reach after the things He has to tell you, you will find there is always an uneasiness when He does come and tell you His mind. There might not be more ignorance in Martha, and she had salvation as well as her sister; but it was understanding of His mind she lacked. She calls for Mary; Martha knew very well she would be up to the things He was talking about; but he had not said a word of Mary. The affections are not ready for Him to talk to us about Himself if we are thus cumbered. There was a link between the Lord and Mary that Martha knew nothing about.

Mary waits till she is called, though she heard He was come. We find afterward she is the one also who knew more than all the disciples what was going on; and the way in which Christ is rejected by all around, draws out her affections. She was not at the cross, and she was not at the tomb; she waits behind. Her heart, struck by the grace of God, answered rightly to all the circumstances, and she is approved and accepted of the Lord at all times. What was the secret of all this? She sat at His feet, and drank in from Him. She fed from what came out of His mouth. When I am quickened, Christ is my life. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Thus, I am first put among the quickened, then sympathy may be known and power exercised. Those living and believing in Him “never die.” If He finds us living when He comes, He will change us; if sleeping, He will raise us. See Martha, in Luke 10, where we see something hindered the growth of her soul; she was cumbered about much serving, and she is astonished the Lord lets her take all this trouble alone. When He was there, the service hindered her going to learn of Him—that is, the instruction. She was right in doing her duty; but the best way is to do things as well as we can, not to be careful. Care is not a virtue, though doing one's duty is right. Whatever is done should be done in service to the Lord. The Lord's heart was where Martha's was not—where Mary's was. Mary's heart was knit up in getting from Jesus what he had to give; she entered into what Christ came into the world for; and Martha knew that He wanted one to hear Him, who would hear His words, and she goes and tells Mary. She (Mary) did not serve for the Lord, but from the Lord. She felt the power of death, and so did Jesus; and when she weeps, He weeps, and His soul is drawn out in the exercise of power; to meet it, He asks, “where have they laid him?” He did not say this to Martha.

Jesus groaned in spirit. He saw the power of death over people who were not dead; they could put the gravestone, but they could only roll it away again; they could bury, but they could not raise. When He sees a spirit bowed down under a sense of this, He bows down Himself, (in grace,)

entering into the shadow of it; He has sympathy with others. In Gethsemane He went through it Himself. “This is your hour and the power of darkness.”

He overcame. He did not turn Satan out a living man, but he broke the power of Satan. “Take ye away the stone.” (Ver. 39.) See poor Martha again, “Lord, by this time he stinketh.” “Did I not say, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” That is God's glory, then,—the power of life over death. “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” This grace of Christ has brought Him all the power of God to deliver out of it, for death has no title against

Chapter 159

Brief Thoughts on Revelation 1-6

THE book is prophetic; it does not deal with the Church in respect of itself, as in relationship with God, save incidentally in the preface (chap, i. 5,6), and conclusion (chap. xxii. 16,17.) it is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The address, though of grace and peace, is governmental. Thus it is from Him which is, and which was, and which is come, (not from the Father as such) and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, i.e. not mere Messianic glory, yet connected with earth, in life, resurrection, and rule. The mention of Him draws out, by the way, the Church's or Christian's own consciousness and feeling as to Christ. This is followed by the testimony of what He is to the world, and to the Jews, at His coming in judgment. Then we have the personal seal of the eternal glory. And so the whole book, in its relationships and results. The word of God and testimony of Jesus applies both to prophecy and to Christianity, though not properly to the Church; for scripture looks at testimony continuously, as in Heb. 1; 2 or separately from what went before, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Next, we have the vision of Christ, revealed in the midst of the churches, governing them. There are two parts in the description—what is personal and what is relative; the former, in verses 13-15, the latter, in verse 16. Personally, He is a Son of man, not now a servant at His work; His garment is the long flowing robe, and not tucked up: His girdle is divine righteousness as such. Verse 14 marks Him as Ancient of days. His eyes search, His eyelids try the children of men in the power of judgment. His feet, as seen here, represent judgment, not abstractedly divine in the sanctuary, but applied down here to the ways and dealings of men—to sin, in government, and his with a peculiar character. Ezek. 1:7, and Dan. 10:6, (different in the English version,) are the same; but we have here πεπυρωμενοι passed through the fire. I apprehend it means here that the application of righteousness in judgment to man was according to the full absolute trial of the fire of God, i. e. judgment allowing no evil. Governmental judgment has not this character exactly. Brass is not used for immediate divine righteousness—i.e. intrinsic divine righteousness as such, remaining immutable in itself; to be met and satisfied, no doubt, by what is suited to it, but not exercised. This last is in power and ways. But in Christ, this last had all the perfectness which that fire, which consumes all dross, has or can have. In time relative characteristics, we have maintenance, by his power, of all the subordinate administrative power of the churches; judgment, according to and by the power of the word, of what had possessed that word, and the manifestation of supreme sovereign power as regards the whole world.

Human nature fails before this, but while the first and the last, God Himself, Jehovah, He was also the Living One—not the power of death for His servants: He had gone through death and destroyed it, and was alive for evermore. Life was His, and not only so, but life after death and resurrection, after His going through that which man was subject to; and He has thus the keys of power over death and Hades. Christ was to be revealed in this way, then the present existing things, and the things after them.

In Ephesus, we have the great principle of His government in, and survey of, the professing Church. He has the seven stars and walks among the candlesticks. The principle of departure from first standing is taken as the general ground; the result of faithfulness is also individual—he eats of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of the God of Jesus, (read, “my God,” in verse 7,) while the general fact of judgment is threatened the candlestick removed. It is in every respect the great general principles of departure and judgment, though there was still much good.

The second state is clear. Christ, who was before all, and will be after all, and, in this present world, has overcome death, sustains faith in the midst of needed persecution, and promises the crown of life. It is the title by which he met the withering of fleshly life in the apostle before His glory. Note, the profession of hereditary religion accompanies persecution—the trial was external, and the blessing here is general; they were to hold good their faith among the polluted.

Next, in Pergamos, we have the searching judgment by the word, where corruption was allowed, So the blessing is distinctive also. Next we have—not trial by God's word, revealed truth—but the Lord's searching of all that is within the heart: His eyes as a flaming fire; and the governmental judgment. And this closes the public history of the Church in general. And the morning star, and the coming, and Christ's kingdom, are brought in as the object of hope. Nor is there here invitation to repent. the first there was. In the persecuted Church there is encouragement. In the third there was. In this fourth, the bad had space to repent, and did not. “Behold, I will cast,” and “I will kill,” is absolute.

The Church of Sardis clearly begins afresh. Christ has the seven stars. They are His; but He does not say He holds them in His right hand. And he has the seven Spirits—a point not noticed yet, but which marks that whatever the state of the Church, He has the full supply of gift—the Spirit in all competency to act and glorify God. But I think it looks out beyond the formed Church. It is irregular, but a competency above order, and a competency proper to Him personally. Hence it will be found, as each characteristic of Christ in the three last Churches, to reach over into the coming scene, i.e., the characteristic itself. They are none of them mentioned in the description of the Son of man. They are new objects and grounds of faith; not the regularized characteristics for ecclesiastical dealing, or of that revealed use.

Hence, if not faithful, Sardis is not judged as the Church, like Thyatira, but treated as the world. The overcomers have the general result of righteousness, not being out of the book of life, and being confessed individually before the Father, as they had confessed Christ before the world. [n Philadelphia, all ecclesiastical pretension is against them. But Christ's personal sovereign title to shut and open is for them. They have to keep the word of His patience. All this is unecclesiastical. Christ waits for his enemies to be made His footstool. In this respect he continues even His life on earth. So do the Saints. They walk in the midst of a corrupt closing dispensation, keeping Christ's word. Hence the word “my.” Laodicea goes further. For Christ takes up the witness in the new creation instead of the Church, which He rejects. Divine righteousness must be had—saints' righteousnesses, according to God's purity, and true discernment from God, known only through Christ. He has not ceased to love the Church, and looks for zeal and repentance. The kingdom is all that is here promised. The different place of the warning in the three last has been noticed.

As to the sequel, I do not see how it can he questioned that we enter on a different sphere of prophecy in chap. 4. I do not mean merely that it is, the third division, as often remarked; but that

chap. 2. 3. were the judgment of the Church on earth, and this is not. The world is dealt with from the throne, not on earth either, but in heaven. When this is the case, the saints are seen there. It is not merely that the blessing is anticipated before the judgments come, through which the blessed have to pass; but the body of saints is seen enthroned, encircling the great throne of God before any history of judgment begins at all. And the sources of all are revealed in this place. They are associated with the throne in its then place and character. It is not Christ's throne on which they sit. They are enthroned and crowned priests and kings before the government revealed in the book begins. And it is not the revelation of any place acquired or reached through them, as may be said in chaps. 7. and 15. Before the Lamb has taken the book to bring about circumstances to go through, they are associated with the throne. The throne itself is very clearly the throne of divine government and providence; and that set in majesty of judgment, but connected with the first creation. The rainbow is round, it. It is not a throne approached with blood—the golden throne, and the living creatures, though in the midst of the throne, can be apart from it. But it is a heavenly throne. Jehovah Elohim Shaddai is celebrated.

The Elders worship Him as Creator and Sovereign. It is His throne of government (in the first creation) and they can sit on thrones, but in heaven. They are in rest as to judgment, and active in worship. Though the living creatures were in and around the throne, next it thus, the elders as to place are first mentioned as morally associated with the throne. On their own thrones they were part of the scene. The creatures are only part of the character of the throne. Reasons for praise are here with the elders only. The creatures' part is the unceasing celebration of what He is.

Chap. 5. We have now competent power to act on the unfolding of divine purpose. In the center of all God's ways of power and providence was the Lamb as slain. He could open the purpose of God's right hand of power. Other saints are here with prayers yet to go up. The creatures and elders fall down before the Lamb. I should leave out ημας and naturally read αυτους, as Tish., &c., unless perhaps βασιλευουσιν. Here if connected with ζωα, these give reasons for worship also, the angels do not. Then note the ζωα put their amen to this ascription of power and glory. The twenty-four elders worship; I a little doubt the worshipping, &c., (ver. 8.) of the ζωα but in xix. 4, they do—In v. 14, “him that liveth,” &c., is to be left out. The ζωα the creatures join with Amen. The elders worship. All may own the Lamb by falling down. It is all most due and right, but the intelligent song is morally, I think, with the elders: αδουσιν they sing, (not “they sung.") It is in the main, (besides the Lamb's glory, having perfect power and the eyes of the Lord which run through the earth,) the interest of the heavenly saints in, and their connection with the earthly ones, and the same place as to the kingdom. In what follows to the end of the 11th we get the general history, and in the earlier part of it, in parenthesis, the special, final history of the beast, so as to get its place in the series. Remark, we have not yet the offspring of David. Only the Lamb is Lion of the tribe of Judah; but it is redemption out of all nations which gives a title to take the book and open the seals. But I suspect there is something more as to creatures and elders. It is not till the Lamb has taken the book that the creatures get their place with the elders. Now it has been long remarked that the creatures are the symbols of providential power, (attributes in exercise,) and that the instruments may be angels as in this world and saints in the world to come. Now it will be remarked that before the lamb appears on the scene and takes the book, there are no angels who praise, and the creatures, while celebrating the character of God, expressing it. are not associated with intelligent praise and worship. Now this is always their proper office and character, but when

the saints take this office, they are also the intelligent worshippers, though remaining another aspect of them. Hence, before the Lamb is in the scene and has taken the book, they are completely distinct, and no angels are spoken of. When He has, they are connected, and the angels are distinct. Still the creatures say Amen to creature-praise, and the elders worship. In point of fact, after Christ has risen up and taken the Church up, the angels expel the dragon from heaven; but in power connected with the Lamb, here held up to view, the saints must be associated. When, in xix., the Lord is coming out the elders have the first place, for that is the first heavenly part and place, the governmental attributes relating to the inheritance and the earth. So they have in vii. 11.

A question arises out of the change of reading in v. 9, 10, whether the redeemed are a distinct set, or the redeemed in general. The saints, whose prayers are offered, are earthly; that is clear. But I have been rather disposed to think 9, 10, are general. The Lamb has wrought this work. But “to our God” is a difficulty in this view, and the prayers of others must be considered.

Then after the general history of public judgments, after conquest, &c., we have the souls under the altar,—martyrs in general, I conceive, though this is a very important point, as to the structure of the book. They are owned, (for there is a break in God's ways here,) but must wait for judgment; but all is broken up in the order of existing powers, so that a way is made to the accomplishing their prayers.

Brief Thoughts on Revelation 7-22

BUT special things, a scene of special dealings and judgment, were first to come in, yet part of the general history, i.e., not the beasts of chap. 13. But before this new scene is opened, the perfect remnant of Israel is sealed. The angel came from—was connected with the dawn of the new day upon the earth. I cannot think that “before the throne and before the Lamb” is physical locality, but moral. The angels do not stand round the white-robed multitude. I apprehend they are the delivered saints on the earth, who are perfectly secured and sheltered forever God dwells among them, His tabernacle is over them. I do not say they are seen on earth, for I do not think so, any more than the woman in 12: 1; yet her history is on earth, but in both cases in the purpose and mind of God. God views them thus, and their place is moral. They are never κυκλ■ θρονου, which is remarkable; nor are they seated as the elders; nor do they give motives for praise as they do. Their salvation is of and from the throne, before which they stand. They have known God and the Lamb only there. There is, however, I apprehend, victory. They have come out of the great tribulation. They are not those born in the peace of the millennium. So that they have a place before the throne, as then set, and serve him inside, and with a knowledge not possessed by merely millennial blessing. There is no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem. It is not the Son of David or of Man, who feeds them, but the Lamb on the throne, and they are before God on the throne. They have an inner place and better knowledge than the millennium. The elders can explain for them—are interested, so to speak, in them—though they are not in their place. There is a connection with Christ, to the elders' minds, which themselves do not fully understand, something as if they said, “When saw we thee?” Compare xiv. for a somewhat analogous class, though there we are not in the general history. They have a heavenly connection, though they are not in heaven.

Chap. 8. I suppose to be general judgments on the Roman Empire. In 9, we begin more special dealings of God: the first woe trumpet, on the rebellious part of Israel; then an inroad of eastern cavalry—characterized nations, but in the Roman empire. (See for the Roman empire being characterized by a third part, chap. 12: 3, 4.)

But men do not repent. Then before the third woe, a more special and peculiar subject is parenthetically introduced. From the eight, the ministrations, as noticed long ago, are angelic in character; previously from 5, the actings of the Lamb: I suppose the latter connected with time throne in heaven, the former with administration towards the earth, before the Lamb takes his title as King of kings and Lord of lords. As such we again find the Lamb. This, if just, is a help to the interpretation and moral placing of these two parts. Hence, we have yet a step lower down, and John takes the book from the angel (Christ.), not the Lamb from Him that sits on the throne. This is no sealed book of counsels and universal ways towards Gentiles, but the open dealings of God with Israel and the earth again, not providential, but in already revealed circumstances, God's known ways on earth. We are here, then, (11.) on direct Jewish ground; the inner remnant are owned, the general outer body given up to be profaned by Gentiles. It is not, I judge, locally, though speaking of Jews and Jerusalem, but morally, that the distinction is made. It is trodden

under foot forty-two months. Some have put the 1260 days of verse 3, after this.

Now, though I admit the possibility of recurring to a previous dealing of God, it seems to me forced to attempt it here with και δωσω. This is important in another point of view; because, in this case, there is only one half week here, as in Matt. 24.; for the city's being given up to be trodden down forty-two months, and 1260 days following after, in which it still is, does not well hang together. It is not sufficient, I think, to say: the first period was characterized by this, without testimony, and the last half-week by testimony, not by this, because forty-two months is an exclusive measure of time. If so, as in Matt. 24., we are in general time up to the last half-week—no commencement here, but the conclusion marked. Then I hardly think, if the forty-two months came after the 1260 days, the beginning of treading down by the Gentiles could be celebrated as the coming of the worldly kingdom of Christ. The witness, however, goes further than the Jews; it maintains (as must be in them) the claims of God over the earth—His ruling title there.

We have worshippers in an earthly way, and witnesses or prophets. They are like Moses and Elias in testimony—in the midst of a captive people and an apostate people. They act in power like them, shutting heaven, as Elias, and turning waters into blood, as Moses, over heaven, the waters, and the earth, but in view of the earth. But they are only witnesses (testifying what is fulfilled in Zechariah.) The power of evil, the beast from the abyss, overcomes and kills them (properly it is the great street of the city); but they go to heaven, and judgment strikes the city; names of men fall; the remnant own the God of heaven, not of the earth—the new testimony.

Note, there is a completing the testimony; till then they are safe. They of the nations kept their bodies—ready to go up. This closes the second woe, The time is thus placed; and this seems to me to conclude a second half-week, because the forty-two months must be within the second woe; and if the third woe gives the last half-week, we have three half weeks—two closed by the end of the second woe, and one forming the third. It can hardly be said that ver. 2 is not within the closing of the second woe.

Note here, “the kingdom of our Lord.” It explains the reign forever. It is the establishment of God's government in contrast with man's misrule. So verse 16, we have ενωπιον. This partly shows its moral force, for they were κυκλοθεν. We have the elders in their own distinctive place again as intelligent worshippers, not the living creatures. (See 19: 4.) They only give an amen to the voices in heaven. Both are there, only elders, as we have remarked, first. They are noted hem, too, as silting before God, on their thrones. But the setting up the governmental power of God draws them to prostrate worship, as the celebration of creative glory had done in chap. 4. The whole scene is judging time quick and the dead, at His appearing and His kingdom, and destroying them that corrupt and destroy time earth. It. is thus the whole scene of judgment of the kingdom—not the destruction of the We now come to the direct and complete development of the parenthetical matter of 10, 11. We get the counsels and thoughts of God, not the history of His ways and man's conduct, but His view of what He was bringing about, and the formal design of Satan to oppose it. This is connected with His covenant with Israel. The ark of His covenant was seen in His temple, which was opened in heaven. He was going to act openly on the earth in connection with the covenant with Israel, and first we have the heavenly aspect of it all before the history. That is to say, Jerusalem or Israel viewed according to God's sure counsel, clothed with supreme authority, all legal ordinances under her feet, crowned with perfect administrative subordinate authority. Of

her the Man child that was to govern all was to be born (i.e. Christ and the Church in Him). Opposed to this, is Satan's power in the Empire of Rome. This empire is looked at, however, not historically, but as the power of Satan. But the Child was not yet set up in power, but caught up to God's throne—bidden there. The woman's (Israel's) place is in the wilderness, driven out in desolation, but kept of God for 1260 days.

Next, we begin our history from heaven downwards. The dragon is cast out thence, but into this earth—he becomes a mere earthly power. The heavens are set free, the accuser gone, and those who suffered, in connection with his and their place, are then freed from all his efforts. He then begins to attack the woman; (now seen historically on earth;) she flees from him three and a half years into the desert, is saved from his pursuit, and he turns to persecute the godly of her seed. Here I certainly think we have still only one half-week. The woe on the earth, on the heavens being set free, is not, I judge, the coming of the worldly kingdom. Divine power was set up in heaven, to the exclusion of the accuser, and in favor of the heavenly people. But the earthly kingdom of the dragon came, not the judgment and worldly kingdom of Christ.

In 13, we get the earthly agent of Satan, the Roman. Empire; but not as a direct subject in its heathen character, but in its blasphemous one: still, it is viewed as being the last of the four empires that came out of the sea, but with ten horns and seven heads, and embracing characteristically the other three. The slain head had been slain, and continued ■ς εςφαγμενην, but had been healed. This is part of his character, showing previous existence and history of a beast who now rises; to whom the dragon gives his authority. But the world would be infidel in it, and take up, independent of Christianity, the admiration of that power which would have destroyed Christ in its imperial character. Blasphemy is the new character of the beast, and he continues in this character, forty-two mouths—half a week, not a whole one. He blasphemes God, and in the shape of His name, dwelling-place, and the dwellers in heaven. This is characteristic. The Church, as a heavenly thing, could not be endured. But it intimates that, in the close, historically, the Church is already caught up. He can only blaspheme them. But He makes war with the saints on earth, i.e., who are not dwellers in heaven. The dwellers on earth worship him, save the elect remnant. I apprehend this latter is more universal in character; while the saints he overcomes are active in witness, more or less, and answer to the saints of the high places (Dan. 7.) whom he wears out. Though more generally expressed here, they are the understanding ones of Dan. 11; not the Church, but not merely faithful, but aware of God's title and ways, as the Most High, and their testimony obnoxious to the beast. Hence they are slain and go up—though they do not dwell there. The changing times and laws is the Jewish part, and not brought in here; but the period is the same. And the two former parts of Dan. 7:25, are found here. (Read “written from the foundation of the world.") As yet, God not being come in in judgment, submission, not actual resistance, is the patient path of faith. He will bring judgment on the persecutor. The rest of the chapter and chapter 14. do not offer, I think, much difficulty. We have active Satanic agency, bearing the form of Messiah's power, and ministering to the first beast's throne and blasphemous claims. Chap. 14. is the work of God in this time:—the perfect remnant of Jewish sufferers preserved under the beast's reign; the gospel of the kingdom and coming judgment before that judgment is executed; the fall of Babylon; the warning as to the beast, and the lot of those who worshipped him; the judgment, of the earth, sparing many—and of the vine, the religious corporate character of evil connected with the apostasy of Israel and antichrist, sparing none. It is the utter

destruction of apostate religiousness in the earth—the vine of the earth. The judgment of the beast as such is not here. I apprehend the beginning of 15. is anticipative, as the judgments are made manifest. But they are what follows. (Ver. 5) it is the ναος, holy place. Tabernacle of testimony is the word used by the LXX. for the tabernacle of the congregation. So Stephen in Acts. What follows is the inauguration of it (like Ex. 40:34, and 1 Kings or 2 Chronicles But here it is the smoke of glory and power, wrath being to be executed as from it. Still God takes His place—though not Himself—by His presence. This and 16. come in before 14: 8. Chaps. 12. - 14. have no date till Satan is cast down, and the last half-week. That casting down changes the whole character of the working of evil. Note, these last chapters are testimony or conflict, and the ways of God when He does not execute judgment, though ending in the Son of man's doing so. Evil has the upper hand as far as man can see. Deliverances, then, are by special or providential interventions. The ark of His covenant was then securing through the power of evil; but not judging. Chaps. 15: 16. are the judgment and wrath of God—not yet the Lamb. And they act not on the power of Satan as an adversary, but on men and the world and what is worldly, as such, according to responsibility to God. You get God's doings in 14. in the period; and the closing judgment by Him to whom definite judgment is committed. God's ways in his government of the world are only noticed in recital. (Ver. 8.)

In chap. 12. - 14. the people are secured; and the world, till the Son of man comes, has its way. The ark of the covenant is seen, ordered and sure, but not made to grow. The men of Belial are taken at the end. Chap. 15. 16. there is no ark of the covenant, but the house filled with smoke, so that none can enter; but it is glory and power active in wrath. In both we have to do with relationship with Israel, and the world; only as yet from heaven, not from Jerusalem on earth. In the first, directly with the Jews—their whole state is unfolded; in the last, the judgment on the proud of the earth, who leave no place for them, have displaced them, and in wickedness taken their place. The earth and everything in it is providentially judged. I have nothing particularly now to remark on chap. 18., only the time is drawing on close, ηγγικε. In chap. 18. I apprehend the fall is before the violent throwing down, but immediately preparatory to it, a total degradation of its state—a final call to God's people to come out of her, to avoid her sins and imminent plagues. I apprehend there will be some strange union under secular influence, connected with the false Messiah, (see Rev. 13. and 2 Thess. 2. for Went and association too,) between idolatrous Romanism and idolatrous Judaism. The Jews only, I apprehend, are His people here. The ark of the covenant has appeared, but it would have a moral application whenever Babylon was spiritually discerned, as even now are there many antichrists. She was now in her last stage: her sins had reached unto heaven and God had remembered her iniquities. So Jer. 9, where also her fall precedes her being taken. The last verse shows the religious character, answering to Jerusalem in the Lord's time. She has taken in a worse way Jerusalem's place.

In chap. 19. it is, first, heavenly, not Church, worship; i.e., not of intelligence of divine ways, but celebration when divine judgments are made manifest. It follows chap. xv. Hence it is entirely God's judgments. The Lamb is not yet spoken of. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures only add their amen, worship, and hallelujah. Here it is a universal summons to praise of every one that fears God, for He reigns as Jehovah Elohim Shaddai. This must be connected with xi. 17, mid helps to a date, and Psa. 95-98 This introduces the marriage of the Lamb (His wife being already made ready). This closes thus far the divine communication. It is on the assertion of the truth of

them here, and 22: 6, on the reigning of the saints, that John was going to worship, Read, “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus;” i.e., this book was the same service and had the same object as John's own, who was in Patmos for it. These were all in heaven. Now heaven is opened not on Jesus—not to the spiritual man—but for Jesus who, with the name taken to Laodicea, (only there in witness,) comes to judge and make war. He was characterized by the garment dipped in blood. He is the Word of God. The 15th verse is not solely or properly applicable to the destruction of the beast and false prophet (though they may come under it as first opposing the other.) It is the place Christ is taking in the world to introduce His kingdom. The beast and the false prophet and their armies gather themselves together to oppose this. They are therefore first met, themselves cast into the lake of fire, and their armies become the mystical supper of the great God, for the fowls of the air slain—by the judicial authority of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. The dragon was then laid hold on and bound for a thousand years in the abyss—then to be loosed for a little season. I have nothing new to add here, save that, if the thought of there being only one half week be just, the slain for the testimony of Jesus are a general class, and those who do not worship the beast belong to the half week. Indeed this makes it simpler. In 21: 1-8, there is, remark, no dispensational name. In the description of the city, which follows, we have the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. It is a dispensational state.

Chapter 161

Fragment: The Saint in Glory

The saint in glory is glad that there should be something above himself there. He can strip himself of glory that the Lord should have it all. What it contrast to the spirit of infidelity in the heart! The saint can delight in the character and honor of God, in his worthiness to be exalted. Even here this is the instinct of divine life. Man is entirely changed here; for, according to his natural impulse, he would pull down God Himself, if He did not suit him. The celebration of his power draws out the worship of the elders. Are we not glad to have crowns to lay at His feet?

Chapter 162

Sketch on Revelation: Part 1

BY THE AUTHOR OF A TRACT ENTITLED “FAITH AND WORKS.”

BEING led to reconsider the Apocalypse, so needful and so interesting to the Christian, I will, by the help of God, go through some of the third part of it, starting from a portion which I think has not only been mistaken from not having its importance granted to it, but from being wrongly divided. I would not however leave behind me the earlier part.

It might appear remarkable, considering it a form of vision and mystical representation of events, that there should be the exhortation to read and keep the sayings of this book. It is a warrant and call to study it. It is remarkable how much may be kept without unraveling what is difficult.

There are three parts as commonly recognized—things that are seen, things that are, and things after these. How can the sayings of the book concerning each of these be kept? I answer, the first by believing the character of judgment held by Christ here on earth over the Church; secondly, as to the things that are (i.e., by continuous application), they are kept by looking to that which constitutes the remnant in Christendom; and thirdly, the sayings as to the third are kept by the saint keeping himself separate from the principles of the world, which in their result come in the last times under the judgments of God, as necessary to keep himself united to God. We have God, and Christ, and the Spirit in the relationship of the book. Christ is the “faithful witness” of the ways of God (and this is the character He bears towards Laodicea); next, as the first-begotten from the dead, the proof given that He will judge the world in righteousness; and in right, now acknowledged by faith, as well as then in fact, Prince of the kings of the earth.

He made the elders a kingdom; that is, those who are in communion of the divine life as priests, therefore in the kingdom of the Father. But where John was, it was the kingdom (with affliction and patience) of Jesus Christ, a point much left out in theories of the Scripture and our relations to God in Jesus Christ. It is present in “patience” of the future.

Coming next to the lamps, (or so-called candlesticks,) Christ stood in the midst of them with the stars in His right hand. The stars are less apprehended than most of this part. It is likely the figure was taken from the angel of the synagogue, but here for Christian authority, representing in persons the application of the Lord's power and judgment. Angel and leader were His presence in authority in the wilderness and on the entry into the land. “My name is in him.” Gathered together unto His name—perhaps presence. (See 2 Chron. 20:9.) “I am in the midst.” They are seen in His right hand and so express His authority in responsibility in the churches.

The first thing to look for is the principle and source of the decay and the development of evil, in the assembly or church, of the age as it passes on." The defect towards God in the inward life of a Christian originates externally a corresponding evil in some certain thing; it is the defect in itself and the defect of result may be another evil, and so I believe it here. The defect in principle is purely so only in Ephesus. Want of life is want of love, and want of life is from neglect of life. “If ye live (have a life) in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit.” There could not be injection, but addressed to the

capacity of fulfilling it under grace. Busy yourself with Jesus: we so look at God in a true mirror. To do so works resemblance, till it may be said, “Not I live, but Christ.” We must study all the development of life in the person of Christ. His loyalty to His Father—such should ours be to Him. The spirit of meekness and lowliness, the spirit of wisdom and quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord and moral and divine grace as it was in Christ.

It does not appear that the works and labors of the church at Ephesus were less, but the root and principle whence they sprung was less than at the beginning. This is the same principle as found in the judgment of the dead. The books were opened. The dead were judged by their works, but the works judged by the life. Therefore, if not written in the book of life, &c. Now the reward of overcoming is in blessed and perfect accordance— “shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

In Smyrna it became manifest that the eye of the saints is not towards the world so long as God is counting the works true, but that it is towards God only. It profanes the heart of the saint to measure any works by the thought that the eye of the world is measuring them, or letting their own do so. If the works are still works, but with less divine life as their spring, as in Ephesus, the day is near at hand that the soul will boast of its success; and should the fall proceed, the world will begin to enter. The first part of this case was the case of Smyrna. The chastening hand of God was upon them to keep them to Himself, but the feature was evident, that they had something to show amidst it. They were lessened and brought low to death in this world, but to holding fast the crown of life in martyrdom was promised. “But thou art rich." It must have been some extension which gave it a measure in its own eyes. Pergamos comes next, and is addressed in much grace. Would not the thought of “angel” include that part which God expected should be true? We should remember that the assemblies are ecclesiastically considered, i.e. as bodies. If life decays, the vacancy is felt. What must it be filled by, but by superstition and dead works? The doctrine of the Nicolaitans and that of Balaam are next door to each other, and relate both to an evil in respect of ministry. As to the Nicolaitans, it always struck me that the charge against them (namely, holding the community of wives) was gratuitous. Such a perversion never could have occurred while Ephesus was the Ephesus of the Apocalypse. It is more likely to be a spiritual fault and more likely to grow connected with failure of life, perhaps a growth of authority which was not Christ's which is in divine life and power; and we find in Smyrna those that called themselves Jews, and it is a worse state of it in Philadelphia. Through Christ risen we believe on God, the God of life; and spiritual power is through faith in Christ ascended and at the right hand of God. In Ephesus, it was life to sustain good works; in Smyrna, life to exclude dead ones. With the growth of Christianity and the Judaizing tendency of the earliest Christians, as shown in the epistles of the apostle Paul, an accusation of failure in the truth of spiritual ministry, and general tendency to copy the Jewish institutions, was very likely to fall into a form of priesthood as it advances at present to apostasy. To the corruption of ministry is added saint worship, the sword keenly dividing between these evils and life and spiritual power. Is not Balak taught of Balaam the form of fornication in alliance with the world, and its advantages, to induce to preach other than what God teaches?

Rome, throughout time, in every condition, has been morally or actually the place of martyrdom. Satan dwells there. The hidden manna is instruction about Christ hidden in heaven, now become so needful and peculiarly adapted to saints in the midst of such a state. If manna were Christ, it would not corrupt and breed worms if kept and not used, which is just the case of instruction and

the knowledge of truth. On the white stone a name written is peculiar and individual.

In Thyatira, the characteristics of Romanism are palpable. Jezebel, exercising the calling of prophetess. “Thy wife,” instead of “the woman,” (the best reading [? ED.]) in place of the one charged by God with the instruction of His own; thus connected with the angel it would be the Romish priesthood, or, as called by them “the church,” claiming the authority of the words of God. “Those that commit adultery with her” —This is a decided call for separation on the penalties named for herself. The usurpation of the prerogatives of Christ has to be confessed against, and to confess will give a share in the prerogatives of Christ when He comes. I will give such the expectation of My coming to sustain Him. Rome claims power over the nations. Keep clear of this claim, and I will give you with Myself what they falsely claim. Separation now begins. I have not yet seen perfectly the reason of the change of the place of the exhortation— “Let him that hath an ear,” &c. That the change of place occurring after the three first induces to separation, is not so clear, because in Laodicea it is promised to him that opens when Christ knocks, that Christ will come in and sup with him, and not he come out to sup with Christ. It may look more to individual action on the body; it is surely to overcome the evil of each separate church and of them all. The object of the addresses is to the body ecclesiastically throughout. Therefore, it is spoken to the angel.

Separation is certainly plain in the other part of the address where, “you, the rest in Thyatira,” distinctly indicates it. The address to the individual is separate in this and the following ones. The characters in which Christ judges Thyatira is the most searching and terrible of all the characters borne by Him.

As to Sardis, the return of Christ to His peculiar character, as judging the churches, is remarkable; for here a new feature enters. Sardis, after a state where even natural conscience had been trampled on by corruption, is worldly, orderly, and subject to the world; and therefore He that hath the seven spirits and the seven stars in His right hand deals with her. It is still, however, ecclesiastically. But, as the world, is exactly threatened with the same threat as the forgetful servants, “I will come as a thief,” the proper and natural sequel is the same judgment; for they are identified. Life, we see here, is the burden of God's requirement; and the fruit of the absence of life in Sardis and responsibility in life, is the entrance of the world, having escaped, by its means, the excesses of corruption and evil; for the world was tired of and disgusted with them. The things that remain relate to Sardis generally, The few that walk in white are the exceptions in the truth of life and obedience. White linen is the righteousness of the saints—works done in Christ; because they are His. “Thou hast weighed all our works in us” —clear of the world; because what is in it must be defiled with the age. And the character of Christ can only be fulfilled in the company of His, or towards the world in patience, and in peace so much as lies in the saint. Laodicea naturally would be the sequel to Sardis. The world is content with Sardis, and adopts and endows it, and it wants nothing; but Philadelphia intervenes in a little strength (which is weakness), not “denying Christ's name, and keeping his patience,” says the Lord in His patient grace. Brotherly kindness in the Church exists as general; not confession, as out of the world, except in those who are pillars. This state of Philadelphia is a general state, and there is promise to eminence in the faith; such as have it shall be pillars. There is also spiritual Judaism of a deep dye. They adopt it as their standard creed. The dwellers on earth, a characteristic expression of the Apocalypse, answering in some sort to Jer. 17:13, are the objects of judgments, while such as keep His word and do not deny His

name will be taken away before the judgments come. It is not difficult to see that each is called on to hear what is said to all the Churches; so that we find a code of perfect confession under all the circumstances detailed in them.

They close with Laodicea—no violent apostasy, but ease in the world, and, because of it, having no sense of need when all was wanting, and lukewarnmess towards Christ as the result, and rejection on account of it. Christ seems to hide Himself behind the moral requirements of the stranger and pilgrim; gold, divine and heavenly; white garments as to personal righteousness; and a clear sight by which evil is perceived, that we may walk without the defilements of the age out of which Christ gave Himself, that we might be delivered according to the will of God and our Father. There may be comfort in religion, which would be sown in the weakness of Philadelphia, instead of confession of the Lord. Christ is the faithful Witness of the ways of God—the Chosen that cannot deny Himself—Head over every created thing—Great Angel over all.

The Lord will surely guide us when we meditate on the causes and substance and results of the failure in the assemblies. Nothing can be more salient than that lack of life and faith of life are at the bottom of it. But life to what end here? Life, not only in its internal character, but life in subjection to Himself and for Himself, whom we are to confess and serve according to power, which is promised to those who are subject and obey His rule—who is not on earth, but at the right hand of God, till God has prepared His enemies as the footstool on which He shall trample, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.

The phase of the religion of the world, as in many parts of it, is thoroughly favorable to such a state as is described in the Church of Laodicea. Civil and religious liberty against the ecclesiastical tyranny of Thyatira would afford such a condition, and it can at any time receive an indefinite extension. It is Sardis in the fullness of its fruits. There is no persecution to make confession bright. Its condition offers no exception in it to bring forth the praises of the Redeemer. If any one answers the knock given by the Lord the FAITHFUL WITNESS, it is all that is left out of the mass. It is a civil reign over the earth in independence of God, in conjunction with a ruined confession. What is to be done? We are heavenly, it is true—in heavenly places in Christ Jesus as our origin and present privilege before the Father; but we come under some of the earthly rights of Jesus, because we are in the place of them, and are on proof whether it is in Thyatira or Sardis or Laodicea we worship the Father. Blessed calling! Do we confess openly Jesus as Lord, as well as believe that God raised Him from the dead? “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but with the mouth confession (of Him as Lord) is made unto salvation.” In fact, hear what the Spirit says to all the Churches; save yourselves from out the state of Laodicea; “touch not the unclean thing, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty.”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 163

Sketch on Revelation: Part 2

BY THE AUTHOR OF A TRACT ENTITLED “FAITH AND WORKS.”

(Concluded from page 111.)

SOMETHING, though much need not, is to be said, and it is hoped for blessing, as to the fourth and fifth chapters that follow. They are the introduction of the Book of the Apocalypse as the judgments that follow on the rejection of the testimony of the church by the Lord. They are all however addressed to the churches:, an abundant evidence of their importance to all those that confess Christ upon the earth; and we may say that this third part shows at once what, had been the growing defect of the churches; viz., growing insubjection to Christ the Lord and the Lord to come; for the sin of the world as here shown is to be overcome in the vengeance at last to be executed according to the will of the Father and Christ's reign to begin.

The churches spued out fall into the world and take their fate with the world and as the world. They are spued out as fitted to the state of the world, and subject to its fate, and reproved with its reproof. Those that have had ears to hear have known and followed that subjection to Christ and to the Holy Ghost that God required, whatever the form of evil of the time or mixture of times was, and are saved. I am sure this insubjection to the Lord is the great defect of modern religion. It is not accounted of, but God has His own amidst it all, and knows them, and great and peculiar blessedness it is to be enabled to enter into the counsels of God, and to apprehend what place the saints have as to the glory and rights of the Son.

The apostle is called from the scene on earth to what is preparing in heaven.

The actors in the scene in the first of these chapters are, HE on the throne and they on thrones encircling the throne, and the seven Spirits before the throne, and the four living creatures in the midst of the throne, and there is the yet empty sea and the rainbow of promise to the earth. The living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders are only those that could exercise us by any difficulty. The living creatures in the midst of the throne (thus manifestly divine) I believe to be the expression of the attributes of God as manifested in all places and things. They are here with God and in the throne and about it. But they are to be found everywhere wherever God's action or the fruits of it are found. Their highest office was over the mercy seat. They had an office at the gate of the east of Eden; they had so in creation. They had a significant one, though only in part, in the curtain of the new temple. It is only the attributes of God in anything or in any place that are to the peraise of God or can justly fulfill the mind of God. How in perfect accordance they are found crying in the midst of the throne, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, that was, and is, and is to come—a cry that also in all places and in all relations is the claim of the character and majesty of God. And when all that is created praise God, they characteristically have but to say, Amen. Cherub is ordinarily given but as an appellative only. The nearest approach to the sense is something great and excellent. Nothing is great and excellent but what is of God. And they vary not day and night, for He is ever the same and must ever be so recognized, and Holy, Holy, Holy

heard wherever found. All that is of Him must be to Him and holy.

In the next chapter, the Lamb is in the midst of the elders, and they with Him within the circle of the throne, and the seven Spirits which were before the throne are the eyes of spiritual guidance, (“ Thou shalt guide me with thine eye.") In this chapter we see them, but in attendance. All becomes ready for action in the fifth chapter.

As to the elders, while the living creatures cry, “Holy, holy, holy,” they say the praise of the Lamb. In fact, the song belongs, not to any, but in regard of redemption; and it is in the character of redeemed that the elders stand is in the next chapter. The clothing and the crowns and song of the elders mark them. The white garments are the righteousness of the saints. They have crowns—golden crowns. These crowns are theirs before the crown of righteousness is given, in the day of the Lord's glory, if this is the representation of actual and present state at this time.

To me, I own that the saints of the Old Testament would not come in here; but as the remnant will, they reign with Christ. Nor do I see how I can divide the elders; but the Lord can teach. I feel thus much—that likeness to Christ answers best the manner they are presented in. It seems to agree with the “better thing for us.” What is that? Is not the heavenly call of the saint in Christ? ("For thy pleasure—they are and were created” is old English for “because of thy will.")

The fourth chapter presents all. in its place and prepared—in attendance, so to speak.

Chapter v. Christ now comes forward. There is but one able to open the book that describes the destiny of the world, of which the iniquity is so near full but still borne with in grace—though fearfully afflicted yet sought to be reclaimed. Never let us forget grace, God's grace, and grace because of His grace. God never consents to evil in His mercy, or in not letting His anger go forth to destruction; we are apt to consent to evil when we do not avenge it. (It is always the feeling of the world that the saint gives evil its scope by suffering wrong.) For we are much truer to our passions than to God's holiness, and our kindnesses are mingled with the flesh.

To return—Christ, wondrous grace! took the world with its burden. He became heir, (the elders are coheirs,) having worked redemption; and in right of His having done so the Lamb, and the Lamb alone, is for this reason able to open the book. The Lamb, in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, (their place is changed,) opens the book of the world, now to be made known to the seven churches. It is in the hands of the Lamb; delivered to Him by Him that sitteth on the throne. He is as a lamb that had been slain in the midst of the throne—perfect power, as denoted by seven horns being now His, and perfect spiritual action. As to the prayers of the saints, they are odors, and they are in the bowls in the hands of the elders as incense. We see them in chapter viii. 3, 4, cast into the earth and the power of them, with the fire taken from the altar. The Lamb had not appeared in the former chapter. He now shares with Him that sitteth on the throne the adoration of all. To the former actors is added the great assembly; all is ready to carry on the vision.

All that can now be proposed to be done is in the way of arrangement. I find explanations so fully provided, and for the most part so just, that little that I am given to see can be added. In venturing a new aspect of arrangement of some parts, I do it in confidence, or I ought not to do it; and, as true, will have the power of persuasion that God may be pleased to give it. Nor need it be considered as destroying the suggestion of arrangement already offered, as far as such can stand with it, for it is exceptional here and there, and not more.

I gave once a short sketch of the Apocalypse in German, and found it unexpectedly in English. It was very short, and in deference, which I still hold in general, of a person deeply versed in the word of the Lord, avoided the twelfth chapter, because my sense of it was different; but being further persuaded of the truth of my view I leave it in the Lord's hands. It has taken large dimensions and an important place, for I find in this chapter a great key to the arrangement of the whole book.

I see the twelfth chapter neither belonging in its entirety to what goes before nor to what follows, but divided between the two, and closing so as to admit of what follow s after chapter xv.

As preliminary, however, to entering on this view, there is an assignment of the various expressions of time which it will be needful to set forth. It is not the key to the view here offered, but which, had it not accorded with it, would have shaken it, but for something not perceived.

The expressions of time are threefold—viz., a time and times and half a time, 1260 days, and forty-two months being the same extent of period, according to Jewish reckoning. It will be found that 1260 days are, in regard of the half week, previous to the great tribulation; and a time and times and half a time, refer to the Jewish position in the last tribulation, and the 42 months to the same period; but in respect of the great Gentile oppression. But the holy city being trodden under the foot of the Gentiles could not be less in this case than this power, and it is not used in application to anything else, and I trust this will be clearer as I proceed. The 1260 days, as the first half week, are so placed as to be alone capable of application to a more extended period of some kind, and so it has been justly applied, and variously true, and to a yet more extended thought of general time from Christ downwards, and which is the case in this twelfth chapter; but not excluding the more strict use of it, closing the first half week. The use of time and times and half a time by Daniel is decided in its character by the period he speaks of and those concerned. This period we find in this chapter. The grand conclusion of Daniel's prophecy being 1290 and 1335 days at the close exceed these periods, whereas his proper subject is, as in chap vii. of his prophecy where this period of a time and times, &c. occurs, for it relates to the fate of his people in particular.

I should, I think, safely say that there are three applications of the 1260 days; viz., the strict real days, or three and a half years, a period of 1260 years, and general time. It may be all three, or the first and last of three, in this chapter. Again, the period of 1260 days is applied to the period of the testimony of the witnesses, in strict application to the first half week, and their time of testimony is closed by the entrance of the Gentile powers, that is to endure forty and two months. It occurs again in its proper application in xiii. 5.

Looking then at this chapter thus, we find it beginning with Christ the Judge and Ruler of nations taken up to heaven. The Second period begins with Michael driving Satan out of heaven. The 10th, 11th, and 12th verses belong to the song in heaven and date before the time. The 11th verse is distinctly, as a matter passed. Satan is now at the commencement of this period cast from heaven, and his work on the earth towards the woman begins and is to continue for the appointed time. It does not conclude with the deliverance of the whole with which the Apocalypse concludes, but leaves this to the actual overthrowing of the resistance described at the end of the book. It leaves Satan engaged in pursuit of the ten tribes against whom save the remnant, he prevails. The remnant come up to the land; they are late enough to know what is before them in a Savior.

It is no doubt understood by the reader that the time, and tune, and half a time, and the forty-two months apply to an identical period, though each with a peculiar application, and that these two periods relate to the last half week. The 1260 days belong always to the prior half week, and therefore capable of extension, and embrace Christianity and the history of the world as Christendom as well.

We have now to go back to the part of the book belonging to the first half of the twelfth chapter in strict time.

The view I have, as far as I can say that I have received, is that the close (not the very last portion) of the visions of the chapters vii. onwards introduce the time subsequent to chapter xii. and also develop the result in anticipation. The sixth seal I would look to be that breaking up of nations which will make them constitute the “sea” out of which the beast is to arise. In this chapter God in His never-failing grace manifests two bodies perfectly preserved, one for earth, the other for heaven, during the great tribulation that is to follow. This intervenes, and then the seventh seal and seventh trumpet end the mystery of God. The trumpets I regard as far more Jewish, if not essentially so, than the seals. There are many marks of this. Trumpets were the Jewish instrument of awakening the people, under the law. The feast of trumpets relates to this. The meaning of the temple in chapter xi., which is in fact the sixth trumpet, and the vision of the new economy in the smite chapter, ready to be manifested at the end, all tend to show that this was more specially dedicated to this portion of the dealings of God and coming in with the close of Him. All that relates to the earth moves round this earthly center of God's purposes. The whole appointed to the Lamb. The sixth trumpet brings on in the east the same whirlwind of disasters answering to the sixth seal elsewhere. The contents of chapter x. do not enter into the question of arrangement. It marks, however, by the declaration of the mystery of God being finished, that it corresponds to the same place in the seals. Of chapter xi. enough has been said.

We now come to the second part of the Apocalypse—the separation of the two parts being bridged across by chap. xii. This latter portion is given wholly to the forty and two months, till judgment brings in Christ the Lord, with the marriage of the Lamb and the bride, who is to share the honors of the inheritance with Him.

The first chapter of this portion sets out with the period of forty-two months. and we find them in chap. xiii, As the sum, the first thing presented to us is the imperial head now having received Satan's power and throne and great authority, and to work forty and two months.

The beast arose out of the sea. The second beast found in this chapter arises out of the earth. The sense of both is familiar to most. Satan is the rival of God. Satan has his man, the blasphemous head, wielding the power of the beast. God has His man, Christ. Satan's man is seen as reigning as the blasphemous head of the worldly empire, having ten horns with diadems, and seven heads, of which he was (as continued in an eight) the last. This empire bear irrefragably, the stamp of the Roman Empire. We have, set forth in vision in chap. xiv., the Lamb on Mount Zion, the place of KINGLY power, (set over here in vision against Satan's man of chap. xiii.) to whom God has given to have authority over all things, and to break the rebellious nations in pieces as a potter's vessel. He has His earthly attendants in the 144,000. The fall of Babylon is foreseen, and the subsequent trial of yielding or resisting the obligation to worship the beast. And the harvest and vintage is proclaimed.

Chapter xv. opens with the declaration of the seven last plagues. I own I see a distinct purpose in the word “last.” put here side by side with the last trial of grace in calling the nations to the allegiance of God, to whom from everlasting to everlasting allegiance is due. As before, also when judgments were to come in, is revealed the body of the saved amidst it, (and time sea of chap. iv. is filled,) as has been God's gracious way to declare His preservation of them that confess His name and the name of Lis Christ here, even the company who were victors over the beast. Blessed victory! Strange victory! He that loseth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.

But the Lamb of xiv. and the company in xv. do not take the part to faith in the view in which we see in the first part of chap. xii. It bears the impress of the victorious Messiah of the Psalms. “All the nations shall come and worship before thee.” And the song of chap. xv. is of Moses and of the Lamb, victorious over the nations. The sixth vial of chap. xvi. has its analogy, but no identity, with the sixth seal and trumpets. Under the seventh vial, Babylon fails. The religious and social condition of Babylon forms the subject of chapters xvii. and xviii. Her fall is at the hand of the beast and the ten kings; and he is alone worshipped, save by the saints, which becomes the signal of the coming, forth of the Word of God,

Chapters xx., xxi., xxii„ belong to the blessedness that follows. There was little in the last half of the Apocalypse to note as to arrangement. The contents of xvii. and xviii. might induce one to enter into this field. I have only to say that the development of the evil has yet to find its chief director. The characteristics exist plain enough to be seen now, and have been ably spoken of. They are ripened for judgment under the direction they will receive.

W. IL D.

Righteousness

Especially when connected with character and honor, is rigid and repulsive, because it is afraid of itself and for itself. Grace which dwells his perfect righteousness, being above the thought of self, because it is divine in its nature, and being secure in perfect righteousness within, is gracious in tone without. Grace can think for others. Such was Christ. He, perfect in all His ways and love, had never to think, and did not think what the effect for Himself would be of His intercourse with sinners. He thought entirely of and for others. This is the effect of intrinsic holiness and grace. He was holy enough to have no thought of aught else, and thus be the companion of sinners for their sakes to deliver them, regardless of self. Now the Christian ought to be able, through grace, to do this: only he has to be on his guard for himself. There is this difference, that the Church has to be jealous and watchful for the glory of Christ and the holiness of the walk of its members. Still, I am persuaded that were we nearer the Lord, more thoroughly identified ourselves in spirit and walk with Him, in the security of His grace, there would be more capacity to seize the good grace had wrought in Others, and be above the evil, dealing with it to heal it in grace. For this, no doubt, straight paths must be made for the feet. May the Lord guide the feet of His saints in all things!

Chapter 165

The Righteousness of God

(FRAGMENTS OF A DISCOURSE, OCTOBER, 1860.)

WHAT is the “righteousness of God"? It is God taking up the cause of a sinner; God working; God giving; and all in Jesus. He has sent a Savior. He has sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, as a sacrifice for it, has condemned. sin already, so that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of God, then, is not your being righteous towards God, but God righteous towards you who believe, because He has found in Jesus all that satisfies His heart and His holiness. It is the consistency of God with what Christ has done for sinners and suffered for sin. God has placed Himself under what I may call a bond to honor Jesus, in the persons of those who confess His name, because of what Jesus has undergone on the cross.

The righteousness of God is “without the law,” apart from it altogether. It is not even the law as it was accomplished by Jesus in this world; that did not touch my guilt. What I want is that my sins should be purged away. Will that blessed One, who is true God and perfect man, will He put His head under the sword of God's judgment in my place? He has done it! Therefore all is changed for the soul that repents and believes. God is not now bound to execute judgment upon man, save upon him who rejects His Son; but He has to be righteous in view of what Jesus deserved at His hands—the blessed man who bore sin, and has borne it away. If I believe in Christ it is no longer a question of the first man, Adam, but of the second man, the last Adam, who is in the presence of God, the perfect witness of divine righteousness; and it is God now that is just and justifies him that believes in Jesus. His concern is to honor and requite His SON. Did God want a righteous man There was the sole perfectly righteous One. Did He look for a heart full of zeal for His own house? Jesus was the one. Did He seek a man willing to suffer everything from the world that God might be honored? nay, be far more willing to bear even the wrath of God, and take upon Him the judgment of sins.? All was found in Jesus. And therefore it is no longer man that is weighed in the balances and found wanting, because he cannot meet the claims of the law, that is, the measure of righteousness due to God. But it is God who has got a new kind of righteousness; a righteousness that justifies instead of condemning. Not only have we an Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, but He is the propitiation for our sins, yea, also for the whole world.

Thus God Himself now is, we may say with reverence, under obligations to His Son on behalf of sinners. For He sees before Him, a Savior, a spotless Lamb, whose blood suffices for the worst of sinners. The gospel is the manifestation of the righteousness of God without the law. If the law enters in the smallest particular, so that we are under it, you are a lost man, and so am I. The gospel is God providing a sacrifice, or substitute, to bear His wrath against my sins. If I have faith in Christ and His blood, I am entitled to say, my sins are gone. By Himself He has purged my sins—not partly by Him and partly by me or others; but by Himself, to the exclusion of everything and every one else.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” The prophets proclaimed that that righteousness was “near to come;” the sacrifices connected with the law pointed to it as the ultimate work and way of God. All centered in Christ—in Him who was called “The Lord our righteousness.” He alone, who was God, could perfectly satisfy God. It is now, therefore, a question of God showing Himself righteous, in honoring the Lord Jesus and His sufferings for us. We cannot make too much of Him and His salvation. God sees such blessedness in Christ, that, because of what He is and has done, He can meet the case, no matter how hopeless otherwise. The sinner may have been ever so abandoned, ever so unfeeling, ever so highminded. “Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified;” because God has, if I may so say, such delight and confidence in the salvation that is in Christ, and the Holy Ghost has sealed us in virtue of it. God is righteous in forgiving me, because of the shed blood of His Son. Without it there is no remission; with it, what is there not? God is most jealous about His son. He will never slight His person, nor overlook the worth of His death. May you cast yourselves upon God, as One who cannot but be righteous to what His Son calls for at His hands! His blood was shed. Can you ask anything of God, or bring anything to God, so precious as that? Can you add anything to what is infinitely efficacious? That blood “cleanseth from all sin.” God Himself gives it to you and thus commends His love. Receive it from Himself, resting on His word. He guarantees its eternal value. (Heb. 10:9-17.)

Chapter 166

Rivers of Living Water

(John 7.)

In this gospel we get not only the testimony to the Jewish people of the Messiah and the message of the kingdom, but the glorious doctrine of the person of Christ, the rejection of which rendered it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them.

In the previous gospels we have the Lord set before us, as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of man, the Messiah, the Servant, the perfect Israelite. This Christ-rejecting generation not only broke the law, but discarded the promises as well. Abraham's seed but rebels against Abraham's God, and now they who had the promises must come in on a common level with the Gentile, through grace. God is faithful to His word, that is true; but it is only under mercy they can be saved. We have no historical account of Christ in this gospel—no genealogy, but we are taken back to the beginning of the book of Genesis; and get a truth deeper, higher, and far beyond that of the other gospels, even the glory of Christ as it ever was, before He became the Incarnate Word: and this is so blessed for us, for we get eternal life in Him—in Him who has life in Himself. It is not the promises we get, (though we get them too,) but it is the Promise Himself. It is this Blessed One who is our life—life that existed before worlds began. He had a former glory, but this glory of His person, where is that to be found? In His redeemed, there it will be displayed. Christ came to His own, but they received Him not, and since then they have been treated as reprobates all along. Up to Christ's rejection God tried man. He left him without law, put him under law, gave him priesthood and prophets, and in due time sends His only-begotten Son. All was without avail. Did they reverence Him? No. This is the heir, said they: we will kill him and the inheritance will be ours: bringing to light that most dreadful truth, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

Man would not have the holiness of God, neither would he have the love of God. And now God brings in a new thing—a spring of life, and puts away sin through the cross of His Son.; and Christ having died for sin, takes His seat at the right hand of God, victorious over all, and sends down the promised Spirit to enable us to walk before Him.

In chapter 6 we get Christ feeding the multitude who followed Him (and the disciples too).

There are three great feasts spoken of that the Jews always kept—the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In this last feast the vintage was prefigured, the showing by a figure they had been a people who had dwelt in booths, but now had rest. Christ could feed them in the wilderness, but He could not go with them to this feast; for before Christ could enter upon a rest down here, the Church must be taken, therefore He said, “I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not fully come.” His brethren may go, but he could not now declare His glory and enter upon His rest. But there was an eighth day—then comes rest—then He would keep the Feast of Tabernacles—then should God's holy rest be on the earth and God's Church in the glory.

We get the Spirit spoken of in three ways: first, all saved ones from the beginning are regenerated—born of the Spirit; secondly, He shall be in you a well of water springing up; thirdly,

rivers flowing out. In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Ghost was not yet given, we read, “because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Mark! Before the disciples could receive the Holy Ghost, the work of atonement must be done. And Jesus, a glorified man, seated up there at God's right hand. Who? A man. Why? Sin is put away. Yes; Jesus, as Son of man, is glorified—as Son of God He was ever the glorified One. God was so glorified by the work of His Son that, so to speak, He became His debtor. How did the Son of man glorify God? By suffering for my sins on the cross. God's judgment was perfectly met, and God perfectly glorified the man Christ Jesus, who endured the wrath. The exaltation of this glorified man is the witness that my sins are fully put away. What does God say about my sins now? Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.

Where was the truth of God displayed that said, In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die, and Satan's he fully proved which said, Thou shalt not die? On the cross Christ died. God is love. The majesty, the holiness, the love of God were magnified on the cross. The question of sin is settled. The Son of man is glorified. God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have all been occupied about my sin. What a footing I have I Done with sin; no more conscience of it; Christ has taken them clean off. He could not bring us into God's presence with ONE sin upon us. No; though they were “as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.” Christ became obedient unto death; and this settles the whole thing, and gives power to the poor sinner. With what holy freedom I can go into God's presence, when I know Christ is there, seated at God's right hand, as my forerunner. I have a perfect righteousness, a perfect love, and a perfect obedience to appear in. What comfort! What joy! You could not go into God's presence with one sin upon you; it would be folly to think of it—madness to attempt it. One sin unpardoned would unfit you for enjoying God. You must be perfectly clean. The blood of Christ does cleanse from all sin, so that the soul in the presence of God can enjoy God—we “joy in God.” The glorified Jesus, seated in heaven, sends down the Comforter to give us power for fellowship with Him. See the place He has taken, one with the redeemed on earth. Never until after the resurrection does He call his disciples “brethren,” nor does He say, “Peace be with you,” before then. He did say, “Fear not.” (But He had not made peace.) “All mine are thine and thine are mine” —all are ours in Christ. We have His righteousness; we wait for the hope. We have the earnest; we wait for the inheritance. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. And when we view the holiness, the power, the love of God, how delightful is the thought, He is my Father? The love wherewith He has loved His own Son, He hath bestowed upon me. No man hath seen God at any time; but we learn what the Father is by the Son. We see in Him the outflowings of the divine fullness; and we must drink at this rock. It is not enough for us to see: we must draw from him; and there will be the conscious outflowing of what He is. What a character that truth should give us! One with Christ in heaven, “Head of his body, the church.” A living union with Him: God for us, Christ in us, the Spirit's seal on us. “If any man thirst.” We must remember we do not drink for others, and others cannot drink for us. I must FEEL my own want and I must bring my own want to Christ myself. There must be a thirsting before there can be a drinking. Have I a want in my heart that Christ cannot meet? No. Is there a spiritual want in the soul that goes to Christ without finding relief? No. “If any man thirst.” Now there must be a need, and that need must be felt, known, and brought to Christ. Then, no matter what it be, it is, “Come unto me and drink.” “If ye knew the gift of God ye would ask of me, and I would give you living water.” Think, beloved friends, of Christ sitting at a well. Which of us would not gladly go to Him with open hearts, and let him read out of them all their need`? He is not

to be put off. He knew her need, and left her not until she felt it, and He met it. If we are to be useful to poor sinners, we must be more like Christ. Why we help them so little is, that we do not come down low enough to them in grace Think of the place Christ ever took towards them, and follow Him, being partakers of the grace, and remembering the word, “if any man thirst.”

In the last chapter of Revelation we have another word. Now, having this water of life in us, we are in a position to say, “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” We have not the Bridegroom, we wait for Him; but we have the Spirit, the living water. We can count on the grace and the love, knowing it will not fail for any who cast themselves on the blood of Jesus.

Romans 5:18-19

“As by one act of offense [it was] unto all men for condemnation, (i.e., it was unto all men to condemnation,) even so by one accomplished righteousness [it was] unto all men for justification of life.” So it runs literally. The meaning may be thus explained. Supposing you had only the one act of Adam by itself, it would have plunged all men into condemnation. On the other hand, the work of Christ in itself would have brought complete deliverance unto all men. But that is only the tendency towards or unto all men, not the actual effect upon them. Here, in this chapter, we have, in verse 18, the tendency; and in verse 19, the effect. “As by one man's disobedience [the] many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall [the] many be made righteous.” “The many” who had to do with the one man that disobeyed were all men, because all were children of Adam; so by the obedience of Christ shall “the many” —His class—be made righteous. the first clause, therefore, “the litany” means all men; in the second, it means all saints. You could understand in the first clause “all men” but not in the second.. The respective families of Adam and of Christ are instanced. “Therefore as by one offense [it was] unto all to condemnation, so also [it is] unto all to justification of life.” It is the aim a thing would reach if unimpeded. If all had submitted to it—Christ's death and rising again—they would have been justified; that was the tendency. But in verse 19, we have the positive result.

By the obedience of one shall [the] many [those who have to do with Him] be made righteous.” headship, first of Adam, then of Christ, is the great truth brought out here. “Justification of life” is the actual condition of a Christian. The life he now possesses is the life of Christ risen. And as there cannot be a question against Christ risen, so there cannot be one against the Christian.

On Romans 8

It is a grand thing for our souls, on the one hand, to be firmly established in the grace of God towards us, to allow no insinuation of the enemy to raise a question touching the efficacy of what Christ has wrought for us—the fullness of the redemption that is in Him, and, on the other hand, to use all the liberty, the comfort, the certainty of God's love towards our souls, as a reason for not sparing in us that which is contrary to Him. Nothing can make up for a soul's slighting what is due to God; nothing can justify a heart in indifference to His glory, in carelessness about sin. Whether it be our own sin, or the sins specially of our brethren, or any sin against God, we ought to feel that offends Him. Even if we hear of it in the world, it should be a sorrow: much more what touches His honor in the Church. But I am sure that we ought to be humbled most of all by what touches His honor in ourselves. Now God has amply provided for this; and the chapter before us is full and explicit upon it. In the very beginning, the exceeding blessedness of the portion of every believer is brought out. It is not only that we have Christ for us, but we are in Christ. What and who is He in whom we are? What does God think of the Blessed One in whom He has set us for Himself! Is there a single fault that God finds with Christ! Is there a conceivable blessedness that He does not find there? Now, this is exactly what we want. Full of faults, without one single thing in us which God's eye could regard with complacency and delight, He who has been pleased to put us in Christ before Himself, has been pleased to give us the knowledge of it. For it is not something done in a corner, or something mysterious and concealed from the knowledge of those to whom this exceeding grace is shown. The God who thought of such mercy has revealed it fully, that we may not have one cloud in our souls, but the positive, absolute, unvarying certainty that we are in Christ before God. We can look back at Adam, and see what we are by nature—not to speak of the bitter fruits all the way through. We can see him sinning and rebelling; we can see him covering his sin and throwing the blame upon his wife, and virtually on God Himself; we can see his pride and untruthfulness—for such is always the effect of sin naturally. Such is the flesh. But we are not in the flesh. By that wondrous work of Christ, by death and resurrection, God has now a blessed way; and He has applied it to our souls, and given us the knowledge of it, that we are no longer regarded as what we are in Adam, or in ourselves; but, as the wife is not viewed according to what she was in her father's house, but married as she is to her husband, so and much more is it with us. She may have been in the humblest position before, but it is her husband's name, and his position, which gave and determine her place now: she has a new relationship, which she has now acquired in virtue of what is in him. So it is with the Christian. Only, in our case, it is not merely a name that we receive. In the earthly instance, the wife might abide as worthless as she was before; but with the Christian it is not a nominal title. In God's ways it is a reality of privilege and relationship which His own power has established, and His own Spirit has made true to the soul. And although there is that which reminds us of what we were—that old, abominable nature, which is not in the slightest degree changed by our having a new standing: yet there is this precious truth—that the more we enter into our place in Christ, and appreciate Him to whom we belong, the less power our nature has to show itself. Where we question the blessing, where we doubt the grace, and hesitate about the reality of our relationship to Christ, all is weak and dim and

uncertain. There may be godliness; but it will always be godliness under the law—the effort after something in ourselves instead of the living upon what God has given us in Christ, And although there may be a measure of separation from sin, yet there will be the danger of thinking something of ourselves because of it—the comparing ourselves with what we were, and thinking how much better we are; or comparing ourselves with other people, and thinking that we are not quite so bad. All this results from one fatal error—the constant tendency of man's heart to think of himself and of what he may be to God, instead of thinking of him who is the fullness of grace, hiding himself, and the Holy Ghost giving him a power beyond himself. It is remarkable that, in this very same chapter, where we have, first of all, the fullness of the deliverance, we have, next, a plain statement of the irreconcilable evil of the carnal mind, and solemn exhortation to the Christian, who has the Spirit dwelling in him, but withal, the flesh to judge and the deeds of the body to mortify. Still there is a perfect deliverance—a deliverance that will not be one whit better when we are taken out of this world and brought into heaven; for, I maintain that we are not a bit more forgiven in heaven, or more secure in heaver), or more precious to God in heaven, than we are made on earth: for what gives us our preciousness and stamps our character before God, is something that God has given us in His Son while we are on the earth. Hence it is that departing front this life is merely a circumstance; the essence of the blessing is in Christ, and we are in Christ, and there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

Nor is this a mere general standing for certain persons; but the apostle goes on to say, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” He appropriates it to himself: he makes it a personal thing, not a mere vague matter, in which the positive joy of it is all lost to the individual soul. The same word of God that shows the common standing of the saints in Christ immediately makes it also a personal thing. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made ate free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending This own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” it is entirely a question of God working for His own glory. Man wrought to the shame of God and his own sorrow. God now has taken the work in hand, has done it perfectly, and He communicates this to us. He wants us to enjoy it, and to be settled in the happiness of it. We are brought there in Christ. Why should we not believe it and keep it always before our souls? Why should we not treat any doubt of it as coming from the devil? For we must remember that the enemies' spite is not so much against us as against Jesus. And if we belong to God, and have got the blessing of his blessing and glory that he has lost forever and ever, therefore it is that he hates us. Leaving his own first estate, he had rebelled against God, and all hope was lost for him—because there is no call for a fallen angel. Yet for us who had chosen him for our friend instead of God, the grace of God has come down to such poor, sunken, low ones, and has most richly blessed us. Therefore the hatred of the enemy is turned against us. Well, immediately after the holy Ghost has shown us the full deliverance in Christ, now, He says, as it were, I must let you know a little about yourselves. The fact of our being in Christ does not hinder that we have got the flesh in us; and the flesh is a hostile thing to God. It never seeks God's will. But the difference between the unconverted man and converted is, that the former has got nothing but flesh; while the converted man, besides the flesh, has got a new nature, which he did not possess before—a new life, which. he derives, not from the first father of all men, but from the lust Adam. This is what the apostle goes on to show. You have got this evil nature still about you, though you are not regarded as in it, but as completely delivered from it. You are no longer called

by your old name, but by your new name, because it is Christ that has taken you to himself; and the Holy Ghost is the seal of it. “To be carnally minded is death.” I do not take this as referring merely to the unconverted man. It is true of the converted also. Does he allow the fleshly mind in himself? So far there is the working of death.

In the latter part of Rom. 8 it is a godly soul, under law, struggling with the flesh, but without any sense of deliverance, and therefore completely miserable. Here it begins with deliverance as a settled thing: but yet in the one thus delivered there may be the yielding to the evil thing. And what is the effect? Loss of joy—loss of the happy spring of confidence in God. It is serious where allowed, which is different from being overtaken in a fault through unwatchfulness, and which the soul goes to God about and renounces; there is nothing in that to keep the soul under the power of evil. It is a sorrowful matter, of Course; but for all that, God gives perfect deliverance from it, I mean, in a practical way. But, on the other hand, if a little evil is allowed, perhaps the very smallest thing, what may not be the issue? For, as we find in Matt. 18 where a brother begins only with a personal trespass against another, his conduct about that little wrong may at last become so bad that he is no longer to be treated as a brother at all, but as an heathen man and a publican. The thing began with only a little spark, but it became a great fire; and not an atom of Christ appears in the man whom we once entreated as a brother. Yet even then it is not said that he is an heathen man and a publican, but, “let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.” He does not show one single spark of divine life, there is no answer to Christ in his soul; and when it comes to that, “let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” This is very solemn; but the same thing is true in daily experience. If there is something I cling to, and that I allow myself in day by day—perhaps it is a little sin—perhaps no eye sees me—but what will be the issue of it? I get doubtful, clouded; then I begin to get hard; I no longer grieve at the loss of joy in my soul; and perhaps I end by becoming bitter against the very saints I used to love, and despise the truth which I would have died for before. This may go on for a good while, until perhaps some dreadful sin is allowed for the purpose of arousing the careless soul. And I am assured that there is never a case of open outbreak of evil, but what there has been for long a great deal of careless walking in secret without God previously.

The apostle here shows the working of the flesh. It might have been supposed that because there was the complete deliverance, there could not be this working of the flesh. But here there is a man who begins with deliverance, with the certainty that there is no condemnation, and still there is that wretched flesh; and all that can be done with it is to mortify it. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

There it is evidently taking in the twofold thing. If a person has nothing but the flesh, he is unconverted; but if, as a believer, he allows the flesh, so far death works. If he sows to the flesh, he must of the flesh reap corruption. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” There it is not speaking, about Christ, but of the power in which the Holy Ghost works in a man who is a Christian. If the power of that life is not manifested, the person is miserable, and makes others miserable. On the other hand, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” It is not only as many as live in the spirit, but as are led of the Spirit of God. No doubt it is the case with all the saints of God that they are led by the Spirit of God in the main, but not perhaps in the detail. Yet it is not the spirit of fear that we have got. God does not wish to alarm us

in the least degree, but only this—hold fast your liberty as firm as a rock, but never allow that which is contrary to God. Never allow the little beginnings of evil. If you do, you will find, so to speak, that there is death in the pot. There will be that form from which no power can deliver you except the renouncing of self practically, because you have got Christ. God has wrought this mighty deliverance for you; and, prayerfully and self-denyingly looking up to Him, we shall have His power against self in our souls. But what follows this? We have the Holy Ghost as One that comforts us, that intercedes for us, that sympathizes with our groans in all our sorrows, that helps our infirmities. Theft come the last verses. After everything, and taking in all the trial, yet the blessed truth comes out—God is for us. But whatever the joy of this wonderful truth, let us remember that the object of God in giving it to us is always for the exercise of self-judgment, and with a solemn warning before our souls that it may be a very little evil that is allowed, but that very little becomes the parent of a great deal of sorrow and of shame.

Chapter 169

Scripture Query and Answer: Saints Caught Away

Q. 1. Whether will the saints be caught away ere vengeance bursts upon the professors. If so, how is Matt. 13:41, 43, 49 to he explained and is it not a matter for joy when they are called upon to suffer unto death for it is name

2. Whether will the saints be suffered, except those fallen asleep, to go all through the tribulation and then delivered and blessed, after the tares have been taken in hand. At the revelation of Christ. If so, how are Rev. 19:14 and Col. 3:4 to be explained?

3. Whether will some of the saints be taken before the others, one class being abundantly, the other scarcely, saved? one receiving a reward, the other saved so as by fire; one consisting of those who will open to Him immediately, and the other of those whom that day will more or less take by surprise See, too, Rev. 3:10. If so, how are 1 Cor. 15:51, Matt. 24:22, and generally those passages which declare that Christ will come with all Luis saints—how are such to be explained—?

LAUDI DEI

A. 1. That the saints are caught away before vengeance bursts upon professors is quite certain, because it is when Christ appears that He executes, vengeance. (2 Thess. 1:8-10 and a multitude of passages.) Now when Christ appears, we appear with Him. (Col. 3:4.) Matt. 13:41, 43 only proves that, when the wicked are judged, the righteous shine forth; but they had been previously gathered into the garner, in order to do so. In verse 49 the judgment severs the wicked from among the just. This is not the rapture. Judgment leaves the just where they were; one is taken and the other left, as in Malt. xxiv. In this last case the sphere is narrower, but the principle is the same. It is well to remark that the explanation does not refer to the same event as the parable explained, but gives further particulars. This is a general rule of interpretation. The public visible judgment of God explains what has to be understood when it is not visible. Privilege is a matter of faith.

As regards suffering and death for His name, it is a privilege compared with those left on earth; but it is only in this case for righteousness and the prophetic knowledge of the name of Jesus, for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. They did not confess and know Him as Son of God, as the members of the Church did. When forced by growing wickedness, through grace, they would not deny divine hopes, and they will have their reward. They would have done better to have owned Him in peace, when not so forced; but God is wise and perfect in all things.

The tares are declared to be taken in hand before the wheat is gathered into the garner; but, as we have seen, when the tares are burnt, the wheat is already in the garner, and then shines forth. As regards the unparalleled tribulation in Matt. 24., and in the passages from which that is taken, it is exclusively Jewish. There is no passage to prove there is such a tribulation but those which prove it is Jewish. As to the inure general tribulation mentioned in Rev. 3 it is only mentioned to declare that the saints shall be kept from that hour. Then, again, a countless multitude come out of the

great tribulation in. Rev. 7. Rev. 9:14 and Col. 3:4, of course, agree with and confirm all other scriptures on the subject. These only go, however, to prove distinctly that the saints are with Christ before he appears; but not how long they hare been so.

“Some of the saints” is vague. It speaks as if they were one common category. The day will not take any by surprise that go to heaven. They will be gone before the day which comes at Christ's appearing. Rut there is a difference. The saints who have fallen asleep and those belonging to the Church alive will be caught up to meet Christ in the air when He descends then from His Father's throne. But neither 1 Peter 4:17, 18 nor 1 Cor. 3. applies to this. One applies to laborers even in the Apostle's days; the other to the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly. Those who are not manifested as members of Christ when He receives the Church to Himself will either remain on earth as God's people during the millennium, or if killed, us we have seen, have part in the kingdom on high. 1 Cor. 15:51 applies, as is there seen, to the manifested members of the Church of God. Matt. 24:22 has nothing to do with the matter. it is the sparing the Jewish saints or remnant, saving flesh, in the tune of their peculiar trouble. When Christ appears, all the saints, conformed to His risen image, will appear with Him in glory. He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe, in that day. He will also come attended with all His holy angels. It is evident that He can mine with only those who are with Him. The people spared on earth, when He comes and judges, do not come with Him.

Chapter 170

Fragment: Scripture Is the Expression of God's Mind

The scriptures are the permanent expression of God's mind and will, furnished as such with His authority. They are His expression of His own thoughts. Not only is the truth given in them by inspiration, but they are inspired, and are the standard by which every spoken word is to be judged. Does this perfect and supreme authority of the scriptures set aside ministry? By no means: it is the foundation of ministry. One is a minister of the word.

Chapter 171

Scripture Queries and Answers: Baptism

Q. I. Is the instruction in Matt. 28:19, to baptize “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” the formula of baptism for the Church?

Is not the instruction to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38) and the command to be “baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48) supplementary?

Is being baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” and being baptized “in the name of the Lord” one and the same thing? If not, what is the difference, and which are we to observe?

If Matt. 28:19, is the formula for the Church, how is it we have no mention of the use of this formula in the Acts, but have repeated mention of believers being “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?” (Acts 8:16; 19:5.)

Does not Rom. 6:3, and Gal. 3:27 imply that those believers had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

A. Baptism has nothing to do with the Church, properly speaking; that is, viewed as the body of Christ. It is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body. Baptism does not, in figure, carry faith further than resurrection. For the body we must have ascension of the head and the consequent sending down of the Holy Ghost to form it. Of that the Lord's Supper is the sacramental sign. Baptism is therefore individual, and is as a figure the bringing out the individual from the flesh and his old life in Adam by death into a new individual position in life (but on the earth) in resurrection. Two great truths seem to me to accompany this: the revelation of the persons of the God-head, for the Father sent the Son, and the Son and the Father too have sent down the Spirit who reveals them. The revelation is a revelation of God. If thus born of God, even this truth enters into all my relationship. God is my Father; in Christ risen I have the form and power of sonship, and it is in the Holy Ghost the spirit of adoption is. It is, however, mainly the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost which is in question. The other great truth brought out in Christianity is, that Jesus Christ (that glorious man) is Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ. This, while closely connected with the glory of His person in the name Jesus, is the anointed man, the Christ.

This revelation of the Godhead and of the Lordship of Christ forms the basis and substance of Christianity itself as a profession, along with the subjective truth that flesh—fully proved already—can have nothing to say to it. I must enter by death into this new sphere, into relationship with God, and, as risen, become the servant of Christ as Lord. Hence, in Eph. 6, we have one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The first is the full heavenly and essential thing in connection with Christ; the second, the profession upon earth in connection with the Lordship of Christ. Hence, also Paul, who saw Christ only in heavenly glory, and to whom the ministry and revelation of the Church was committed, was not sent to baptize; and in Matthew, where the commission referred to was given, we have not the ascension at all. Here Jerusalem is gone, and Christ associated with the remnant in Galilee already around Him,

and they were to disciple the nations. This does not connect itself directly with the millenium, but with the ministration of the Gospel of the kingdom, which precedes it, and does go out into all nations before the end comes—the end of the age. The millenium is brought in by the coming back of the Lord in glory from heaven. This precedes it. Hence in Matthew He says, and “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age;” that is, the age which precedes the coming of Messiah in glory to set up the kingdom publicly. Hence, I do not see why this mission should not go on when the Church is gone up. It does not directly contemplate the Church, but so neither does baptism over. It does profess Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the Lordship of Christ, when He is not yet revealed from heaven.

Baptism, therefore, is the public testimony of reception by death and resurrection. That is, now Christ is rejected, we have the public witness that flesh has no place with God, that life is in the Son and given of God—that it is on the ground consequently of the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father who has given this life in sending Jesus, in whom it is, and the Spirit's witness of it because He is truth—all this is on earth, as the Apostle John's witness always is. And that, walking in this world, we own and are subject to Jesus as the Lord.

The formula I only so far attach importance to as being the expression of the truth. If one were bona fide baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the present lordship of Christ, I should consider them baptized, though the words were not used. Though in saying that, I think the maintenance and holding fast a form of sound words has its place and importance. And I need not say we have none better than those of Scripture, of the Lord Himself and His apostles. I only mean, if they were not used, but the person bona fide baptized in the acknowledgment of the thing, it would be real baptism. For my own part, I always use both. And I believe every one rightly baptized is baptized to the Lord Jesus, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is given up to Christ, once dead, but now risen, and Lord, through death and resurrection—to Him as Lord, but according to the revelation contained in those words, “Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” We do it when He is not manifested as such before the world. We do it through the knowledge of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that is, God so revealed. They are not baptized to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We join the risen Christ as Lord by baptism. We are baptized to Him, but it is in the confession of this wonderful and complete revelation of God in grace, and in truth, too, through Him, but by the Holy Ghost, who is truth. Of course this involves the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ; and thus we are baptized in His name. It is the thing we are to look to, not the mere formula.

Chapter 172

Scripture Queries and Answers: the Pouring Out of the Spirit

Q. The Spirit is said to have been poured out on Cornelius and his house, i.e., the Gentiles, as well as on the believing Jews at Pentecost—why not now also?

A. Though the word be not used, we go farther and affirm the fact practically as to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. (Acts 2; 8, and 10.) The sense amounts to one common fact. Still, this is a confirmation of the truth, that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost is an original and primary gift to the saints; while each receives the Holy Ghost when he has believed, as regards his own particular portion in it. (Acts 19:2.) The three preceding passages show that, on each distinct part, out of which the Church had to be formed, God put the seal of His Spirit, giving it a divine and independent title to relationship with Himself and to the common unity. But this once formed, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in the one assembly, there was no such formative and sealing power to be looked for, because the Holy Ghost was there, and was to abide there forever. It is an effort at recommencing what has already a responsible position before God, in virtue of having the Holy Ghost; and to look for His coming on the Church is to deny that He is there, and that we are responsible in this way. God may pardon and reply to ignorant expressions; but, deliberately used, it is incredulity. Acts 19. shows that the individuals partaking of it is a distinct and very important point. To doubt that the Church of God has the Holy Ghost is unbelief as to this point. To doubt whether Samaritans or Gentiles could receive it so as to have a share in the new privileges, was an unfounded doubt and one well worthy of God to resolve in grace, yet in the way of a common unity of the assemblage on earth. The desire that the Spirit of God may act mightily, is good—that He should be poured out again, may be pardoned, and blessing given, but it is a phrase of unbelief.

Chapter 173

Scripture Queries and Answers: Those Come Out of the Tribulation, Before the Throne

Q. Rev. 7. What is the meaning of this tribulation? If it be not the Church, properly so called, which comes out of it, of what other saved Gentiles does the Spirit speak? Is it of those converted during the millenium? Whence come the rebel Gentiles at the close? (Rev. 20.) D.

A. The great tribulation of Matt. 24. (and Mark 13) clearly identifies itself with Jer. 30. and Dan. 12., and is limited to the case of Jacob. This has a larger sphere, and is not even confined to the Roman earth. There are Gentiles spared, spite of association with idolatrous Jews, whom the Lord will judge at His coming. (Isa. 66.) That the saved here are not the Church is clear, from many considerations.

They are contrasted, in their whole condition, with the crowned elders. “Before the throne” is not necessarily to be taken physically, but morally. (Comp. chap. 14:3.) The singing of the 144,000 there applies to those on earth. The English Version goes too far in making God dwell among them: the true meaning is, that He will be a tabernacle over them, as the cloud of old overshadowed Israel. The sun not smiting them would tend to show they are on the earth. Nor does the temple set them in heaven: at least, there is no temple in the New Jerusalem. They are saved by Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb; which connects them with the time of introductory government, though not of the millennium. They give no motive for their praise, as the elders did in Rev. 4. and 5.—a mark of the intelligence of the saints who are properly heavenly. Their blessings are relief from sufferings, or being led by the Shepherd's care to refreshment. In a word, their relationship with God as before the throne takes them out of association with it, according to the true character of the strictly heavenly saints. Even the angels are round about the throne: not so these. But they are certainly separated pre-millennially. They are in relationship with God, on the ground of the place He takes as introducing the First-begotten into the world. Hence they pass through the time of temptation which shall come upon all the world, instead of being kept from it, or called afterward. I do not see that the object is to state heaven or earth, but to reveal the character of relationship. As the elect perfect number of Israel would be sealed, so there would be a countless multitude of Gentiles spared in the time the throne of God held its place above, after removing the glorified saints, and before the First-begotten is brought again into the world. But this is a totally different subject from the nations at the end of the thousand years. These latter multitudes come into existence during the millennium, and have not eternal life. They render a feigned obedience to the King of nations; but there is no godly fear. So that they only want the temptable reduction of Satan to be led captive at his will. There is therefore no real difficulty.

Chapter 174

A Letter on Separation

I WRITE rather because of the importance of the point than for any immediate occasion of circumstances; I mean leaving an assembly, or setting up, as it is called, another table. I am not so afraid of it as some other brethren, but I must explain my reasons. If such or such a meeting were the Church here, leaving it would be severing oneself from the assembly of God. But though wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name He is in the midst, and the blessing and responsibility of the Church is, in a certain sense, if any Christians now set up to be the Church, or did any formal act which pretended to it, I should leave them, as being a false pretension, and denying the very testimony to the state of ruin which God has called us to render. It would have ceased to be the table of the people and testimony of God, at least intelligently. It might be evil pretension or ignorance; it might call for patience, if it was in ignorance, or for remedy, if that was possible; but such a pretension I believe false, and I could not abide in what is false. I think it of the last importance that this pretension of any body should be kept down; I could not own it a moment, because it is not the truth.

But, then, on the other hand, united, testimony to the truth is the greatest possible blessing from on high. And I think that if anyone, through the flesh, separated from two or three walking godlily before God in the unity of the whole body of Christ, it would not merely be an act of schism, but he would necessarily deprive himself of the blessing of God's presence. It resolves itself, like all else, into a question of flesh and Spirit. If the Spirit of God is in and sanctions the body, he who leaves in the flesh deprives himself of the blessing, and sins. If, on the contrary, the Spirit of God does not sanction the body, he who leaves it will get into the power and liberty of the Spirit by following him. That is the real way to look at it. There may be evil, and yet the Spirit of God sanction the body, not, of course, its then state,) or at least act with the body in putting it away. But if the Spirit of God, by any faithful person, moves in this, and the evil is not put away, but persisted in; is the Spirit of God with those who continue in the evil, or with him who will not? Or is the doctrine of the unity of the body to be made a cover for evil? That is precisely the delusion of Satan in Popery, and the worst form of evil under the sun. If the matter, instead of being brought to the conscience of the body, is maintained by the authority of a few, and the body of believers despised, it is the additional concomitant evil of the clergy, which is the element also of Popery. Now, I believe myself, the elements of this have been distinctly brought out at; and I cannot stay in evil to preserve unity. I do not want unity in evil, but separation from it. God's unity is always founded on separation, since sin came into the world. “Get thee out” is the first word of God's call: it is to Himself. If one gets out alone, it may require more faith, but that is all; one will be with Him, and that, dear brother, is what I care most about, though overjoyed to be with my brethren on that ground. I do not say that some more spiritual person might not have done more or better than I; God must judge of that. I am sure I am a poor creature; but at all cost I must walk with God for myself Suppose clericalism so strong that the conscience of the body does not act at all, even when appealed to, is a simple saint who has perhaps no influence to set anything right, because of this very evil, therefore to stay with it`? What resource has he? I suppose another case. Evil goes

on, fleshly pretension, a low state of things on all sides. Some get hold of a particular evil which galls their flesh, and they leave. Do you think that the plea of unity will heal? Never. All are in the wrong. Now this often happens. Now the Lord in these cases is always over all. He chastens what was not of Him by such a separation, and shows the flesh in detail even where, in the main, His name was sought. If the seceders act in the flesh, they will not find blessing. God governs in these things, and will own righteousness where it is, if only in certain points. They would not prosper if it were so; but they might remain a shame and sorrow to those they left. If it be merely pride of flesh, it will soon come to nothing. “There must needs be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest.” If occasion has been given in any way, the Lord, because He loves, will not let go till the evil be purged out. If I do not act with him, He will (and I should thank Him for it) put me down in the matter too. He loves the Church, and has all power in heaven and earth, and never lets slip the reins.

I have not broken bread, nor should do it, till the last extremity: and if I did, it would be in the fullest, openest testimony, that I did not own the others then to be the table of the Lord at all. I should think worse of them than of sectarian bodies, because having more pretension to light. “Now ye say ye see.” But I should not (God forbid!) cease to pray continually, and so much the more earnestly, for them, that they might prosper through the fullness of the grace that is in Christ for them.

Scripture Query and Answer: My Servant

Q. Isa. 42:19. Who is meant by “my servant” here? E.

A. Israel, I believe. The beginning of the chapter refers beyond a doubt, to our Lord—the latter part to the people. The misapplication of verse 19 to Christ arose out of two things—the assumption that “my servant” must have referred to the same in both passages, and the notion that [Greek word] means one who is morally perfect. As to the first, the context need leave no doubt that Israel are referred to, in contrast with the heathen idolaters, Israel called out to be the witness of the true God. To this position of favor and responsibility, as God's friend in the world, (though, alas! unfaithful in it, “deaf” and “blind,") the word meshullam applies, not to the absence of sin. The change from Messiah to Israel in chap. xlii. is not nearly so abrupt as the substitution of Messiah for Israel is in chap. xlix. 3, 4.

Chapter 176

Thoughts on Service: Philippians 2

One great object of the Holy Ghost in this epistle is, to make known Christ to us as the servant, and this He does, that He may produce in us true-hearted service. God has his own way of doing this, as He has of doing everything: it must be suited to Himself, and it can only be through His Son. There is not a thought of God's love but what we get in the face of Jesus. He wants to endear His Son to us, and so He associates us with Him in service down here, as He has associated us with Him in the glory above. In this epistle, the Holy Ghost is looking at the path of Christ in service. God does not merely call some special ones servants; there is no such thought with God as confining service to those that receive some splendid gift, or are filling some particular office. There is something much deeper meant by being a servant than the office of bishop, deacon, or the like. It is not the law, nor the appointing to office, that can make servants; but fellowship with Him who calls to service: this puts us in the path and gives us power. It is the Spirit uniting to the Lord Christ that gives us the place and the power.

In this epistle we find a full picture of true Christian experience; there is not another scripture where we get it so prominently brought out. In Rom. 7 it is the experience of a Christian, but not true Christian experience. We find there a soul anxious about its state, but not one thought about Jesus—much about self and the law, but not the Spirit. Christian experience is appropriating Jesus, and in this epistle I see Him come down in the full energy of service, and this is needed. I want more of Christ—more power for service, and I can only get it by looking at Jesus. I want to be carrying Him continually to God, who is in full favor with Him. He is my righteousness and my glory, my alone power. He is God's triumph over sin for me—His resurrection is the triumph out of death and out of all my sins. The 7th of Romans is the experience of a soul not come to the end of itself, but feeling the burden of sin; but what is rightly called Christian experience is that I should realize in my soul what God has given me in His grace. If God has not given me enough in Him to put me in His presence, then He cannot do more. He has not another Son to give. God cannot disparage the work of His Son. The Holy Ghost came down here to witness to me of Jesus, and to show me what is the new covenant of God's grace; and this should remove every cloud. The Lord Jesus has been to the cross: that is the blessed beginning, the ground of my hope. He has been raised up out of the grave, that is my rest, and the character, if not end, of my hope. What a difference it makes to a Christian when passing through trial in service, if he has Jesus for his object —when, in the midst of his difficulties, he sees Him as his standing and his strength, the ground from which he acts! If I am put in a place of service by God, it is to Him I have to look, and on Him I have to trust, and not on man at all. If I am God's servant, it. is not for the glory of the flesh; the flesh I must judge: if I do not, I shall be sure to get humbled by it, for it will lead me to disgrace Christ.

We do not get here a soul anxious about its state, as in Rom. 7, although, as we have seen, that may be the experience of a believer—of most Christians, doubtless, at one time or another; but not true Christian experience. Now, what we have most prominently brought out in this epistle is the experience of the Christian servant, and what it is that qualifies and gives the heart of every true

Christian courage for service. It is not Christian affection, love, or humility, though these must be; but it is not that which encourages: what keeps us, as well as what sets us in the path, is, what we have, and what we are, in Christ. We must have bowels of mercy, kindness, and compassion; but that does not give us power. That which strengthens is, what we see in Jesus and get from looking at Him. “If there be therefore,” (Verse 1.) &c. God reveals to me His Son, and that draws me out to serve Him. In this chapter we get a full-length portrait of Jesus, as the servant. He was the Son, and He took the place of the servant; and we must be made sons before we can be servants. We must have the place and affections of sons in order to render true-hearted service. The spirit of a Christian servant is not doing merely what is commanded, but the doing whatsoever delights God: the desire of the servant should be to please the Master. “Fulfill ye my joy, (ver. 20.) The Holy Ghost is here showing us Jesus as the true servant, and Paul His faithful follower. He was the chief of sinners, and followed His Lord more closely in service than any other. He had received much and he loved much. We have seen Jesus as the servant come down from the glory to man. His was no condescending grace. He came down to glorify His Father and to serve sinners. Not to gloss over evil, but to do the will of God in the service. The Holy Ghost is here exhibiting Jesus as the servant, that those who are dear to Him may follow in the activities of love and service. It is not so much what is required from them, as what is good for them in fellowship with Him.

But the time of active service is often the time of greatest danger. At such seasons, Satan is specially vigilant; and Christians should be very watchful lest they bring a reproach on the name they wish to honor. “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory,” &c., (ver. 3.) There can be no question as to there being different places as to service; it would be folly to say or suppose there is not: but there is a sense in which we should be esteeming others better than ourselves. We should be seeing them as they are in Christ. It is what they are in Him that is the spring of all true Christian glory, and the alone ground on which we render true honor to saints. It is apprehending them as they are apprehended in Christ Jesus. It is valuing them in measure as valued by Him. “Who, being in the form of God,” &c., (ver. 6, 7.) It is from coming to God as sons that we become servants—not servants and then sons. He who was equal with God “took upon him the form of a servant.” The Holy Ghost shows us this in order to cut off the thought that Jesus worked Himself up to be a Son by being a servant. He was the Son, and He took the place of the servant; He had the high one, and He took the low one. He was the Son—that was His own by right; or surely He who was so very jealous over the very least of God's glory, would not have associated Himself with Him in the highest, if it had been to rob God. There was nothing the Lord Jesus was more sensitive to than what belonged to God; as indeed it is the prime element of all true righteousness that, first of all, God should have His rights.

We must be sons before we can be servants; and the only thing that can enable us to discharge any service acceptably is the power we get in looking at Jesus—in knowing what we are and what we have in Him. All other energies lift up after a fitful sort, but they do not fit us for service.

There is one thing God would always have us remember, that is, what we are in His grace. The world and the flesh would make us forget we are in Christ. The devil ever aims to keep us off the consciousness of our ground of standing. If I am thinking of my home as God's word speaks of it, and of Jesus as the Holy Ghost makes Him known, I am attracted by His love and sheltered by His power. I am raised above the world's vanity by the glory I see in Him, and kept out of temptation by the beauty of the place He has brought me to. Is it that I am brought down so low that none of

these things affect me? Am I so fallen that the thought of this glory cannot lift me up? I do not take a place of service to get dignity. I cannot be higher than God has made me in Christ— “bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh” —bound up with Him in life and glory—made to sit together in Him in heavenly places. This is my positive position; and it is not humility to take a lower place than God has given me—and no higher could He bestow. I belong to the risen Jesus, and with Him and in Him I share all given glory. I have a place at God's right hand, and I am down here to do His will—to be His servant. And nothing fits me for serving, or gives me power to walk in obedience, like the apprehending my association with a glorified Christ. Nothing gives me power to abstain from evil as the realizing my union with Him once dead, but now exalted in heaven. “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him,” &c., (ver. 9-11.) I do not the least doubt the cross is the foundation of every blessing; but it is the risen Christ I belong to—the One who has died and is now in glory, having established a righteousness for me. God's righteousness was declared for man when He raised up the Man, Christ Jesus, from the grave. Paul, in the third chapter, says he would not have the righteousness which was of the law, now that he had the righteousness which far surpassed. it in Christ. He did not desire the righteousness of man, now be had, through faith, the righteousness of God. Our highest blessing, as well as our perfect righteousness, flows from belonging to the risen Jesus, and the knowledge of this is Christian experience. And this is fully brought out in the Philippians. It shows us what was so largely true in Jesus, and what God would have to be true in all His people.

Now, what is the effect of seeing Jesus? “We are changed as by the same image from glory to glory.” “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have obeyed in my presence,” &c. The true victory God has gained for us. He has provided the great things, and will He not care for the little ones? He has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus by His Spirit, and will He not keep us by His power? Power does not depend upon prophets or apostles. When they were here, they were made by Him channels to convey blessing; but now they are gone, God can, and will work otherwise. Strength never depended on man. Paul and Peter, and others, were the vessels through which the heavenly grace reached the people; but they were not the source of it. Servants God had before the apostles appeared, and He has them now they have disappeared. He will, at all times, provide for His own people. In the millennium, it will be blessing come down from heaven to the earth; Christ over the people, and Satan not there. But what keeps me now, is the power of God in grace who has united me to a living Christ above by His Spirit; and my strength depends upon Him, and not upon man at all. It is by looking at Jesus, and not Paul, I am strengthened. Man is very often the thing that charms, but he cannot give strength. Paul says, “as ye have obeyed not only in my presence, but much more in my absence.” They were feeding on Jesus, and that gave them power to obey, and it delighted Paul; he did not want to set himself up, he wanted Jesus to be glorified in them; and the more sensibly the Holy Ghost keeps us in the love of Christ, the stronger shall we become. That is the energy to lift us up; all other power is unavailing. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” and do not give a false expression of the grave conflict you have entered on. You, not Paul only, must fight. That is your business, “for it is God that worketh you to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

As a Christian is occupied with Christ before God, the more will he walk according to the pattern of the true servant, and the more perfectly will he exhibit the character of the heavenly man. (Ver. 16, 17.) What a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Paul was! It is beautiful to see the sympathy of his

heart and the forgetfulness of himself: he lost sight altogether of his apostleship, if I may so say, in the delight he had in getting upon common ground with the Lord's people. To the Corinthians and Galatians he could say, an apostle of Jesus Christ; but to the Philippians he says, “the servant.” He was so filled with what he had in common with them, in a risen Jesus, that he did not want a place of honor down here; and it was this joy that he wished to see in the Philippians: “I joy and rejoice with you all: for the same cause also do ye joy,” &c. It delighted Paul to get the people with himself, in a place above the world's temptations, and their only safety was to be kept in nearness to Jesus. The rejoicing in Him dulls every other joy.

Ver. 19-24. There is something very lovely to see how regardless of self Paul was. He could give up Timothy, who was to him as a son of his own heart; he was above himself, and so he could let go the one who was most clear to him, if he could but get good news of those he was so anxious to serve; and he was ready to go and help them himself when the Lord made the way. “Yet I supposed it necessary,” &c. (Ver. 25-30.) Of Epaphroditus we do not hear save in this epistle; but Paul was rejoiced to put himself upon a common level with him. “My brother, companion in labor, and fellow-soldier; but your messenger, and him that ministers to my wants.” How pleasant it was to Paul to have fellowship with those who were true-hearted to Christ, and how ready always to acknowledge any service done unto Him, as done unto himself! What I see in this is—we ought to cultivate a spirit of fellowship with all those who are in heart servants of Christ, and to rise above the little marks that distinguish them in either station or gift. If I am seeing them as they are in Christ, I am looking at them in the living power, of the true servant. If my eye is fixed on Jesus, I shall learn not only what He came down from, but what He is gone up to, and it is for me. God grant that our ways down here may yield some little fragrance of Him!

It is now no question of acquiring dignity. I cannot rise higher than I am; and, in a way, I cannot think too highly of what I am. I belong to the risen Jesus at God's right hand. I am united to the glorified One in heaven, a member of His body: this settles every question of honor; and the more I am occupied with my place and portion in Christ, the more I shall be guarded against seeking honor for self; the more I am entering into the glory given me in my risen Lord, the more I shall be lifted above self-exaltation. The Lord grant our hearts may be kept above self-seeking, resting in Jesus, and may our ways be to His glory. God will keep a register of all our works, but not of our sins: blessed be His name, He has promised not to remember them. He will keep no record to the shame or hurt of His people.

Chapter 177

Strength Made Perfect in Weakness

2 Cor. 12:8, 9.

It is a natural thought, the first thought perhaps even for a godly soul, to desire an answer of the Lord in the removal of that which is trying and painful. We know the Lord's great compassion—that He cares for His own—that He feels for them and with them; and we are prone to gather from this that He must appear speedily for us when any blow, humiliation, or sorrow comes upon us, specially that which would seem to make the Lord's glory to be questioned and thwarted in various ways. And this was most plainly so in the case before us. The enemy was taking advantage of this thorn in the apostle's flesh to lower the apostle and his work. We are disposed to expect an immediate answer from the Lord in the way of the removal of the trial. It was so with the apostle himself. He cried to the Lord about it; he besought Him thrice that it might depart from him. But he mistook the Lord. It was not so that He heard. The Lord did hear him. But the apostle had this great truth to learn:—the Lord's way of answering is much better than our way of beseeching. Even were it the Apostle Paula man with such an amazing knowledge of what was most suitable to God and most to be desired by His children—even he had to learn that he was not the Lord—an apostle had to learn that the Lord's ways are above our ways. I believe that this desire of an answer from the Lord coming at once in the way of meeting us in our difficulty and sorrow, is rather one that was taught, and that God acted upon in His ways of old, in dealing with His ancient people Israel. When they were in any difficulty or trial, they cried to the Lord, and He heard and delivered them out of their troubles. But it was not so necessarily now. It is not always in removing the distress that God acts. This is not the characteristic way now with Christians. I do not say that He does it not in many a case; for he pities the weakness of His children, and does not lay the same burden upon all.

But there is something more blessed than the mere setting aside of the trial, and that is the power of divine grace which enters into it, and lifts us above it, the distress, it may be, continuing, the sorrow going on, the thorn not removed, but ourselves raised entirely above it. And I believe that this heavenly way of meeting sorrow and trouble, is specially the one in which God triumphs in His dealings with the church. Because it is not power coming into the tribulation, and preserving saints through it, that is the characteristic of the church, any more than it will be a mighty deliverance at the end of the tribulation, and the execution of judgment on surrounding enemies. That is not the manner of the Christian's deliverance. And as it does not answer to the way in which the church will be dealt with at the end, so it is not the principle of the Lord's dealings with us all through. It is a higher thing, the lifting us in spirit above, even while the sorrow may be still adhering to us. Perhaps there is sharp trial, difficulty, and that which is heartbreaking, even in the church of God itself. The apostle must know this in a way that seemed to frustrate all his desires for the blessing of the church. For the thorn given him was something that made him to be scorned in the eyes of others, and that was an immense trial to himself and to every one that loved him, appearing to be a hindrance, even to the work of the Lord through him. What a thing it looked that the Lord should have sent upon him something that he even had not before, that which made him an object of

contempt to others; for that is what the thorn in the flesh was. So that, in some unexplained way, carnal persons, who looked to the outward appearance, were in danger of losing their respect for him. It was not that the thorn was a sin, or something evil he did—it was nothing that people commonly call an infirmity, which, as thus applied, is really a sin; but it was something that was entirely beyond the apostle's control, and that made him an object of contempt to others. We can readily conceive more than one thing that would have such an effect; but we are not told what it was, and we ought not to go beyond the word of the Lord. We do know that both the Galatians and Corinthians were affected by it, and even reasoned from it that he was not called to be an apostle. Paul himself was exceedingly tried by it, and brings out this to the Corinthians themselves, He shows them that it had been an immense exercise to his own mind, the more so as he had had special revelations from the Lord; and that, along with this great honor which had been put upon him by God, but which was unseen by men, there was the thorn given to him in the flesh, producing what men could see and feel, and naturally tending to destroy his influence. But the apostle had a deeper lesson to learn than be had ever entered into before, God giving such a sight of Christ, and such a present knowledge of His love, not by removing the trial, nor by a present answer, it may be, but by lifting him in spirit completely above it, so that he should realize the full weight of it, might even know what it was to die daily, because of the sorrowful circumstances of the church, and now also by reason of what he felt in himself; for there was this that was so painful to bear and so apparently undesirable, because of its effect upon the minds of others. Thus he learns that there was something still better. “My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Oh! for faith to rest in this, to believe it about ourselves, to apply it to present circumstances of the church of God, to rest with unhesitating certainty in the assurance that, whatever appearances may be, however plain the impossibility for us to set things right where they are wrong, we may have our confidence unshaken in the Lord, just as one can rest in His salvation and know that it is perfect, so should we be calm in the certainty that Christ is Son over His own house, and that His love to the saints now is as perfect as in the matter of bearing their sins. But as individuals may not enjoy the salvation of Christ, so, too, shall I be weak and cast down if feeble in my faith as to the Lord's care for His Church, and His entrance into its sorrows, or if burdened about it, as though the whole blessing of the Church rested upon me. It is plain that this resting upon Christ as the head of His Church would not make the members less feeling and watchful. On the contrary; where we realize that Christ is identified with everything, the sorrow will be intensely known; but there will be confidence in the Lord when we can confide in nothing else, and our faith will not be disappointed. The Lord is coming Himself, but ere He comes, He never ceases to be head of His own church, nor fails to nourish and cherish it.

Chapter 178

Suffering in Temptation

We do not suffer when we yield to temptation. The flesh takes pleasure in the things by which it is tempted. Jesus suffered, being tempted, and is able to succor them that are tempted. So the saint also suffers when, in the light of the Holy Ghost, and the spirit of obedience, the attacks of the enemy, whether subtle or persecuting, are resisted. The new man needs succor, not the flesh, but against it rather, in order to mortify all the members of the old man. Besides, the more faithful the heart, the more full of love to God, and the less it has of that hardness which is the result of intercourse with the world, the more it will suffer. Now, there was no hardness in Jesus. His faithfulness and his love were equally perfect. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and weariness. He suffered, being tempted.

Chapter 179

Scripture Query and Answer: Swearing

Q. What does James 5:12 take in? Is not swearing or taking an oath, for any purpose or in any place, positively forbidden by this scripture? And ought not a Christian, in a court of justice, as well as in his daily walk amongst men, to let his yea be yea and his nay nay, lest he fall into condemnation?

W. G.

A. The passages in James 5, as in Matt. 5, refers solely, in my judgment, to the question of light, irreverent asseveration or imprecation, so common among men, and especially in that day among Jews. The Christian was, of course, in danger of the same. No form of judicial oath, it will be noticed, is referred to. It is a. question, in Matthew expressly, of our communication, not of a declaration before a magistrate The Lord was silent before the high priest, till adjured. The oath in such a case is the solemn intervention of God's authority in those who are His ministers in the world.

Chapter 180

The Table of the Lord

(AN EXTRACT.)

I look for two things especially, as constituting distinctively the table of the Lord: first, the unity of the body of Christ—we are one body as partakers of one bread; and, secondly, that it should be a holy table. Both are denied in —. I do not mean that there are not individuals who believe in the unity of the body, and who are holy persons and desire holiness: I do not the least doubt it, but I speak of the principle for which they are responsible there. First, the fact that brethren, known to all, who came from elsewhere, were not allowed to meddle with the affair here, because they were not of the place, is a direct denial of the unity of the body of Christ. It is not a question of deference for those habitually here, but of principle. From the outset their interference was rejected on this ground. The unity of the body of Christ is therefore denied, and any gift or wisdom, which other brethren. who do not reside here possess, cannot be exercised freely in the body. The gathering then is a sectarian party everywhere, or an independent church, and the true unity of the body of Christ is denied there.

It is useless to say that all saints are admitted to communion. So they would be in any other independent church in the kingdom. The real unity of the body as a whole is denied.

Secondly, the judgment of evil is positively refused to the Church in defiance of direct plain Scripture. “Do ye not judge them that are within?” “If he neglect to hear the church.” “Put out from among yourselves that wicked person.” And here comes out another principle: the teacher and his authority is set above the written Word. The Word says, Judge. The teacher says, You must not judge; and the fact is, no judgment takes place. Perhaps, if the rulers bring a member before the body, the body may be suffered to excommunicate him. They have, that is, an executive and not a deliberative capacity. That is, when the rulers have deliberated and resolved, (for I suppose there is to be some deliberation) the body is to execute; but the exercise of conscience, or spiritual judgment by the Holy Ghost working in the body, is not for them at all. This is what in principle has taken place. If those who have assumed the place of rulers commit even a crime, there is no remedy but to leave it to the Lord. None in any way. The body cannot judge; and if brethren, ever so gifted, come from elsewhere, they cannot be allowed to interfere, for they are strangers. There is an absolutely irresponsible body of rulers who have assumed the place to themselves, (for who placed them there?) who can sin as they think fit till God is pleased to interfere. Such a gathering, besides being sectarian, is really an independent church, which has no power to judge evil, with irresponsible rulers, who have assumed this place and cannot be judged by anybody for anything they do. Do you really think that irresponsibility as to evil for all who can assume the place of rulers is the principle of the Church of God, being neither remediable within, nor others allowed to interfere? “I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say.” You will find, and it is worthy of note, that, in the Corinthians, where directions are given as to these things, they are addressed to all saints, and no rulers or elders are mentioned in the matter.

Hence, further, I fear nothing of the charge of a “second table.” There are many tables, where dear saints too go conscientiously; but they do not rightly own (in terms they would admit as much as the unity of the body. Now I doubt that in any of them the friendly and gracious intervention of known brethren to help them through a trying case, would have been rejected as it has been in the gathering here; and certainly none would hold that there was no remedy at all for evil in their rulers but to leave it to the Lord. But I do not judge, we do not judge, they are what we seek for at the Lord's table, and I do not go there, and you do not go there. I act then as I acted years ago, believing that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there He is. I do not speak of a “second table” more than I should say a fifth or sixth, if I began to break bread where there were four or five dissenting bodies already established in a place.

I admit that it is a very serious thing to quit any body of Christians, but it is equally serious to remain when the table is based on principles which make it not the Lord's in truth. And the insisting on the doctrine of unity to prevent the judging of evil, and that by the conscience of the saints, and assuming it into the hands of the rulers, is one of the worst forms of evil, if not the very worst, which exists. Unity is insisted on by Rome, and on that account evil within is not allowed to be judged by the consciences of the saints. The representatives and rulers have that in their hands, though they may and do associate to themselves the body in doing it.

It may be alleged that young saints are unfit to judge such things. I believe there are many things a young saint would, in these days, judge better than many an old one. But that is not the question. Individuals are not called on to judge as such. The objection brings out a further point—the denial of the Holy Ghost acting in the body, so as to guide it in a common act. And this is the real root of the whole matter.

Chapter 181

Scripture Query and Answer: The Morning Star

Q. Rev. 22:16. Is it to the Church the Lord presents Himself as the morning star? If so, when? Is it on earth, after all the judgments? F. C.

A. The difficulty of F. C. will be entirely removed, I think, by the consideration, that Rev. 22:6-21 forms no part of the prophetic visions, but simply the concluding remarks of the book. The argument, that because it is after all the judgments, would prove too much, because it is after the account of the millennium and even of the new heavens and earth. Nobody would contend, I suppose, that the Church must remain on till then. To me it rather shows how independent the Church's hope is of the predicted judgments; for after these have been all stated, the Spirit recalls the saints to the coming of Christ as the joy of our hearts. That is, He thereby guards us, it seems to me, against the inference that the Lord cannot come before the events of prophecy happen.

Chapter 182

Scripture Query and Answer: That Blessed Hope

Q. A mislaid note inquires whether “that blessed hope” is equivalent to, or distinct from, “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

A. I apprehend that the form of the phrase in Greek (one article to the two connected substantives) does not at all of necessity identify them, but only joins them in a common class. Compare 2 Thess. 2:1, where the same construction occurs. Yet none would maintain that “the coming or presence of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the same thing as “our gathering together unto him.” They are meant, I think, to be regarded as associated together in the mind of the Holy Ghost, though in themselves distinct objects. It may help some to a better understanding of Titus 2:13, if they bear in mind that the true sense is “the appearing of the glory” —in contrast with the grace which has already appeared. (Ver. 11.) “That blessed hope” seems to me still nearer, and more personal, to the heart. (Compare 1 Tim. 1:1.)

Chapter 183

Fragment: They Are Not of the World

The church was called to be a witness for God. In the first of the apocalyptic assemblies, this had ceased to be for his glory. In the last of them, when the church has entirely lost its character as such, Christ, in the fullest way, presents himself, before taking the inheritance, and takes up the character which should have been maintained, viz., the “amen, the faithful and true witness.” then a total change follows. The throne of God is seen in heaven: Christ, as the slain lamb, is revealed as the object round whom all is clustered, and we are admitted to see the preparatory government, not of the churches, of the world in view of the kingdom which Christ is about to introduce in power and glory.

Fragment: They Are Not of the World

This sweeps away every principle of conduct which cannot connect us with the world rejected Christ. The world hates what is heavenly, neither can it bear the testimony of what it has done. We must be content to be despised and find Christ such a portion as to have no ambition of being anything where he was nothing. “How can ye believe who receive honor one of another?” our practical calling is to manifest the spirit and temper of Christ.

Chapter 184

To Correspondents

A. B. C. (Portishead) is referred to a series of papers “The Sufferings of Christ,” in various Nos.

of the Bible Treasury for 1858. If he has not access to those Nos., (for they are now out of print,) these articles are to be shortly reprinted in a separate form by Mr. Morrish, the publisher.

To Correspondents

W. P. (Charlton) is thanked for the investigation, which is returned as directed, to the publisher

J. P. F. (Oakleigh, east of Melbourne, Australia), may expect tracts on “the Lord's coming again,” &c.

Chapter 185

To Correspondents: the Seventy Weeks of Daniel

If “G.H.L.” were to send his statement of evidence as to the seventy weeks of Daniel, the editor might be enabled to form a better judgment whether its publication would tend to profit. But, he cannot for a moment allow that to deny symbols in the prophecies is a help to understanding them. In his opinion, it is as erroneous as the opposite theory, which deities any part to be literal. The truth is, that in almost all the prophets there is a mixture of figures with ordinary language; which to a really simple mind, occasions no insurmountable difficulty. The source of mistake as to scripture lies in the truths communicated, far more than in the words which convey them. Again, he thinks that it is piffle to gainsay the fact that symbols are the rule, the language of every day the exception, in a large part of Daniel and the revelation. None have done more harm than men like Tyso, who, overlooking this in their zeal for letter, have propounded the grossest absurdities (e.g., that the locusts of Rev. 9. Are “literal insects, bred in the smoke of the bottomless pit, as insects are, commonly, in a blight;” or that the woman in Rev. 12, is some pious and excellent woman, perhaps a queen.") symbols, figures, plain language, all occur, here and there. One theorist, according to the character of his mind sees nothing but figure; another reads nothing but letter. Real wisdom bows to what God gives and as he gives it; accepts and seeks to understand all that he reveals, whatever the form. Verbal inspiration has nothing to do with the matter. Has not God been pleased to use both symbol and language, and the words of daily life; to assume that all is literal is to close one's eyes to facts, which need no further evidence for such as can see

If “G. H. L.” merely raises a question as to a particular prophecy, such as the seventy weeks, the case is altered. By all. means let him prove, if he can, that years are not intended. Only let him be aware of the delusion, that those who argue for the letter everywhere are the only true and faithful expositors of Scripture. A symbol, if clearly and certainly understood, is quite as determinate as any other mode of expression. It is a mere misconception that the language of symbol is necessarily vague and inconclusive. The vision of the beasts in Dan. 7 is as clearly symbolic as the angel's narrative in chap. xi., is literal; yet the difference of view even now about the willful king far exceeds that which has ever existed touching the four imperial powers. “G. H. L.” seems to think there can be no doubt that we are all wrong in regarding Rome as the fourth Gentile empire; but here, at least, unanimity is against him, and he had not literal language, but symbol; so that, on his own principle, he should not be too confident.

Further, the Editor would remind “G. H. L.,” that those who profess to be literal interpreters exhibit a very large amount of conflict and inconsistencies in their schemes, and that the mystical school can scarcely be said to surpass in monstrous explanations what has emanated in our own day from their antagonists. The argument founded on diversity of opinions is a fallacy; if true, it would be destructive, almost equally, of both parties.

Chapter 186

This Is the True Character of the Church

This is the true character of the church for worship in its full sense: it remembers the cross, it worships (the world left out, and all known in heaven before God).

Chapter 187

A Few Words on the Two-Fold Way of God Brought Before Us in Psalm 77

A FEW WORDS ON THE TWO-FOLD “WAY” OF GOD BROUGHT BEFORE US IN THIS PSALM.

His way is “in the sanctuary,” and His way is “in the sea.” Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary, where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that, is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth.

We have the same thing in Psa. 78. “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I. their end.” That is, in the sanctuary of God, everything is understood; no matter how difficult, and trying, and painful, as regards ourselves or others. When we once enter there, we are in the place of God's light, and God's love; and then, whatever the difficulty may be, we understand all about it.

But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the sea. He walks where we cannot always trace His footsteps. God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in His own hands. The way of God is thus, not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with His footsteps being in the sea is, “Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” That was through the sea: afterward, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with His people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God Himself is nearer still—and to Him we are brought now. As it is said, (1 Peter 3) “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God Himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter, if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is Himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to Him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—in the sea. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then they are not known. But confidence in God Himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for His name's sake.

The Way of Grace

(Ex. 34:9.)

By looking at the fact, that grace was manifested in Christ, and reigned through righteousness, we see that God cannot be known, or practically enjoyed, but in Him, who was the expression of His grace. Sin reigned through the law, and must be judged by the law. Grace cannot judge, but the righteous law of God did, as indeed Christ yet will another day. The moment Christ is now looked at, perfect grace is seen; the Father's name is revealed, and His love made known. God in Christ deals in grace. Moses, in his measure, understands this, the people did not. The law must impute sin; but Moses by faith, seeing the place Christ has, does not take one under the law, which could only distress, but exhibits the place of grace. Indeed, the people were never properly under law, for before it was given the golden calf had been made, and so there was an end to all standing on that ground. From chap. 32:9, they are looked at as a stiffnecked people all through. Moses now makes everything to depend on this principle of grace—the Lord's glory. On the ground of the law, all was over and wholly lost; but Moses takes the place of mediator, and intercedes on the plea of grace.

In the indignation of holy wrath he broke the tables of stone, when he saw the golden calf; for how could he put the righteous law of God beside a false God? Still he could say, “They are Thy people;” and the very same thing that makes him zealous for God, make him zealous for the people also—it was God's glory. When he pleads with God for the people, he says, “Why does thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?” What will the Egyptians say? Will not the enemy say, For mischief did he bring them out? “Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.” With God Moses pleads his glory for the people, and with the people He pleads for the same glory.

In principle, Christians can take this place, the place of intercession. If we see a Christian sin, we can go to God and plead with Him that He is His child, and ask God, for his own glory's sake, to deliver him; for Christ's sake, knowing the grace that is in Him, that the enemy may not triumph. Then we can turn round and sharply reprove, saying, How can you sin against such perfect love, and grace and holiness? How can you grieve a heart of such unheard-of compassion and goodness, and be reckless of the mercy and glory of the God of all grace?

“Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up to the Lord; peradventure shall make an atonement for your sin.” (Ex. 32:30.) He had only a cheerless peradventure to leave with them. “Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh, this people have sinned, as great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sins”

—then, in true zeal for God's glory and real self-sacrificing love for the people, he adds— “If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.” But the Lord said to him, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” This is the principle of the law, and under that law God cannot clear the guilty nor let the wicked go unpunished. Everything hangs now upon mediation. But Moses, though taking the place of intercessor, was not perfect in the knowledge of grace he could only say to the people, “peradventure I shall make an atonement.” He could not put away sin. It was altogether a different thing with Christ. He could put away sin. He did make an atonement. There was no peradventure with Him. He bore the sin, and so to speak, made a transfer of what He Himself was to the poor sinner. God has to retire into His own sovereignty, which allows Him to act in goodness and mercy towards the wicked. In His sovereign grace He then could say, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.” (Chap. xxxiii. 19.)

Moses now pleads with the people, just as he had been pleading with God for them. They counted on blessing, because they were Abraham's seed. So may Ishmael and Esau, then. This could not be. Yet Esau was just as much a child of Abraham as Jacob. Then hope must stand on the sovereignty of God, as we see in Rom. 9 If they take the ground of righteousness, they are no better off. The golden calf had broken the very first link of the chain that could have claimed help from the law; for they had made “another god.” Moses shows them that all claim and title and expectation was clean gone. Deliverance comes from the sovereign grace and mercy of God; for the law “cannot” clear the guilty, but visit iniquity to the third and fourth generation. Now, under grace, it becomes a question of God's righteousness in Christ. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” (Rom. 3) We find that he who sins can only be spared on the ground of atonement, through the sovereign grace of God. Israel, as we have said, was never fully and strictly wider pure law; but a mixture of law and mercy came in. And this is just what the people of the present day delight in. They will have the law; and they talk of trying to keep it, and of looking to the mercy of (lid to pardon them when they break it. But the law must ever be the ministration of death and condemnation. (2 Cor. 3) The first time Moses came down from being on the mount with God, his face did not shine. He then brought solely the law, and that was the sure sentence of death—nothing, surely, to make his face shine. It was the mixture of mercy which produced the effect on Moses; but the law prevented the people looking upon the glory; for they could only see it in a legal way. The law had claims; and they were guilty. Israel could not behold the glory.

How different our position! There is no longer a veil needed nor allowed: it is rent. We can look at the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, in the fullest certainty of forgiveness; for we know, by and in the gospel, He could not be in heaven if sin was not put away. Moses said, “peradventure” —the atoning work not being done. But there is no peradventure with Christ. As long as the law had a claim, He could not go up; for God had “laid upon him the iniquity of us all and by his stripes we are healed.” When I see Christ at God's right hand, I ought to know there is not one speck of sin imputed to me. He has put it all away; and the dealings of God with me now are upon the ground of an accepted atonement. Law and mercy will not do for the Christian; for had not the failure been met in Christ, the law would still have claims on him. “We are not under law, but under grace.”

God's government in another thing: He does put his people under that, and He will exercise it over them; for he is the moral Governor of His redeemed.

Let us look at the place Moses takes. It is wonderful what he can ask from God in grace on behalf of the people. How blessed the consciousness of His dealing with them on the ground of mercy! In chap. 33:1, God says to Moses, “Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, and I will send an angel before thee. Say to the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff, necked people. 1 will come up in the midst of thee, in a moment and consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee that I may know what to do to thee.” Now we can understand this thing in ft human way. Suppose my child has been thoroughly disorderly, rebellious, and disobedient; I can say to him, Stand by, my indignation is great, humble yourself. The people are obedient; they strip themselves of their ornaments; they how to God. Everything now depends on the Mediator. Moses takes the tabernacle outside the camp, and pitches it far off. The living God and a strange god could not dwell together. Things now are well reversed. The Lord speaks to Moses face to face, as a man does to his friend; and Moses returned into the camp as God's witness; But Joshua, the spiritual leader of the people, does not go out of the tabernacle. The people had seen the cloudy presence of God stand outside the tabernacle door, and they worship. The people have but one character—they are stiffnecked. God said so, and Moses did the same. But he says to the Lord, “Thou sayest, Bring up this people; but thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me,” &c. Moses recognizes what God had told him, and takes the place of mediator. He does not dare to entertain a thought of going up alone. He desires to know whom God will send with him. He had found grace in God's sight, and this place of grace makes him bold to ask. It is wonderful what requests he can make. “Show me now thy way.” — “and consider that this nation is THY people.” It is God’s Way: not merely a way, but the way. The Lord would have him go the way that would be well-pleasing in His sight. This will be the desire of every soul that understands the love of God's heart. It will not satisfy to find a way which my conscience will be at ease in—a way where there is no great evil; but “Show me thy way” —the right way, in which I can glorify God—His way who was meek and lowly of heart—that good and acceptable way of Christ. If I am in the enjoyment of his love and grace, my own way will not do: it must be His way. Moses, as we have said, knows it is useless to attempt to save the people, unless he has the Lord's presence with him. “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” When grace is seen, the very reason that God gives wily he should not go with them (because they were a stiffnecked people, lest He consume them) becomes the ground on which Moses pleads that He should go with them. “If I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; FOR it is a stiff-necked people.” It is beautiful to see how grace comes in, and pleads that as a reason for God's presence in mercy, which, under the law, would have consumed them.

Do you think Moses would ever have got the rebellious, stubborn, stiffnecked Israelites through the wilderness, where there was difficulty at every step and danger in every turn, if God had not been with them? This is exactly our position. Our only standing is in grace, through the mercy of God, on the ground of atonement. This is the righteousness of God. We are a forgiven people, but in that we are stiffnecked and continually erring; and this is just the very reason why we so much need God's presence with us. Do you think we should ever get “up hence” with our evil, treacherous hearts; with our stubborn, wayward, unsubdued wills, if God was not with us? If there was the slightest question of the imputation of sin, then, of all things, we should most dread God's

presence. But sin has been imputed to Christ, and cannot be imputed to us who believe. He was the propitiation for our sins. We are pardoned through His blood, and sealed by His Spirit until the day of redemption. We are God's people, though stiffnecked and rebellious;, and on the ground of grace, we, like Moses, can plead this as a cause why we cannot go up hence without Him. While walking through the wilderness let its hold fast grace. But we must not forget that God is the governor as well as the guard and protector of His people. He will deal with them according to the principles of His own government, and we shall get from His hand according to our ways. Do you think He is more indifferent as to the walk of His child than His servant Do you suppose He will act towards the obedient and the froward alike? No! If you are not so walking. as to he guided by His eye, He will draw you in with bit and bridle. For He not only bends and bows the will but He must break it, that we may walk according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

Chapter 189

The Ways of Grace

Eph. 5

IT is a serious thing, while full of comfort and warning to our souls as well, that there is nothing that so condemns sin as grace. The law condemns it, no doubt, but the law, in itself, never judges the nature, It condemns acts. If applied by the Spirit of God, it leads one to gather what the tree must be from the fruit. It infers what the nature is, but it does not directly, and immediately, and entirely deal with it. Grace does: “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son (that is grace) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (as a sacrifice for it), condemned sin in the flesh.” God condemned the nature, root and branch; executed His sentence upon all that man is in his best estate. No disguises could stand now; no excuses: all was brought into the full light of God Himself, and all condemned. It is the same thing from first to last. Grace is that which strips off all the thin veils which the flesh would cover itself with, in order that we should not learn what we are. Grace, while it puts away what we are, yet gives us the privilege of learning it—puts us on God's side, to execute his judgment upon it: enables us to deal with it, with an unsparing hand, just because we have a new nature given from God. We can afford to mortify the old nature; because we have a new and divine life that death and Satan cannot touch. And therefore it is you will find that in those paths of scripture, where grace is most fully brought out, there we have the closest; exhortations to holiness. Consequently, wherever souls are afraid of grace, they avoid the only thing which can produce real holiness, they avoid the only thing which can detect and destroy the vain show in which they are walking themselves.

But there is another and a very serious thing for those who have received the grace of God, and who profess to stand in it. It is this: “God is not mocked.” He will not allow that the name of His Son should ever be allied with evil. He will never allow that His grace should be pleaded as an excuse for sin. Grace has stretched out his hand, and has plucked us from hell, to carry us straight from the jaws of death into heaven itself: no less than this is done in principle, when we receive the Lord Jesus. We are taken out of the net of the spoiler and set in the hand of the Father and of the Son, whence none shall pluck us. But if this be so, what is the practical purpose of God in it? What does He intend that we should do under the shelter of this almighty grace, which has wrought such marvels for us? Assuredly that we should never allow the natural evil of our hearts; that we should watch for God and be jealous for Him against ourselves. We are taken out of ourselves, transplanted into Christ. We become, therefore (if we have faith in Him, if it be a real work of the Holy Ghost), identified in feeling. with the Lord: we are put in the interests of God, if I may so say, against our own corrupt nature; against evil everywhere, but above all wherever the name of Christ. is named. We have nothing directly to do with the corrupt world outside, but we have everything to do with our own corrupt nature; much to do with watching against it judging it, dealing with it for God, wherever it dares to show itself. In love to one another and jealously for the Lord, we may have to deal with it even in another: but then it must always be in holy love. For even where we have to watch over one another for the Lord, it is never in the spirit of law—never merely to condemn the evil, and then leave a person under the effects of his folly and sin.

But let US listen to a few of the words spoken to the Ephesian saints: and first, in a verse or two of chap. iv. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.” Evidently there you have what is to guide and form the spirit of my walk with my brethren, is that all? No. It only takes up our spirit towards one another. But we are reminded what God's way is towards us: “forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath for, given you.” Then it goes on to another thing. The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sin, but to give me the immense privilege of being put before God in all his acceptance and loveliness. I could not be in heaven if it were not so—if it were only that sin were put away. God cannot have anything in heaven merely negative. Mere absence of evil is not enough there. If we are to be in heaven at all, God must have us there, lovely in all the loveliness of Christ; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here. Accordingly it is said to us, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,” &c. That is going further. A person might forgive another, but there might still be reserve remaining—a shutting oneself up in one's own little circle. Here, on the contrary, we find there is to be the energy that goes out; the love which delights in another's good. It is the activity of love going out towards the saints. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,” &c.

But then another thing comes to light. There is danger even among the saints of God. The devil can come in and turn brotherly love to a snare; and this not only in the way of positive evil being allowed to break out, but in the unjudged tendency to it. “But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness let it not be once named among your, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.” The Lord in no way forbids the happy cheerfulness, which He loves in His saints. He does not call us to be monks, which is man's way of keeping the flesh under restraint, and only another form of self. We may have self under a legal form, and self under a lax form; but under any form it is not Christ, and the only thing which God values now is Christ.

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater; truth any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” This raises a serious question for all of us. These are things for use. They are exhortations, not merely to apply to other people, to measure them by, but to take home to ourselves. They are for saints, not for the world. No doubt we find the evil warned against, in the world, and our hearts aught to feel for those who shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. But, remember that the primary object of the Holy Ghost was to warn and guard the saints themselves; who, desiring to watch against the evil distance of the flesh, will, directly they come together, find the danger of another thing, and that is evil nearness. Who then can take care of us, if such be the dangers that surround us? Only God—but God still acting in the way of grace. There is no reason why a soul should not have perfect confidence in God against itself. But wherever there is the desire to have our own will and our own evil thoughts gratified—wherever there is the wish to have our way according to the flesh, depend upon, it, the judgment of God will be there, unless the grace of God interfere to deliver the soul. This is a solemn tiring, and one that we need to lay to heart. For the Lord is jealous on our behalf, and He is jealous for His own glory. Therefore may we be watchful. May we remember what he has written; that if “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” he on the one side, “let every one that nameth the name of Christ

depart from iniquity” is on the other. “Depart from iniquity!” Is it possible that such a world could be said to the saints of God! Yes. It is the word or the Holy Ghost Himself, wherever the name of Christ is named, Let our souls then hold fast grace; but let its remember that the object of all the grace which has been manifested to us is, that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly Fear. It is always so. And there is another thought along with it which seems to me of value—that sin, when looked at in the presence, of God, always acquire its true name and character, I am not allowed to gloss over it, and call it by a name that men might give it. For instance, there are a thousands things that men would only call polite. What does God call them! A he. Again, there are many things that men would say were allowable in the way of business. What does God call them? Dishonesty and covetousness. Such is God's sentence. And would we escape from it! No. We should be left to manifest what we are; that we had named the name of Christ falsely, in our own strength merely—like the Egyptians assaying to pass through the lied Sea after Israel. The result was, that they were all drowned. May we be jealous not to allow ourselves in the smallest thing that is contrary to God! What a list of things the Spirit of God here warns use against! I can look within, and know how the heart there answers to the word of God without that has already put me on my guard. If I despise the warning, what then? I shall prove what I am, to the disgrace of the name of the Lord Jesus, and my own shame and sorrow. What an effect of a moment's gratification! If then a little word is as the letting out of water, what is a little act of sin, where it is allowed. The Lord keep us from little sins—keep us watchful, jealous, careful; but at the same time never letting slip grace—rather reminding and strengthening One another in that perfect grace in which we stand.

Let us remember that He who has called us to watch against these things has also called us to thank Him, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ always, and for all things. Even if we have got to humble ourselves before God for what we are, we are never to forget what Christ is for us and to its.

May we be kept faithful and circumspect in our ways for the Lord Jesus' sake.

Chapter 190

The Well of Water

(John 4.)

In John 3 we had the quickening power of the Spirit, the contrast of the old and the new creation. Here we have another thing, the dwelling of the Spirit in the believer. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”

A man must be born again—born of water and of tine Spirit, if he has to say to God. This is what has to be presented to the sinner: “Ye must he born again;” when at the same time we know it must be God's work. Not that it is said, in a legal sense, “Ye must,” &c., because we know a man cannot accomplish it of himself. But there is a moral necessity for it, because, until born again, the sinner cannot have one desire or anything in him suited to God. It is the requisite flowing from what God is, and what the sinner is. But there is no such necessity for the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer. instead of being requirement, it is the expression of pure grace; not so much necessary to man, as it is given by God.

Therefore not only the Jews, but the Gentiles might have it. “If thou (the poor Samaritan) knewest the gift of God,” &c.

For the Jew even it was necessary to be “born again,” and that was the instruction in chap. 3. In chap. 4 it is a pure gift of which He speaks, and He would show that the worst of gentiles might have it, as well as an Israelite.

The Holy Ghost that is given brings in power, as well as a new nature. The new nature has certain characteristics—love, holiness, &c. “He that is born of God sinneth not,” but there is another thing—power, and without this, the very desire for holiness will occasion distress of soul, the sense of condemnation, and there will be neither peace, joy, liberty, or consciousness of relationship. all which are founded on the indwelling of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit produces these effects in the soul in which He dwells bringing forth in us what is like God. Thus we see the difference between the Holy Ghost quickening, or giving a new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us and giving us power.

The woman, as we know, comes to draw; the Lord requests to drink. She is surprised at His asking her for water. Before, we have seen Him taking to a Jew, a Pharisee, an honored Rabbi; but here was a despised Samaritan. She was astonished at His have overleapt all bounds and come in perfect freedom to speak to her; but here was the gift of grace come down to her as well as the Jew. Passing over the details of her conversion, which are most interesting, we will notice the lowliness of Jesus in His actings towards her. His position here is founded on His entire rejection as coming in the way of promise. He is on His way, as rejected, to Galilee, the place where God visits His remnant. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.” He left Judea, and God leads him through this wretched, apostate race—just a picture of the Lord's acting's now in sovereign grace, gathering out Gentiles, before He comes to the remnant.

That which lays hold of a sinner is sovereign grace. He is rejected by man, and man is rejected by God. There is mutual and complete rejection. Promise is gone, because Christ, coming with the promises, was rejected. “My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” It is now a rejected, humbled Christ, bestowed as the sovereign gift of God. “If thou knewest the gift,” &c. God was giving freely, and He who gave was there. He who could create another heaven and earth, if He pleased, came to ask drink of her! What confidence in his grace it inspires! He does not expect her to ask of Him until He has asked of her. Our pride would say, If I accept favors of God, He will accept favors of me. Here is God Himself, coming and saying, “If thou knewest the gift of God,” &c. He would be dependent for a drink of the brook by the way. Such was the position He took. When He could put Himself in such a place as to ask a favor of her, all the sluices of her confidence are opened. “He must needs go through Samaria.” The path led through. That was the road in which His love, in coming down here, put Him.

There is nothing so hard for our vile hearts to understand as grace; but there is nothing so simple in God's presence. If you knew the person of Him who asks you, you would believe the perfectness of grace coming down to the wretchedness of man to bestow. It is not how you must be this or that; but here is God come down to you.

He is at perfect ease with her, though she had been up to this going on in her sins. She a Samaritan, and yet there is God conversing with her! The revelation of God in this way gives the consciousness that we can get what He has to give. The moment a soul apprehends what there is in Christ, it has the blessing.

“Sir, give me this water,” &c.

Ver. 16. There is a thought added now. The sins have to be made known. There is no understanding of what He has to give until the conscience is reached, and she has the conviction of sin. If the things of God could be received by the understanding (natural), man would, in a sense, be a match for God. Clearly, man is not in that position with God. But when the conscience is opened, it brings the sense of need. Then the sinner sees nothing but sin, and that nothing but God's grace can meet it. A man never gets spiritual understanding until God has dealt with his conscience. until the flesh is, in a measure, judged, the Christian has no power to understand God.

When I know the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I have everything I can need, because everything is in Him—love, power, holiness in Him. “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” A detected sinner is in a different case to being in possession of the well; and yet the detection was on the way to it. To bring this well into the heart He must convict of sin. she must consciously stand in the presence of God. Do we think of that—that we are in the presence of God? We should never sin if we did.

The woman follows the natural course of her own thoughts in talking about the water from the well. (Ver. 11, 12.) But Christ says. The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, &c. in using what sin gives in this world, it is soon spent; its strength is gone in the spending: the spring becomes dry. But with spiritual things it is just the reverse. The more I spend. the more I have got. “To him that hath shall more be given.” And it leaves no desire for anything else—no hankering after that I have not got. “He shall never thirst” —never thirst after anything else, while there will be the increasing sense of need of the living water Continually. I cannot say this practically of one

whose soul is hankering after earthly things. When there is this hard crust over the soul, there is need of humbling; but the natural state of a Christian is to go on and have more given. A Christian sunk down into the flesh is thirsting. It one went down to the bottom of his soul, one may find the well but there ought to be rather the sense of possession than of need in the soul.

Here is rest and power. We have net only everlasting life in Him, from whom we shall never be separated; but the man has a well of water in himself. “It shall be in him a well of water,” &c. This is power coming down front God—heaven is brought down into my heart. It is the power of divine life bringing me into fellowship with the rather and the Son. It is nothing short of all that is in God dwelling in me. I have got something that lays hold of that; life—the gift of God. Mark, it is here the well of water in the individual. There is an eternal spring, in my own soul. There is a power in the person associating him with all that is in God; the man drinks it in—receives it as a thirsty person—and then it becomes in him a well which makes him partaker of what is in God. It brings into intercourse with, and feeding in spiritual apprehension on, the things of God.

This has not reference to the outward gift, but to the living power in the soul, embracing all that the rather and the Son have, and it has the character and stamp in the person of the eternal life to which it These everlasting things belong to the person who enjoys them—it “springs up to everlasting life.” In Rom. 8 the Spirit is brought out as life I and power. As the breath of life was given to the first Adam, and ire became a living soul, so we have the “spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” After life there is power also. This is the consequence of the sentence passed upon sin in its whole nature—not on sins only. Christ on the cross condemned sin in the flesh. God has dealt with it, and judged it on the person of Christ. They are distinct and connected in a moment. As soon as I am quickened there is the inquiry, How am I to get rid of this sense of sin in the flesh! It is already condemned: not only are the sins condemned, but the principle of sin is, root and branch. They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” There, is not only desire but power, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The Spirit is not only the source of the new nature. but the power that puts this new nature into living connection with its object. It is not only the flesh on one side, and the new nature on the other; but 1 have the Lily Ghost in the new nature. God has con; deemed sin in the flesh by the death and resurrection of Christ. There is the revelation of the rather and the Son, received by the soul in which the Holy Ghost dwells. The Holy Ghost now works in power on the new nature, because Christ has dealt with the old. This is not like the Spirit as given to Balaam, but it is showing how the believer receives the Spirit after he is quickened. “Not in the flesh but in the spirit,” which puts me on the ground of what God is to me, and not what I am to God. As to our standing, this is our position—the Father loves me as He loves Jesus. I own no life but what the Spirit gives, and because of the Spirit dwelling thus in me as the grand link with the Father and the Son, there is not a bit of the believer belongs to sin or to the devil—but spirit, soul, and body we belong to God. “The Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Another thing is, that He will “quicken these mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.” in the burial of a Christian, we commit his body, not to the earth, but to Him who redeemed it.

Verse 14. There is also relationship— “sons of God.” If led of the Spirit, I am a child, and have the “Spirit of adoption.” I am thrown into entire association with Christ; I am a child of God and have the consciousness of the Spirit of adoption. “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit,” &c. We are

set there by sovereign grace. It is not what we think about it, but, what we are— “the children of God by faith in, Christ Jesus.” The Holy Ghost cannot lead us to say, ‘I do not know whether I am saved;' ‘I doubt;' ‘I hoped to be saved.' The Holy Ghost brings it into the heart, and gives the blessed sense of the relationship.

When the High Priest went into the presence of God, the light shone ripen all the names engraved on the breastplate, &c. That was an inferior relationship, but it is true that the same delight which the Father finds in Jesus He finds in us. There is the shedding abroad in the heart of divine love by the Spirit, just as a candle sheds abroad its light in the place where it is. So if the Holy Ghost really dwells in my heart, God's love is there, for God the Holy Ghost is there. Though it is my heart, it is God's love that is there. The Spirit sheds it abroad by being there, just as Christ being in the heart, He draws down His own love into it.

Again, if the Spirit thus dwells in us, there will be the consciousness of groaning with the creation around. If we walk through the world with Christ's love filling the heart, there is not a single thing but what will awaken sorrow—the sorrow not of irritability, but of love. Christ did ever the work of love, but with what a sense of the way in which depth had come in! He was always sorrowing, because He was all love.

The Son of man was “acquainted with grief;” not only trouble, but grief. It went to His heart. We hear Jesus groaning at the grave of Lazarus, though fie knew what deliverance He could effect. If we had been going to do it, we should have gone gaily in, because going to bring comfort to the family; but Jesus had such a sense of the groaning of creation that he “groaned.”

“The Spirit also maketh intercession for us,” by putting us in communion with God's love. The Spirit, by dwelling in me, makes me to realize love in the midst of sorrow. Instead of selfishness, it produces prostration of spirit in the sense of what is around. The Spirit takes up the sorrow which nature sinks under, but helps my infirmities by putting me into connection with the perfect love of God, shown in Christ humiliation. The Holy Spirit being given to us in Christ—God's having come down to us in all our necessities. we are carried back into the midst of the sorrow and the sin, in the sense of that in which believers groan.

This woman at the well (John 4) was conscious of the creation she belonged to. She had no power to overcome sin; but perhaps well wearied out with it—coming in the heat of the day to draw water, not at the hour that others came, for shame. She did not know what she was joining for now: and when she had got the living water, she went back to the city to tell the Samaritans. Thus should we carry back the love which has delivered us, into the world from which we have been delivered.

“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” Our understandings are not fully informed of what we want; lint the “Spirit himself,” &c.—and “He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” If God searches our hearts, what does He see there.?

A quantity of sin, to be sure; but He sees desires there. “The Spirit maketh intercession according to God,” and yet from poor creatures who do not know what to ask for. The use the Holy Ghost makes of it, is to take up all the groaning, Every groan I utter is the positive witness of blessing in the midst of sorrow, because of the intercession of the Spirit according to God. What a well of water! It is not crying out for self: but so realizing the blessedness of God's presence in the midst of a world and a body not yet set free by his power: selfishness gone, and a means opened, while

in the body, of being the vessel of the intercession of the whole creation. All our own sufferings are lost in the thought of its being the path to glory. Christ's heart was moved when Be saw sorrow. He would not have us cold and indifferent to it—yet not, on the other hand, selfishly affected by it; but full of tenderness and compassion towards those who are suffering. “He hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps.”

Chapter 191

Scripture Query and Answer: What Ground Is There for the Rhemish Version and Note: Staff or Bed?

A. The difference between the Hebrew copies and the sense given by the Septuagint is simply a question of the points (i.e., between ncp, a staff, and ■■■■, a bed, both being derived from the root rrca which means to lead as well as to stretch.) There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the “bed” in the Old Testament. The staff was in his hand while he bowed himself upon the bed's head. Aquila and Symmachus gives κλινψ, while the LXX. have ρ■βδου. Indeed, so far there is a difference; the Rhemish is stronger than the authorized in excluding from Gen. 47:31, anything but the absolute and supreme worship of God. “Israel adored God, turning to the bed's head,” whereas the English Bible simply states that he bowed himself, doubtless, in worship, upon the bed's head. This, then, is not the question, which is, whether the Septuagint, or rather Hebrew xi. 21, intimates that Jacob also paid relative honor to Joseph's scepter, as a figure of Christ's royal dignity. Now waiving for the moment the question to whom the rod belonged, it is admitted in the Rhemish note to Gen. 47:31, that “Jacob, leaning on Joseph's rod, adored turning towards the head of his bed.” This shows that the Rhemish translators perfectly understood the real force of προσεκ■νησεν kirl το ■κρον της ρ■βδου avrout How came they to know that Jacob so leaned? The Hebrew does not say so, but the Greek. How came they, then, to understand the same Greek words in Hebrews, quoted from this very passage? The only true answer is, that they sought the appearance of Scripture sanction for their idolatry. But God has caught them in their own craftiness; for the words cited prove that they knew the real meaning of the Greek, justify the authorized version, and retort the charge of corruption on their own heads. The truth is, that the Greek will not bear “worshipped the top,” but “upon the top,” as every version known to me has it, save the Vulgate, or those made from it. As to the meaning, it is clearly leaning on it, as the Rhemish Annotator himself confirms in his note to Gen. 47:31. The reader may compare 1 Kings 1:47, where the Septuagint has προσι;κ■νησεν ■ β. Μ ττ]ρ κο■τψ, the Vulgate, adorat in lectulo suo, and the Douay “adored in his bed.” Now, the construction is precisely the same as in Heb. xi. 21.

Another thing seems plain—that if by leaning on the top of the rod is meant that Jacob worshipped the rod, equally so by turning to the bed's head must be meant that he worshipped the bed. But, as in the latter case, (Gen. 48) the Douay version understands that Jacob adored God, turning to the bed's head; so in the former case, (Heb. xi.) they ought to understand that he adored God, [leaning] upon the top of the rod. But it would be intolerable, even to the Romanist, to suppose that Jacob adored the bed. Consistency, however, requires it. The grammatical construction is imperative. Either he adored both rod and bed; or he worshipped God leaning upon the top of the staff and turning towards the bed's head.

It may be added, that there is not the least ground for making the rod or staff to be Joseph's. It was Jacob's. With his staff he had passed over Jordan once a poor outcast, as we are told by himself (Gen. 32:10) when he returned with two companies and feared before Esau. Now, in Egypt, before

Joseph and his sons, even though he were next unto Pharaoh, and, leaning upon the staff, which had been the companion of his own weary wanderings, the dying pilgrim worships the God whose faithfulness he had proved all the way through. What more striking than his faith which could bless the children of his now exalted son, seeing the true worth of Egyptian splendor in the light of the glory of the promised, land; and what more affecting than the worship of his happy heart, as he leaned upon the witness of his many toils and sorrows! CONTENTS.

Chapter 192

“Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.”

(Job 1; 2)

THE chief thought upon my mind in reading this portion of the word of God, was a simple but, at the same time, a comforting one. It is this:—That even where Satan is working with the children of God, it is God Himself that prompts the trial, and not Satan. It is God who takes the initiative, in praising His servant. It is not Job that is found out by Satan, but God speaks of Job to Satan. In other words, the first person who acts, who even sets the trial agoing, is God Himself. Now, at all times, whether before the Lord Jesus came or since, there is one grand truth that lies at the bottom of all divine doings or revelations—that God is supreme— “God over all, blessed forever.” He is “the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.” He may allow heaven itself to be, in a certain sense, defiled by the presence of a rebel, one that has already been dishonored there, and that is about to be judged there by and by. For it is said, the kings of the earth shall be dealt with on earth, but “the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high.” The scene of their great sin against God is to see their retribution.

But although the earth itself is a platform for iniquity of every description, yet still there are those upon it that are very near to God; whom He loves; whom He turns, even from heaven itself, to look upon. Not that there may not be many things to correct in them: God was going to chasten His servant Job at this very time. But that does not hinder the feeling and expression of His delight in him. Just so a parent regards his child, and speaks of him with love and complacency. It may appear to the eyes of others that there is blindness to the faults of the child: but it is a parent's love, and those that understand it can appreciate it. Such, but in a far higher sense, is the love that God has to His beloved children upon the earth.

It was in this consciousness of being above all evil that God speaks to Satan about His servant Job. He knew what that enemy was, and what he was especially towards man. And He knew that if any were more obnoxious to him than others, it was those men that were called by grace to be saints of God. But God, knowing His power and love to be above all the evil that Satan can do, actually makes use of Satan for the good of His own children. And this is the marvelous story that is so fully developed throughout the Book of Job. We know that the end of it is the full blessing of Job, and through him even of his friends, when the battle has been fought and the victory won. But the precious thing that meets us at the very beginning of the Book is, that it is God that begins the trial. Satan may be the instrument of it, but there is always God above and before Satan. In man's ways mischief first comes in, and then a remedy is provided. But that is not the way of God. Redemption is not merely a remedy for the evil that Satan and man have brought upon the earth; it was always in the mind and in the heart of God. It was not a mere remedy wrought in to meet the evil. But it was the triumph of God; the full manifestation of what He is as rising above all evil. For God Himself would not have been known as He is but for redemption. Therein He is not merely looking at man or the devil, but He must have an opportunity for showing out This love. He must make known His power, wisdom, and love in meeting evil, in using even the chief of evil, as a

means of greater good to His children than if there had not been such an one at all. What man does is to deny the evil, to make light of it, and so despise God; or he makes him in some way or another to be the cause of it, and so hates God. But what a joy is it for us to see God as He is, always above it all.

You will find these two thoughts throughout the word of God, two great ways in which God displays Himself. First, there is His grace that delivers, that forgives and brings near to Himself. But, besides that, there is another great object in the Bible—the government of God; His government of the world once, and His government of souls now. For they are two things, quite distinct in their nature—the grace and the righteous government of God. But it is well to remember this, that whatever may be the form His government takes, it is grace that sets the government agoing, where His own children are concerned. It is true, that the Father “without respect of persons judgeth,” but still it is “the Pallier.” So here; it is God Himself that, at the very start shows how near Job was to His heart. He challenges Satan to consider His servant Job, and see whether there was any like him on the earth. The enemy comes and insinuates that it is not for nothing that Job serves allowed to try him; he is brought into another kind of tribulation. But the end of it was, if we may so say, that he gets the crown of life. He is upon his face before the Lord, praising His name. If he had known before the blessedness of the Lord's giving, he now learned the blessedness of His taking away.

Then comes another trial; and now it is his person that is touched, a much harder thing than when it was merely his circumstances. This the enemy knew, and he accordingly says, “Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.” The Lord permits Satan to do his worst with the person of Job, only reserving his life. Still, not only did Job not fall, but, though his wife is a part of the trial, in all things we find him shining out increasingly. And it is not until Satan has done with Job that the Lord comes in and puts His finger upon the point that needed His dealing with, through Job's friends.

Think of where we now are. It is not only that we can reason from what God is as supreme above Satan, but we have to do with Satan as an enemy that has been overcome in the cross, and resurrection, and ascension of Christ. It is not only that we know that God must be above Satan, but we have seen how He is so for us. Satan was at the cross, God was there, too, and the Lord Jesus Christ was smitten. And there that Blessed One, falling under the whole power of the enemy, overcomes him and rises alive again for evermore with the keys of death and hides. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” The Lord has won the victory, and we have this heavenly and new fruit for our souls to feed upon.

Whenever we can see “Satan” in anything, whenever we can discern the power of evil, and judge it as evil, it is powerless as far as we are concerned. It is his wiles, his deceits, that we have to dread. But the comfort is, that let all the power that Satan wields be put forth, touching our circumstances or in any way nearer still, in all the confusion that he may introduce, we owe it to the Lord to cherish simple peace in Him, and the certainty that He will appear, that He works, that Satan will be defeated, nay, that the very trial itself is for the safety and bringing out of greater blessing for those that are looking to Himself.

Chapter 193

Who Is a Priest and What Is a Priest?

IN the New Testament the Jewish priests are often spoken of and their high and chief priests too. The priest of Jupiter is spoken of, who would have offered sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas as gods. Melchisedec and his priesthood are spoken of. Christ Himself is spoken of as a priest in general and as high priest. All this is simple enough and needs no particular comment for our present purpose. But others also, men on earth, are spoken of as priests and a priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5, 9.) The first passage says, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;” the latter, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an 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.” These words are addressed, beyond all controversy, to the whole of the Christians to whom Peter addresses his Epistle, and whom he is instructing and encouraging in their trials. All Christians, therefore, are a holy and royal priesthood. Again in Rev. 1:5, 6 we find, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father.” Here again all Christians are priests. This is in the introduction, before the prophetic part of the book. In chap. 5: 9 we read, “Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” In chap. 20. 6 we read, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” These passages tell us that all Christians are priests to God. Another passage, though the word is not used, alludes to it. “By him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving praise to his name.” (Heb. 13:15.) This calls on all Christians to exercise their priesthood and shows how they are to do it. There is not in the New Testament one passage which speaks of, or alludes to, a priesthood upon earth, save as every Christian is, or supposes the existence of a priesthood on earth save that of all Christians. No one on earth is ever called a priest, save the Jewish priests, and once a heathen one, save when Christians in general as such are called so. A distinct class of priests on earth amongst Christians is totally unknown to the New Testament. Our great High Priest is gone to heaven. And all Christians are priests in a spiritual and heavenly way, for praises and intercessions under Him. The New Testament does not know or own a class of Christians on earth who are priests in a distinct office from other Christians. Such a thought is unscriptural and false in every way.

If it be asked, then, who are priests under the Christian revelation, I reply, (because the word of God replies,) Christ is the great High Priest. All Christians are priests, and no other priesthood than this is owned among Christian men in the New Testament.

Next we may inquire, what is a priest? And more exactly, what are the principles on which earthly priesthood, where it is established amongst men, is founded? A high priest from among men is thus described in the Epistle to the Hebrews. “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.” Other

priests had the same office when priesthood was established upon earth. Certain functions belonged to the high priest only, but gifts and sacrifices for sin were offered by all the priests. Hence when priests are officially established now, there is always either the formal institution of a sacrifice, as that of the mass, which is quite consistent; or the hankering after one, and the effort, on the part of those called priests, to turn the Lord's Supper into one, from the sense of inconsistency, and of what they ought to be about, if they are really priests.

But this whole system denies the force and efficacious truth of Christianity altogether. The Epistle to the Hebrews carefully assures us that there remains no more sacrifice for sin, now that Christianity is established, founded on the one perfect sacrifice of Christ, whose value and efficacy are eternal. But let the reader turn his attention to what the system of an earthly priesthood supposes, what it means, and he will readily see that the idea of a priesthood on earth, acting for men in things pertaining to God, is a denial of the whole truth of Christianity. I do not say every one that believes there are consecrated priests, desires to do so, but the system he maintains does so.

The establishment of a class of priests to offer gifts, or sacrifice, or prayers, is the public declaration that other worshippers cannot directly approach God with their gifts, and sacrifices, and prayers. They must stay at a distance and the more favored class approach for them. The character which God assumes in such an order of things was distance from men, shutting Himself up in a hidden sanctuary, where none could approach freely. There was in the Jewish system one vail, inside which the priests went to offer incense, then another inside which even the priests could not go, and where God's glory was enthroned between the cherubim. Into this the high priest alone went, only once a year, with the blood of propitiation to put upon the mercy-seat, and even then enveloping himself in a cloud of incense lest he should die. Thus God was hidden within the wail. “The Holy Ghost,” the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, “this signifying that the way into the holiest was not yet manifested, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” Even to the altar, which was outside the two veils, the worshipper could not approach to offer his gifts or sacrifices. The priest received the gifts, or the victim's blood at his hand, and he offered them. All this system taught that men could not approach God; He dwelt in the thick darkness, and even those who were nearest to Him. This own priests, could not approach close to Him; they must remain without the vail. Christianity is the opposite of all this, though beautiful figures of truths as to Christ are found in it. By it God has revealed Himself. He does not dwell in the thick darkness. “The darkness is past,” says the Apostle John, “and the true light now shineth.” And for a blessed and simple reason. The Word has been made flesh and come among us: perfect grace has been manifested to the chief of sinners. Instead of our not being able to approach God, God has approached us. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.” “In him (Christ) was life, and the life was the light of men.” The record of God is that “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life.” “The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared.” The chief of sinners was welcome to the Lord Jesus. The leper, whose defiled state excluded him from the camp of Israel and every one that touched him, (an image of sin,) Jesus laid his hands on and touched him. Gracious goodness has visited us. God has shown Himself “the friend of publicans and sinners.” But this is far from being all; for though God visited the sinner thus in grace, the sinner could not approach Him in His holy habitation uncleansed. Hence the blessed Jesus not only lived but died. And now mark the effect of His death.

The vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. That was the vail behind which God was previously hidden and unapproachable. But that which rent the wail, (that is, the death of Christ,) put away sin perfectly from every one who believes in Him. He has borne their sins. His blood cleanses them from all sin; and not only have they found that God is perfect love, has commended His love to them, in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them, but they have found, if they believe in the efficacy of that sacrifice, what has purged their sins, for it was "When He had by Himself purged our sins," and not till then, that "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hence, the blood of Christ purges the conscience, makes it perfect, (Heb. 9:10.) and God remembers our sins and iniquities no more. Hence, also, "there remains no more sacrifice for sins," because they are remitted; and that "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The Epistle to the Hebrews, from which I quote these statements, gives two striking reasons why there could be no repetition of the sacrifice, nor any more sacrifice for sins. First, without shedding of blood there is no remission—therefore, Christ must have suffered often, if there were any besides that accomplished on the cross. Further, it is added, the Jewish priests stood offering oftentimes the same sacrifice, which could never take away sins, but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down; for by one offering He hath perfected forever them who are sanctified. Such is the plain and blessed language of scripture. God would show His goodness and grace towards us, but He could not bear sin, nor receive what was defiled and guilty into His presence, in His holy habitation; and hence, gave His Son to put it away, that we might draw nigh, with full assurance of faith. But this work is accomplished once for all. We have, therefore (it is the conclusion drawn in Heb. 10.), "boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say his flesh." There no priest could enter (save the high priest, once a year, as we have said) when there were priests. And now every Christian can enter with boldness, under the great High Priest, who is over the house of God. Believers are that house. We are those priests, as I have already shown. No priest can go further than entering into the holiest; and there I do not want him, for I can go boldly myself. If I get him to go for me, I am denying my own right and Christian character, and the efficacy of Christ's work. He who sets up a priesthood on earth, between the believer and God, is denying the efficacy and truth of the work of Christ. He has "died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." If I am brought to God I do not want a priest to go to Him for me. If the vail is rent, and I am told by God to enter into the holiest through that new and living way, I do not want another to go there because I cannot—another who could not go either, if I cannot.

The essence of Christianity is to reveal God, and to bring us to God, to give us holy, happy liberty, as children in His presence, into which we can enter, as cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. The essence, of a distinct human priesthood is to say we cannot, but must get others to, go into God's presence, to offer our gifts and sacrifices for us. It is a denial of the whole efficacy of Christianity, and the place in which all Christians are set who, if Christianity be true, are all God's priests on the earth, to offer up spiritual sacrifices—the fruit of their lips, giving praise to his name.

But, I add more:—It is false and useless. The vail is rent, God is manifested in His holiness, the light has gone forth, and you, my reader, must "walk in the light, as He, (God) is in the light," or you can have nothing to say to Him. You cannot have a hidden God, as in Judaism, for a priest to go to, who yet could not reach Him. The light shines, and you must walk in it yourself. There is no vail over the glory of God now; there may be over your heart, but then you are an unbeliever, and no

priest can represent you before God. You have to stand before God, in the light, yourself. If you have come through the blood of Christ, the light will only show so much the more that you are perfectly clean through it. But you cannot even be dealt and another go in to God's presence for you. If you are clean, you are a priest and have to draw nigh yourself.

The work of Christ is a perfect and divine work, but you cannot approach God by a proxy here below. You cannot have another person clean or holy for you on the earth. If Christ has answered for you, all is well. Go boldly to the throne of grace yourself. If not, no one else can do it for you. You must have to do directly with God, now He has been revealed. No doubt that will be in condemnation, if you do not come to Him through Christ; but you must come yourself: the state of your own conscience is in question, directly between you and God. If you do come to God by Him, no human priest can interfere, nor do you want any.

I repeat, then, the establishment of a human priesthood, as a class distinct from all other Christians, is the denial of the truth and efficacy of Christianity.

All Christians are priests, according to the New Testament: their offerings are spiritual offerings of praise to God's name.

Chapter 194

Scripture Query and Answer: Woman's Part at Meetings

Q. What Is the Woman's Part at Religious Meetings?

X. Y.

A. The Scripture is plain that it is forbidden to a woman even to ask questions. It is not seemly for angels or men. If any strangers are allowed to come in who wish it, I should consider it a public assembly; but if it be an invited meeting for any beyond the saints, then it has a private character, and I think the woman's place is as in another private assembly: only that in divine things and in Christian women, modesty and a retiring spirit is of great price with God. If it be a regular meeting of the assembly, the woman's part is surely to be silent. In a private meeting, it is merely a question of the modesty that becomes them. We are called to peace.

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