BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 6

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 6, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

265 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 6

Chapter 1

Remarks and Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 12

“Now concerning spiritual operations (or, manifestations).” This word is preferable to that of “gifts,” because here it includes diabolical operations, as well as operations of the Spirit, and we do not like to call that which is really the working of the devil a “gift.” Such is the meaning of desiring the “best gifts.” “Desire spiritual manifestations.” Paul wished them to be able to discern, when any one had spoken with power among them, whether it was the devil or the Holy Ghost speaking by him. No man can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the Holy Spirit; and no one calls Him “Anathema” if he speaks in the Spirit of God. It seems strange for us to think a person speaking with power should speak by the evil spirit; but it was a common thing with them. There were false prophets, we read. They took the form of teachers, instead of utterances. No doubt the devil has been thus working among Mormonites and Irvingites. “Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh, is of God.” The great Truth is Himself come in the flesh. The Gnostics said matter was a bad thing made by the devil. It is in 2 John, Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, not speaking as to the time, but of the character of His coming. Again, “This is he that came by water and blood.” There was moral power, but atonement also. He was real man; and came for the shedding of blood as well as for purifying.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” The great thing here insisted on is the unity of the Spirit, as opposed to many demons, creatures working by creatures. “He shall not speak of Himself.” (Chap. 14:29, 30) “Let the prophets speak two or three.... if anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” The power of the Holy Ghost acts morally on the individual. “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” If we see a carriage movable by steam, the moment the steam is put on, there is the power; but it wants one to guide. If the one prophet went on speaking, it was not according to the order of the Spirit, though it was by the Spirit. The gift is committed to men who are responsible for the use of it. It is not impulse merely, though there be an impulse given; but then there must be the control over it. If two get up at the same moment to pray, both may have what is of the Spirit to utter, but one is not subject, at the moment, to the Spirit's order.

“The difference of ministries”, &c. The gifts are through the Holy Ghost, the service is to Christ the Head; but the Spirit is the power. In the exercise of the gift one is the servant of Christ the Lord, the Spirit is the energy by which one serves, but God is He that works all in all, doing everything. Though several should speak together, still it is all by one divine Spirit (not several spirits of demons). While I am Christ's servant and not man's, still I could not exercise my gift in spite of all my brethren say against it without despising Christ's authority in the body. “Be ye subject one to another.” It is God that is working; and therefore let all be silent before Him.

The thought of the family, which sometimes prevails, is not sufficiently reverential to Christ as the Head. Service to Christ as the Head is something more than service in the family. For instance, I feel a difference in going to my Father, and going to God. Thus, if I go to my father in the house, I go up to him at once, and jump upon his knee; but if he is in court, sitting in public in his official

capacity, I do not use such familiarity; I treat him with more respect than that. We are set as servants and as members (lower down in the chapter) of one body, of which Christ is the Head. It makes an amazing difference in this way. If I have the thought of the Holy Ghost only present to my mind, self comes in, and I almost necessarily attach a certain importance to self, because I am expecting to be used. I am to speak, or I am to pray. But when Christ is looked to and realized, it is entirely different. Self does not come in, because I am looking to another—to Christ as personally present to faith; and thus the affections are drawn forth to a person—to Him who has died for me. The whole tone of a meeting will be affected by this.

There are many members, not heads. Again, no one is to go beyond his measure. Each is to wait on his ministry, whatever it may be; lot him stick to that one thing, and not attend to everything else. He that gives, let him do it with simplicity; he that ministers is to wait on his ministry—to do the work he has to do (and do not you attempt anything else): He that exhorteth on exhortation. God may give one person half a dozen gifts. One may be an evangelist only; one may exhort and move the conscience; and another may teach. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to profit withal.

At the first, in preaching the Gospel, there was the broad statement of the fact that the Son of God was come. Now it has to be applied, because it is admitted in common as a fact, though the more it is stated again and again the better. Where there is a gift, if the saints are not in a spiritual state, the gift is but little manifested, and not so easily discerned. What marks the gift of an evangelist is love for souls, not love of preaching. Where the gospel is preached and God blesses it, there is fruit, which gives His servant confidence to go on; but when he is beginning, there may be very little development of the gift and no fruit seen, but still there will be love for souls and the endeavor to get at them. He must work by faith, therefore, until he gets proof in result.

The confession of Christ must not be confounded with the preaching of the gospel. Every one ought to confess Christ in one sense, though he may not be able to preach Christ. We have to act as having received the talent from the Lord, and there should be full confidence in Him and a desire to trade for His advantage. It is sweet to see love for souls in seeking to speak to them, but this does not prove there is a gift for preaching.

He, moreover, that is always speaking of Christ in his intercourse with his brethren and others, is more useful in the Church than he who speaks with tongues.

We are in a defective condition if we are not in principle taking in every member of Christ. There is one body—the whole Church; there can be only those who are inside and those who are outside.

Some have spoken of a gift of prayer. It is, I think, a wrong expression. Prayer is not the exercise of gift. Preaching is the Levite service, if you please; but prayer is priestly. Levite service is to end in this world: priestly service is to go on through eternity. One who has a gift comes into a meeting of saints where the Holy Ghost is, and that which is in him is pressed out by the power of the Spirit in the assembly.

The spiritual man, again, “judgeth all things.” If I am not spiritual, I shall make a mistake. A man's saying a thing was done in the Spirit or not in the Spirit, must depend on his grace to act, and has nothing to do with his power to judge. Of course, it is assumed we are in the Spirit or spiritual. If a man is spiritual, he judgeth all things, and he must be spiritual to judge. If he is not spiritual, he

cannot judge; but if he is spiritual, he first judges himself.

When the Holy Ghost is present in power and ungrieved, the simplest speaking of the love of Christ will be enjoyed by the whole assembly. The affections will be lively and fresh towards Him, though the truth spoken may be familiar to all. “Let all things be done to edification.” You may get in one train of thought a happy flow of unity; but you must remember it is the power of the Holy Ghost which produces it.

Chapter 2

Fragment: 1 Timothy

In 1 Timothy there is nothing of privileged relationship. The Father is not spoken of, nor children, nor the Bride, the Lamb's wife. It is God in His own nature and being, a Savior, but God as such in nature. Hence also law and Judaism are left behind, useful in their place; but the truth is God with man by a Mediator between God and men. The other point is by the by—the public order of the Church in the world, guarding against false doctrines. The Church is the witness of truth in the world, the display of that truth having been in Christ.

Chapter 3

The Achill Herald Recollections: Part 1

Nos. I., II., and III.

My attention having been drawn to these remarks, I will content myself with a very few words of comment. Can these good men, whether of the English Magazine or of the Irish Journal, be aware, first, that the writer of the tracts on “Darbyism” is thoroughly unsound, in one or more of these very tracts launching out against Brethren so-called because they refuse all fellowship with his denial of eternal punishment? He holds the notion of the annihilation of the wicked. Is it a dishonor to be the object of such men's attacks? Secondly, it is utterly false that Mr. Darby has fallen into Mr. Newton's heresy. In the January Number of the Bible Treasury for this year, page 205, a very recent document of Mr. N. was cited, which attacks those he too styles the “Darbyites,” instead of welcoming them as converts, and (what is more serious perhaps) coincides in doctrine with the late assaults on Mr. D. Like them, Mr. N. denies any sufferings of Christ besides atoning ones. Thirdly, the Collected Writings of Mr. D., now in course of publication, utterly disprove the statements of the Achill Herald as well as of the Rainbow; for they show that from the earliest days of the movement till now the same principles were asserted, the same object was avowed. Take the very first part as a witness, and the second article, “Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ.” (Dublin, 1828.) This is as fresh and distinct as possible, and in a practical point of view. It would be impossible for any godly soul who accepted that paper as a just application of divine truth to the actual state of Christendom, to continue a churchman or a dissenter. And in fact neither the writer nor those who felt with him as to this remained at that date in the denominations of which they had previously been members or ministers. Fourthly, the statement that one of the “Brethren's” leading characteristics from the commencement was to reject an ordained ministry hardly agrees with the preceding allegation. This must of itself separate them from all the denominations. But the most singular appendix to this is that these men seem to blame Brethren because, as a consequence of rejecting what they regard as an unscriptural innovation, it becomes a question of the best qualified men taking the lead in their assemblies. Is not this God's will? Would they think it wiser or more scriptural to own as guides the worst qualified? “Hoc Ithacus velit, et magno mercentur Atridae.” But we have learned that the Lord gives gifts to His servants, to every man according to his several ability.

I must add, however, that no brother of intelligence demurs to ordination by those who are really called to ordain. We own it as of God when a Paul or a Titus appointed elders; but not having the title of either, we refuse to go beyond our measure and only do what our power from God enables us to do according to His word, pretty much as the assemblies did in early days when they had not the advantage of being visited by an apostle or an apostolic man. Is not this a humbler and truer position than national or dissenting makeshifts for proper apostolic or equivalent appointment? Our friends have neither apostles nor their delegates one whit more than we; yet they assume to ordain without that due ordaining power. Who then are most right? Who are guilty of insubordination?

The great mistake made by our friends is their oversight of the fact that in the primitive state, according to scripture, there was an open door for the exercise of every gift from the Lord, both within and without the Christian assembly, whether or not there happened to be elders in this or that particular assembly. Modern practice, Established or Dissenting, forbids this free action of God's Spirit, which was certainly and confessedly the order even when apostolic order reigned.

“Brethren” believe that God has revealed this for action at all times; for this, unlike ordination, does not demand the presence or mission of an apostle. That is, we in this simply act as members of Christ's body; our friends (who are equally members with us) neglect this which is open to them and their duty, while they set up to ordain, which none can do legitimately but an apostle or his deputy. Which of the two courses then is most lowly and obedient?

As to the sorrowful divisions of “Brethren,” we grieve deeply over them and still more over the want of faith and spirituality which was, of course, their cause. But our brethren will agree with us, surely, that no failure on the part of individuals can justify our abandoning the will of God, supposing now that it is His will that we should meet according to His word and looking to His ever present Spirit to guide. They may be assured also that if they knew better the facts, they would judge more kindly. Is it righteous to credit every evil tale which disaffected or excommunicated individuals say of us?

The three questions at the end of No. I. seem to us questions of unbelief. The only question is, What is God's will for His children? Does He not set out in His word one body as well as one Spirit? Does He not condemn schism and denominations in principle? Is His will or word changed now? Is it a hopeless thing to obey it? None will condemn separation to follow individual teachers more strongly than “Brethren.” The only right course for teachers or taught is to follow the Lord. Will our friends help us to do this more fully? Are they willing to follow Him more fully themselves? Let us pray for each other, as well as set forth the truth without fear.

No. II. need not detain us. If the writer does not think that subordination is sought, found, and valued among “Brethren,” he is in error. That we fail in this as in all other excellent things is our sorrow. But is this peculiar to us?

The writer, however, is still more wrong in implying that we deny appointment of elders as well as of deacons. He has mistaken “Fundamental Principles;” but in fact (through inadvertence, I am sure) he has not borne a true witness to it. 1 Tim. 3; 4:14, and Titus 1:5, 9, 10 do not speak of ministry as such, but of elders or bishops. These last required and received due external appointment. Such is the uniform teaching of the book censured. Let a single passage be produced to the contrary. But in the early Church Scripture shows a number of gifted men exercising their ministry in the word, besides elders whose business was local rule, though, of course they might labor in the word and doctrine if they had suited gift. It is therefore our friend (the Editor, probably, of the Achill Herald) who mistakes both our principles and the light of scripture. Rejection of invalid and unauthorized appointment is a consequence of our adhering to the word of God; but we are not so childish as to refuse the principle of outward appointment, nor the fact where it is duly carried out. Do they not know that “Brethren” have had hands laid on them according to Acts 13, which does not involve the claim of apostolic authority? The basis of what they call our system is nothing of this sort, but the recognition of the continued presence of the Holy Ghost in God's assembly on earth to give power, as working in it and the members in their

several places in it, to do God's will according to His word.

The case of R. I cannot judge of, save that, though an eloquent and pious man, according to the writer, he was certainly impulsive and unwise. This may account for his return to Anglicanism, as well as for his temporary appearance among “Brethren.” Whatever may be the estimate of the good man with others, he must have been little known among us; else some tradition must have been left behind.

Will the writer in the Achill Herald permit me to assure him that the experience of many among us is that there is too great backwardness to speak even among very competent men, rather than the forwardness which so offended him when he attended? If it was because they were poor and uneducated men, I do not sympathize with the feeling: such were some of the chief apostles. Nor did the power of the Spirit set aside the evidence of their lack of human polish, as we gather from Acts 4:13. It is in vain to allege that they were inspired; for I am speaking, not of writing scriptures, but of God's sovereignty in calling whom He will to serve in His Church. It may be pleasanter for refined and even for vulgar people to hear men of education; but it is impossible to defend from scripture the plan of confining to such the ministry of the Word either in or out of the congregation. Nor is any amount of knowledge in a real Christian what scripture calls gift, which may be now, as of old, given of our Lord to a poor man as well as a rich. If not, why not? Without gift the ministry of any man is a sham; while the exercise of gift by the humblest Christian is real ministry. Compare Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; 14; 16; 2 Cor. 4; 5; Eph. 4; Col. 2; Phil. 1.; 1 Peter 4

No. III. calls for even less notice. The story of R. fills the imagination of the writer, with the added tale of some lady who, by his account, acquired a most unseemly influence in his congregation. The Achill Herald may be more or less exact in his statements, which are much too vague for any careful mind to conclude from. All I can say is, that though I know for a good many years those called “Brethren,” abroad as well as in Great Britain and Ireland, I never heard of such persons or such doings, save as coming under discipline when the least approach to them was attempted.

Our reason for separation from the Establishment and Dissent is, not merely because of practical evils existing in these bodies, but mainly because they are not and never were (what alone we see in scripture) assemblies of those received as accredited believers, gathered unto the name of Jesus (not peculiar views, or nationalism), and looking to Him as Lord to act by His Spirit according to His word in their midst. It is a very rare thing for “unruly and vain talkers” to rise in the midst of the assemblies; but if they should there is ample provision to deal with such scripturally: their “mouths must be stopped;” and so they are. Our faith in the presence of the Holy Ghost does not weaken our hands, but the contrary; and God is faithful both in hearing prayer and in giving power to convince (in private, and, if necessary in the last resort, also in public) the gainsayers. We believe that ministry is both a divine and a permanent institution, as certainly as the Church or assembly is. We believe that a few are gifted to minister in the word to the many; we believe that some are gifted to rule or exercise oversight, who may or may not be called of God to preach or teach. But there is not the smallest abandonment of our faith either in owning that individuals may sometimes speak in the flesh, not in the Spirit, in the assembly, or in using such means of repressing this as scripture provides. Cannot the writer see that the case of the assembly as having the Holy Spirit to direct it stands on ground precisely analogous to the individual Christian? The one, like the other, is God's temple; neither is infallible, both are bound to act in the Spirit by

the word: Just as the Christian may fail (as we all do individually, the Editor of the Achill Herald, no doubt, like ourselves) so the assembly is liable to the failure of individuals in it as well as corporately, but it is none the less under the responsibility of the Holy Ghost's presence and guidance, which in both cases is the most powerful means both of judging the wrong and of supplying power to walk aright.

The writer is totally misinformed as to the real facts both of “Brethren” and of the seceders who have recently attacked them. But I have said enough to convince fair minds, even among those opposed to us, that our censor is in collision with scripture; no less than with those who are today acting on it at all cost.

Chapter 4

The Achill Herald Recollections: Part 2

I proceed to review briefly the rest of these “Recollections of Separatists,” having noticed the first three in the Bible Treasury for April.

No. 4 consists chiefly of a notice which seems intended to decry “Brethren” through exposing the alleged infirmities and faults of a valued and now departed servant of Christ, who “was intimately known to the writer, and greatly esteemed and beloved as a brother in Christ, for his many excellent and amiable qualities.”

It seems that when some Roman Catholic boatmen were rowing them in Dublin bay, J—'s countenance once betrayed grief when the writer himself spoke strongly to some Roman Catholic boatmen about errors of Popery! J—may have been right or wrong; but what has this to do with “Brethren?” Are they morbidly shy of error in Popery or Protestantism? Again, J—refused fellowship at the Lord's table to a Christian whom he believed to be compromised by communion where Christ was deeply dishonored, though not himself charged with holding false doctrine. Is neutrality right in such cases? Lastly, when the Achill Herald writer once complained of his trials in the Achill work, J—said he counted his own among “Brethren” far greater. The rest of the paper attacks “Brethren” for their want of missionary zeal, especially in the Achill mission, and somebody who censured the writer for seeking a magistrate's protection from Popish violence. What is the weight of all this? The delicacy too of the allusions to the deceased may be questioned, and the writer's measure of himself as compared with his friend. I confess I should be disposed to draw an inference unfavorable to the living rather than to the dead, and to impute part of the misleading influence to the party-spirit and self-importance so hard for a clergyman to escape.

No. 5 tries to contrast apostolic labors with “Brethren's.” Let me say a few words. First, the apostles in going forth to preach the gospel far and wide had not to do with such a system of corrupted Christianity as we see around us now-a-days. Secondly, if work among heathen is the one right labor, why does the Achill Herald press it among Roman Catholics? If right among misguided Papists, is it wrong or uncalled-for among misguided Protestants? Thirdly, it is a mistake that “Brethren” do not labor, nor contribute to the support of laborers, among both heathen and Roman Catholics. But we hold that the preacher lowers the dignity of the Lord's call by being the employee of a society or even a so-called church—that he is and should be simply the Lord's servant. In scripture “service of the Church” is quite distinct from ministry in the word. We hold too that the yoking of believers and unbelievers in the professed work of the Lord is forbidden by God's word (2 Cor. 6), contrary to the practice of the existing religious societies, which take and seek from the Gentiles all they can get. At the same time, while I have no sympathy with the false expectations and the vainglorious reports of most of these societies, I am free to confess how short we ourselves come in living only to serve the Lord and spending all we have in helping on His work. I would that “Brethren” and all other saints were incomparably more devoted and self-denying in the fellowship of the gospel and the Lord's objects generally than they are. With those Christians who live at their ease, I have no sympathy, least of all where they ought to know

and do best.

Nos. 6 and 7 betray the total incompetency of the Achill Herald for the task it assumes. The writer talks of Mr. Newman as a “rival leader of the Brethren!” This will be as new to our readers, as that Mr. Darby was separated from “for denying the imputation of Christ's righteousness to his believing people!” People so ignorant ought to learn or be silent.

I must add that the writer's knowledge of our views is as glaringly at fault as of facts and persons: is his knowledge of scripture more accurate? Where does God's word make ordaining elders to be a standing institution? Where does it guarantee the permanence of the requisite authority? That “gifts” are secured as long as Christ's body needs them is allowed; for gifts never required ordination by man, but come direct from Christ. On these gifts depends ministry, which we fully allow to be continued by the Lord now as of old. But scripture never speaks of elders appointed without apostles or apostolic delegates. You cannot, therefore, have the one without the other: if you have no apostles, how scripturally can you have elders in due form? It is ridiculous to suppose that, because a society or even the law of a country calls a man a bishop, he can ordain like Titus or Paul.

But there is such a thing as spiritual power. An evangelist proves his gift by the conversion of souls; so does a teacher by edifying exposition of scripture; as an exhorter does by urging truth home. A pastor toils in love to the sheep and lambs of Christ, repressing the unruly, and encouraging the timid, and helping souls in general. There is no real difficulty, as a general rule, in discerning these gifts where they exist, any more than in forming a conviction as to converted and unconverted. Of course there may be mistakes in both respects; but God is faithful and knows how to correct where He is leaned on.

Hence “Brethren” eschew the religious radicalism of dissent, and fully own gifts differing among the members of Christ's body. They hold that some are called to rule and that no one is free to be unruly. Nothing is simpler, therefore, on their principles than the dealing with “unruly and vain talkers,” should such arise among them, which is comparatively rare. Of this class, I fear, consists a considerable part of the clergy, national and dissenting, against whom their congregations have no godly resource. Their “orders” maintain them, spite of ignorance and worse. Scripture, as ever, shows the more excellent way. And so it is found in fact among us, unless with a morbid soul here or there who suffers “agony,” instead of acting in faith and using the power the Lord has given him for common profit and blessing.

The account of D., a zealous Baptist, does not call for notice. We can reprove eccentricities in good men, but must bear the reproach of the Achill Herald if we do not exclude them from Christian fellowship. Would he really have us do so? These are a part of our trials, but we share them with our blessed Master.

It is difficult to suppose a man serious who contends that the English Establishment ever admitted the sovereign action of the Spirit in the Christian assembly. Nor can I acquit the writer of trifling when he argues that faith in Christ can consist with denying the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost. We hold that the right line is to do as the early Church did—to receive all who make a credible confession of living faith in Christ; and then to maintain among those received godly discipline in doctrine and conversation. I think the allusion to “the cave of Adullam” as against us is

the less happy, when one remembers that, though the outward pomp and power might be found in Saul's court, God's king, God's prophet, and God's priest were with the poor despised company in that cave.

Was it better with the Church in the days when they walked as we seek to do now, holding to all the word of God in the power of the Spirit; or when the Church began to protect herself by human creeds and confessions?

As for the account of “Brethren” the writer gives, he must forgive my saying it is wholly erroneous. It is untrue that there is any “section” which denies eternal punishment; nor is Mr. Newman at the head of any. So the other “section” is equally misunderstood. And why the rash speeches of zealous but unformed young evangelists (many of whom are not and never were in fellowship with us) should be thrown in, it would be hard to understand, if the writer were not often careless of his facts and statements in his zeal as accuser of the “Brethren.”

It is false that “Brethren” now or at any time claimed to be “the very body of Christ.” What really distinguishes them is practically and in principle contemplating all the members of that one body, and receiving them frankly, while they appear to us to walk after a godly sort, to the Lord's table; in separation from the world, in a scriptural way. This is obviously impossible in the English Establishment or in dissenting societies. We do desire purity of life for ourselves and all saints, and we exercise discipline according to scripture, as far as we have light and power from God; and we believe that, our position being scriptural, this is practicable amongst us, not where the ground taken is unscriptural and human rules are the guide. But as to denying that there have been painful falls among those received, this be far from us. These have always been true of Christian assemblies, whether rightly gathered or wrongly, and we never expected to escape them. Do we deal with them scripturally when they occur in our midst? This is the only just question, which does not occur to the Achill Herald. But it seems to me that they greatly dishonor Christ who retail such cases against us, instead of according to us their help and sympathy. Are they so blind as net to see that the early assemblies at Rome, Corinth, Colosse, &c., had just the same sources of shame and sorrow as we have now? What must we think of him who would rake such things together in order to condemn what God owned as His assemblies? It is not the entrance of evil which is incompatible with the character of a true assembly of God, but the inability or refusal to exercise discipline according to His word. Where any assembly amongst us so refuses, we disown that assembly. But it is not uncommon, first, to collect and print scandal against “Brethren,” and, next, to sympathize with those who do not exercise discipline rather than with those who do. How does all this appear in the sight of God? To call “fruits of separatism” the cases of moral evil which we have judged solemnly by God's word, I believe to be iniquity which God will judge. It is also wrong to say that we think there is no danger either of sin or of self-deception.

No. 8 objects to sect-making. So do we most earnestly; and of course to old sects, as well as new. The question is, What is a sect? Is not the English Establishment one? Must a Christian belong to a sect?

“The main body of the baptized” is; I suppose, Popery. Idolatry is not the only evil that justifies separation. No Christian is free to sanction any evil or error in what claims to be God's Church. But the grand point is that neither the Establishment nor Dissent ever took or even contemplated the original ground of God's assembly. As to the railing tracts by angry men cited in the Achill Herald,

they are best left in silence. If such tracts as these can overthrow us, we deserve to fall; but my opinion is that the condescension to use such weapons shows the moral state of our adversaries, and can only injure themselves. Those, within or without, who can be influenced by such reasoning, we can well spare.

Chapter 5

Fragment: Acts 7

Acts 7 - I had not sufficiently observed the completeness of the whole view given at the close of the discourse. First, on the testimony of the prophets, the whole Jewish foundation is set aside as a dwellingplace of God, as being mere creation. Next, as to the moral position of the Jews, they had not kept the law; they have betrayed and murdered the Just One; and they were, as ever, resisting the Holy Ghost. Thus their whole condition was brought out. Then we have the contrast: a man full of the Holy Ghost, heaven opened, the man Jesus seen in glory, the cross, and likeness to Jesus, the spirit being received up.

Chapter 6

Fragment: 1 John 1

1 John 1 “That which was from the beginning,” denotes that the life, though in its source eternal, was looked at as in man, a new and absolutely original thing. This is very important. As to its nature, the life, which is our life [as Christians], is an entirely new original thing as regards man; for it was with the Father from all eternity. But it began in itself in Jesus as shown down here. It is no modification of the first Adam.

Chapter 7

Fragment: Life and Death

John 11 - Jesus as the God of life enters the house of death. He had done so ever since sin had worked. (See Gen. 3; 6:18, Ex. 12, Josh. 2) Faith has thus always talked of life in the midst of death, as we see in the same chapters. Nature is not equal to this: witness the disciples Thomas, Martha, Mary, and her friends in this chapter. So the experience of all our hearts, and even of our religion.

Peter talked of life in Matt. 16, and Jesus said, Flesh and blood had not given him that power, which all in this chapter proves. The Rock-life (Matt. 16:18.) is the victorious, infallible life of the Son; and He speaks of it here. (Ver. 25, 26.) It is such life the Son communicates: death touches it not.

Chapter 8

Fragment: Unity and Christ

Popery attaches Christ to unity, and hence may and does legalize with his name every corruption and evil. Christianity attaches unity to Christ, and therefore gives it all the character of grace and truth that is in him—gives it all his excellence

Chapter 9

Fragment: Christ Alone

This position of Christ is very striking as showing the absolute intrinsic perfectness of His love and obedience. There is an end of man. All that was in man was hatred to God in goodness; so that he has no sustainment from man—only evil. He turns to God, and there He is forsaken. Broken, and more than broken, pressed up to death, from man He turns to God and finds forsaking. He was left alone, repelled by man and in a certain sense by God when He turned to Him—was alone, accomplished all in His own love and obedience, and perfected the work, so that revelation could say, “Therefore doth my Father love me.”

Chapter 10

Fragment: Christ Dwelling in Us

Christ dwelling in us—that is light, life, fragrance, holiness. Many seek Christ within before finding Christ without, and so cannot attain to peace; many, after finding Christ without, do not seek diligently to have Christ within. To have both Christ without and Christ within is peace and purity.

Chapter 11

The Christian Observer: Part 1

This evangelical magazine again assails the “Plymouth Brethren,” as they call them. Are they wise? It may be doubted; for while they own their hopelessness of convincing those they oppose, we are pretty sure that, the more they write on the subject, the more they expose their want of acquaintance with the principles of those attacked, with the Scriptures, and even with their own indefensible position. Many godly and intelligent persons outside “Brethren,” some even in their own Anglican fold, are ashamed of their advocate, and of his objections, which are never well-founded, sometimes suicidal, always frivolous. We are not so unreasonable as to expect that those who pronounce the clerical system to be anti-scriptural can ever find favor in the eyes of clergy as such; but there are servants of Christ who, spite of being clergy men, value the faith of those who at all cost carry out practically what they themselves know to be according to God's word. Naturally, among laymen so-called, there are many more who agree with us that the clerical system grew at best out of a graft of Judaism, that it is wholly opposed to Scriptural ministry as instituted of the Lord, and that it is inconsistent not merely with the best interests but with the fundamental constitution of the Church of God. Of course, those who justify that innovation of patristic times cannot cry up those who denounce it as sinful. The next best thing they can do, as far as we (not they) are concerned, is to cry us down; for this always makes manifest their own weakness, gives candid Anglicans an opportunity of comparing scriptural principles and practice with their own ways as well as ours, and keeps the subject as one of present, permanent, and great importance before all who read and hear. More prudent adversaries avoid the perilous game of confronting the Scriptures as to ecclesiastical ground, walk, and discipline, on which the so-called “Brethren” seek to act in the face of Christendom which let them slip from the earliest days as impracticable.

By those who read this journal, whether among or outside “Brethren,” a refutation of these articles can hardly be wanted. The writer is therefore under a surprising and groundless illusion if he really believes what he says, that the former article “seems indeed (and here it has exceeded our expectations) to have gone, like a Palliser shot, right through all the iron coating of their system, and to have caused much fright, even within the vessel, by the scattered splinters.” (Page 896.) There is as much truth in this romance as there was weight in the arguments; but the self-complacency of the whole thing is singularly grotesque.

In the same page the writer claims no small vantage-ground in being able to look at us from without. Will he dispute that it is better sometimes to look from within as well as without? But granting that a look from without has its value, does he not perceive that on his own showing the advantage is greatly on their side who have examined Anglicanism as well as “the Brethren” both from without and from within? Our mathematical friend ought not to need the lesson that a whole is greater (or better) than a part. For myself, I believe that the proposed criterion is only partially true, and quite fails in divine things. There is a testimony to those without, sufficient to leave without excuse, as will be seen another day, and now used by the grace of God to produce conviction through faith; but all our best blessings in Christ, or even in the Church, His body, must be tasted

within in order to be adequately known. But let us hear our accuser.

“One of the gravest charges we have to make against the Plymouth Brethren is, that they take the most extraordinary liberties with God's Holy Word. While professing the most entire subjection to every word of the Lord, and chiding all who do not join them with the want of subjection, they set aside the far greater part of Scripture as not applicable to the present age of the Church, and as of no present authority or obligation. Here we shall be met again with the charge of misrepresentation; but we assert that this is no misrepresentation in the sense we mean. Their great knowledge of Scripture, and their readiness in applying it in its spiritual sense, is one of the things we continually hear advanced in favor of the Plymouth Brotherhood. We fully admit that they are most of them well up in the contents of the Bible; that they are very ready with quotations; that they can find a spiritual sense for almost every word of it: but here lies our complaint. They spiritualize it till they pulverize it all into fine dust, which any one's breath may blow clean away. Now for the proofs. They condemn us of the Church of England for repeating the Psalms of David in our Christian service; these, they say, are Jewish, expressing feelings belonging to the Old Dispensation, and altogether unsuited to the new: thus the whole Book of Psalms goes aside, except in the spiritual sense in which parts of it may be thought to relate to the person or work of Christ. With this aside goes the whole of the Old Testament, except so far as that is prophetical or can be spiritualized.” (Page 897.)

Did one ever hear greater confusion and absurdity, giving the writer credit for meaning to say the truth? The first proof, then, of this heinous charge is that we spiritualize the Psalms! That we read them habitually alone and with our families, that we hear them in our assemblies, that we preach on them and expound them and write on them and publish our expositions far and wide, and this not alone historically or prophetically, but also for our soul's profit and blessing and the present edification of all believers, does not satisfy. “Here lies our complaint. They spiritualize.” Now I appeal to any intelligent man in the English Establishment: Does not the Christian Observer herein state exactly the reverse of the truth in both its parts? Is it not plain and notorious and undeniable matter of fact that those who use the Psalms in their Christian service must necessarily spiritualize them? and that one main reason why “Brethren” do not use them as the expression of their worship is because they refuse to spiritualize the Psalms of David? They believe the Psalms in their plain and direct meaning, and accordingly see in them the sympathies of the Messiah with the godly Jews, also their Aaronic priesthood, incense, sacrifices, and all the other appurtenances of an earthly land and a city here below. All this the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches them to be now superseded for the partakers of the heavenly calling, on the footing of accomplished redemption and of a priest after the order of Melchizedec, no longer typified or predicted, but actually on high appearing in the presence of God for us.

It is therefore the Christian Observer's own system, not Plymouth Brethrenism, which really comes under the charge of spiritualizing. For those who employ the Psalms of David in the Christian service as the proper and full expression of Christian worship are obliged to fall back on the mystical process in its extreme form in order to effect a tolerable metamorphosis. Hence David's throne must be made the throne of God; Israel, Judah, &c., must set forth Christians; Zion and Jerusalem must be the Church now on earth, now in heaven; the pleasant land has to be construed of the Father's house; the wars must be taken as a figure of spiritual conflicts, and the destructive judgments on the enemies of the Jews must be converted after some analogous

fashion. If this be not spiritualizing, what is? Is it not the basis on which reposes the use of the Psalter in so-called Christian services all over Christendom? Was it not the system (probably derived from Platonizing Jews) of Clemens Alex., Origen, as of Jerome and other Latins, and soon prevalent, all but universal? From this mischievous system the Reformation delivered only in part, not merely because the Reformers, like ourselves, were but disciples imperfectly instructed, but because they were much fettered and hindered by their respective governments from carrying out all they saw. However this be, and whether spiritualizing be right or wrong, the misapprehension of our censor is as complete as can be. For spiritualizing, which he so unqualifiedly blames, is abjured by the “Brethren” and is in full force in the Establishment; and the use of the Psalms in the Christian service, for which he contends, is only consistent on the ground of spiritualizing, which he mistakenly lays at our door.

The truth is that the Psalms, like the law, are divinely inspired and profitable to all: only like the law, they must be used lawfully. I quite acquiesce in the principle of the Christian Observer that what is called spiritualizing is dangerous where it supplants or interferes with the real distinct scope of the Holy Ghost in any part of God's word. But I appeal to his own conscience: does he not perceive that he wrote under some strange spell which inverted his vision and falsified his conclusion? For beyond a doubt it is his own system, not ours, which, to accommodate the Psalms to Christian purposes, yields to the common error of spiritualizing, which we both agree in denouncing. “Brethren” however, I humbly think, enjoy a decided superiority over their unexpected ally in this, that they honestly act out what they believe by God's grace—at least such is their hearty desire and strenuous aim. Hence, rejecting the later patristic and still popular mysticizing of the Psalms, they believe that the evident character and contents of that wondrous book demonstrate it to be an inspired provision, as for the past, so for the future devotions of Israel, in public and private; while it also opens its treasures to us, Christians, meanwhile, furnishing copious, and rich, and touching expression to the heart's exercises and outpourings before God for the present and all time. In our walk and varying states of soul, beside prediction of Christ and His work, who shall set limits to the measure of our appropriation and enjoyment of the Psalms? Certainly not the “Brethren.” Here the Christian Observer is inexcusably ignorant and mistaken. If he takes the ground of competent knowledge, I arraign him of positive untruth. The “Practical Reflections on the Psalms” in the Bible Treasury, not to speak of what everybody knows who knows “brethren” moderately, suffice to contradict flatly his statement. Indeed the New Testament freely applies the Psalms as we use them freely. But thence to infer that the Psalms contemplate our present standing and service as Christians is as false and unreasonable as it would be to deduce, from a similar employment of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, that we are not under grace but law, with an earthly priesthood, carnal sacrifice, and a worldly sanctuary.

The same principle applies to the Old Testament. None but the most ignorant fancy it is the same state of things now that the blood of the new covenant is shed, though the knowledge of it is not yet given to the house of Israel. The writings of the Old Testament mainly occupy themselves with the state of people under the law, save that the prophets, as indeed the types of all the other books, looked on to better things. Faith now knows, as to all the promises of God, the Yea and Amen in Christ. All Scripture accordingly is for us in these days of the gospel; the mistake is that it is all about us. The state before the fall differed essentially from that which followed the fall; and new conditions ensued on the flood. The call of Abram and the dealings with the fathers were not

at all the same as those known previously. So also the days of Moses saw new ways of God, as the law of course raised the question of righteousness in a more definite shape than had been before it was given. Then, again, without noticing the details of Israel's history or the times of the Gentiles which began with the supremacy of Babylon, the coming of Christ and yet more His cross laid the foundation for all that is now or ever shall be, though even so the age to come will be wholly diverse from that which now is, and the eternal state, when the new heavens and new earth are in their full and final consummation, will differ from both as indeed from all the past dispensations also. Now the Scriptures treat of all these varying states from first to last, and the revelations of God adapt themselves in His wisdom to all that has been or will be during the vicissitudes of the earth or rather of men upon it. That they are all about us who now believe in Christ is untenable; that they are all for our instruction and direction, none can hold too tenaciously, which is indeed the reason why we notoriously study the whole from Genesis to Revelation. If they considered that any part of the Old Testament was not of real present value to the soul, it is absurd to suppose that “Brethren” generally, abroad or at home, teachers and taught, would read, hear, teach, meditate on it as they do. The only persons entitled to bring such a charge are men so grossly in the dark as to deny all difference of dispensation, if there be such. If the Christian Observer allow (as I presume they do) different dispensations, they admit the principle which lies at the bottom of their objection: all else as to this is a question of detail and degree.

“But worse still: it is not the Old Testament only that is thus made null and void as respects authoritative instruction, but also a great part of the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew, for instance, it is assumed, was written specially for the Jews, and contains peculiar Jewish phraseology, such as the expression, ‘the kingdom of heaven:' therefore it is ruled that it relates specially, if not only, to the intermediate dispensation, or period between the birth of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost when according to the Plymouthites, and not before, the Church of God came into existence.” (Page 897.)

“Brethren” need not to be told that in every respect this is a string of blunders, founded on truth or statements which the writer did not even comprehend. “As respects authoritative instruction,” they hold that all Scripture stands on the same foundation which never fails. They do hold, as Christian writers have done from the earliest days to our own, that Matthew was inspired to write his gospel in view of the Jews and the relations of their Messiah, and the consequences of His rejection; but they see with equal clearness that “the kingdom of heaven” goes through the entire dispensation, as it is called, in its present mysterious form (chap. 13), and that it is the only Gospel in which Christ announces the building of His Church (chap. 16), and lays down the spirit which ought to regulate discipline in the case of one brother trespassing against another. (Chap. 18) The Christian Observer ought to be more careful: the allegations are quite unfounded, though it may be unintentional.

As to the charge that the Church of God, Christ's body, began at Pentecost, it is quite true that such is the conviction of most or all “Brethren,” though no one is required to believe it. The Christian Observer reasons thus— “Mr. Kelly fails to see that he has fallen into the absurdity, in his interpretation of the words— ‘The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved’—of making them to be added to a thing that, according to him, did not exist; or rather, to go a little further back, the three thousand souls converted on the day of Pentecost, respecting whom the

word ‘added' is first used, must thus have been added on to nothing, if the Church had no existence before!” (Page 898.) The blunder is exclusively on the part of the Christian Observer. Even if the Lord's adding to the Church daily such as should be saved had referred to Pentecost, the error was disgraceful; for the Lecture criticized had drawn attention to the 120 names of brethren in Jerusalem. Were they, including the twelve apostles, nothing? But the case is in fact much worse. For in Acts 2:47 the Holy Spirit (of whom the Christian Observer likes to hear as little as possible, at least through the “Brethren”) is describing the additions which the Lord was making from day to day after Pentecost with its three thousand souls added to the previous band of disciples and the Twelve. Does the Christian Observer fail to see now that itself alone has fallen into absurdity at the very moment when it was seeking, without reason, to charge it on another?

“He [Mr. K.] finds the word Church for the first time in those words of Christ to Peter—’Upon this rock I will build My Church,' and because the future tense is here used, ‘I will build,' he infers that this must have had reference to what was to take place at the future period of the Pentecost; and because he never meets with the word ‘Church' in the New Testament before, that no such thing was before known of! He thus falls into precisely the same mistake as the Baptists,” &c. (Page 898.) Perhaps it may save time if I at once summon not a P. B. but a bishop of Chester in days of yore, who has never been surpassed there in the combination of solid learning with excellent powers of mind, especially of reasoning—the celebrated John Pearson, in the most celebrated of his writings, a textbook for Anglican clergy everywhere. “The only way to attain unto the knowledge of the true notion of the Church is to search into the New Testament, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice that our Savior, first speaking of it, mentioneth it as that which (Matt. 16:18) then was not, but afterward was to be; as when He spake unto the great apostle, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;' but when he ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when Peter had converted ‘three thousand souls' (Acts 2:41), which were added to the ‘hundred and twenty' (Acts 1:15) disciples, then was there a Church (..) for after that we read, ‘The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.' (Acts 2:47.) A Church then our Savior promised should be built, and by a promise made before His death; after His ascension, and upon the preaching of Peter, we find a Church built or constituted, and that of a nature capable of daily increase.” In his posthumous work containing his “Lectiones in Acta Apostolorum” all this is given again as his ripest judgment, which, as far as it goes, coincides entirely with the “Brethren” and condemns the Christian Observer of ignorance, not only of Scripture but of their own ablest writers, where they were most confident.

Hear again: “Is Mr. Kelly really so ignorant as not to know that the word ■κκλησ■α is constantly used by the Septuagint translators for the Hebrew word which in our English translation is rendered 'congregation' or ‘assembly?' The idea of Church, then, was no new thing. Mr. Kelly makes a great parade of his knowledge of the Greek, and of the various readings of the New Testament, where it suits his purpose: he could even tell us that the Holy Ghost used the singular ‘the Church' where our version has Churches (Acts 9:31); but how is it that he has not discovered that the word, ‘the Church' in the passage, ‘the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved,' is not found in the ancient MSS. but is an unauthorized interpolation; and yet upon this groundless basement he has built his grand fabric, that now for the first time God's Church came into existence.” (Pages 898, 899.)

Now in the same page of the Christian Observer there is printed an extract from my Lectures on the Church, which to any man of sense and temper would prove (if the writer questioned my acquaintance with the fact), that the 70 (as is also done exceptionally in the New Testament) employ the word ■κκλησ■α in the sense of the congregation of Israel. I expressly said “The Church, in the New Testament sense of the word,” i.e., as the body of Christ; and I challenge this writer, or anybody else, to produce instances from the Septuagint where ■κκλησ■α is so used. His insinuation, his logic, and his learning are equally at fault, not to speak of good manners, which I hope one may expect from a decent evangelical journal. If this be so, “the idea of the Church” was a new thing in the sense in question; for there never was before even the thought divulged of believing Jews and Gentiles taken out of their natural associations and united on earth in one body with the Head glorified in heaven. And so far is it from being true that my books referred to contain a parade of Greek and various readings, that, on the contrary, every scholar must see that I refrain from these topics save where the truth would be, in my judgment, seriously affected by reticence. Further, it was my dislike to talk of “the Greek” and “the right translation,” which led me, as I do not infrequently, to speak of the blessed “Spirit of God” saying so and so, which I think I never do unless perfectly sure of my ground. But enough of this. As to the attempt at textual criticism on Acts 2:47, I recommend the Christian Observer to beware of damaging its character by allowing men to venture on such a serious task who are such novices as my reviewer. If his ignorance made him ridiculously timid and captious (not to say more) as to Acts 9:31, his ignorance makes him ridiculously rash as to Acts 2:47. “How is it that he [Mr. K.] has not discovered,” &c. Let me answer that I have not now discovered anything of what he says, but that I am perfectly sure he knows hardly anything of the matter, no matter what books he had to help him. His statement is in every point of view unfounded. 1, I knew the various readings of this verse quite familiarly, but a statement of them here would have been mere “parade,” because the determination of the point is not clear or sure. 2, It is false that the words “the Church” are not found “in the ancient MSS.” Is not the famous Codex Bezae of Cambridge a venerable manuscript? Is not Laud's copy of the Acts (now in the Bodleian) an “ancient MS.?” 3, So far is it from being “an unauthorized interpolation,” that it is the reading of the vast majority of manuscripts, supported by both the Syriac, the Arabic, and Slavonic versions, not to speak of early citations; though it is wanting in the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, a few juniors, and the rest of the versions. 4, So far from being “a groundless basement,” (as says this slashing sutor ultra crepidam), the greatest of living editors, Prof. Tischendorf, who had yielded in his first edition of the Greek Testament, has replaced τ■ ■κκλησ■■ in his following editions (except of course his strange GrecoLatin one, Paris 1842), and Griesbach, who is inferior in acumen to none of the past editors, never removed the words. But the fact is, that the editors who, like Lachmann, omit τ■ ■κκλησ■■ take ■π■ το α■τ■ and from the beginning, of chapter 3 (as in the received text). Now this makes the sense in substance the same as if τ■ ■κκλησ■■ were read. “And the Lord was adding daily those that should be saved together.” In this case Acts 5:11 would be the first occurrence of the word, referring to the assembly, or Church, as an existing and known institution; but this would fall in with the idea that the assembly, not yet begun to be built when Christ was on earth, actually commenced at Pentecost and is ever afterward recognized as a subsisting fact. Lastly, even if the words were removed, my doctrine of the Church is affected no more by their removal than the doctrine of the Trinity by the exclusion of the unquestionable interpolation in 1 John 5. Nor would it be shaken if there were six or twelve dubious insertions of the word ■κκλησ■α, for happily both

the word and the general truth, presented in a variety of forms and phrases, cover a large part of the Acts of the Apostles as well as the Epistles of Paul. But the fact is, the writer next (page 899) repeats (on a vague reference which, as far as I can see, does not confirm in the slightest degree his statement) that Matthew's Gospel is relegated to the transition between the beginning of our Lord's ministry and the development of the Christian system (i.e. Pentecost, page 897). I believe it to be one of his usual blunders; for not only have I failed to discover the smallest ground for it in the “Papers on the Gospels,” reprinted from the Christian Witness, but it is notoriously contrary to the views which everywhere prevail among “Brethren” on the point. What makes the mistake on his part the graver is that he imputes a motive here as he often does elsewhere. Some men never seem to feel that there are those on earth who are above every consideration save homage to divine truth. And here it is my duty to tell him that he affirms what is utterly inconsistent with fact, in saying that “the Plymouthites get rid of the application of the parables, which describe, under the phrase ‘the kingdom of heaven,' the mixed condition of the Christian Church till the Lord comes again, and confine that to a very limited period.” They do neither the one thing nor the other, as every intelligent person who has read their expositions on this gospel, or even short tracts, must know. They teach, on the contrary, that the “kingdom of heaven,” though in substance equivalent to and hence often interchangeable with “kingdom of God,” differs nevertheless in this that the latter is applied to the state of things while Christ was on earth, the former never is said to be come or set up till He went to heaven. They, as strongly as the Christian Observer, do hold that the parables of the kingdom suppose a mixed condition, and that they extend till the Lord comes again. But that “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are not absolutely equivalent terms, is clear and certain from the fact that Matthew uses both terms, and that you could not always if ever substitute “kingdom of heaven” in the few passages in his gospel where “kingdom of God” occurs. Our Lord's teaching we believe to be eternal truth: only we must also bow to His own declaration, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth.” And so He did; and we seek to be obedient to His words and to the Holy Ghost's further communications, whether in the Epistles to the Corinthians or any others. Only we suppose that what is addressed to the members of the Church of God, as to matters of common concernment and duty, do not warrant us, or the writer in the Christian Observer, to claim the authority of Timothy or Titus.

Whether the Christian Observer defends the notion of apostolic succession, is unknown to me: as being an evangelical organ, it is to be presumed that they abandon that pretension to others. Who then is to do the work of Paul and Barnabas in ordaining elders? Who is to take up the task deputed to Titus by the Apostle Paul? Those who claim and exercise such authority ought to prove that they are similarly, or at least validly, invested with it by the Lord. The attitude of “Brethren” is simple and clear. We do not go beyond the word of God, and are thankful that, if we cannot do all that the apostles or their delegates did, we can freely do all that God is pleased to put within our little compass, and find our own blessing and the profit of others proportionate to our fidelity and lowliness, which we pray Him to increase. It is confessed by all men of any weight, and if it were not it is patent to every believer in the word of God, that to preach and pray, to baptize and break bread, never needed ordination even in presence of the entire college of apostles. Hence in doing any or all these things, as God leads and enables us, is strictly within the limits of the general orders of Him whose we are and whom we serve. If any men exhibit the qualities required in such as desire to be bishops, or elders, and deacons, we own them and their work, valuing them for

their work and submitting to them as over us in the Lord. This 1 Thess. 5, 1 Cor. 16, Rom. 12, show we can do without exceeding our bounds, or imitating Paul and Titus, as some do. Far from narrow views of ministry, we recognize real ministers as well as members in the English Establishment, as well as in the various orthodox Dissenting Societies, as heartily as among ourselves. But this does not hinder our convictions that unscriptural arrangements (partly relics of Popery, partly through governmental influence, partly through lack of heed to God's word) have effaced much truth as to the Church and ministry for Christians in general. Is this impossible or even improbable? I am surprised that any man pretending to teach others should fail to distinguish between an exhortation in 1 Tim. 2, meant expressly for all Christian men and women, and a charge as to dealing with bishops, meant for Timothy. Any and all in Timothy's position may act and ought to act thus; but surely all who do should have credentials like Timothy. Who are they now? (Page 900.) Those who set up to do what Timothy or Titus did without their authority seem to act “most presumptuously,” not those who confine themselves within what they are sure is their duty before God.

“Our authority shall again be Mr. Kelly. Upon this point he is most positive and dogmatic. This is one of his statements: ‘In fact, as far as the New Testament speaks—and it speaks fully and precisely’—(the italics in the following are his own)—"no one was ever ordained by man to preach the gospel:” And what is the refutation? For there is nothing like having a clear, downright (“most positive and dogmatic”) statement to deal with, if it be erroneous. “Now this is asserted, be it remembered, in the face of the fact that each of the elders whom Titus was ‘to ordain in every city' was to have this qualification, that he was to be one holding fast the faithful word, in teaching, that he may be able both to exhort and convince the gainsayers.” And then he proceeds to compare me to the voice of the Vatican, a pope, &c. Really the Christian Observer is fallen to a low ebb if they can put forward no more competent person to defend their own system or to combat those whom they may believe wrong. I warned them already of this writer's inability to do service. If they are still unable to appreciate the state of the case, they have many friends who will discern the worth of such talk as this: reasoning it is not, still less is it unfolding the precious and sure testimonies of God. Does the writer not comprehend that preaching the gospel, or evangelizing, is wholly distinct from the functions of an elder? I will not accuse him of anything undue in adopting the marginal alternative, though in my judgment the common text is better than the active sense which thus comes in so awkwardly. But letting it pass, no “Plymouth Brother” doubts that an elder was ordained by competent authority, and that his duty was with sound teaching both to exhort and to refute gainsayers; but how does this prove that he or anybody else was ordained to evangelize? Nay, I am bold enough to go farther and to affirm that multitudes preached freely in the best days of the Church, when the fullest authority was there, without question of ordination; and that he who disputes my affirmation just seems to me open to the reproach of excessive boldness and of no less ignorance of his Bible. (See Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; 18:24-28, &c.) Even teaching was not the work for which the elders were chosen, but to rule. Hence, says the apostle (1 Tim. 5:17), “let the elders that rule (or, take the lead) well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” It was necessary that a bishop should be (not exactly “a teacher” but) “apt to teach,” possessed of a capacity for instruction. Others might be teachers, yet not eligible for exercising oversight, because of the want of moral power for government, which last was the chief desideratum in an elder.

If Scripture nowhere pledges the perpetuation of an ordaining authority, what is the fair inference? Is it not a perfect standard? Was it not provided for all times and circumstances? Did not God who wrote it give us every requisite for obedience and godly order, individually and corporately, ruler and ruled, teachers and taught, till the Lord come? Is anything lacking to its words which ought to be supplied? It is not “Brethren” at least who imply that it is defective and needs either the supplement of tradition, the system of development, or the new inventions of human wit.

Let us test the principle by facts. Who honor most the Epistles, not to the Corinthians or the Ephesians only, but to Timothy and Titus—the Christians who let the government of the day choose the bishops or elders; or those who own they have not those apostolic envoys, and therefore refuse to go beyond their measure, whether as simple disciples or as possessing gifts as teachers, evangelists, &c.? Far from slighting, it is their sense of the superior place and the definite mission of such as Timothy and Titus, which makes themselves shrink from the pretension to appoint and regulate bishops as those did. There is no arguing in a circle, any more than setting aside any scriptures. We cannot but tell the Dissenter that he disobeys them, because in his system the church chooses men to minister in the word and to rule; we cannot but tell the Anglican that he is at least as guilty, because in his system the squire, or the Lord Chancellor, or a college, or the crown chooses similarly both parties in manifest opposition to the uniform practice of the early Church and to the plain word of God. It needs no “positiveness of a pope,” but only the simplicity of faith in Scripture, to know without a doubt that these Dissenting and Anglican methods are at issue with the only principle of ordaining elders laid down in the Bible. Yet because we hold to this firmly and say so, we are charged with nullifying the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and “taking extraordinary liberties with God's written word!” (Page 991.) As honestly asserting the place of apostolic delegates and cleaving to these very epistles, we are obliged to condemn the present practice of Christendom as palpably unscriptural. Will the Christian Observer dare to affirm that Anglican or Dissenting appointments (which indeed cannot both be scriptural) are the same as the apostle enjoined on Timothy and Titus? I can understand his soreness and hard names: it is usual with men who know themselves wrong.

“For what purpose, then, we ask again, as respects us, were the Epistles to Timothy and Titus?” Surely one weighty lesson, and in order not the last perhaps in the present state of Christendom, is that no Christian should sanction a direct violation of that which they teach us as to the appointment of elders. The Christian Observer knows perfectly well that Anglican appointments are not according to those epistles, any more than the popular call of Dissent. If any of the “Brethren” set himself to ordain elders because Titus was commissioned so to do, there would be good reason to challenge his authority and to denounce his acts. Is it not rather too bad to blame us because we refuse any such assumption in deference to these and other scriptures, and frankly allow that none of us has the place of a Timothy or a Titus in this respect?

But the second lesson we gather from these epistles is that a very small part indeed is confined to this peculiar relation of the apostolic delegates to elders. It is in fact with them as with almost all other scriptures: if certain points here and there are special, much the greater portion directly concerns believers in general, and every whit is or ought to be instructive to us all. Thus, from first to last in these epistles, how much there is of the deepest importance to every Christian! The value of sound doctrine, the rejection of fables and unprofitable questionings, the end of what the apostle enjoined, even love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith, and the

danger of missing this in the desire to be law-teachers, with the lack of intelligence which invariably accompanies it; for such pervert the law unlawfully to the righteous, instead of knowing and using its application to the lawless, impious, unholy, violent, unclean, and in short anything else contrary to the sound doctrine according to the gospel of the glory committed to the apostle: all this is but the beginning of 1 Tim. 1. But why need I thus enlarge? The present value “as respects us” is unquestionable; and even that which was exceptional, so far from dying with Paul or Timothy, has this momentous and living use, that it furnishes a divine test to judge whether those who now assume Timothy's functions as to elders have Timothy's qualifications and authority. My knowledge of a magistrate's office and duties, according to the country's laws, does not warrant me to set up myself or my neighbor as a magistrate; but, far from being useless, it may, in a day of difficulty, be the means of preserving others besides myself from owning those who claim to be in the commission of the peace without the necessary authorization (i.e., in fact, from rebellion).

There is a third lesson of great practical value deducible even from the special instructions in the pastoral epistles, where there was no apostle nor apostolic man to appoint local functionaries. They clearly state the qualities spiritual, moral, and even circumstantial, required in bishops or elders. The possession of them all, however unquestionable, would not in my judgment warrant a man to call himself an elder or bishop, nor another who was not duly authorized, nor the assembly so to call him: but it would be the strongest ground, where due ordination could not be bad, for all godly-minded saints to be subject to such, to recognize them as laboring and taking the lead among brethren in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. “Obey your rulers (or leaders, chief men, τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν), and submit yourselves,” would thus apply to the conscience wherever such men watched over their souls in the fear of God, though no apostle or apostolic delegate had ever penetrated there.

This may suffice for the argument drawn from the pastoral epistles. A wise opponent would have carefully retired from that field. For it is the part of God's oracles which sentences to death ordinary ministerial appointment as hopelessly as 1 Corinthians exposes the actual departure of Christians from God's order for the assembly, and from the, principle and exercise of gifts in it. (Chaps. 12, 14) Do they so much as think of their indifference to these things?

It is strange that such an effusion should pass muster with a staff of (I hope) grave, godly, and educated, if not learned, men.

As to the remarks in the rest of page 901, it is due neither to the writer nor to myself, still less to the Master, that I should dwell on such improprieties. “To our view, his ‘Fundamental Truths' are so many fundamental errors. It would be easy to demonstrate, had we space for it, that he is wrong, most egregiously wrong, upon every one of his points. He may well be afraid of mathematics. By his method we would undertake to prove anything whatever out of the Bible,” &c. Uninstructed minds are apt to over-estimate their own powers and attainments; but such a specimen of self-confidence, with so little bottom for it, one rarely meets with. With every desire to avoid a style so unbecoming, let us pass on to page 902 where the writer recurs to the supposed error of believing that the Church of God, Christ's body, began after the ascension of our Lord and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now we do not “assume” but produce the amplest testimony of scripture that the Spirit's baptism of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body, the body of Christ, did not exist

before the middle-wall of partition was broken down by the cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit was sent down to unite the members to Him and to each other. It is this state of union with a glorified Head which is not found in the Old Testament. On the contrary, by God's law the Jew (believer or not) was peremptorily, in every detail of walk and worship, separated from the Gentile (believer or not). Nay, even during our Lord's ministry here below, the same separation was, as a rule, maintained when He sent out the twelve to preach over the land of Israel (Matt. 10:5, 6). After His resurrection He gives His disciples a world-wide commission to all the Gentiles; and in due time the Holy Ghost came down baptizing both Jew and Gentile into one body, one new man. Thus and then was revealed that mystery hid previously in God, now made known to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Such is the Church of God, Christ's body. Not a syllable in 1 Cor. 10 intimates that the Old-Testament fathers were members of it. Nobody denies that believers among them were saints, looking for Christ and regenerate of the Spirit; but where are they called Christ's body, or said to be baptized by the Holy Ghost? The writer does not see that there may be many blessings common to the faithful at all times, and a new corporation formed from among the redeemed within given limits for the glory of God. This cannot be determined a priori or on vague general grounds. It would be wiser to weigh the alleged proofs, and above all the Scriptures. Indeed it is a more logical inference from 1 Cor. 10 that the Jewish fathers could not have essential identity with us, because the apostle says these things happened as “types” of us. Now a type suggests resemblance, and not, as he contends, identity with the antitype.

So Heb. 11, to which he next appeals, concludes with a verse remarkably adverse to the notion that they and we form one body; for the words he cites expressly teach that God has provided a better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Instead of being perfected in resurrection glory, when the Lord came and wrought redemption, they had to wait for us who are called to partake of the heavenly calling. (Chap. 3) When we have all got our “better thing,” they will be perfected (not apart from but) with us. That is, the verse teaches with equal distinctness that God has foreseen some better thing as to us, and that we and they are to be perfected together; but not a trace appears of the union of them and us in one body. Heb. 12:23 distinguishes between the spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints), and the church of the firstborn.

Again, if Stephen speaks of Moses being ■ν τ■ ■κκλησ■■ with the angel that spoke to him in Mouth Sinai and the fathers, Pearson and Alford will, with the “Brethren,” correct his error, and tell him that it was the assembly of Israel in the wilderness, not the one body of believing Jews and Gentiles. Will he be bold enough to say that the Bishop and the Dean were “utterly obfuscated by their sectarian theory?” He ought to be more cautious, and not scandalize his evangelical magazine by abusing too strongly men far more instructed and able than himself, when letting out against the “Plymouth Brethren." It is to be presumed that some of its readers are decently acquainted with common Anglican divinity.

Nor does the writer perceive that the argument here surrenders the citadel. Christ, says he, “as ‘the angel of the covenant was in the Church in the wilderness,' as Stephen says (Acts 7:38), before He actually became its human Head, because His incarnation was an anticipated fact in the divine purposes. He existed in posse before he existed in esse, as the logicians say.” This bit of logic is unfortunate. For Scripture speaks of the Church as the πλ■ρωμα or complement of Christ, never of the glorified Head as the fullness of the Church. It is our point in opposition to the

Christian Observer that Christ's headship of the Church was only in posse, not yet in esse, till the basis not of incarnation only but of redemption. It is now confessed that it was not in esse. This is a fatal admission: for that which wants a head is not a body but a trunk or a monster. Scripture never speaks of the body before the head but rather as following it. Thus, Eph. 1 tells us God raised up Christ from the dead and set Him in heaven, “and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” So the figure of the building in Eph. 2 where Christians are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. Was the building begun before the foundation was laid? Our question is one of fact, not of the counsels of God, who of course sees the end from the beginning. Were the question about the existence of Adam and Eve (who set forth the mystery as to Christ and the Church), what would be thought of the argument that Adam and therefore Eve existed in posse in the dust of the ground on the fifth day?

Again, there is nothing about that one body, the Church, in Heb. 13:8, or in Matt. 21:43. One text speaks of the unchangeableness of “Jesus Christ;” the other intimates the rejection of “that generation” which refused Him, and the passing of God's kingdom to a nation producing the fruits of it. What has either to do with the question whether those before and after Christ form one and the same body? This is not reasoning, still less Scripture; but a mere popular notion without Scripture as to those before Christ, and against Scripture as to those since Christ. It is a tradition, founded on grounds which real scholars of his own and all parties explode as untenable. Indeed any Christian can judge for himself.

The motive, too, which he imputes (pp. 902, 903) is his own fancy, and contrary to all our thoughts and words. If he in the least understood our principles, he would see that to constitute a peculiar church of our own is quite foreign to us. We object to making a church, as much as to the churches, so-called, other men have made. We insist on the truth that God made, and intended there should be according to His blessed will and word, but one Church—not, of course, denying any number of assemblies locally severed, but all Christians forming one assembly, the assembly here on earth; all enjoying one Head above and one Spirit below; all joined into one body, so that a member of Christ should be a member of the assembly everywhere, and equally so His gifts of ministry. (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) Such was the fact in apostolic times: Scripture recognizes no other doctrine or practice. “Brethren” only recall believers to the Church God has made, of which they and we are already members, and entreat them to cast away the worn and soiled clouts as well as the new fashions of human texture, and to cleave only to what is of God's word and Spirit.

Next, we come once more to 1 Corinthians and the Christian Observer's never failing misstatement as to both Scripture and ourselves. 1. It is not true that this is “the stronghold of the Brethren.'“ Of course, we believe it to have divine authority over us and all Christians; and it is ridiculous to evade the fact that we are really seeking, cost what it may, to act on it, and that our brethren, Anglican and Dissenting, are not. All Scripture, nothing less, is our stronghold.

2. It is not true that, “because they find at the beginning of this the expression, the church of God which is at Corinth, they conclude that that, as set in order by the apostle, must have been intended to be a pattern church.” We see and say that there is admirable harmony between the address and the contents of the epistle; but we conclude that it is the most largely ecclesiastical, and therefore the most instructive on such matters, from the plain fact (deny it who can), that it

enters into questions of the sort, not only more than any other epistle but, more than all other epistles put together. At Corinth the spirit of schism and party displayed itself early. (Chap. 1) Here the wisdom of the world soon claimed to adorn the doctrine of the cross. (Chap. 2) Here schools of doctrine quickly found mutually opposed votaries. (Chap. 3) Here apostolic authority was widely despised for teachers who allowed the world and flattered the flesh. (Chap. 4) Here gross practical evil was winked at, as if the Christian assembly were not competent and responsible to put away known evildoers. (Chap. 5) Here was seen readiness to neglect brotherly arbitration for the world's decisions, forgetting the grace of rather suffering wrong than compromising the love and glory of Christ; here too moral laxity was an especial snare. (Chap. 6) Here difficulties as to marriage, as to the unmarried, as to widows, and as to slaves, required solution. (Chap 7) Here questions of communion, and conscience as to idols, temples, and things sacrificed, demanded an answer, and his own ministry to be vindicated, however he might have waived its rights; for such was his joy and glory. (Chaps. 8, 9, 10) Here the order as to women, even in points of external decorum, had to be laid down; and also the right mode of celebrating the Eucharist is given. (Chap. 11) Here the operation of the Holy Ghost with a view to the common profit of the assembly, had to be explained; and this, not in view of any local need only but of the Church as such everywhere on earth; for it was not in any one church but in the Christian assembly as a whole that God set, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, &c. (Chap. 12) There too after the sweet episode on love in chapter xii. (how needful in such things!), the apostle had to regulate the exercise of the manifestations of the Spirit, especially for the assembly when they came together. (Chap. 14) Again, after the assertion of resurrection against gainsayers as a foundation truth—not merely the soul's immortality, but the rising of the dead (chap. 15), he lays down the general principle and method of collections for the poor saints, and treats of the various ways of divine grace in the service of Christ here below. (Chap. 16) I have but sketched the salient features, as the chapters pass before the mind's eye: but where can one match these inimitable church canons? Still none that knows the value of what is “written again” thinks of making any spot the stronghold, or any church exclusively a pattern church. There is not even the shadow of an excuse for either misrepresentation. What can one think of a man who, when his mistake is corrected and contradicted, simply repeats it without a word or fact adduced as an excuse for his obstinacy?

8. Who ever dreamed that “the Church of God was to be found only at Corinth, because this expression is used” in the address? Nobody but the Christian Observer in its vain efforts against the “Brethren.”

It is not a gratuitous assumption but a necessary consequence of the inspired character of 1 Corinthians, that “what is there written respecting the Church” is obligatory on every assembly which claims to be on the ground of God's Church. Human churches may take or leave what they like, or do not like, out of this or any other epistle. How striking it is that the very address of this epistle, from which they try to escape (sometimes under the subtle excuse of their deference to other epistles or churches!), is not merely to the Church of God at Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, but “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

Is it honest to say that “the apostle speaks of several things as exceptional, or only of temporary purpose?” This may be convenient to a defender of present things in Christendom; but why not

specify? It is true that the apostle corrects their mingling of a feast with the Lord's Supper; but if he enjoins anything exceptional or temporary, why not say what? If the allusion be to miracles, tongues, &c., it seems to me unworthy of a grave man. His directions as to these things abide, just as his injunctions to a Timothy or a Titus. If such powers exist at any time, they must submit to the apostolic order; and if any man have the authority from God of a Timothy or a Titus, they can appoint and govern as their predecessors did—nay, they are bound so to do. But there seems rather more care taken to assert the general value and authority ecclesiastically of 1 Corinthians than of any other epistle, if one may judge from such passages as chapter 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 9:16; 14:37. Does not this peculiar provision seem meant to guard souls from that prevalent unbelief of which the Christian Observer is here the exponent?

(To be continued.)

Chapter 12

The Christian Observer: Part 2

(Concluded from page 223)

6. “And if that Church were designed to be made the model for all Churches, in all countries, and in all ages, the epistle to it ought obviously to have been the very first epistle Paul wrote. But the First Epistle to the Church of the Thessalonians at least is of earlier date; so is that to the Galatians; and that to the Romans is coeval if not somewhat earlier.” The argument has no force, laying aside the irreverence of dictating to God the order in which He ought to reveal His truth, which lies at the bottom of it. But, in fact, no objection can be more worthless. For there is evident propriety in the Epistles to the Thessalonians taking the priority in time of all others. They develope Christian life in its fresh simplicity and in its capital elements of faith, hope, and love, though correcting specially certain errors into which they fell or were misled in the great article of our hope, and insisting on the moral duties which suit that hope, instead of being incompatible with it, as some vainly supposed. There is no niche which these epistles could so well fill as that in which the Spirit of God was in fact pleased to put them—an initiatory instruction and exhortation to an infant assembly. The date of Galatians is the least ascertainable of all Paul's epistles, some making it first, some last, and many viewing it as intermediate. There is no sufficient reason to postpone it till the apostle's visit to Rome, as the legendary subscription in the common Bible does, followed by not a few names of weight I do not even contend for its being so late as the Epistle to the Romans, which was certainly written at Corinth long before he saw Rome, but after the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus, and even after the second was written somewhere in Macedonia, before his stay of three months in Greece, when and where he wrote to the Romans. But, supposing that the Epistle to the Galatians could be proved to be anterior to 1 Corinthians, contrary to the recent investigation of Prof. Lightfoot, what would be the value of the argument? Who can fail to see that to deliver saints from abandoning grace for the law (which is the point in Galatians) is an individual appeal of the most urgent personal importance, and therefore might well precede the laying down of the divine will as to corporate privileges and responsibilities? But the truth is, that the measure of uncertainty which hangs over the place and time of writing to the Galatians, suits exactly. The point is recovery from a lapse into Judaizing, which might have been either before or after or along with 1 Corinthians. But the Epistle to the Romans was assuredly written in Corinth during the apostle's brief stay in Achaia, after both Epistles to the Corinthians were written and despatched. The Christian Observer therefore is all abroad in the alleged facts: had they been correct, the desired conclusion would not follow.

In a former reply it has been already shown that a model place is not given to the Corinthian assembly more than to any other which the apostle planted or wrote to. We go on the broad ground that the same substantial principles were in force everywhere, that all the assemblies of God recognized the same fundamental truths as to communion, the same exercise of gifts and discipline, the same administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper—all this because the Church is one body, the habitation of God through the Spirit. Scripture is fatal to the present condition of Christendom. Our critic somehow must get rid of the authority that condemns it all. Is not this the

aim of the following remarks? “The apostle of the Gentiles seems to have had no idea of conforming the churches, as established in different countries, among people of different habits, to exactly the same type. That would have been Judaism indeed. There is a certain pliancy in Christianity in this respect. The churches planted by the apostles were, so far as we can discover, differently endowed as to gifts, and so they had prescribed for them different rules of action. The Plymouthites admit that the age or miracles has passed away, so far as the supply of apostles and prophets is concerned. By what kind of logic, then, can they contend for its permanence in the supply of evangelists, pastors, and teachers? If the Plymouth Brethren can exhibit the miraculous gifts possessed by the Corinthian Christians, we, for our part, will not object to their acting by the same rules; but to enforce the rules for their exercise, where the gifts do not exist, would be obviously Pharisaic and foolish. The laws of the first creation of the world were exceptional: the laws of its continued existence are fixed and uniform. Is not the same true of the Church?” (Pp. 903, 904.) Now it is no question of detail, nor of the presence of this or that particular gift in this or that particular assembly. The truth is, not that Brethren contend for some one out of the scriptural churches as a model (for we are convinced that they were all essentially alike as to constitution, the Church in fact), but that our adversaries want no model whatever from Scripture. And no wonder.

I utterly deny the ground of the reasoning. Differences in the measure of supply, varying displays of power there were in apostolic days, but there was one divine system which then pervaded the entire Christian profession, founded not only on a common relationship to Christ but on the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. This then is the true question: Does that relationship still subsist for faith to act on? Is that divine Person still present here below to guide those who desire the honor of Christ in obeying God's word? Let others deny not only that it remains but that it ever was true, and thus vainly deny their responsibility and their guilt. May “Brethren” in their weakness have grace to hold fast the word of the Lord and not deny His name It is not true that all the gifts described in 1 Corinthians are gone, because miracles and tongues are no longer. Does the Christian Observer deny that God any longer sets in the Church teachers (1 Cor. 12)? That He still makes His presence felt in His assembly (1 Cor. 14)? There have been Anglican bishops and archbishops who, spite of their system, fully allowed that the prophetic (not predictive) gift is not extinct, and who yearned and contended for the liberty of exercising it; and this on the same ground of 1 Cor. 14 as “Brethren” do. So far is this chapter from being limited to miraculous displays, that the apostle forbids the exercise of a tongue unless sonic one could interpret it for the edification of the assembly. Such was the grand aim of all—common edification, and this in order and decency. But the order is that of the Christian assembly open to the action of the Holy Ghost through its members—an order undoubtedly believed in and acted on by “Brethren.” Will the Christian Observer dare to say it is obsolete? Will they say that no gifts, not even teachers, exist, because tongues, &c., are passed away? “Laws of creation” is mere clap-trap which can only mislead. God created all things by the Son, by whom too all things subsist. He formed the Christian assembly which can never depart from His word that regulates it, save sinfully.

It is true that it was pre-eminently Paul's province to lay down the authoritative regulation of these matters; but God took care to affirm precisely identical principles by the great apostle of the circumcision. So we read in 1 Peter 4:10, 11, “As every man hath received the gift, even so

minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." This unquestionably supposes the most absolute openness for the Spirit's action in the free working of every gift from the Lord. Not even an apostle, still less the elders or bishops, thought of silencing the lesser gifts. There was room for all, great and small. Nor were gifted men merely at liberty to employ what was given them for the good of souls; they were bound to minister to one another, as good stewards of God's various grace. Otherwise God would not be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. Flesh might take advantage of this; but no human restriction can afford a remedy, but on the contrary it aggravates this evil, introduces others, and in itself outrages God's revealed will. The true guard lies in the conscience exercised before Him and subject to His word. Hence the exhortation of James (chap. 3:1), "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive greater judgment." The abuse of gift was in no way peculiar to Corinth, but the very abuse, whether in one place or another, demonstrates what was the sanctioned principle of God which required the warning, and this where no sign-gift is spoken of, but only such a gift as abides still for the edification of Christ's body. If indeed the Christian Observer's view is that no such gifts as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are still given by the Lord, if they are obliged to substitute for them the scanty mathematical or classical lore possessed by the ordinary graduates of a university, and the common-places of divinity required by an examining chaplain, one can understand that much of scripture ceases to apply either in principle or in practice. It is for the believer to judge between us and our adversaries. We hold that every spiritual gift needed to call in souls and build them up is still provided by our living Head; and consequently that the scriptures which treat of this subject are as applicable and binding as in the day they were written. Whose logic is at fault? Whose principles make scripture a dead letter?

It is remarkable that the principle for which men now contend was anticipated by the Corinthians, and is forever condemned in this very chapter xiv. of the first epistle. The Corinthian brethren also wished a certain "pliancy" in their church. They saw that some of their females were endowed with gifts. Why should people of habits so different from those in Judea, or proconsular Asia, be conformed to exactly the same type? "That would have been Judaism indeed." Surely the apostle of the Gentiles had no idea of conforming all in different countries to the same model! Has not the church power to decree rites and ceremonies? has it not authority in controversies of faith? The apostle of the Gentiles does pronounce on the case, but it is to put down with peremptory hand this licentious self-will which forgets that the Church, even on earth and though composed of living men, is a divine institution, and cannot be altered in its landmarks without rebellion. Did they contend for tongues in the assembly? Did they come together every one full of his own contribution? Did they prophesy ever so many on the same occasion? Did they allow women to speak in the assembly? These were abuses of Christian liberty in the assembly, which must be subject to apostolic ordinance, instead of arrogating the title to please itself according to race, age, or country. "What came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." This is the alternative for the Christian Observer as well as for ourselves. Which of us owns and seeks subjection to the things the apostle of the Gentiles wrote to the Corinthians? Which of us contends for leave to give

up this very portion of scripture as of present obligation? Which of us seeks to originate methods of our own as the Corinthians did? Which of us insists that the word of God comes to us only (not from us as “a certain pliancy” would imply)?

As for the notion that it is illogical to contend for the permanent supply of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, if apostles and prophets are not now vouchsafed, I can only stand amazed at the extent of these men's incredulity as well as ignorance. Are they so far gone as to think that we must have either all the gifts the ascended Christ conferred on the Church at first, or none? Had we the miraculous sign-gifts of those early days, 1 Cor. 14 forbids their exercise, save under peculiar circumstances in the assembly; whereas the edification-gifts were exactly in place and season there. Does this writer believe that we have no edification-gifts now? no evangelists, pastors, teachers? or will he boldly take the other side and claim the continued supply of apostles and prophets too? Nothing is simpler than that the Lord does not furnish gifts to lay the foundation when the foundation is laid; but that He in faithful love continues all gifts needed to build up the saints “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13.) If these divine gifts exist (as we believe) among all Christians, Anglicans, Dissenters, as well as ourselves, it is Pharisaic and foolish to enforce the divine rules? Is it not Corinthianism to seek other rules or no rules at all?

Next, as to Calvin's note on 1 Cor. 1:21 (p. 904), so far from being opposed to our views, few brethren have taught or commented on this epistle, as on others, without similar reflections. God is long-suffering and faithful; but a real assembly of His may be distracted by countless elements of sin, shame, and sorrow. The Christian Observer does not understand our aim, nor does Calvin touch the point. Since Catholicism swamped Christendom, breaking out into the rival systems of the east and west, there has been no gathering of God's children in the power of the Spirit to the name of the Lord as their true and everlasting center on earth. The Reformation, which did so much for putting man in presence of God's word and proclaiming justification by faith, did not clear the revealed truth as to the Church, ministry, worship, &c., from the rubbish of ages. On the contrary, it embarrassed the ecclesiastical difficulty by giving rise to national churches, each with its own peculiar system of government, ministry, and discipline, independent and coordinate. This was pushed out yet farther by the non-conformists at home and abroad who claimed the title to frame churches of their own. So that the result was (not the Church of God on earth, one body, energized by one Spirit, with local assemblies doubtless, but the members and ministers in the unity of Christ's body, but) distinct bodies, Roman Catholic or Greek, National or Dissenting with no proper intercommunion, save occasional or by courtesy, but contrariwise membership and ministry in a church, so that to be a member or minister of one is incompatible with belonging to another. What people call Plymouth Brethrenism is the recall of Christians to the original state of things in its essential features, as of eternal obligation and the only groundwork truly divine. We leave it with God to give this re-assertion of the Church according to Scripture that acceptance which seems good in His eyes; but whether we convince others or not, our own duty remains clear, as it is our joy and, we believe, both glorifying to God and profitable to His children.

It is curious, however, that the Christian Observer omits in its citation the pith of Calvin's answer to the question what appearance of a church was any longer presented in Corinth. Let me supply his words, “Respondeo: Qnum illi dictum esset a Domino, Ne timeas, populus hic mihi multus est (Act.

18:9): hujus promissionis memorem id honoris paucis bonis detulisse, ut Ecclesiam agnosceret in magna improborum multitudine. Deinde," &c. The Lord's word that He had much people in that city sustained his hopes spite of appearances. Now, although satisfied Calvin did not seize the truth of scripture as to much, any more than other great and good men of that day, yet I do not dissent from his conclusion that the true assembly of God in any place may be painfully afflicted with all sorts of evil in the members. 1 Cor. 5 is explicit, as are other scriptures, that it is not the amount of sin that may enter or spring up in the midst, but the refusal to judge, and the consequent sanction given to evil there, which destroys the corporate title of the Church as God's witness here below.

The reader may gather hence how little either the Donatists or the Plymouth Brethren so-called are understood, classed as they are here together. "They are attempting what the Donatists attempted in the first century." (p. 904.) This at least is a discovery! I had been content to know with less pretentious students of ecclesiastical history, that the squabble about the election of Caecilianus (A.D. 311), is the earliest point to which we could look as giving occasion for that famous rent in Africa. From the works of Optatus and Augustine I had learned nearly all that can be ascertained about that turbulent faction. It seemed to be far more a question of discipline than of doctrine if not of party opposition, the Numidian bishops being piqued that they had no part as usual in the election. Felix, bishop of Apthunga, who ordained the new bishop of Carthage, was said to be a traditor during the persecution of Dioclesian, and Caecilianus himself also was accused of ill conduct at that time. The elder Donatus who took part in the election of Majorinus, the Bishop of the seceders, was the bishop of Casae Nigrae of that day; the greater one, who seems to have given the name of Donatists to the party, was successor of Majorinus. Spite of a fierce persecution, which Augustine palliated in the hope that it would be good for their souls, they appear to have gone on sometimes flourishing, and sometimes depressed, till Mohammedanism extinguished both them and the Catholics. Insisting on the rebaptism of all whom they received from their adversaries and refusing all communion save to such as absolutely broke off spiritual connection with others, they differed essentially from the so-called Plymouth Brethren. For we believe, that no ecclesiastical mistake, however grave in itself, calls for such stringent measures, and that extremities ought to be reserved for those who bring not the doctrine of Christ or connive at it.

But there is another discovery as to Scripture which rivals the Christian Observer's sight of the Donatists in the first century, and this in the very next sentence of the same paragraph. (P. 904.) "It is as clear as anything can be, that there never was the 'one body' in the sense the Plymouth Brethren would put upon the words, that is, a church consisting exclusively of true saints (?) in perfect unity one with another (?) since the day that the three thousand, along with the previous hundred and twenty true disciples, assembled with one accord at Jerusalem, and had all things common. The Corinthian Church certainly exhibited the reverse of this: and indeed, in all the apostolic churches, as described in the epistles, we find precisely the same evils, more or less, and still greater moral evils prevailing, than can be found now in any community of Christians. Are there no similar evils, even among 'the Brethren' themselves, with all their pretensions to oneness and to exclusive purity?" (Pp. 904, 905.) I know not how godly Anglicans relish such remarks as these on the dead as well as the living; but I avow that a lower tone of spiritual judgment it has rarely been my pain to meet with. Defamation of the apostolic church seems natural to those who apologize for Christendom as it is, and dislike the testimony to their own departure from God's

word. Here every notion, every statement, is false. The sense said to be put on the words “the one body” is never given by us. We do say that none were received who were not accredited as “true saints;” but we always allow that our brethren of old, like ourselves now, were liable to be imposed on for a time by deceivers or self-deceivers. Such, however, are apt to fall soon into evil of word or deed, were they as clever as Simon Magus, and thus bring themselves by their manifest iniquity under the discipline of the Church. Next, it is a strange deduction from our writings to infer that our sense of the one body supposes not only the Church to consist of none but true saints, but these “in perfect unity one with another,” since the same writer pretends that we count the Corinthians to have been the model for all churches. For the first evil denounced in the first epistle is their schismatical state, which forced the apostle to exhort them to be perfectly united in the same mind, just because they were not. Yet there are throughout more frequent implications that they belonged to “the one body” than in any other epistle; though, of course, the fact that such was their privilege is as often urged to correct their practical short-coming. See especially 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 12:12-27. I do not hide for a moment the extent to which unwatchfulness exposed the inexperienced Corinthian assembly to gross evil, the remains of old heathen habits, or the effect of wondrous power at work among souls so little used to walk in self-judgment and the conscious presence of God. But there is about as much truth or right feeling in the odious comparison of that church with modern communions to the advantage of the latter, as if it were said that the apostles Peter and Paul were not quite so respectable ministers as the modern clergymen of Nationalism or Dissent. The essential thing to remember is that the Corinthians had been really gathered according to God; and though Satan brought in exceeding mischief, still they were in a position and free to use divine remedies according to His word, neither of which features is true of modern communities.

As to the attack, on ourselves, in the rest of the article (pp. 905-913), it is not for us to speak in self-vindication. We can trust God and are not careful to answer such charges; and the rather, as it is evident the writer knows scarcely anything about us. Others will and ought to look more to the realities of things, judged by scripture, than to the thoughts and feelings either of ourselves or of our accusers. Mere vituperation has no force save for the weak and worthless; rarely is it the servant of a good cause. The question of Christendom is with the revealed word, rather than with those who cannot depart from that word knowingly, save at the peril of the soul and in opposition to God Himself. No dissenter who knows us will admit that we have a special dislike of the English Establishment. Equally untrue is it that “Brethren,” to maintain their position, “give us a new version of the scriptures under the title of a ‘Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,' which is their ‘Douay Version.'“ (P. 905.) Mark the trustworthiness of the Christian Observer in common matters before all eyes. The writer must speak at random of what he cannot have examined, if he ever touched the works alluded to. For the fact is that the “Synopsis” is not in any sense a version of the Bible, though its author has also translated the Greek Testament into German and French as well as English. But the most learned men of the English Establishment have recorded their judgment of this English translation, which one of them, inferior as a textual critic to none in this country, recommended to his divinity classes. The writer can know neither the “Synopsis” nor the 'version; else he could not have confounded them, nor have foolishly sneered at either, as “their Douay version.” The “daring dogmatism” of describing the aim and object of each book of scripture, is just what every annotator and every expounder does every day. The only question is, whether the work be done with spiritual insight, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. It requires no great

penetration to see that the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, is not addressed to the assembly as such, but to the saints at Rome (i.e., in their individual standing) and hence, as in chapter 8, brings out their position very fully as “children” and heirs of God. 1 Corinthians, as we have seen, is far more ecclesiastical. He who denounces such self-evident facts as to these epistles may not be a dogmatist nor write mistily; but certainly he must dwell in a land of Egyptian darkness. Would he fain condemn us to the intolerant yoke of his own dullness?

Of the three anecdotes next given to illustrate the spirit of the “Brethren,” I know that the two public ones are not stated truthfully. May one ask if the private case is any better? Is a monstrous tale against well and long known servants of God to be received because it is evil, though none among those acquainted with the facts feels the least need of contradicting it? Trashy scandal neither deserves nor needs notice though some have a natural liking for it. Further, I never knew any “Brother” object to join in family worship conducted by Christians in a Christian manner. And I am perfectly sure that separating the wife from the husband, save for reasons which all Christians would hold as decisive, would never be tolerated in our midst. We have no controversy with our brethren as to such matters; and no man or woman guilty of such shameful impropriety would be allowed a place in fellowship. What can one think then of statements so reckless? or of those who deign to employ them for party or any other ends?

As to our essentially schismatical and sectarian spirit (pp. 906, 907), we have suffered not a little in vain, if we do not utterly condemn it, fruit, branch, and root. But how is it schismatical to abandon all schisms, whether national or dissenting, in order to recur to the original and constitutive principles of God's Church? Is this what the apostle denounces in Rom. 16:17, 18?

It is observable too that in excusing their own intolerance of our refusal to join in ways which we are sure are unscriptural, the Christian Observer avows its gross latitudinarianism. To us it is no matter of opinion but of faith to worship God as the apostolic) church was called to do in holy writings still vouchsafed and obligatory. It is not charity to give up conscience, or to allow self-will, but this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous. To talk about the wise and good of all generations, is idle and false; seeing that every wise and good man knows that the original church action and worship have been abandoned for many ages in Christendom, and that the best and wisest of the reformers (i.e. those who laid the present basis of the greater Protestant bodies) owned how far short they were of the primitive state, and that many of them then and since contested these questions hotly with one another. There are ever so many different modes of worship in Christendom, which may all be wrong but cannot more than one be right. Why this rancor? Is it not fear or hatred of the truth that condemns them? “Brethren” felt that there was no use in owning one thing and doing another, and therefore necessarily left what was wrong in order to do the right thing according to scripture. The Pharisees did not leave the religion of the day, but gave themselves proud airs at no cost in it. Would it have been more righteous or charitable to have gone on, owning our common defection from scriptural duties, but yet persisting in that which we believed to be sinful? This seems precisely what the Christian Observer thinks a more desirable course. Let Christian conscience judge. We have judged that we ought to cease to do evil and learn to do well; and of course where such matters come before us, we lay this as an evident duly on all who see that they are in a false position but are disposed to tamper with a good conscience by remaining in it. Where is the “sectarian spirit,” save in those who take fire at this?

I do firmly and openly tell all these defenders of Christendom against the authority of scripture and the rights of the Holy Ghost, that God's glory is and should be the aim of the Christian, and not only the salvation of souls. I tell them that in vain they worship Him, teaching for doctrine the commandments and notions and practices of men. I tell them that for Christian men it is of the utmost moment both for His glory and the good of themselves and their brethren that they should recognize and follow His will, as about other things, so about His assembly; for they are members of it, and so much the greater is their condemnation if they (through tradition, prejudice, haste, or any other cause) neglect that which so intimately concerns both Him and them. He who truly believes in the Savior but does not understand the assembly of God, or his own responsibility in respect of it, will not be lost; but the man who treats a matter which runs through a vast part of the New Testament so lightly as to class it with “foolish and unlearned questions,” is bolder than one ought to be with the divine truth be does not see, as he will learn to his cost in the day that is fast approaching.

Do the readers of the Christian Observer think that its managers will damage any but themselves by citing 1 Tim. 6:4, as if it applied specially to those they call “Plymouth Brethren?” I admit it. is as close to or as wide of the mark as the rest of their diatribe; but it must be manifest to unbiased men in their own community, that this sort of thing is mere rant. The apostle was denouncing those who sought to make slaves discontented with their masters, especially believing masters. Are “Brethren” men destitute of the truth who suppose that piety is gain? Others there are, most will allow, who lay themselves rather more open to the appearance of using religion and its service as a means of worldly advantage.

Among our logomachies they class objections made to the character of the English Liturgy, to language which confounds the believer's need of forgiveness day by day with the unbeliever's need of remission through the blood of Christ; and, above all, to expressions which cloud the great truth of the Spirit given to all Christians, with desires after greater power of the Spirit. I pity those who count these “foolish questions;” but our objections go much farther than any phraseology however beneath Christian privilege.

But when it is next said that “they confound atonement with pardon on the conditions of repentance and faith, and make faith a mere assent of the mind to a fact,” &c. (page 208), they assert what is directly opposed to truth. This, I should judge, was gathered out of a Methodist preacher's attack, or an article in a Wesleyan organ founded on it. Let me tell them that, without boasting of our knowledge, I do not believe they will produce one man, woman, or child among us guilty of that confusion which they so inconsiderately impute to us as a class; and that no man holding the Sandemanian or Walkerite doctrine, which reduces faith to a mere mental assent, would be knowingly received amongst us. We hold universally that faith is the soul's reception of a divine testimony by the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost.

Again, the Christian Observer must be strangely uninformed of the sentiments of Christians in general, if they do not know that some of the best and ablest men among the Evangelical clergy repudiate the mingling of Christ's legal obedience during His life with the ground of justification. We all agree that Christ obeyed the law perfectly, and that this was needful to vindicate God who gave it; but it is infatuation to think that this proves His law-keeping to be the very basis of the merit of His death as our substitute. These men, like others, are feeble in their apprehension of the

divine judgment of sin and sins in the cross. The union of the divine and human natures in Christ's person, His sinless life, His obedience, were all necessary to redemption. The true question is, by what was atonement wrought? With what does scripture connect our justification?

“Brethren” know nothing of imputed sanctification, which really deserves the sneer which J. Wesley cast on imputed righteousness. It is false that such is our doctrine. Every man who knows ourselves or our teaching in any moderate degree, must confess that we insist on a holy walk, as Paul does, because we are under grace, not law. It needs no argument to see that “they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh,” does not mean daily practice but the ground of it. Really the Christian Observer's grammar is very peculiar, not to speak of the doctrine. Do they not know that the Aorist implies a single act, as opposed to what is continuous; or a completed act, as opposed to what is in progress? I do say that Gal. 5:24 speaks of what is “done already;” and I defy any man to prove otherwise. Other scriptures teach a process going on, but not this passage.

If the Christian Observer stands to this, there are more intelligent clergy and laymen who will join with those they blame. It is not a question of substitution alone, but of imparting a real life to the believer, everlasting life in Christ; so that they, possessed of that very life in Him, are called now to walk in the Spirit according to the characteristics of His life in whose cross the flesh, with all its activities and issues, was judged. Is this religion made easy? Ignorance of Christ and the cross may so deem it, but nothing else can. Life is not a question of imputation but of impartation; and the believer, accounted righteous, has life in Christ. This will show how far men are to be trusted who talk of imputed sanctification as the doctrine of the Plymouth Teachers. It is only the misapprehension of the writer. We hold that the believer is sanctified through the offering of Christ's body once for all, and that, besides, he has to pursue peace and holiness (or sanctification) without which none shall see the Lord. What, then, means this senseless outcry? It is unquestionably false witness, which is even more conspicuous in the next paragraph; where a “subtle and specious heresy,". “very pernicious errors,” “Satan's snares,” “angel of light,” open the way to a wholesale application of 2 Tim. 3 to us. Now is it not remarkable that the provision of the apostle against the perils of the last days (which is the real aim of the passage, and of evident bearing on that assumption which is so apt to impose on the morbid, especially on the weaker vessel) is precisely what “Brethren” everywhere press—the value of every written word of God?

I do not deprecate the violence of the Christian Observer, nor should I tax them with “uncharitableness” if their assaults were founded on God's truth. But they falsely accuse us of desiring or allowing liberty to the flesh, which is incompatible with giving due place to the Spirit and word of God, but may and does co-exist well with human ordinances, ecclesiastical creeds, and worldly plans of government, substituted for God's system of His Church. But they betray themselves in the next breath; for after asserting in page 907, their large allowance for differences in modes of worship, as well as in opinion, in other communions, they maintain in page 911 that “separation from a church like that happily established in this land is nothing less than needless schism.” This blind self-complacency in their own religious system (at an hour when its powerlessness to deal with Infidelity, Popery, not to speak of heterodoxy and wickedness of the grossest kinds within its own borders and even in its highest seats) would be ridiculous, if it were not a fitter object for pity and grief. How often must one repeat that no amount of good points and persons can make an association to be God's Church, unless it be the assembly of those recognized as God's saints gathered in the Lord's name, and in subjection to the word and Spirit of

God. This the Anglican system never was, any more than the various associations of Dissent. To meet on this ground, of course separate from every unscriptural form, as far as we know it, is the aim of “Brethren,” and the ground of the Christian Observer's charge of schism, which to us seems no better than the blindness of prejudice, as it flows from sheer ignorance. It is evident, moreover, that if Anglicanism were really God's Church in England, every species of Dissent would be schism according to page 911, and the large allowance of differences of worship in other communions would be wholly unjustifiable, contrary to page 907. The fact is, that the premises and the conclusions of this writer are altogether and equally at fault. Separation from that which is not God's Church, though pretending to it, is not necessarily to create a fresh sect (as some absurdly conceive), an absolutely necessary condition if we would “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Am “I free to abide in a body whose membership and ministry I believe to be opposed to God's word? I might, no doubt, have continued a member of it, lay or clerical, like some thousands, alas! even of real Christians, not to speak of others, who are convinced, like myself, that it is a mere human politico-religious system, and not a Church of God any more than societies framed on the narrow basis of some peculiar and perhaps mistaken ordinance, the denial of external divine institutions, or the maintenance of some earthly founder's plan. Do they really believe that subscribing Art. vi. absolves their consciences, either in using formularies they know to be unscriptural, or in not obeying the scriptures as to the assembly, the Spirit's action there, ministry, discipline, &c.; in short, in never doing the right and always doing the wrong thing in matters that concern the Lord's glory in the Church here below? Tetzel offered indulgences for sin cheap enough, and yet too dear in result; but what shall we say of this evangelical license for a pliant conscience?

Further, I can understand prejudice steeling a man against the scriptural evidence we produce for the nature of God's Church, and the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost in it; but he who treats such a matter as a crotchet or a persuasion about meats or drinks (page 912), and not as a fundamental question for the believer and the Church, does not seem to me, I confess, qualified spiritually, morally, or intellectually to assume the place of an instructor in divine things. It is easy for such a mind to fling out accusations of “mental idolatry” and “singular obstinacy;” it may even appear loving and Christ-like to argue that the apostle classes us as the ■σπονδοι, the implacables or irreconcilables, with the most wicked of characters. Does he think it consistent with this in the next and final paragraph (p. 913) to admit that the “Plymouth Brethren” have got hold of a good deal of scripture truth, and have, most of them, no deliberate intention of doing wrong; and (believing, as they easily can, that some of them possess considerable gifts) to suggest some sort of linsey-wolsey spiritual occupation in the English Establishment? With such dreary jokes (if a joke this part, or the whole, of the paper can be) in serious matters I have no sympathy. But I may say (with unfeigned respect and love to the saints of God I know, and the many more I can believe to be, in that system,) that from first to last more sorry specimens of a religious essay than these of the Christian Observer on the “Plymouth Brethren,” it has not been my lot to find, even in a day when the press teems with productions which have not a grain of personal modesty, love to brethren, fear of God, or real knowledge of His truth. Did they design to expose themselves or to prove the value of what we have learned from scripture, I doubt that they could do either more effectually than to commit a principal organ of the Evangelical party to attacks which injure none but themselves, and themselves in every point of view, with men of intelligence.

Chapter 13

Notes on Colossians 1:1-8

It is hardly possible for the most careless reader to overlook the kindred truth set forth in this epistle and in that to the Ephesians. Union with Christ, the Head of His body the Church, has a place here beyond all other scriptures; for though 1 Corinthians may present the same doctrine (chap.12), it is evident that there it is a question of the assembly of God on earth, in which the Holy Ghost is actively at work through the members, distributing to each as He will, much more than of the saints viewed in Christ above, as in Ephesians, or Christ viewed in them below, as in Colossians.

Nevertheless, distinctions of great moment and full of interest characterize these two epistles, the chief of which lies in this, that, as in Ephesians we have the privileges of the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all, so in Colossians we have the glories of the Head, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This difference, like others, was due, in the wisdom of the Spirit, to the moral condition of those addressed. In the former case the apostle launches out into the counsels of God, who has blessed the saints with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; in the latter case there was a measure of departure into philosophy and Jewish traditions, not an abandonment of Christ, of course, but such an admixture of these foreign ingredients as threatened fatal results in the apostle's eyes, unless their souls were brought back to Christ, and Christ alone, in all the rights of His person and work. Thus the Epistle to the Colossians, in consequence of their state, does not admit of the vast scope and development of divine purposes and glory for the saints seen in and united to Christ; whereas in writing to the Ephesians there was then nothing in them to arrest or narrow the outgoing of the apostle's heart, as the Spirit led him to apprehend with all the saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the knowledge surpassing love of Christ. Here it is largely a question of exhortation, of recovering their souls, of grave warning. Hence the human element is more prominent here. Writing to the Ephesians the apostle associates none with himself in the address; yet was Ephesus the capital of proconsular Asia and well-known to his fellow-laborers and associated by a thousand tender ties with himself and others. The assembly at Colosse as such was among those that had never seen his face in the flesh. This makes it the more marked when he joins Timothy with himself in their case.

“Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy the brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse: grace to you and peace from God our Father.” (Ver. 1, 2.) For himself, he was not unauthorized, nor was his title human. He was an apostle, not of the Church, but of Christ Jesus by divine will; and Timothy stands with him simply as “the brother.” Again, the assembly at Colosse are also characterized not only as “saints and faithful,” as the Ephesians were, but as “faithful brethren.” It is evident that here again, while all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, this term “brethren” brings out their relations to one another, as the others suppose God's grace and their faith if not fidelity. His own apostolic place is named with quiet dignity and in the evident appropriateness for all that follows.

It has been well observed that the apostle quite omits anything answering to the magnificent introduction with which he begins his Ephesian Epistle. (Chap. 1:3-14) There was a check on his spirit; he felt the danger that threatened the Colossians. How could he then at once break forth into an unhindered strain of blessing? The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and deals with hearts and consciences. Still, if that high tone of worship could not find a place here with propriety, there is immediate thanksgiving. “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ always when praying for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and love which ye have toward all the saints, on account of the hope that is laid up for you in the heavens, of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel that is present with you, even as also in all the world it is bearing fruit and growing even as also among you, from the day when ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth: even as ye learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-bondman, who is a servant of Christ, faithful for you, that also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” (Ver. 7, 8.)

The apostle had heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus that was in the Ephesians, and their love toward all the saints, which drew out his heart in thanksgiving and prayer. He knew them personally and well, having labored with deep blessing in their midst; but it was sweet to hear of the working of the Spirit among them. So of the Colossians, though not known thus, he had similar tidings, for which he could thank God always in his prayers for them.

But is not the difference striking between the two as exemplified in his manner of presenting the hope? In Ephesians it is the hope of God's calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. What can be more profound or boundless? Here he could scarcely say less. Their hope was laid up, it was safe, it was “in the heavens,” not (spite of philosophy or of ascetic ordinances) on the earth. Of all these they had to beware, whatever their looks and promises. Of their proper hope he would remind them, recalling them to the heavens where Christ is, the true and only deliverance from all the workings of mind in divine things and from earthly religiousness.

This heavenly hope, blessed as it is, was nothing new to them: they had heard it before in the word of the truth of the gospel. What the apostle taught would not weaken or undermine, but confirm that which they had heard in the good news which converted them originally, or (as he here styles it, to give it all possible weight in presence of their straining after novelties) “in the word of the truth of the gospel.” It was not intellectual groping, but “the word” definitely sent to them, God's revelation; it was not dabbling in legal forms, but “the truth,” the truth of the gospel. The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The gospel came to them, yea, was there present with them, no more changing than He does who is its sine and substance. Real truth, even when new, never sets aside the old, but on the contrary supplies missing links, deepens the foundations and enlarges the sphere. Had their philosophy, had their novel restrictions (chap. ii.) increased their sense of the value of the gospel? Had those things exalted Christ? There is no doubt what the effect of Paul's teaching would be either in general or in this epistle very specially.

Further, the gospel being thus the display of God's goodness in Christ, not the measure of human duty nor a system of religious shadows, its theater according to God's intentions is not a single land or family, but “all the world,” and its operation is not condemning and killing, but producing fruit and growing, even as among the saints at Colosse. Was there this fruit-bearing, and expansion too, since they had taken up their newfangled notions and legal ways? The gospel is

both productive of fruit and has propagative energy. This addition of its growth (κα■ α■ξαν■μενον) is lost to the common text, having been omitted in inferior copies. That it is genuine cannot be fairly questioned. Certainly both were known from the day they heard and really knew the grace of God in truth. And this gives the blessed apostle opportunity, as was his wont, to strengthen the hands of one who was Christ's minister and faithful on their behalf, “Epaphras, our beloved fellow-bondman,” as he is here affectionately called. The speculative views, the Judaistic forms, had, no doubt, their exponents, who would seek to ingratiate themselves at a faithful laborer's expense. We can readily conceive that the word thus commending Epaphras was needed at Colosse.

Scripture is throughout a moral book. God speaks to us according to this, not according to the (after all) petty discoveries of science. I call it petty, because it is only occupied with material things. All knowledge is the proof of ignorance; for what a man has learned, he did not know before. Yet, if he has rightly learned it, it was before, and he did not know it. As Pascal has said, All matter never produced a thought, and all intellect never produced charity.

Chapter 14

Notes on Colossians 1:9-18

In the last portion we saw how the apostle could speak of the effects of the gospel from the day they had heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. Grace is not like the law. The ten words are chiefly negative. The law, for the most part, deals with what is evil and condemns it; but the gospel reveals Christ as a quickening power, and strengthening and fruit-producing power. Being a principle of life, it expands and grows as well as produces fruit, as the apostle describes it, “and bringeth forth fruit [and increaseth] since the day ye heard it,” &c.

But now he says, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it [heard of this living witness to the power of the gospel], do not cease to pray for you.” This is a beautiful expression of the apostle's love which, spite of fear which he justly entertained about the tendencies of these Colossian saints, still only drew him out in prayer for them the more. “And to desire (or ask) that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will.” They had shown rather the reverse of this; they had proved a void in their hearts, which they had in vain sought by legal ordinances and philosophy to fill up. Nothing but an intelligent and growing acquaintance with Christ can satisfy the renewed heart. The very mercy that delivers a soul becomes a danger unless Christ Himself be the maintained, habitual object. Alas! the freedom which the gospel brings may be used to take things easily, and, more or less, retain or gain the world; but where this is the case, it is seldom a soul possesses any large measure of spiritual enjoyment, and it is never accompanied by solid peace. The soul becomes thus unsettled and uncertain. These oscillations may go on for a certain time, until God carry on the work more deeply in the heart. The Colossians were in some such state; they had not steadily advanced to a fuller knowledge of God's will: consequently Satan found means to trouble them. They had seen the first precious display of grace: it was real but not deep; still, knowing the grace of God in truth, is not the same thing as being filled with the knowledge or full knowledge of His will.

The law never gives that in the least degree; it is a righteous interdict upon man's will. Thus there is only one of the commandments—I mean the law about the sabbath-day—which has not distinctly this character, which never can form a Christian's ways. We want the bracing of the man morally to all that is good. How is this to be effected? As there is in Christ the communication of life, so also from Him comes the filling with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The believer is not treated by God as a horse or a mule which have no understanding, but as an intelligent and loving being who is brought into fellowship with God. He would not be a delivered man if his own will ruled him; but this is the very reverse of being filled with the knowledge of God's will, and therefore it is that the apostle prays for them that they may be.

In Ephesians, though we read in wonderful terms about God's will (chap. 1.) the apostle did not as here require to ask the knowledge of it for them. There was an apprehension of heart in them that did not need that the apostle should thus pray for them. He does desire for them both a deeper knowledge of their standing, and a richer enjoyment of Christ within, that they might be filled with

the fullness of God— “strengthened with might by his Spirit.” But to be filled with the knowledge of His will, as we have it here, evidently has to do with practical walk, “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord.” In other words, in the Colossians there is an important practical hearing upon the walk; it is more the forming of the child; it is the strengthening and guiding of one that can but feebly walk, to help it along. In Ephesians, it is the communication of the God and Father of Christ to His children, who are now no longer babes, but full-grown men. Hence, there we have the family relations, feelings, estates, interests, responsibilities, everything. The Colossians had been misled by the thoughts of teachers who were themselves far astray. Though the saints there were earnest, still there was something that blinded their eyes. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” They must have been governed by their own thoughts, else they would surely have rejected these false notions. It is a simple truth, but very important to observe, that what is presented as God's will necessarily forms the mind, and consequently the walk, of a Christian man. If I am misled as to the mind or objects of God, the effect will be most fatal practically; and the more earnest, the farther one goes astray. But the apostle had prayed for the Colossians, and still continued, “that they might be filled with this full knowledge of him.” I do not the least doubt that in this passage there is a contrast with the walk of one who, however well-disposed, is under law. The more the Christian knows God's will, which is good as well as holy, happiness grows and strength too; whereas law works so as to produce misery and convince of utter weakness. No doubt if there were a deep sense of the presence of God, it would make but little difference with whom we might be, worldly men or children of God. Of course there would be a difference in our bearing to them according to their relation to God or ignorance of Him; but as a fact, we are always deeply affected by the company in which we are, we affect and are affected by those we are thrown with. Therefore, it is evident that when Christ was a revealed person before the soul, and just in proportion as the believer realized his right relationship to Him, so would his walk be. If I know my place as bound to Him, having Him as the object of my heart, and that He is my Head and Bridegroom, it is clear a totally different walk will be the result. The measure and character of the walk among the children of God is formed by the measure of our acquaintance with Christ, where the flesh is sufficiently judged to enjoy it.

But mark again that all through, until we come a little farther down, the apostle does not touch upon the matters in which they had been faulty. In the middle of chapter 2 he tells them plainly wherein they were to blame. This is very important for us to observe; because, if our aim be really the good and deliverance and help of souls, we should see what God's way is of meeting souls and enabling them to escape the snare. The way we best learn is by observing and cleaving to the guidance of the Holy Ghost as shown us in such scriptures as these. It is a rebuke to one's own too frequent bearing toward others, when we think of the marvelous grace and the slowness of the apostle in coming to what people call the point. I have no doubt there is much to learn in this; and so much was it the case, that from the beginning of this epistle we might almost think these Colossians were in a very delightful condition. The apostle is most careful to approach gradually that which pained him and must pain them. He is sapping and milling, as it were, to take the citadel; but it is slow work, though sure.

There is another expression here that is well worthy of our notice: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” It is not worthy of the gospel, neither is it worthy of our calling, &e. These are not the ways in which it is put here. The Ephesians were sufficiently clear of this evil

influence and could be instructed freely in the calling of God to which they were called; and therefore he says there “that they might walk worthy of the vocation,” &c. But he says to the Colossians, “worthy of the Lord.” It would not be so easy for them to get rid of the effects of occupation with philosophy and ordinances. The Ephesians had been kept quite clear of this error, and therefore they are exhorted to walk worthy of what they knew was their place.

As the Lord Jesus is pointed to here, so “unto all pleasing” is the measure; it is not as pleasing us or others, but pleasing Him. Now this is wholly different from the law, which just asked so much and no more. The ways of grace were to be unlimited, “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Therefore he adds immediately, “being fruitful in every good work.” It is all positive and not merely negative like the requirements of the law. “Increasing by the full knowledge of him” here appears to be the thought. It refers to the means of Christian growth. I think the “wisdom and spiritual understanding” means a perception of what is good and wise in God's sight, apart from its being His express command. I might do a thing simply because another wished it, and of course this is quite right where there is due authority. For instance, my father may bid me do such or such a thing, and I may do it without knowing why; but here it is my Father who at the same time skews me the importance of it. Thus “wisdom” sees the beauty and propriety of any given thing and “spiritual understanding” takes the right application. One seizes the cause, the other is occupied with the effect. Hence then the gospel differed from the law. Whether a person entered into the meaning of the law or not, he obeyed simply because God ordered This does not rise to the nature of the Christian's obedience, which enjoys the unfolding of the mind of God in Christ, so that one not only sees His authority, but also its admirably perfect character and its gracious effects. It is quite right a subject, a servant, a minor should learn to obey, if it were only for the sake of obedience. But this is not the Christian principle. The obedience of a Christian is not the blind leading the blind, nor is it the seeing leading the blind, but rather the seeing leading the seeing. But there is very much more in this. It is not merely that people are quickened and bear fruit, but besides that they grow either by or into a deeper knowledge of God Himself. That deepening acquaintance with God, which goes along with the knowledge of His will, is a very important thing in the path of obedience. One knows God better, one enters into His character better, one learns Himself intimately. Another thing which is of great importance, is that there is not only the growing knowledge, but the being strengthened with all might according to the power of His glory; for that is the idea—it is not “His glorious power,” but the power of His glory. It supposes that the glory of Christ has a most decided effect, as the way in which strength is formed or communicated.

If I look at Christ here on the earth, I see Him in weakness and shame and rejection, but in the deepest grace withal, and no where so much as on the cross; and although we cannot do without it (indeed Christ everywhere is unspeakably precious and absolutely necessary for us), yet for the Christian the place of strength is to look at Christ risen and glorified. No doubt this thought of Christ as one down here in this world is what draws out the affections, even as the cross meets the need of conscience; but neither gives strength in itself, neither is intended of God to give all that we want. Hence while those who know Christ at all will surely find in Him life and blessing, yet they are never strong where His earthly path is all that occupies their hearts. What then supplies our need as to this? Such should weigh what is said in 2 Cor. 3: “We all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” This gives practical power. So here the question of power connects itself with His glory. If sympathy be in

question, it is always connected with His life down here, for instance in Hebrews, though Christ is spoken of at the right hand of God, &c., yet it is chiefly as once tempted in all points like us, yet without sin, touched, with a feeling of our infirmities. This is most comforting as to the power of sympathy. Eternal life and strength are two very different things. The only idea with many is following Christ as an example. Of course it is admirable; but what is to give power? I must be in relationship with God first, a possessor of eternal life, and then power is wanted. I am not in the position till I know redemption through the blood of Christ, and power is only found in Christ risen and glorified. The spring of power is not in looking at what He was down here, but having the consciousness of the glory that is in Him, the power of that filling my own heart, and making the certainty of being with Him. I shall thus not shrink from the rejection that was Christ's portion down here, being strengthened “unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.” It is an evil world that we are passing through; but we have this wonderful secret: we have the consciousness of better blessing we possess in Christ. Therefore, let me observe, it should be the very opposite of a man going through trial with his head bowed down. Let it be according to the power of His glory with joyfulness, “giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

This is a present meetness. Sharing the portion of the saints in light is a most wonderful favor; but the apostle does not hesitate to predicate it of these Colossians whom he was going to rebuke with all solemnity in the next chapter. Still he says the Father has qualified us for sharing the portion of the saints in light. It is purposely put “in light” to show how absolute is the effect of God's work in Christ. It is not simply the inheritance, because that would not of itself present the idea of unsparing holiness, as light does. Again, the portion of the saints in light is not upon the earth or in the heavens merely, but in the light where God dwells as such. Wondrous place for us! Our Father has made us meet for this. The effect of law is always to put God at a distance. Therefore here the Father is put forward. There are many persons who only look at God as the Creator and the Judge. Although they admit life in Christ, yet are they not at home with the Father. They make of Christ what the Papists make of the Virgin Mary. It is all false. This was what made the necessity of bringing the Father especially forward. In Ephesians it was not necessary to do so: they were intelligent in the truth. Here although the great object is to make Christ, the unqualified glory of Christ, to be that which shuts out ordinances, &c.; yet the apostle brings in the Father, sheaving that the Father was acting in His love. The combination of perfect love, and our being made meet for light now, is a wonderful truth. As to the light, the Christian is always in the light, but he may not always walk according to it. A Christian, if he sins, sins in the light, and this is what gives it such a daring character. He may be in a dark state himself practically, still he is always in the light. And it is precisely this which makes a Christian's sin to be so very serious. He is doing it in the presence of perfect love and in the presence of perfect light. There is therefore no excuse for it.

This blessing depends upon two things; first upon the effect of the blood of Christ in completely atoning for our sins, and next upon the fact that we have the life of Christ communicated to us, which life is capable of communing with God in the light. Both these gifts of grace are absolutely true of every Christian. He has the blood of Christ cleansing him as much as he ever can have, and he has life in Christ communicated to his soul as much as ever can be. What follows in after experience is simply having a deeper estimate of what Christ's blood has done and what He Himself is, who has shown us such infinite favor and done so much for us. Our Father has done

more, as the apostle shows further how we are thus qualified: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” It is not merely a question of wicked works, but of the power of darkness; and how could they be delivered from Satan? He says they were delivered and, more than that, “translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” It is all perfectly done. The deliverance from the enemy of God is complete, and so is the translation into the kingdom of the Son of His love. “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” “Through His blood” has been inserted in the vulgar text and followed in our version, but it really belongs to Ephesians. I do not doubt the copyists put it in here because it was there. There is greater fullness in Ephesians than in Colossians. Hence the former shows how we can be so blessed, spite of our sins entering into the statement of the account there. But here it is just summing up the blessing, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God.”

The object evidently is not so much to dwell upon the work of Christ, but to show His personal glory. Christ is never said to be the likeness of the invisible God, because it might imply that He was not really God. This would be fatally false; for He is God (and without it God's glory and redemption are vain), but yet He is the image of the invisible God, because He is the only person of the Godhead that has declared Him. (See John 1:18.) The Holy Ghost does not manifest God. He does manifest His power, but not Himself, but Christ is “the image of the invisible God.” He has presented God in full perfection; He is the truth. He who has seen Him has seen the Father. He was always the One who made God manifest. The word “image,” as has been remarked, is continually used in Scripture for representation. Such is the first thought. Christ is the image of the invisible God.

The next glory is that He is the first-born of all creation. This seems obviously contrasted with His being the image of the invisible God. Christ as truly became a man as He was and is God. He was made flesh. He is never, nor could be, said to be made God. He partook of flesh and blood in time, but from everlasting He is God. Having shown that He was the image of the invisible God, the apostle then speaks of Him as the first-born of all creation. How could this be? Adam was the prototype. We might have thought he was first; but here, as elsewhere, the title of first-born is taken in the sense of dignity rather than of mere priority in time. Adam was the first man; but was not nor could be the first-born. How could Christ, so late in His birth here below, be said to be the first-born? The truth is, if Christ became a man and entered the ranks of creation, He could not be anything else. He is the Son and heir. Just so we are now by grace said to be the Church “of the first-born,” although there were saints before the Church. It is a question of rank not of date. Christ is truly first-born of all creation; He never took the creature place until He became a man, and then must needs be the first-born. Even if he had been the last-born literally, He must still be the first-born; for it has nothing to do with the epoch of His advent, but with His intrinsic dignity. All others were but the children of the fallen man Adam, and could in no sense be the first-born. He was as truly man as they but with a wholly peculiar glory. What makes it most manifest is, that He is here declared to be first-born of all creation, “for by Him were all things created.” This makes the ground perfectly plain. He was first-born of all creation, because He w he entered the sphere of manhood's creaturedom was the Creator, and therefore must necessarily be the first-born. This is the plain and sure meaning of the passage, in the strongest way confirming the deity of Christ, instead of weakening it in the least, as some have conceived through strange misunderstanding. Hence they have changed the rendering to “born before all creation.” It is impossible to take it so.

But indeed there is no need for a change. God's word is wiser than men. There is no Scripture which shows His dignity more than this.

First, then, He is said to be the image of the invisible God. Then we have His human place, in which He was first-born; because, being God, it could not be otherwise. In Hebrews, He is said to be constituted heir, because He was the Son of God. But here it is “all things were created in virtue of Him;” it is not merely “by” Him but in virtue of His own divine power.

“For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him.” All this reaches to things of which we know little, and beyond our ken. As we had before what was in virtue of His power; so now it is by Him, because Christ was both one who acted in His own divine right, and also one who acted instrumentally for God the Father's glory. All things were created by Him. The word created is different; in one case it is a past action, but in the other it is the present effect of a past action, the first being the power that made to exist, the second rather the present result of it. “And he is before all things,” &c. Not merely was He before all things, but before all (God only, of course, excepted). Nor was it merely that all things were, but they were created for His pleasure. “And by [or, in virtue of] him all things consist.” In virtue of Him gives a clearer and more intimate idea. The object here is to take away all vagueness in exalting Christ.

But, again. “He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” We shall find a reason for this in what follows. It is interesting to see that there are two very distinct firstborns: first-born of all creation, because He is the Creator; and first-born from the dead, as a plain and weighty matter of fact. Thus Christ is not only the head of creation as man, but He is first-born from the dead as risen. It is in connection with this that He is Head of the Church. He was not in this relationship upon earth; He was not so simply as taking humanity. Incarnation is an entirely distinct truth from His headship of the Church, which involves the further truth of union. It is evident that His headship of the body, the Church, is introduced by His being risen from the dead, and having taken His place in heaven. But Colossians does not at once begin with the heavenly place of Christ. Ephesians presents Him plainly as risen and seated as Head. Here it is more general, and does not speak of His being in heaven; He is “the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” Many confound union with incarnation; but union is not His taking flesh and blood here below, but our being made members of His body, now that He is risen and glorified. There could have been no union with Him until death and resurrection, and the Holy Ghost was given to unite us with Him in that risen condition; then and not before we have the body, the assembly. He had a human body, of course; but the mystical body is formed by the Holy Ghost sent down after He rose from the dead. The one was connected with the earth, the other with heaven.

Chapter 15

Notes on Colossians 1:19-23

With the pre-eminence of Christ in all things two great considerations are connected. First, all fullness was pleased to dwell in Him. It was not a partial nor any manifestation of God: this might have been in any man; but here all fullness was pleased in Him to dwell. This is the truth of Christ's person, the glory of the incarnate Lord. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” “If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, the kingdom of God is come unto you.” “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” Yet we know it was always by the power of the Holy Ghost that everything was done and said. So truly was all the fullness pleased to dwell in Him.

We observed in an earlier verse that it was because of His being a divine person that He could be said to be the firstborn of all creation. It was founded upon the fact that He was God who created all and sustains all. But here there is more. In Him all fullness was pleased to dwell. It was not alone a question of acting, but of dwelling, whether He acted or not. Thus it is a very full and rich statement indeed.

But again (ver. 20), there is another unfolding of the truth which sets forth His glory, another reason assigned for His indisputable pre-eminence. By Him, the Christ, is reconciliation effected. All fullness of the Godhead was pleased in Him to dwell and by Him to reconcile all things unto God. There is a peculiar phraseology in the passage, which may have led the English translators to put in “Father” in verse 19. If the conjecture be correct, they did it not so much because of this verse as of the following, the 20th— “to reconcile.... unto himself.” They could not make out how it could be unto Him unless it were the Father; but I think the context is purposely so framed, because it is intended to show us, unless I am greatly mistaken, that all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, not one person of that divine fullness acting to the exclusion of the rest. They all had one counsel, not barely similar counsels, as so many creatures might, but one and the same. Hence the object is not to contrast one person with another, but to state that all the fullness was pleased in Him to dwell. It is put in this general form purposely. Then the Spirit of God glides with a scarce perceptible transition from His being the God-man to the work God has done by Him; so that you cannot separate clearly the two thoughts, as far as the construction goes in ε■ς α■τ■ν. Afterward, as before, the person of Christ is distinct and prominent.

But man was utterly gone, hostile, dead. No moral glory even of the Godhead in Christ could win him back. A deeper work was needed. “Having made peace by the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself.” All creation was ruined in the fall; and here we have the vast plan of God first sketched before us, the reconciliation of all things, not of men but of things. It was the good pleasure of the Godhead to reconcile all things unto God. Even the Word made flesh, even all the fullness dwelling in Him, failed to reach the desperate case. There was rebellion, there was war. Peace must be made—it could only be made by the blood of Christ's cross. In a word, reconciliation is not the fruit of the Incarnation, most blessed as it is; for it was altogether powerless, as far as that is concerned. It brings before us grace and truth in Christ—God Himself in the most precious display of holy love. Nothing is in itself more important than, for a person who

has found Christ, to delight in and dwell upon Him and His moral ways here below. Everything was in exquisite harmony in Him; matchless grace shone out wherever He moved. All was perfect, and yet would it all have been fruitless; for man was as the barren sand. Therefore we have another and wholly distinct step— “by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.” All the fullness dwelling in Him was insufficient: it brought God to man, not man to God. All the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him, and not as a mere passing thing. This was quite independent of the anointing in due time by the Holy Ghost. It was the continual delight of the whole Godhead to dwell in Him as man. But so far gone was man that this could not deliver him: sin cannot be so got over. Even God Himself coming down to earth in Christ's person, His unselfish goodness, His unwearied patient love, not anything found in Christ nor all together could dispel sin or righteously recover the sinner. Therefore it became manifestly a question of reconciliation “through the blood of His cross.”

All things then are to be reconciled, as we see; peace has been made “by the blood of His cross.” It is sweet and assuring to think that all has been done to secure the gathering of all things round Christ. It is merely now a question of the time suited in God's wisdom for the manifestation of Christ at the head of all.

As far as the efficacious work is concerned, nothing more is to be done. Meanwhile God is calling in the saints who are to share all along with Christ. As it is said in Rom. 8 all creation groaneth, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. They are the first fruits. All was subjected to vanity by sin; but now He who came down, God manifest in the flesh, has taken upon Himself the burden of sin, and has made peace by the blood of His cross. Thus He has done all that is needed for God and man. Morally all is done, the price is paid, the work is accepted, so that here too we may say “all things are ready.” God would be now justified in purging from the face of creation every trace of misery and decay; if He waits, it is but to save more souls. His longsuffering is salvation. The darkness and the weakness will disappear when our Lord comes with His saints. For the world, His appearing with them in glory is the critical time. The revelation of Christ and the Church from heaven is not the epoch of the rapture which comes first. The revelation is the manifestation of the Bridegroom and the Bride then glorified before the world.

Thus having brought in the universal reconciliation of created things, the apostle turns to that with which it was so intimately connected “and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” I do not doubt there is an intended contrast. The reconciliation of all things is not yet accomplished. The foundation is laid; but it is not applied. But reconciliation is applied to us who believe. Us who were in this fearful condition, “now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.” Again, observe, the body of His flesh, the incarnation in itself did not, could not avail, no, nor all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily. For guilty man it must be “through death.” It was not through Christ's birth or living energy, but “through death” —not by His doing, divinely blessed as it all was, but by His suffering. “The blood of his cross” brings in much more the idea of a price paid for peace. His “death” seems to be more suitable as the ground of our reconciliation. At any rate “in the body of His flesh through death” contradicts the notion that incarnation was the means of reconciliation. This brings in moral considerations and shows the most solemn vindication of God, the righteous basis for our remission and peace and clearance from all charge and consequence of sin.

“To present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight.” Blessed as the death of Christ is, so that God Himself can find no flaw in us or charge against us, which is the meaning here—so perfectly efficacious is this death of Christ in our favor, yet still it supposes our holding fast— “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” Now I take that word “if” decidedly as a condition and nothing else.

It is quite different from chapter 3, “If ye then be risen with Christ,” &e. It is the same word, but there should always be a regard to the context. Here, I believe, there is a condition implied, whereas chapter 3 simply reasons and exhorts from an allowed fact. This would not make sense in chapter 1.

Unless under specially modifying circumstances, every man, almost every person before conversion is naturally disposed to be an Arminian, i.e. to build on his own righteousness; but when he finds himself undone, yet justified by faith of God's pure grace in Christ, there is often a tendency to rebound violently over to the opposite extreme. When he becomes more matured in the truth, it is no longer a question of party views, but of that which is infinitely larger, even of God's mind as revealed in His word. The unconditional parts should be taken in all their absoluteness, and the conditional should be pressed in all their force. The apostle does not bring this in as a condition of our justification. There grace justifies the ungodly; a condition cannot enter. It would be a denial of grace. For all that, there are unquestionable conditions; but in what? God does not let us certainly know who they are among those who profess the name of Jesus that really believe in Him. Some there were even in those early days who followed the truth for a season and then gave it up. Others were slighting the pure gospel for philosophy and ordinances, or at least were disposed to add them to it. Hence the apostle says, “If ye continue in the faith.” There he warns, no doubt, that those born of God continue in the faith; but along with this, other things have to be borne in mind. May not persons truly born of God waver and even slip for a season into error? Now I cannot say of any who abandon the faith that they are holy and blameless in the sight of God. One may have a hope from previous facts perhaps; but as long as a soul is thus led of the enemy away from fundamental truth, I cannot, I ought not, to speak too confidently of him as of God. It would be a trifling with the unbelief and increasing the danger to his soul by making light of it. Therefore the Apostle says,” If ye continue.” A similar principle applies to him who lives under a cloud of unjudged sin.

So in 1 Cor. 5 we see that a man guilty of gross sin and therefore put away is to be treated as a “wicked person,” although the Holy Ghost in the same chapter speaks of the aim that his spirit might be saved, &c. And the second epistle proves that, spite of all, he was a true believer and on his repentance to be restored to fellowship. The Holy Ghost of course knows perfectly; but we can only judge what God permits to be brought forth before our eyes. This is of practical value to our souls; for it is often difficult to behave rightly to a person out of communion. We are apt to think too slightly of such cases, and what is the effect of thus treating them? They drag on outside. There is feeble power within of restoration. The sin is superficially judged. If we feel it much, we desire earnestly to get the person back. It ought to be a pain, a deep grief, whenever souls are put away from the Lord's table. Our desire would then be continually to know them and see them restored.

It is not, If ye continue in faith, but “in the faith.”

When Paul speaks about the common faith, he means the thing believed. So when he speaks about the “one faith,” he does not refer to the reality of our faith, but to the objective truth received. Real believers or not, if they forsook the faith, how could they be owned as such? Modern times have greatly thrown people upon what is inward or subjective: whereas “the faith” is revelation that is offered to faith, outside the man. It is a great mercy that in these last days, to truth, the truth in the person of Christ, great prominence has been given. One cannot absolutely pronounce on an individual's faith, but one can judge of the faith he owns, and tell whether what he professes is the truth or not. Love would assume, if a man professes the faith and there is nothing clean contrary to it in his words and ways, that it is real faith. A person may be sincere in what is wrong, or insincere in what is right; but the truth is an unbending standard. If one judged on the ground of an individual's heart, one could never speak at all; for of that who can pronounce but God? If one acts on the ground of the faith, the moment man goes against the truth, giving up what he professed, we are bound to judge it, leaving the question of his heart's faith in God's hands.

The apostle urges also, “and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” The Colossian saints were in danger of slipping away, for they were striving to make themselves holier by asceticism or other efforts, not by the application of Christ to judge themselves. But no, says the apostle; it is in the body of His flesh through death that you are presented holy and unblameable, if ye continue in the faith, &c., and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, &c. What is “the hope of the gospel?” It is in a heavenly Christ who died for us giving us the assurance of being with Himself there. The hope of Israel (one can hardly say of the law), was the earth; this “hope of the gospel” is above. The Colossians were most unwittingly but practically losing sight of their heavenly hope, because the thought of adding to Christ philosophy or ordinances tends to deprive one of Christ. He calls it the gospel which they had heard; he would not admit of any other. It was that which had been “preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister.” How the apostle puts forward that which some then, as now, would make cheap—the being a minister of the gospel! He does not regard what would exalt himself in the eyes of the would-be professionists, but what gives glory to God and His grace in Christ. There is a stress accordingly upon “I” here.

Chapter 16

Notes on Colossians 1:24-29 and 2:1-3

I should judge that there was a slight put upon the gospel by some of those who were exercising an evil influence at Colosse. They may have thought it good in its place as awakening the unconverted; but what had Christians to do with it? The apostle insists not only on the dignity but also on the depths of the gospel. No doubt, a Christian does not need it in the same way as the unconverted; for he is one who has found rest, has remission of sins, justification, sonship, &c., while the other has no real link with God. A Christian, therefore, does not listen to the gospel as if it were an unknown sound, or as if he had not certainly received it. But he rejoices in it still, and admires with increasing fervor the matchless display of God's grace therein. The apostle therefore takes particular pains to say that he, Paul, was made a minister of the gospel. He did not consider it a thing merged in his apostleship, but emphatically declares himself a minister, not only of the Church, but of the glad tidings to every creature under heaven. It was evident, then, that if any at Colosse had slightingly regarded that message as a thing too elementary for the saints to occupy themselves with, the apostle did not sympathize with such feelings. He served and gloried in the gospel. It is wrong, of course, to put myself on the same ground as the unconverted person, as if I needed it; but it is also depriving myself of much if I do not delight in it, for its own sake, so to speak, as the vindication of God Himself. No other part of the truth brings out such a display of grace and divine righteousness as the gospel. As far as the testimony to souls is concerned, it may be more what relates to their need as lost sinners; but for Christians it is of no small importance to have the heart engaged with its active grace, and the mind filled with its vast scope and the conscience invigorated. It is impossible to see how the gospel vindicates God until a soul has peace with Him. This is practically important. A person that barely knows God's mercy in Christ, has relief, has the remedy for sin, but such a remedy does not always bring in the sight of God fully vindicated. It is more the idea of the scapegoat, than of the goat that was killed. In the gospel we see not only the resource for our sins, but God's truth and majesty and love and whole character glorified. It is not only a question of evil judged and sins forgiven, but a testimony to His rich grace in Christ. But the apostle adds here, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I am made a minister,” &c. It appears that the two ministries, the connection of them, and the assertion of the apostle's relation to both, are intimated. As to the gospel, Paul says, “Whereof I am made a minister.” So also it is here: but inasmuch as this was a more intimate thing, it is added, “According to the dispensation of God,” &c. The gospel of which he was made the minister leads him at once to speak of his sufferings for them, not exactly the sufferings of the gospel, but his sufferings for them. Next, he speaks of “filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ,” &e., for his body's sake, which is the Church. No doubt there was that which pertained exclusively to the Savior in substitution for us. But in all respects Christ did not suffer, however perfectly, so as to shut out others, His saints, from fellowship with Him. His sufferings were absolutely perfect, as the witness of righteousness, as man upon earth and the witness of grace as on God's part. But there was far more than testimony in the cross when made sin for us, and all that God was as judging it fell on Him there. Righteousness and grace were the occasion of

His sufferings in life here below: the holy judgment of sin was that which characterized His sufferings upon the cross, that God might be able righteously to show us who believe His grace, without any question of judgment remaining.

Again, the apostle rejoices in his sufferings, instead of thinking them hard or shrinking from them. What a contrast with Peter in the close of Matt. 16. Christ did not monopolize them, as it were; He left some for others—the sufferings spoken of here are mainly sufferings of love for the Church, for the saints of God, but they also include what the apostle suffered as being a witness for Christ in this world. They were real external sufferings from enemies, as he says, “in my flesh.” He does not make it merely a question of his spirit, although if this had not gone along with the trials, there would have been no value in the suffering. But he did not take it easily even as to his body. Some at Colosse, we know from the end of Col. 2, were contending for ascetic practice, mortification of the body, &c., which, the apostle lets them know, might be compatible with a much puffing up of the flesh. But, as for him, he would fill up the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake. Paul was pre-eminently a minister of the Church, in a sense in which others were not. No doubt, the mystery was revealed by the Spirit unto the holy apostles and prophets. But God had entrusted it to Paul “to complete the word of God.” There are two great parts in this mystery, the first is that Christ should be set in heaven above all principalities and powers, and have the entire universe given to Him, as Head over the inheritance on the footing of redemption. Himself exalted as Head over all things heavenly and earthly, and the Church united to Him as His body, He being thus given as Head to the Church over all things. Then the other side of the mystery is Christ in the saints here below, and in such a sort as to bring in the Gentiles with the utmost freedom. “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles [or nations], which is Christ in you the hope of glory.” The hope of glory is the hope of all the glory that flows out of His heavenly place as now at God's right hand. In Ephesians the apostle dwells more upon the first of these aspects, in Colossians, on the second. Hence the point here is not our being in Christ as Head over all, but Christ in us, the hope of all. But it is in contrast in both cases with Jewish things. The Messiah's reigning on earth over Israel, with the nations rejoicing also, is a true expectation gathered from the Old Testament prophets. In Colossians it is Christ now in us, but the glory not yet come. Christ in us is the hope of the glory that is coming by and by when we shall be glorified and appear with Christ. This was a state of things entirely foreign to Jewish anticipations. Christ in heaven and the saints not yet with Him there, but waiting to be with Him, and meanwhile Christ in them the hope of glory, but of a glory not yet come. There was nothing like this in the older oracles. Then they could not have expected that Christ would be in heaven and a people be one with Him there, still less that Christ should be in them, Gentiles or not, here. It is well to weigh the expression, “to complete the word of God.” It is not the mere idea of writing a book; for James and Peter and John had done this, and yet they could not be said “to complete the word of God.” It was not only bringing out truths already revealed, but adding a certain portion that was unrevealed. Even Revelation did not do this in the same sense. We have there a fuller development of what had been previously referred to, a giving further revelations as to prophecy, but all that was not completing the word of God. It does not mean that Paul was the last of inspired writers; for if he had written before all the others, it would still have been true that he completed the word of God. The sense in which Christ is said to be in us here is not merely as dwelling in us, but in us the hope of glory. The hope of glory is contrasted with their having Christ to reign over them in Palestine, bringing in manifested glory. The apostle speaks of them as now down here, but Christ

in them the hope of the glory they will have with Him by and by. It is Christ's life in us in its full risen character of display. Colossians never rises above it.

The Holy Ghost, it has been noticed, is hardly spoken of in this epistle, and the reason is, the introduction of Him would not have been good for them; they would have used the Holy Ghost apart from Christ, as something to draw the eye away from Christ. A religion completely of forms makes much of the Holy Ghost, but it puts the Holy Ghost in the clergy as the dispensers of blessing, and thus Christ is dishonored. Again there are Christians who have no forms at all and who consequently make much of the Holy Ghost but apart from Christ. There was much of the old legal feeling that had come in at Colosse, therefore the apostle presses upon them the truth of the riches of the glory of this mystery being among the Gentiles. God did not bring out this mystery when the Church was at Jerusalem; indeed it was only fully brought out among the Gentiles. That is, the full heavenly character of it is only properly known when the Gentiles are in the foreground. Hence Paul the apostle of the Gentiles is the very one who especially brings it out. The full gospel is not mere forgiveness, but deliverance, liberty, and union with Christ above in Spirit. “Whom we preach warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Perfect in Christ means full grown. A man may be very happy, may enjoy the pardon of his sins, &c, but without the unfolding of this heavenly secret (that is, Christ in the saints and the heavenly glory connected with it), he can hardly be said to be full grown in Christ. This “every man” is very striking here; the repeated individualizing is very beautiful in connection with the body. The two truths are singularly characteristic of Christianity, which unites the most opposite things in a way that nothing else does, and it also individualizes. In the Millennium, individuals will not have such an important place as now; nor will there be the Body on earth. Now “He that hath an ear” comes in as well as “what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” there is the richest place of blessing given both to the individual and to the Church, the Body of Christ, and both are brought out in their fullness. The human way, on the contrary, is that if what is public and corporate be much pressed, the individual suffers and vice versa.

Christianity makes every individual of eternal value to God, and also shows the Church's place and there you find the large feeling of desire and self-sacrifice and seeking the good of the whole. Paul who brings in the Church so prominently, says pointedly, “every man.” “Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” “Whereunto” has reference to the need. “I also labor striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily.” Strong words are used here, to show what it cost him. It all supposes great difficulty, and the need of a power entirely beyond himself. It shows the necessity for Christ to work in it all. It was not only for those who had seen his face, but the contrary, as we see from chapter 2:1. What is to be noted is this: while the apostle loved those whom he had seen, there was no such thing as forgetting or not feeling deeply about those whom he had never seen. It was for the Church, for the saints as such, whether known or unknown; and more than this, he had a keen conflict for them because of their difficulties. Now (chap. 2:1) he commences to show them their danger, but he first wished them to know what a combat he had for them, and for them also at Laodicea, and as many as had not then seen his face in the flesh. “That their hearts might be comforted.” They were not happy now: they were oppressed, they were getting clouded in their thoughts, and losing the clearness of view they had, “being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, in which

mystery [for that is the point] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There were hindrances to their apprehension of this mystery. His great desire was, nevertheless; that they should understand it well. A person may be a Christian, seeing the grace of God in Christ, and yet be comparatively poor in his thoughts and very feeble in his apprehension of the counsels and ways of God He may never have been led into this fullness of the understanding of this mystery. Without this it is impossible to have all these treasures. "In which [mystery] are hid all the treasures of wisdom an knowledge." This brings us into another atmosphere as it were. Failure in apprehension shows a moral hindrance. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

Chapter 17

Notes on Colossians 2:4-12

To some minds there may be a difficulty in the strong language on the one hand, in which the apostle speaks of the Colossians' faith and order; and on the other, in the solemn warnings with which the epistle abounds. It might seem hard at first sight to reconcile the steadfastness of their faith in Christ with the warning we have seen given them— “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled.” All we have to do is to believe both. What it really proves is, that no blessed order or steadfastness can guarantee a soul that admits wrong thoughts and corrupt principles that shroud, weaken, or lower the glory of Christ. Thus, the seeming incongruity makes the danger more apparent and striking. The fact of their order and the steadfastness of the faith in Christ that had characterized them, were in themselves no effectual bulwark against the evil that menaced them. The apostle felt, and lets them know, that, though they were so blessed, yet by admitting the enticing words of others, their souls would be injured and undermined. No soul, no matter what the blessing in time past or present, can afford to trifle with that which upsets the person or glory of Christ. The Colossians had been remarkably favored; and the apostle rejoiced in beholding their order and steadfast faith in Christ; still in the very verse before he cautions them “lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.” (Ver 4.) What he presses upon them is, that as they had received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, they should walk in Him (ver. 6), abiding as they had begun. Speculation covered over with plausible language, was what they had to guard against. Therefore, though absent in the flesh, the apostle says he was with them in spirit, joying and beholding their order, &c., for this very reason they were to be warned of what would mar the Savior's glory in their testimony. The finest fruit is most easily injured. They would thus practically lose Christ. He does not in the least call in question their real blessing thus far. On the contrary, he reminds them of it, and tells them to walk in Christ, “rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught;” not downcast because of perils, but “abounding therein with thanksgiving.” It is very close work, the object being to exclude the persuasive speech of false men that, if received, would steal them away imperceptibly from Christ.

When we are at rest in Christ before God, we can enter in and behold the manifestation of Himself in Christ, after the most blessed sort. It is very important to see Christ not only in His work of reconciliation but as revealing the Father. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The Holy Ghost does exalt Christ, no doubt, but then the Son is never exalted, so to speak, at the expense of the Father, any more than the Father can accept honor where the Son is degraded.

The important thing for Christians is to be true to what they believe and confess, or rather to what God has revealed for their faith and confession. Whatever takes us away from the grace and truth which came by Christ, always subverts grace, truth, and Christ. The Colossians had been heretofore happy and really steadfast in their faith in Christ, but they were now allowing doctrines among them which, if not rooted out, would infallibly lead them away from Christ. Here lay their danger. It is astonishing how eagerly and easily Christians are apt to admit something new. The apostle in this case refers to philosophical speculations, which seem to have been brought in at

Colosse, as well as Jewish elements, if indeed they were not combined. It was not enough for them to have Christ: they were to walk in Him rooted and built up in Him, assured in the faith, and not caught by these novel dreams, whether of an intellectual or a religions kind. It was thus an early error, that philosophy might be united to Christianity in order to make divine revelation more palatable to earnest, thoughtful minds. It has been all very well, they thought, to preach Christ at first simply, but now that it was no longer a question of a few lowly Galileans, why not address themselves to the great and wise of the earth, sick as many were of heathenism, and repelled by cold Judaism? And, if so, why not meet them as much as possible on their own ground? Why not engraft into Christianity some of the common sense of Aristotle, or, still better, the lofty aspirings of Plato, or yet more readily such high and noble sentiments as Philo represents in his Biblical essays?

Philosophy is one great bane of Christianity now as in these early days. The whole scheme of God's truth and ways is blotted out or has no room left for it in the teaching of philosophy. They overlook creation and the fall. They deify conscience, which man acquired by the fall. They ignore sin and God's judgment of sin. So also God's grace is unknown and the atonement its fruit. Rationalists would reduce divine truth to a mere conclusion that people draw. But truth is never a conclusion. The moment I draw a conclusion, I am on the ground of science. Thus logic is a natural science, the root, one may say, of all others, which submit facts to it; but what has this with submitting to the truth of God? Revelation may pronounce on things as they are in man, as it also gives us things as they are from God; it does not merely show us that such or such a thing must be, which is the province of human reasoning. The truth reveals to us that a thing is. A poor soul might be perplexed to understand what must be; but no one that hears the testimony can avoid receiving or rejecting, if God declares that a given thing or person is. Hence the vast importance of faith.

The Colossians were beginning to let in two snares—a reasoning mind, and certain ascetic mortifications of the body. The one was in connection with philosophy, the other in connection with Judaism. These were the two great errors then slipping in, of whose real character and source they were not aware. The apostle warns them (ver. 8) though he had just told them he rejoiced in their faith and order. How sad in them to slip! But this is not all. He as good as says, Take care of what you are doing, of letting go what has produced such fruits for the fair promises some are holding out to you. They tell you these new thoughts and ways can be held along with Christ; but let me say that you are embracing and taking up that which will frustrate, sooner or later, the truth which you now profess. The effect invariably is, that those who are not really born of God receive these inner dreams and outer forms instead of Christianity, while true believers are seriously damaged and lose their delight in Christ, and their testimony for Him. The one error suits the speculative, the other would meet those of a more practical turn of mind. No wonder, therefore, he exhorts them to be “rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” This last word is much to be weighed. I suppose their thanksgivings were beginning to wane, for such is the immediate effect of other things intruding into the place of Christ.

“See lest there shall be any one that leads you as his prey through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the rudiments of the world and not according to Christ.” The earth gives clouds and not light. Man promises and undertakes much; but he can

really give nothing but the blinding deceits of the master he is enslaved to. There is the deepest possible necessity for these warnings. Speculation about the origin of things, in which the Orientals, Gnostics, &c., delighted, as about the eternity of matter for instance, might not have seemed directly dangerous. People are ready enough to say, my philosophy is one thing, my religion another. They might reason then, as since, that the world must have been made out of something always in existence. This might sound plausible to the mind, but it has a great flaw for the believer; it makes nothing of God and gives His word the lie. Matter becomes the great circumstance before the mind, and God is made like man, a mere active mind, a manufacturer, &c. How grandly the scripture of the Galilean fisherman rebukes Colossian dreamers! “All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made.” How aptly the error had been already met in chapter 1:16! “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him.” The idea of the eternity of matter brings in from the first something outside God, independent and antagonistic; for this was the further deduction from the actual state of the world. Hence they reasoned of the two first principles, the one good, the other evil. This was the very error which was so much followed out and interwoven into heathen philosophy; especially in the East, as indeed to this day. It is evident that the principle as to the eternity of matter, once admitted, leads the way to an abyss of falsehood and moral evil; and he would soonest fall into these inward or outward excesses who reasons most from his false starting-point. Faith repudiates philosophy, not only as a rival but as an ally; it rests only on God's word; it accepts that word as absolute and exclusive. Therefore had the apostle the best reason for warning them against philosophy and vain deceit, “according to the rudiments of the world and not according to Christ.” They savor of, as they spring from, man as he is, not Christ; they suit the world, not heaven, nor those who belong to it, even while they are upon the earth. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” What gives a more wonderful view of Christ than this truth which the simplest believer knows, or ought to know, however little able to explain it? There is nothing like it. There alone we have the truth. We know God now; and how? Not by reasoning, as if thus we could search and find Him out. We know Him in Christ as a living person who lived once bodily in this world, who still has His body above the world. We know from God, from His word, that in the person of Christ “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” not merely in His spirit, but really in Him bodily, though He be now glorified. He had a real, true body from the incarnation, but He had all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him thus.

Nor is this all. The apostle adds, “Ye are complete in him;” so that you do not want philosophy even if it contained anything good, still less since it is positively bad. What we want is to enjoy Christ better and to walk more according to Him—not to glean other things from man as if they could enrich Christ, whereas they do but corrupt the truth. Man fallen is away from God, and under the power of the devil. This is the fact that makes these human notions so false and ruinous. Philosophical principles spring from death and can only produce death. In all heathenism (and perhaps one might say as much of Christendom) there is nothing more deadly than its philosophy. It is only less deceitful than the world's religion. It sounds reasonable, and a man gets charmed with the beauty or boldness of thoughts, imaginations, language, &c. Faith destroys both superstition and infidelity by the truth of God, and this by the revelation of Christ. The fullness of the Godhead never dwelt in the Father bodily or in the Holy Ghost but only in Christ. He was the only One of whom this wonderful reality could be affirmed. The whole fullness in Him dwelt and

dwells still. “The Father that dwelleth in me (said He here below), he doeth the works.” Again, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils,” &c. Here we have not only the Son, but in and by Him the three Persons of the Godhead active in grace in this evil world. And faith receives what Scripture says of the unseen and eternal: faith acts on God's revealed mind as to the present. Unbelieving man refuses what is above himself and draws inferences from what he knows or does not know; but God will destroy both him and them. It is not only that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, but we are (not that fullness) but filled full in Him. We may be and are said to be the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1), but never, of course, of the Godhead.

Hence we “are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body [of the sins] of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” This is expressly in contrast with the external ordinance of circumcision. It should be “putting off the body of flesh,” not the body “of the sins” of the flesh. The true reading makes it a more complete thing: it is not a question of sins, but rather of sin in the nature. “Sins” would hardly be in keeping with the scope of the passage or phrase. It does not refer to the literal fact of circumcision, but to Christ's death. When we believe in Christ, we have all the value of His death made true of us. This is here called circumcision not made by hands in contrast with the ancient ordinance. The meaning and spiritual thought of circumcision is the mortification of human nature, man as he is being treated as a dead thing. It is Christ's death that gives us this privilege. We are brought into association with His death and have all its value in parting with all our ruined condition, the body of the flesh, when we receive Him by faith. His circumcision supersedes all other which in no way stripped off our evil state as man in the flesh.

“Buried with him in baptism whereunto also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.” This brings in, not so much Christ's personal glory as His work. The first chapter gave us chiefly His personal glory and even though it spoke of His work, it was the reconciliation of all things, and of the saints withal, meanwhile, before the glory is revealed. Chapter 2 presses His work upon the saints. I have no doubt the wisdom of the Holy Ghost is shown in this: we have first Himself and His work in general, then the specific value and effect of His work for us and on us. There His headship is doubly unfolded with precision; here the fact of His being the Head of all principality and authority, is just alluded to, giving emphasis to our completeness in Him. The reference to circumcision is clearly bound up with Christ's death, &c.; not the legal act to which He submitted, nor a question of His person, but of His work applied to us. This is entirely confirmed by the statement of our being buried with Him in baptism, in which, says he, ye have also been raised with Him, &c. The great point is the linking us to Christ. By Him alone the work was done; but when we believe in Him, we are brought into its efficacy and acquire by grace a common position with Him. It is not merely, that it was by virtue of Him, but in Him this great work was wrought, whereby we have a place in and with Him. The initiatory institution of Christianity sets forth this immense distinctive blessing of the Christian. We owned in baptism that we died in Christ's death out of the condition in which we naturally lived; and now we are risen with Him by faith of the operation of God who raised Him out of the dead. We are thus entered on a new state (not, of course, our bodies yet, in fact, but our souls). The practical application of both death and resurrection with Christ, we shall soon see in the hands of the apostle.

Chapter 18

Notes on Colossians 2:13-19

Much as the Spirit of God brings out the quickening power of Christ in this epistle, He never pursues the ultimate or highest consequences of the work of Christ. Quickened or raised up by Him, or rather raised together with Him, is the utmost we find here; but there He stops. Again in chapter 3, although He says, “seek those things that are above,” He does not say we are there, but on the contrary, looks at the saint as being on earth, while seeking the things that are above. Thus, this epistle never goes so far as Ephesians; it never says we are seated in heavenly places. As we have seen and as is clear, the current of the communications of grace was interrupted; there was a hindrance before the apostle. The Holy Ghost cannot freely show the saints the things of Christ, where He has to show them their own things. He turns aside to occupy himself with the truth practically and apply it to them, which is never the sign of souls being thoroughly bright; for there ought not to be such a need for arresting the flow of grace and truth. In Ephesians, on the contrary, the work of Christ is carried out to all its fullest consequences; the healthy state of the saint is unfolded; and exhortations follow proportionately high.

We have an instance here of the way in which the apostle, having brought in a general principle, turns to them and says, “you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” then in verse 16, he goes aside to show how very pointedly and completely the work of God would take them away from the things of the flesh and law— “Having blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,” &c. Yet you want to get ordinances again! The only effect of this handwriting must be against you: it is very strongly expressed; and the apostle repeats it in a double form. These Colossian saints were not so far gone in legalism as to put Christians under the ten commandments as a rule of life. To bring in ordinances even, was not so ruinous; because they at least derive their entire value from the truth of Christ, couched and shadowed forth in them; whereas, there is nothing like making a rule of life of the law for awakening the spirit of self-righteousness in the confident, and of distrust and despair in more diffident souls, reversing exactly the way of grace with both. The apostle insists, that even to let in the principle of ordinances now is to renounce the fundamental truth of death and resurrection, that is, of Christianity, because they suppose men alive in the world, not dead and risen in Christ. Those led aside may not mean to do anything of the sort; but the enemy does who misleads them. It is going back to dealings of a preparatory kind, into flesh and the world, and in effect a forsaking of the glorious privileges of Christ to do so. The apostle does not dwell here as in Galatians on the consequences of our being made debtors to fulfill the whole law, if we venture under it at all; but he shows, that it is a denial of Christ, as we know Him, if we allow of going back to law in any form, ordinances or not. It is the folly of making a merit of a return to the discipline of the rod and the value of the letter-game and the dissected map and the toy—rewards for full-grown men.

It is evident that, in the handling of men of philosophic tone, the rite of circumcision might be made a much more spiritual thing than any man could work out of the law as a rule of life. For they might say, as men have said, that circumcision was pressed only as the emblem of what we have in

Christ, an ancient and divine though of course outward sign of spiritual grace. But the step was fatal; for if they admitted that sign, it was a recurrence to shadows when the substance was come; it was a relinquishment of grace too for the principle of law. The fathers had circumcision, no doubt, before Moses, which was then especially connected with promise. Still, although it was originally before the nation's responsibility to the law was pledged at Sinai, it was after that so embedded in the law that they cannot be separated. Take up circumcision now; and if you do not put yourself, the law puts you, under its whole system, and separates you, in principle, front Christ as an exalted heavenly Head who has accomplished redemption. Thus, if there was one ordinance that more than any might symbolize with promise and grace, it was circumcision; yet so strong was the apostle, that he tells the Galatians, that, admitting it at all, they became debtors to do the whole law. To the Colossians he goes farther, and shows how it contradicts and sets aside the work of Christ, and the place of association with Him, into which we are thereby brought before God. Hence he here intimates what sort of circumcision we already have as Christians; it is of divine operation and not human: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh,” &c.: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him,” &c.

In Galatians, the law is in connection with justification; in Colossians, with Christ risen from the dead and in heaven. Christ, at any rate, is there; and although we are not seen to be in Him there, His exaltation to God's right hand really decides our place as dead with Him and risen with Him; not merely as justified by His blood, but dead and risen with Him. Of all this exceeding rich roll of blessing, subjection to ordinances is the denial; for what has Christ to do with the law now? And it is with Christ as He is, not as He was under law, that we are associated. In Hebrews we have another thing; it is not our death and resurrection with Christ, but Christ now appearing in the presence of God for us in glory, which is founded upon the perfection of His work, His one offering, which has forever put away sin. He is there, at the right hand of God, because He has by Himself purged our sins. The law as a code or system for us is inconsistent with Christ's place in glory as the bright exhibition of our triumph through God's grace; and such is the Christian way of looking at Christ. We do not, it is true, find our association with Christ dead or risen in Hebrews; still less is it the display of our union with Him above; neither is it justification, as in Romans and Galatians, but the value of His work measured by His position in heaven shines there with special luster. Any allowance of ordinances now is proved to be a gainsaying of His work and of the glory He has in heaven, in danger, too, of leading to apostasy.

From verse 13, then, the apostle takes great pains to set before the saints at Colosse their condition without and with Christ: “You being dead in your sins, &c., hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” The very life we have received as believers is the token that our trespasses are gone. If God has quickened us with the life of Christ, He has forgiven us all trespasses. It is impossible that life in Christ dead and risen could have anything against it. There was everything against the believer once, but the possession of life in a risen Savior necessarily attests that all is righteously forgiven to him who believes. It is a remarkable way of putting the case, an exactly parallel case to which you can scarce find in any other part of Scripture.

In general, as we too well know, recourse is had to ordinances for meeting shortcomings, whetting spiritual appetite, &c. It is never in Christendom the open, despised denial of Christ, but the supply

of certain aids to faith (!) or feeling besides Christ. This is precisely what the apostle affirms to be so unbelieving and evil. “Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us,” observe, not against you, but against us. When the apostle comes to speak of the operation of the law, he will not say “you,” but “us;” as, again, “which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” The fact is, the Colossian saints, being Gentiles, had never been under law at all, and therefore he does not say “you;” but when he spoke of sins just before, he said you: “You being dead in your sins,” &c. This makes the distinction very striking. “You” occurs in verse 13, because it applies to any sinner now, Jew or Gentile; while it is “us” in verse 14, because none but Jews, strictly speaking, were under law. The allusion to handwriting was very notable also; for the Gentiles had never put their hands to it, whereas the. Jews had affirmed “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” and thereon had been sprinkled with the blood as a seal of the legal covenant they had signed under penalty of death.

The apostle declares this was contrary to them and only brought in as we know, condemnation, darkness, and death. What has Christ done in respect to all this? He has blotted it out, taken it out of the way. Do you want, like the Colossians, to bring it back again? Christ nailed it to His cross—an expression of entire triumph over it. “And having spoiled principalities and powers he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

It is very interesting to see the way in which the power of evil is viewed according to the place we are in. When the Church appears, it is not so much Satan's power on earth which was the way the Jews felt it chiefly; but we have the special disclosure, that he is the prince of the power of the air, and that the wicked spirits are in heavenly places. (Eph. 2 and 6.) This in no way clashes with what we have in the Old Testament; only now it is brought out more fully, and shown to be the position in which they are as opposed to the Christian. In Rev. 12 we see them (the dragon and his angels) ejected from heaven. They wanted to keep the heavenly places; they desired to hinder the Church, and dishonor God in His saints, that they might have a righteous claim over them as it were. It was intolerable to them that such as had behaved badly on earth should be at last with the Son of God in heavenly places. Alas I how many here below of the very race whom God so distinguishes in His mercy betray that they are of their father the devil, by love of falsehood and by hatred of God's grace and truth. Here we have the effect of the work of Christ upon these powers—leading them in triumph on the cross. It is not so high a tone of triumph as in Eph. 4, where, it is said, Christ led captivity captive. The powers that led believers into captivity were themselves vanquished. The reason is manifest. It was when He ascended up on high. Here we hear of what was done on the cross, the power of the cross; but there it is the public manifestation of the victory, in ascending up on high. The great battle was won. Christ had forever defeated the powers of evil for the joint-heirs. This ascending up on high, and leading captivity captive, is the witness that they are powerless against the Christian. The language is always adapted to the point of view which the Holy Ghost is taking—whether it be of earth or heaven, whether of Israel or the Church. More than this, it depends on how and where He looks at the saints now. If they are viewed as in the wilderness, there is a different style and figure. Satan is spoken of as “a roaring lion,” which suits the wilderness, and hence that is not the way he is spoken of in Ephesians, but in 1 Peter.

Now comes the practical turn to which the apostle applies this. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or new-moon, or sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” (Ver. 16, 17.) A Christian man who knows the victory of Christ

for us should not surely entertain the idea of going back to these elementary forms of working good. Hold fast your actual place in Christ, act consistently with it. As to eating and drinking or ordinances relative to the year, month, and week (and the apostle takes particular care to speak not merely of feast or new moon but of sabbaths) remember that these things but prefigure the body or substantial good found really and only in Christ. In fact, these times and seasons point chiefly to what God will give His people by and by. The new moon was a remarkable type of Israel, being renewed after fading away; as the sabbath was the type of the rest of God which He will yet enjoy and share. But whether it be peace or drink-offerings or the feasts in general, they are connected as the shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. This we have. The Jew had the shadow, and he will have the things to come by the grace of God under the new covenant by and by. We are given the substance of Christ now. It is a question here of Jewish days. The Lord's day has nothing to do with Judaism, it is not only apart from but in contrast with that system. The Lord's day is as distinctly a Christian institution as the Lord's supper, the Jew having nothing to do with either. It is very important to see that God has put honor upon the day of resurrection and grace. When people are radically loose or begin to slip away from the Lord, an early symptom is carelessness about this day. There ought to be an exercised conscience about it, not only for our own selves, but also as to servants within and others without our houses. It is of very great consequence that sense of liberty and grace should not even have the appearance of laxity or selfishness.

It is not exactly said the body is Christ. It is said “the Lord is that spirit,” not that body, which was within the letter of the law. “The body” is used in contrast with “the shadow.” There is no substance in a shadow, but we have the body which is of Christ. The twofold idea is, that while the substance is of Him, He is the spirit of all. Verse 16 deals chiefly with a Judaizing character of evil; but verse 18 goes farther and shows a kind of prying into the unseen, not so much the religious use or misuse of the seen, which was the Jewish snare, but dabbling with philosophy, specially of the Orientals. There was a great appearance of humility in all this, as there always is in false systems. The worship of angels seemed right and due; especially as no term peculiar to divine worship was used. Let it be ever so modified, still the apostle speaks of it strongly. “Let no man deprive you of your reward, doing his will in humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh.” The Orientals indulged in abundant speculation about angels. It is true there are such beings; but it is the prying into such subjects that is so evil. They have to do with us, but not we with them. Our business is with God. Now it seemed to be a reasonable inference that, if angels had to do with us, we must have to do with them; and inasmuch as they had to do with God immediately, why should we not have recourse to them with Him? It was a not unnatural thought: what then makes it so grievous an error? It is the setting aside of Christ who is the Head of all and so above angels. Christ is the One who determines our relation before God; and for all our need with God we have Christ the great high priest. Thus the putting angels in this place is a double dishonor to Christ. Such a speculator was “vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh.” It might be plausible; but it injured not only the soul's enjoyment of Christ but His nature and glory to indulge in thoughts of the kind. “And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, by joints and bands being ministered to and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” (Ver. 19.) It was false teachers who were thus depriving the saints of their blessing. These men habitually and instinctively seek to ingratiate themselves with the children of God whose unsuspecting simplicity exposes them to be carried away by them. The worship of

angels was one method in which the evil showed itself there and evinced its false character. The Holy Spirit is come down to glorify Christ, not angels. He who went beyond Scripture after angels, certainly did not hold fast the Head. The reference here to ministry is not at all the same as in Ephesians, where the apostle enters into it copiously and shows the spiritual gifts in their chief forms from the highest down to the least, by which the body works for itself the building of itself up in love. Hence, if souls came together in a very simple way, it might still be for edification. Here all is put together, not expanded and distinguished as in Ephesians.

If God has led such into the place where Christ's headship (I may add, too, the Holy Ghost's presence) is held and acted, how can they expect blessing from those who do not see nor act upon it? These truths are fundamental for the Church, ministry, &c. We have to hold to the will of God, and God has His own will as to all this, and His own wisdom and way, which ought to be something in our eyes. Here we are told of joints and bands—the various means which Christ employs for the spiritual blessing and profit of His people. It enables the body to work better; it concentrates the saints around Christ, and for His glory. It is well to seek the diffusion of blessing to others; but for the saints the truest thing is the power of gathering to Christ Himself, not merely sending out servants, but gathering to Christ as Lord where there is need of spiritual power to hold together. This is to increase “with the increase of God.” There is then enlargement, comfort, and consolation. The power that is expressed is not in conversion only but works within in positive blessing and self-judgment.

Chapter 19

Notes on Colossians 2:20-23

Here we have the application spiritually of these two great truths, the death and the resurrection of Christ. They had been already put together in verse 12. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him.” “And you, being dead in your sins, hath he quickened together with him.” (Ver. 13.) Now, from verse 20th to the 23rd, we have the consequences of being thus dead with Christ, as in chapter 3 from the first verse onwards we have the meaning of the resurrection of Christ, that which it secures and to which the Holy Ghost calls us as thus risen with Christ. The use that is made of our death with Christ is not that we are redeemed. In this point of view the blood of Christ is ever made prominent. It is not that the forgiveness of all trespasses is omitted; but the death of Christ and, our association with Him goes much farther here and introduces us to another line of truth altogether. We might have seen the offering of His body, the shedding of His blood, and there might have been no presentation of death with Him. What is here founded upon our being dead with Christ is the having nothing to do with nature or the world in the things of God. The whole force of the world's religion denies death with Christ: it does not see and will not admit the total ruin of man as he is. What the world thinks of in a religion is that which will suit people in every variety of condition. Human wisdom provides for each and all, for the becoming religious observance of the entire population of a land. Thus all decent people, all who are not scandalous livers, &c., are made worshippers, and have a religion adapted to their thoughts of themselves and God, mainly occupied with what man essays to do for God. It is a mixture of heathenism with Jewish forms and finds its element in certain abstinences as its holiness. As there can be no positive enjoyment of Christ, the negative must be its essential characteristic. God embodied these very elements in Judaism, where was a religion of the flesh and a worldly sanctuary. He Himself made the experiment, so to speak, of an immense system of restrictions, which is the only conceivable plan for man as such to be holy to the Lord. Hence we find the trial under every advantage of this kind of worship in the Levitical law. Besides the restraint put on man's will morally in the ten words, particular meats and drinks were forbidden. They were not even to touch certain ceremonially unclean objects. All this had to do with man in the flesh, though I doubt not that every ordinance in the Jewish system had a weighty meaning as shadowing better things in Christ. There were always precious truths couched under these forms and ceremonies. The letter kills (that is, the mere outward husk of the system), but the spirit gives life, wherever there was faith to lay hold of the spiritual import.

Now if we are “dead with Christ,” where is the application to us of “touch not, taste not, handle not?” Such injunctions disappear entirely, because, if already and really dead with Christ, I am outside such language and ideas. You might as well exhort a dead man as to his old wants or duties. The old religious system for man in the flesh is absolutely done with for the Christian. It is to contradict the foundation on which he stands, yea, his very baptism. In Christ he is dead to the world. Hence, if a Christian mingle with the world's religion, he invariably loses the sense of being dead with Christ, as well as the true judgment of the world and man. The only means by which the world could ever be religious, is by a resort to the law, as we see in every national system, and

indeed in every effort to win the acceptance of man as such. But this is now to give up Christ dead and risen, little as men think it. Here the apostle seems to allude to the general system of human restriction in religious matters rather than to any particular part of the Old Testament. When a man dies, he leaves behind him his wealth, rank, ease, reputation, energy, that constituted his enjoyment in this life. So does the Christian from the starting-point, by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection. Only it is a great truth on which he is called to act while he is still on the earth. In Christ he is now dead to the world. There is in many Christians the entire overlooking of this truth either as a privilege for enjoyment or as a reality for practice. To them it is a mere mysticism, the idea of being dead and risen with Christ, which they are too humble and reverent to look on and think about. Let me add that it is not the same thing as having life in Christ, for this was of course ever true of believers before there was or could be such a standing as that of being dead and risen with Christ. After the death and resurrection of Christ such was the great change in this respect that then came in.

It is thus evident that to be dead with Christ takes a person not only out of the world in spirit, but out of the whole system of its religion. “If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” Such had been the condition of men, at best, before Christ. They were at the letters so to speak; the rudiments or elements had their place and trial. But now, the Son of God being come and having given us to know Him that is true, it is the substance and fullness of the truth that we know in knowing Christ. The work of Christ rested on by faith fits the believer now for this place where old things are passed away and all things are made new. “Why, as though living in the world,” is a most remarkable expression. It shows that we are not true to our standing, as well as to Christ, if we are as men alive in the world. We have a new life, which is the life of Him who is dead and risen; and this has now brought us into the condition of death to all that is of the world. Hence as to the religion of the world, the Christian has in principle as really done with it as Christ Himself had after His death. What had our Lord from His cross to do with the fasts and feasts of the Jews? Absolutely nothing, neither ought we; and by “we” I mean every real Christian. The time of patience with the Christian Jews is long passed away; there is no longer the smallest ground of excuse.

I admit that the great mass of Christians will not hear of such a breach with the world; and thus comes one severe trial of those who see it thus a foundation truth of Christ. Have they in grace made up their minds for His sake to be counted fanatical, foolish, proud and narrow, committing these and all other calumnies to Him who loves them, and knows the end from the beginning? The taking up the rudiments of the world, is then a flat practical contradiction to our death with Christ. The Colossians were in danger of this snare. They did not see why, because they were Christians, they should leave off what seemed good enough done among the Jews or Gentiles. They wanted to hold on to the truth of Christ, but to keep up or adopt along with it religious forms which had been observed in olden times. No, says the apostle, it is Christ who is all our good, and nothing but Christ: we need nothing else. Christ is all. Nothing was so exclusive as Christ and the cross; and yet what was so large? “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” But He was rejected. Since then Jewish forms and principles had lost all their ancient value. In Galatians the apostle speaks even more strongly than here. He charged those who would observe days and months and times and years with going back to heathenism. “Howbeit then when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods” (that was their old Gentile condition);

“but now after that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” They thought that it was to improve on the early simplicity of the Gospel, if they borrowed from the law, and little did they expect the apostolic rebuke, that it is as bad for Christians to take up Jewish elements as to turn back to idolatry. It is in truth now shown to be the same principle: such is the light in which the cross of Christ puts these worldly elements. Before many years are over, there may be seen a strange amalgam not merely between the churches so called, but between Christendom and Judaism. The loss of the temporalities of the Roman See is no unimportant step in the chain of events. In due time Rome will be left free for the Beast to display his power in, Jerusalem becoming the central seat of religion to which Christendom will turn. There will not only be idolatry, but the abomination of desolation: the man of sin will be set up and worshipped in his time. All work on towards a worse evil than even Popery itself.

But if such will be the end, the way now is “living in the world,” which means that the heart is here, that one has settled down to the world's religion. A Christian, on the contrary, is one who belongs to heaven. The error of embracing these Jewish elements practically denied this, and especially the being dead with Christ. The only sure way to judge of anything is to bring in Christ. The question here is, how stands Christ in view of the world's religion? When He lived here below, He, undoubtedly, went to the temple, owning and practicing the law (however truly the only begotten Son of the Father), for God did; He had not yet given up Israel, man, the earth, all things here below. But where and how is Christ now? One cannot, again, have and keep truth unless it be followed out, and God does not mean that we should possess it otherwise. He gives a testimony; the light shines; but the truth only fills a soul when acted on: else the light that is within becomes darkness, and then how great is that darkness! Need one hesitate to affirm, that if a man professed to understand what it is to be dead with Christ and yet went on with the world's religion, he would show himself to be a thoroughly dishonest man? It is more than a want of intelligence. What more solemn, save sacrificing Christ's person? Those who seem to have the truth but refuse to act upon it, will ere long become enemies of the truth which they do not follow.

The religion of the world has to do with this creation; it belongs to those things of which people can say, “Touch not, taste not, handle not.” Take the principle of consecrated buildings, holy places within the holy, sacred vestments, anything of that kind which perishes with the using, all is connected with the world and the flesh is capable of enjoying it. To say it does not matter where or how we worship God, is as bad as any evil. There is nothing worse than indifference in the things of God. Those who are thus careless in what regards God, are not wanting in vigilance as to what concerns themselves. I speak, of course, of the general facts, not of individuals. If we did not know ourselves associated with Christ dead and risen, our worship ought to be a kind of accommodated Judaism, which was the religion of a people living in the world. Now, on the contrary, all that is entirely judged in the cross to be enmity against God; and Christians are called to have nothing to do with it. There is wonderful blessedness in realizing where the death of Christ puts us. It has quite closed with whatever is alive in the world, with all that a man in the world might value. Living in the world takes two great forms, one superstitious, the other secular, self being necessarily the root of both. Being dead with Christ delivers us from both. Take the American churches as the secular form in religion, the one idea is to make themselves comfortable even in devotion. The idea of worshipping God is gone. They have no notion what it is to be dead with Christ. The

greater danger, however, lies on the other or superstitious side, because that has a fine skew of humility, piety, and reverence. But those who are truly, wonderfully, delivered through death and resurrection with Christ ought to avoid all reproach of lightness and negligence. Unbecoming behavior is nowhere so painful as where the Christian standing is known and the ground of God's Church is taken.

Then the apostle gives us a sample of what these ordinances are. It is not the power of the Spirit of God unfolding the things of Christ, but something that relates to self, chiefly of a negative character. Such of old was the dealing of law with flesh in an evil world. Faith is now entitled to look on Christ in heaven. “Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.” This is not God's will, but man devising means of pleasing Him out of his own head. All this clothes itself with a great apparent lowliness, and cherishes asceticism. It is exactly what philosophy has done—denying the proper place of our bodies. How strikingly, on the contrary, does the New Testament bring out the vast importance of the body It proclaims, for instance, that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. This is most important, and, itself the effect of redemption, is the true ground of Christian morals. “Yield up your members as instruments of righteousness to God;” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice,” &c. The philosophic mind of Corinth went on the principle that it mattered not about the body, provided the spirit was all right. The apostle insists that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20.) Farther, there is the truth of the resurrection of the body, and not merely the immortality of the soul. The emphasis is upon the body; so that although the body is fallen under sin, the power of the Holy Ghost is there, who is said to dwell in each believer. You cannot reclaim the flesh, you cannot improve the will. The old man has to be judged, denied, treated as vile; but the body is even now made the temple of the Holy Ghost. Adam before he fell had body, soul, and spirit; but directly he fell, he acquired self-will—the loving to have his own way This is a thing we should always treat as evil, and judge ourselves if in any way we allow it to act. What can give a man such power to do this as Christ known thus in full delivering grace? Like the captured sword of Goliath, “none like that.” If I am dead and risen with Christ, where is the old man It does not exist in the sight of God; therefore we are not to allow it in the sight of men.

The prime thought of worldly religion is correcting the flesh, and improving the world. The mind finds greater glory in itself by ascetic efforts. Neglect of the body may be at the same time a puffing up of the flesh. It was a heathenish idea, the foster-child of philosophy. They willingly believed that the soul was holy if not the body, some contending that the soul came from God and the body from the devil. This was productive of frightful evil, to the destruction of all morality. Is there not an answer in Christ to all these wanderings of the human mind? Receiving the truth in Him, you get that which defeats the object of Satan; but the Holy Ghost alone, if I may so say, makes it to be truth in us. May it be received in the love of it!

Chapter 20

Notes on Colossians 3:1-11

We have seen death with Christ and its consequences applied to the danger which menaced the Colossian saints, judging the evil into which Satan was trying to draw them back. But the effect of this death with Christ was there regarded chiefly in a negative point of view. Why were such as they subject to ordinances? They ought not to be; for in Christ they were dead from the rudiments of the world and had consequently nothing to do with ordinances. These might be all well enough for men alive in the world, but necessarily cannot apply to dead men. It was a total spiritual contradiction. Now the Christian is dead by virtue of the cross of Christ. This is all a matter of faith. Of course he is alive naturally; he is disposed also, if not occupied with Christ, his life, to have old thoughts and habits revived; &c. As a believer I ought to distrust every judgment, every feeling I have had as a natural man, remembering that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. But now the Christian is looked at as a dead man, aye, dead to the world doing its best, even the religions world. The best the realm of nature can pretend to is in not touching, tasting, handling. Such is its only way of getting the victory, which is really no victory at all, but merely abstinence from certain things, or a system of fleshly restrictions. That is wholly distinct from the principle of the Christian. He looks for the victory of grace. For the death of Christ has delivered him from the whole ground of nature in not touching, tasting, or handling. This was Jewish in principle, and not merely so, but it was the natural religion for man. It is only thus that men try to avoid evil in the world. Christianity does not merely avoid the evil within and around, but brings in death to it all. Christ has died to it, and the Christian should know himself dead to all that is of the world, moral or religious, as decidedly as gross, intellectual or infidel.

In chapter 3 we advance a step farther. The apostle reasons from our being risen with Christ. It is not merely that we shall die and rise, but that we are dead and risen. Even many Christians who use the words constantly, do not really enter into the meaning of this language, and for the obvious and sufficient reason—they are not living in the truth of it practically: they are too habitually mixed up with the world to understand such absolute separation from it. It is not that they are dull of understanding in the things and interests of nature. But their speech and their ways bewray them, proving how far they are from intelligence of the Scripture itself. They substitute mysticism for the truth.

Before Christ came God had appointed a system of ordinances. Judaism was the world's religion in its best shape. Those who were formed in that school, till they underwent a total revolution by grace, never understood the distinctive features of Christianity. Its character was hidden from them. The Jews had no notion of the flesh being utterly ruined—no sense of sin, no understanding of the grace of God. As a nation they were put under law, under Levitical priesthood, under outward sacrifices, under carnal ordinances. All this was a part of what they had to go through, great truths being concealed under these rudimentary pictures. Christendom has taken up the things that were right enough for a Jew, but which are now called “the elements of the world,” as in truth they are. They were not so judged when God was dealing with Israel. It was, however, what the world is capable of. Now they are treated as elements of the world; but it was not so before

Christ died.

There are many, for instance, who think you cannot have fit worship for God without a sacred building and ceremonies in accordance and the more beautiful the building, and imposing the ritual, the more they count it acceptable to God. Now all this is part of the elements of the world. Again, there are those who think you cannot have the Lord's Supper without an official ordained for the purpose of administering it. There is no such custom in the Church of God. The apostle repudiates the entire system. It is an invention of the enemy. New Testament Scripture, which reveals the Church, excludes all this. Not only is it not a good thing, but all such thoughts and ways are evil now, and opposed to the cross and the heavenly glory of Christ.

Scripture remains unchangeable (whatever the changes of Christendom), and what we need is to betake ourselves to the light of Scripture. This is a simple but immense safeguard—let us go back to God's word and cleave to that alone. The devil was at this Judaizing work among the Colossians; his great aim was to lead them away to ordinances, Jewish forms which had their lawful place once, but were not in force now. Christianity treats them as of no account, and indeed so far from retaining any value they are treated as childish, and even idolatrous to the Christian. That was naturally a very serious difficulty for a Jew. All that Moses, David, Hezekiah honored as religious observances, were they asked to abandon now? Yes, but Christ had come; and were they not to “hear Him” now? Redemption, the substance of their figures, was wrought: was this to be slighted? The great error of Christendom has always been a going back to ordinances. Take the principle of a consecrated order of men; what is it but the same thing? It is true, all Christians have not the same gift or place; there are only a few gifted to help, lead on, and instruct the many. What is a difficulty to some is, that up to the cross Christ was of course bound up with the Jewish system. But this closed with His cross, resurrection, and ascension. The Christian's connection with Christ is since then founded on the cross, which rent the veil and thus dissolved the Jewish system. Therefore it is said, “Seek the things above where Christ is seated on the right hand of God.” (Ver. 1.) It is very beautiful, the allusion to Christ's place on high outside the world. It is His settled place in glory as our keynote. Not that we are here said to be seated in Him there. In Ephesians that side of the truth is pursued and enforced. But the epistle to the Colossians never carries the believer so high; it shows Christ there, but it does not, so to speak, set us there. The resurrection of Christ or rather our being risen with Him, is urged as the ground for our seeking the things above.

“Let your mind be on the things above, not on the things on the earth.” (Ver. 2.) Who can loyally have divided affections? As our Lord Himself said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” The Lord put it as a moral impossibility. But here it is put as an exhortation founded on the immense grace that has raised us up with Christ risen. In vain do you essay to be occupied at the same time with things heavenly and earthly. Our calling is to have our mind on the things above, not merely now and again, but at all times. Supposing a person to be engaged in business: is he not to attend to it? Surely; yet not to set his mind on it, but simply to go through all as a duty to the Lord. Ought he not to do it better than another man who has not Christ? I am assured that such would be the fruit of looking to the Lord while the same single-eyedness and faith would preserve him from the snares of covetousness, as well as vain glory. The Christian thus taught and walking has an object before his soil which alone is adequate to raise a man above self and the world. Of course, if he is thus laboring day by day to the Lord, the consciousness of the grace in which he stands would

deliver him from the carelessness, or self-indulgence, or speculation, which expose men to get into debt or to act in other dishonorable ways. For this is to sink beneath even decent worldliness. Yet, if a Christian does not walk with exercised conscience to the Lord, he is in danger of doing worse and going farther astray than an ordinary man. Humbling and grievous as this is, it is not surprising. The main object of Satan is put forth to dishonor Christ in those who bear His name, and the power of the Spirit is only with those whose heart is toward Christ. It is not, then, Have your mind partly on things above and partly on things on the earth; but have it not at all on the things that are on the earth. Whatever the Lord gives you to do, you can take up as service to the Lord; but even here there is need to watch narrowly and, not the least, spiritual work in the gospel or in the Church. There is no security in anything but in Him, who sits at the right hand of God. Take, for instance, research into the scriptures. One might be absorbed in the niceties of the language, the prophecies, the poetry, the history, the doctrine, &c. Any or all these might become a snare. There is no safety for us but in Christ Himself—Christ as He is above.

Moreover, there is added a remarkable statement of the reason why we should have our mind upon things above— “for ye have died.” It is not moralizing, like men, even heathen, that we have to die, but the fundamental Christian truth that we are dead. All mystics, old or new, have, as their object, to die. Hence it is a dwelling upon inward experience and human effort—the endeavor to crucify themselves: not “I am crucified with Christi nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” What was suitable for a Jew, so far from being necessarily for a Christian, is on this side of the cross: our foundation is Christ who is dead and risen. Because a thing is in the Bible does not warrant the conclusion that it is God's will for the Christian. We must seek rightly to divide the word of truth. What was formerly right for the Jews is for us nothing but the elements of the world. These forms pointed to a reality that is now come; the body is of Christ. The blessed position of a Christian is, that he is dead even to the best things in the world, and alive to the highest things in the presence of God; for Christ is his life.

To have our mind therefore on the things which accord with Christ in glory is what we are called to—first of all Christ Himself, then the mighty work of Christ in redemption viewed in its heavenly effects. What objects to have before us always! The hopes too that are connected with Christ thus known, spiritual wisdom brought into exercise thereby, the affections kindled and in play; in short, all the fruits of Christ's work in relation to heaven are comprised in these things above. “For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Ver. 3.) The prevalent notion with many is, that the Christian is just the better qualified to fill a place in the world, because he is a Christian. But this is in truth to deny the primary and precious truth of God, that I am dead, which my very baptism confesses. And it is remarkable that the impression of the world about any one who receives Christ is, that he is dead. They feel that he is lost to his former objects; and if he takes his place in any full measure as belonging to Christ, he does justify the instincts of men; for he ceases to act as one alive in the world. Christendom, alas! soon accustoms him to be false to Christ. But the truth is that “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God:” As yet it is hidden: Christ has not yet caused His glory to be seen by the world. Therefore should a Christian be content to be for a little while an object of rejection and scorn. Faith and patience are thus put to the proof: God allows it to be so; and a Christian ought not to wonder at it, for Christ had just the same portion. A single eye is not deceived; selfishness is blind to God's glory. We would be true to the moral power

of the cross—the night is far spent. The reason why we are despised is thus a blessed source of joy in our sorrow. Then the time is short. All will soon be changed.

There is the further truth, “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Ver. 4.) Christ is not always as now to be hidden; He is about to be manifested; and when He is, we too shall be manifested with Him in glory. God will bring us along with Him, as we learn elsewhere. We shall have been translated to Him, in order that, when He shall be seen by every eye, we may have the same portion with Him. The expression “hid with Christ in God” is a much more emphatic one than simply saying, He is absent in heaven. In John 13 it is said, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself and shall straightway glorify him.” It is not merely glorification in heaven, but what Christ has now in Himself. It is while He is hidden in God, as was said in verse 3, and in contrast with the display of His glory when He comes by and by, as in verse 4. The Colossians had lost sight of this truth in great measure and were in danger of getting on a track that would have deprived them of all enjoyment of peace and confidence in God. The theory was to add what they could to Christ in order to increase the saints' blessing and security, and make a present display to His glory. The apostle shows them that their life is hid with Christ in God. Consequently, though they possess the most perfect security, it is in accord with Christ's place, hidden and not displayed yet. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth; fornication, uncleanness,” &c. (Ver. 5.) Because ye are dead, because ye have this new life, even Christ, and so are dead and risen with Him, mortify your members which are upon earth. What were they? Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Such is what they, what we really are. It is a wonderfully strong and pointed way of presenting the truth. God is not mocked. Grace does not hinder His judgment either morally in His word or by and by when it shall be executed. “On account of which the wrath of God cometh on the sons of disobedience: in which things ye also once walked, when ye lived in them.” (Ver. 6, 7.)

“But now do ye also put off these all, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, base language,” &c. It is sweet to see how the truth of being dead with Christ is brought in as deliverance from nature in all its forms, no matter whether corruption or violence. It is the judgment of the first Adam as a whole: nothing is spared. The “ye” is emphatic in verse 7. “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of him that created him.” God would have His children enjoy the fullest comfort; and indeed it is impossible for a person to be practically holy until he is happy. There may be godly desires and the Spirit be at work; but there is not power till the soul finds its peace and deliverance in another that God gives in pure grace. Then, when he is made happy through Christ and His work of redemption, he goes to God as his Father and has the Holy Ghost as power and all the other practical results which flow from that new relationship. “Where there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all.” (Ver. 11.)

How beautifully in keeping is the Christian motive seen in this, that we should not lie, &c., not only because it dishonors God, but because we have put off the old man and have put on the new man! All appears in a strikingly characteristic light. God in His very instructions to us fails not to remind us here of our blessing. If we are therefore called to put off anger, wrath, &c., it is because we are

dead. If we are told to walk no longer in uncleanness, it is on the ground that, though we once lived in it all, we are now dead to it and alive in Christ. If we are exhorted to speak the truth, it is because we have put off the old man and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. In Him is no darkness at all. He is the true light that now shines.

It is imperative on us as Christians to value nothing but Christ. I speak simply of our place as Christians; but what does not this embrace? As Christ is all and in all, so we have to seek to act upon this always, only prizing in one another what is of Him. If I love and prize Christ, such will be my feeling toward Christians, even as I shall want myself and all Christians to feel that Christ is the only thing worth our thoughts, affections, labor, and life. There is continual danger of the Christian's sinking into thoughts of natural qualities, of those things that make men attractive, &c. The point of faith is to rise above all this. “Let your light so shine,” &c. Where Christ is not steadily adhered to as object and motive, nature will break out as bad as ever. But before God and to faith I am entitled to treat it as dead; and I owe it to Him who died for me and rose again, to act upon the great truth that God has passed sentence upon the old man. To this end I must judge myself with my eye fixed upon Christ. Otherwise there is no failure in which I may not dishonor Him. No man ever walks inconsistently while his eye is on Christ. Nor is it merely sense of his own weakness, but the consciousness that the old man is judged and gone from before God. What a blessed standing is the Christian's! The Old-Testament saints were kept from sin expecting and desiring Christ; but we look on Christ now, dead and risen with Him who has already done all for us. Is it not an incalculable progress? And there is difference quite as marked as the progress; but on this I dwell not now.

Chapter 21

Notes on Colossians 3:12-17

In Ephesians the ground for not lying is because we are members one of another. Here it is treated as inconsistent with our having put off the old and put on the new man. Thus it is an evident contradiction of the new nature, as well as of the judgment and setting aside of the old one. That judgment doubtless took effect upon Christ, but then faith in Him supposes it has been applied to us, and that we have, through Him, renounced self, yea, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new. The old man is supposed to account for lying; the old man is false, full of deceit. There is not, there cannot be, thorough truthfulness in nature as it is now. We see this from the first: Adam was false directly he sinned; Cain was false also. There may be other evils, such as violence, &c., shown betimes in some and not in others, but all are false—lying one does sec in all. The ordinary forms of social intercourse are founded more or less upon deceit in the present state of the world. Men say what is agreeable to others without thought. Men subscribe forms, especially in religion, which they are not expected to believe, and, sad to say, the best men least of all. This all shows how universally falsehood follows the old man. Here it is a question of Christians, and therefore we have the new man. In Ephesians we hear of the members of the body; here it is the nature. In Ephesians also they are to put off the old man and put on the new; but here it is said, “which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” In Ephesians it is as a fresh thing that they had not before, without any reference to being renewed; it is absolutely new-created; whereas here they have received the fresh blessing, but at the same time there is renewing. Both ideas are in the two epistles, but singularly put so as to prove the complement of each other. In Ephesians it is said the new man is after God created in righteousness and true holiness. What is the difference between the two? Righteousness brings in the idea of authority; it supposes an answer to a just claim; let it be man that meets it, or God, a right to demand underlies it; merely nature above and intolerant of evil. Holiness has in itself nothing to do with the claim of justice. To the believer Christ is made righteousness, which is grounded on God's judgment, though it may be entirely settled in our favor; whereas holiness would have been true apart from the question of His authority; it is the essential nature and character. The angels are said to be holy, but are never said to be righteous or just. The new man rejoices in both. There is entire acquiescence in the authority of God, and delight that the judgment of God has been so met in Christ that He is glorified more than ever. Besides that, there is the moral nature that feels with God. Righteousness is more a bowing to Gad, holiness is the participation of His own feelings about good and evil. In us the two feelings often mingle. Righteousness is a true balance, the maintenance of what is just in relationships of all kinds. For instance, it is right for a child to obey its parents; it is not merely holy but “right” to do so. The one belongs to the nature quite apart from relationship, or anything of duty, apart from anything that is a sort of obligation which at once brings in the idea of righteousness. Hence rationalists admit the value of holiness, but they seldom talk of righteousness, for righteousness supposes judgment. Righteousness is a terrible word for a man until he has got hold of Christ. Righteousness, I repeat, proclaims the authority of God. God was holy before sin came into the world; but who could speak of His righteousness before there was the judgment of evil, spite of conscience, and against His

express authority? Under the law, therefore, which was the formal assertion of that authority in dealing with men in the flesh, Jehovah, as a righteous God, is continually set forth. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” &c. There was neither righteousness nor holiness in Adam before he fell. We have both and become both in Christ. Adam was made upright, but that is not the same thing as being righteous or holy; it was the absence of evil: he was innocent, unfallen.

Righteous and holy is the description that God gives of the Christian. Adam knew nothing of evil as yet, neither was there any question of God's righteous claim upon him, save so far as the forbidden fruit tested his obedience, yet there was no limit of doing this and living, but rather of not doing lest he die. Adam was in a place of privilege, and the point was simply to enjoy it in obedience to God, on penalty of death if be disobeyed. We are in a wholly different position, being in the midst of evil, and acted on by a good outside and above us. Hence we are said to be called by glory and virtue; “by glory” as the object, the condition in which Christ is, and “by virtue,” as a restraint upon us and practical conformity to Christ.

It has been well remarked that in Ephesians Christ is never spoken of as the image of God; He is so very expressly in Colossians. If we may discriminate, what we have in Ephesians is more Christ showing me what God is—not His image but His moral likeness reflected in Christ. Hence it is said, “Be ye imitators of God, us dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” It is more the notion of resemblance than representation. Still although you can say of Christ, He is the image of God, he is never said to be in the likeness of God, just because He is God. In Colossians we hear repeatedly of the image of God. Here, for instance, the new man is said to be “after the image of him that created him;” as in the first chapter Christ is said to be the image of the invisible God. The two ideas of likeness and image may often he confounded in our minds, but not so in Scripture, where likeness simply means that one person resembles another, image means that a person is represented, whether it be like him or not.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.” (Ver. 12.) These are the positive, moral qualities of Christ, the tone, spirit, and inward feelings of our Lord. It is not exactly as children, but “as the elect of God, holy and beloved,” that we are called on to manifest the same. We are to feel and walk as the Lord walked here.

There is this character about Scripture, that, being divine, it never can he mastered by intellect alone, but always appeals to the affections and conscience as well as mind. It needs the power of the Holy Ghost to connect it with Christ in order even then to feel, judge, and act aright. “Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Christ is looked at as Head of everything in this epistle. He is viewed as the ideal of all that is good and lovely which God looks either for or from us. “And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” There is more in love than simple kindness and forgiveness: it goes beyond these. Love always brings in God, being the activity of His nature. His nature morally is light, but the energy of it is love that goes out in goodness to others.

Thus, love tends to bind together, whereas self or flesh is the very opposite, the one as decidedly removing difficulties, as the other brings them in. Love not only bears and forbears, but overcomes evil with good. “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,” &c. The peace of God is that

perfect calm in which He rests as to all circumstances in this world and into which He brings the believer who looks up to Him, committing all circumstances into his hands without allowance of will or anxiety. Instead of our way of escape, which is what man's mind loves to take, because he has always a notion of governing for himself, faith enables a man to look up to God, and brings in the word of God to bear upon what passes around us. But our epistle speaks of a peace more intimate. It is the peace that Christ has now, the peace He ever had when here below. Thus Christ Himself met all difficulties, as He saw all perfectly, resting in perfect peace about all, and so should we. No sense of evil without, no sense of weakness among His own, disturbs His perfect peace about everything.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful.” Thus it is peace, but not in an isolated spirit, not as having done with one another, but, on the contrary, cleaving to all, spite of all. Supposing, for instance, something painful troubled me about one in communion, am I to be stumbled by this so as to be hindered from going to the Lord's table? That would be adding wrong to wrong; for if it were right for me to stay away, it would be equally incumbent on others also. I am never warranted to yield to trouble about such matters, but entitled to have the peace of Christ ruling in my heart. There is always a way of Christ in everything, and this is very important for our souls to remember. “And be ye thankful,” not anxious nor fretful, but thankful. Everything that is wrong may be matter for judgment; but the best preliminary for judging soundly is to do what is according to God ourselves. It is our privilege to think of Christ in all that we enter on.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This is a remarkable contrast of the gospel and the law. The law decided this and that; and not this only, but the obedience of the law is definite, it does not leave room for a growing measure of spirituality. Now, in Christianity, there is an elasticity which leaves room for differences in spirituality. This does not suit the thoughts of human nature; it is too vague for it; but it is perfection in the mind and ways of God, who thus forms the affections and judgments. It is precisely what leaves room for the word of Christ. Here there is growth in every kind of wisdom, and also room left for the exercise of spiritual judgment. In the first chapter there is a similar principle, only there it is “Being filled with the knowledge of His will, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Here it is “That the word of Christ may dwell in you richly in all wisdom;” it is not a question of walk, but of enjoyment and worship. Hence immediately after we have “teaching and admonishing one another,” &c. By speaking of enjoyment and worship, its public exercise is not meant, but the spirit of it in intercourse with one another.

As to the difference between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, I suppose a psalm was a more stately composition than a spiritual song, which admits more of Christian experience, expression of our feelings, &c. This may be very good in its way and season, but it is not the best or highest thing. A psalm, then, is more solemn; a hymn is a direct address to God and consists of praise. By psalms, of course, I do not refer to the Psalms of David, but Christian compositions.

The exhortation, again, to sing with grace in their hearts was because the Colossian saints were far from the excellent state in which we may gather the Ephesians, for instance, were. “And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the

Father by him." This exactly meets what has been already remarked about bringing in everything as a matter for blessing the Lord, instead of finding only sorrow. Doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, includes not the mere thought of belonging to Him, but of perfect grace. Still it is the Lord Jesus, not Christ simply, but the "Lord Jesus," which involves our relation to His authority. Whatever grace may be shown us, the authority is not weakened, and the effect is that we give thanks to God and the Father by Him. A Christian man, woman, or child dishonors the Lord by yielding to the thankless spirit of the world. "Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Thus our mode of speech, as well as our ways, should testify our subjection to Him, before whom all heaven bows.

Chapter 22

Notes on Colossians 3:18-25

Hitherto the exhortations have been entirely general. Now the apostle enters upon special relationships. The Spirit begins, as a rule, in these exhortations with the subordinate ones, with those under authority, rather than with those who are called to exercise it. The wisdom of this is manifest. If the one that should be subject behaves with humility, there is nothing more conciliating to such as are in authority. First of all, then, we begin with the most important of earthly relationships, that of wives and husbands. The wife, in accordance with that just principle, is exhorted before the husband. The emphatic word for the wife is to submit herself. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” Where she is not submissive, it is unseemly even in nature, but more especially in the Lord. The wife's subjection is fitting in the Lord, though no doubt “in the Lord” acts so far as a preservative, that if a husband required anything wrong, submission could not be right. The point here, however, I think, is rather the suitability of it as a Christian principle without entering into the question of how and when it should be made. Some have inferred that as we are all one in Christ Jesus, there is now no submission due from the wife; that it was part of the curse and woman's special lot in and by the fall; but that now, when she becomes a Christian, the inferiority vanishes, and the woman stands absolutely equal with her husband. Now it is true that Scripture skews us a place and relationship in which the question of man and woman disappears. Thus, “if ye then be risen with Christ” applies in a manner quite independent of age or sex; man, and woman, and child are equally risen in Christ. But the moment you come down to special relationship, there are distinctions. If a person indulge in wrong thoughts about this, he is in danger of destroying weighty principles. The husband would abandon his right seat of authority: the wife as a matter of course would lose her only happy place of subjection, and where would the Christian child be if the scheme were followed out? As children of God, no doubt all stand on a level; father, mother, child, if believing, enjoy like spiritual privileges. The differences as to flesh and the world entirely disappear in Christ; but the moment you think of earthly relationships (and this is what we have here), there are differences, neither few nor unimportant, in what pertains to our present life and the shape of our walk as Christians. The difference between man, woman, and child, was not destroyed, and still less was it originated, by the fall; it existed before there was sin: the fall did not touch it in any respect. So far is Christianity from taking these differences away, that it strengthens them immensely. When the apostle forbids a woman to teach, &c., he does so on the ground that a woman is more likely to be deceived than a man. Adam was not deceived; he was no better for this, for though not deceived, he sinned boldly with his eyes open, while the woman was led away weakly: what the apostle infers thence is that the woman should not teach nor rule, being stronger in her affections than in her judgment. A man may be worse, but is less likely to be deceived. The woman is governed by her affections instead of judgment guiding her. A woman is not so apt to fail on that side. A wise woman would show her wisdom, in not putting herself in the place of, or still less above, her husband. If she compared herself with him, she might be easily misled; but if she thinks of the Lord, she would rather put her husband forward. The principle of submission to the husband is here without any guard. “As it is fit in the Lord” does not mean so much acting as a measure, but that it is a seemly

thing in the Lord for wives to submit themselves.

Next, comes the word to the husbands. “Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.” The wife needs not to be exhorted to love her husband; it is assumed that therein her affections are all right. But it is very possible the husband might allow anxiety and outward pressure of life so to occupy him that he might not take sufficient care of his wife or interest in her anxieties: accordingly this is the exhortation for him. The wife is necessarily thrown upon her husband; she leaves father, mother and all, and is cast peculiarly upon her husband, and if he be not watchful, he may fail in thoughtful love, in the attention of everyday, not sufficiently guarding his temper, which seems to be what is meant by being” bitter.” There should be this affection for the wife, this vigilance against the influence of circumstances; the outward world might often occasion irritation, and then the husband is liable to vent his spleen at home, especially on his wife. This is human nature and what we know too often happens; but it is not Christ; and here it is guarded against: “husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.”

In the same order parents and children appear, the fathers, however, more particularly. “Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” Here this also is put quite absolutely. We know elsewhere there are landmarks to guard us. It is evident neither a father nor a husband has any title to insist on what is contrary to the Lord; but accordance is assumed here. What the apostle urges is that the children should in all things obey their parents. And how good is obedience! Scripture elsewhere brings in a limit, but not here. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” furnishes a very important restriction; at any rate it defines the sphere of obedience; it determines how and how far one ought to go. As a rule, even a bad father would like to have a good child. Many who drink or swear would be very sorry for their sons to do the same. “Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to [or, in] the Lord.” This directs us simply to the Lord as the One to whom this obedience is acceptable, but well pleasing in the Lord goes a great deal farther. It is not the bare fact of regarding the Lord as the ultimate judge, who then will be pleased; but the Christian has the consciousness of the Lord's love now and of His interest in all his ways and trials day by day. No doubt He will manifest His judgment of all that was done in the body by and by; but this should only strengthen the Christian now to do that which is well pleasing in the Lord. The best authorities are unanimous that it should be here “in the Lord” rather than “to the Lord.” It is well pleasing that children should obey their parents, not naturally only, but (for the Christian, let it be) in the Lord. “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” The mother is not thus exhorted; for as a rule her general fault is to spoil them. There is nothing that more discourages a child than a parent's continual needless fault finding. Again, where a child is punished without deserving it, what can be more apt to create distrust, and so weaken the springs of love and respect?

We now come to the lowlier members of the household. “Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.” It is absolute in every one of these cases in Colossians; not so in Ephesians, where there is more of a guard brought in. I should think this attributable to the happier and better tone of the Ephesians. They required rather the limits than the pressure of the duty. The Colossians, on the contrary, stood in need of exhortations to obey. Thus, for instance, if a man had to do with a well-ordered family, he would not have to urge obedience in the same manner as if they were disorderly. Strange to say, you will always find self-will the companion of a legal spirit. There is

never true obedience without the power of grace. Who were the most stiff-necked people in all the world? The Jews, the same who boasted of the law. You will find, since the law has been taken as a rule of life for Christians, they too are less obedient and think nothing of going against the Scriptures. This was one danger for the Colossians—a spirit of ordinance and legality. No person becomes obedient by good rules. What is it then that produces it? The heart must be filled with right motives; and what brings this about? Love for a person gives a sense of duty to him, and acts upon the heart. This makes obedience easy. Rules are never the power but only tests of obedience in certain cases. This is even true of Christ's commandments. He keeps them who loves Him, and he only. This induces obedience, and then what Christ says lies upon our hearts and minds and memories—not only His commandments but His words: whereas if we love not, how readily all is forgotten! This is an important difference in John 14. First the Lord speaks of His commandments, then of His words. The truth is, where there is a loving heart, any expression of will, even without a positive command, governs the affections.

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh,” &c. This is very important. Feelings, habits, &c., no doubt, have been brought in by Christianity—difficulties also (not that these ought to have been, but by reason of a fleshly mind)—all these arose. A bondman found himself suddenly a brother to his master: if he did not watch, he would soon begin to judge his master, whether he ought to say this or do that. If his master blamed him for anything, he might consider his master to have acted in a fleshly way, &c. How easy it is to slip into a wrong spirit, especially for a servant in presence of his master's infirmities daily before him, and in danger of judging his master according to the evil thoughts of his own heart! But surely a man ought to do all better after, than before, he knew Christ. The notion that, because they have to do with Christians, the latter ought to put up with ill done duties, is all selfishness. The fact that servants are not bondman now in no way alters the matter. In those days they had often to serve heathen masters. In any case the great thing is to remember the Lord Jesus and His will in every place. We belong absolutely to Him to do His bidding in all things. In order to walk well with God, let me take care that I am in a position according to His will where I have no qualms of conscience. A scrupulous conscience however is dangerous, though far preferable to a burdened or bad conscience; but it is dangerous; for the strain tends to break and to end in a bad conscience. There is no place in this world where one may not glorify God, sin of course excepted.

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Be not so occupied with the fact that you are serving an earthly master; remember,” ye serve the Lord Christ.” Thus will you be the more subject to your earthly master, doing heartily whatsoever ye do, not as being right only but with heart. The apostle adds a remarkable word here, “he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons.” This takes in both the present and the future, as I suppose, being a general principle.

The condition of the Ephesians was such that the love of Christ to the Church could be developed and urged on them. The Colossians, not being in so healthful a state, are exhorted on a lower ground. Conscience needed to be exercised.

Chapter 4:1. It is evident that the first verse of the new chapter belongs to the special exhortations which occupy the close of chapter 3 Consequently, chapter 4 ought, if the division were accurate

according to subjects, to begin at the second verse.

The exhortations to wives and husbands are correlative, so to children and fathers, and to servants and masters, making three pairs of such appeals. There is the difference to be noted that husbands and wives existed from the very first; not so the relation of master and servant. It is clear also, that though children were contemplated from the beginning, in point of fact they did not exist in Paradise. God took care there should be no race, no parent and child, before the fall.

It was when Christ had glorified God perfectly, that Christ became the head of a family. The contrast in this respect is very interesting and beautiful. What confusion, if some had been born in a state of innocence, and others in sin! God ordered things that there should be no family, till man was fallen. To increase and multiply, however, was the intention and word of God even then. The relation of masters and slaves (as they are here supposed to be), was solely a result of the entrance of sin into the world. We do not hear of bondmen before the flood, though Noah predicts it of Canaan soon after. I presume that the mighty hunter, Nimrod, was the first that essayed his craft or violence in this direction.

If this be so, there is a remarkable gradation in these relationships. Husbands and wives in Paradise, children born after the fall but before the flood, servants not heard of till after that. I do not mean at all that Scripture does not recognize this latter relationship—far from it: only it is well to see that it was one which followed not only the fall, but even the great judgment of God executed on the earth. Thus it is a condition of things very far from according to God, that men should have their fellows as their property or slaves. And yet even so, “masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.” In our countries it is a relationship voluntarily entered into on both sides, and there are corresponding privileges and duties; but here, though it was a case of slaves, the call to masters is to be impartial in their ways with them. And this refers not only to equity as a matter between the master and a slave, but between the slaves generally. There might be much confusion and injury in a household by disturbing the equilibrium between the slaves. The wisdom of God thus provides for everything, even for what respects the despised bondmen. It is here said “just,” &c.—not grace. You never can demand grace. In writing the epistle to Philemon, the apostle brings motives of grace to bear upon the case: he does not dictate what Philemon was to do, but reminds him of his heavenly relationship, and leaves it to Philemon's grace. Though the runaway slave was justly liable to be put to death, Roman and indeed any other masters having the right to punish them thus, yet would he have Philemon now receive him again no more as a slave but as a brother. Here however it is a question of what was “just and equal.” For the expression, “just,” shows a sense of right, grace in this case would not have been suited, as it would have left the door open more or less. Justice maintains obligations. In Ephesians it is said “forbearing threatening.” It was wrong even to threaten a slave with violent measures. The Colossians, being in a lower condition, are plainly dealt with, and told to be just and equal; it is the recognition of certain responsibilities in which the masters stood to their slaves. Do not you masters imagine all duty is on one side; you have yours toward your slaves. This, often forgotten, seems implied in the word “just,” and “equal,” forbids the indulgence of favoritism.

The rationalistic philosophy is mainly founded on the endeavor to blot out the word “duty.” I have known persons even in the Church disposed to deny anything in this shape as obligatory on the Christian. But it is a fatal error. Grace no doubt alone gives the power, but moral obligations ever

remain binding.

The broad-church class talk of holiness, they do not like righteousness. That bias of mind ever tended to explain it away from Scripture. So Grotius used to say that the righteousness of God means His mercy: an idea as dreadful in its way, as the common error that the righteousness of God means the law fulfilled. Such entirely deny the standing of the believer, for the law was not made for the righteous, but for the ungodly. Thus theologians are infected by a double error, either that of confounding the righteousness of God with the righteousness of the law, and making this to be both the standing and the rule of the Christian, or that of denying all righteousness in any shape by making it to be merely divine mercy. Both are quite wrong, and one error leads on to another: as truth hangs together, so does error. “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” “This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”

Chapter 23

Notes on Colossians 4:2-18

“Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving.” (Ver. 2.) The habit, the persevering habit of prayer, is of immense moment. And as Luke 18, so this chapter presses it strongly, though the apostle does not look for such far extending and thorough spirit of supplication as in Eph. 6. Their state did not admit either of like depths of desire or of such large affections for all saints in the bowels of Christ. Legalism, ordinance, philosophy savor of the creature, not of God rightly known: they are not Christ and are far short of comprehending all that are His. Nevertheless, he does count here as there on a mind on the alert to turn occasions of difficulty or blessing, joy or sorrow, anything, everything, into matter for spreading before God; and this in a spirit not of murmuring anxiety, but of grateful acknowledgment of His goodness and confidence in Him. How blessed that even the groaning of the Spirit in the believer supposes deliverance, and not mere selfish sense of evil! Not of course that the deliverance is complete and evil yet put down by power from on high and actually cleared out of the scene. But we know the victory won in Christ's death and resurrection, and having the earnest of the Spirit, feel the contrariety of present things to that glory of which He gives us the sense in Christ now exalted, the hope for all saints at His coming. The consciousness of the favor already shown and secured to us in Christ makes us thankful while we ask of God all good things suitable to it now, worthy of it in result by and by when evil disappears by His power. Yet it is remarkable to see how the apostle values and asks for the prayers of saints— “praying at the same time also for us that God may open to us a door of the word to speak the mystery of Christ on account of which also I am bound.” (Ver. 3.) The value of united prayer is great; but God makes much of individual waiting on Him, and very especially as in the interests of His Church and the Gospel—of Christ in short—here below. How little the apostle was discouraged even at this late day! He writes to the Colossians, from his bondage because of his testimony to that very mystery of Christ which he still desired to be the object of their supplication on his behalf with God, “that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.” (Ver. 4.)

Next, he reverts to their own need of walking wisely, considering those outside, and seizing the fit opportunity, though I doubt not the service of prayer, such as we have seen would have issued in their own blessing as truly as in good to others. “Walk in wisdom with those without, buying up the time. Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with salt, to know how ye ought to answer each one.” (Ver. 5, 6.) Grace gives us the rich glow of divine favor to the undeserving, the display of what God is in Christ to those who belong to this guilty, ruined world; salt presents the guard of holiness, the preservative energy of God's rights in the midst of corruption. It is not said “always with salt,” seasoned with grace but “always in grace, seasoned with salt.” Grace should ever be the groundwork and the spring of all we say. No matter how much we may differ, righteousness must be maintained inviolate.

It is this combination of divine love in the midst of an evil world, with uncompromising maintenance of what is due to God's holy and righteous will, that teaches the Christian not merely what but how to answer each one as he ought.

Next come personal messages. (Ver. 7-18.) Observe the remarkable care of the apostle to sustain and commend true-hearted laborers, knowing well the tone of detraction natural to men who can see the failings of those whose service left themselves far behind. “Tychicus, my beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-bondman in the Lord, all my affairs shall make known to you, whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that he may know your matters and may comfort your hearts; with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is [one] of you: they shall make known to you all things here.” (Ver. 7-9.) This exuberance of affectionate commendation is greatly to be weighed. The lack of it tends to loosen and dislocate the bonds of charity among the saints. Remark further, that love counts on the interest of others in our affairs quite as much as it feels a real concern in hearing of theirs. Among men such a feeling is either unknown, or where it exists is but vanity; but then love, divine love, is not there. And love must exist and be known in order to understand its workings and effects. Truly is it called in this epistle the bond of perfectness.

“Aristarchus, my fellow-captive, saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received orders (if he come to you, receive him), and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these [are the] only fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God which have been a comfort to me.”

(Ver. 10, 11.) There is a singular change in comparing the notices here with those in Philemon. Aristarchus is here a sharer of the apostle's captivity, as there Epaphras is; while there Aristarchus is a fellow-laborer of the apostle with others, as Epaphras is here spoken of—at least as a bondman of Christ. They may have shared the apostle's imprisonment successively, as some one has suggested. It is certain that Aristarchus was his companion not only in Asia, but during his voyage to Italy. This would tend to show, I think, that this Epistle to the Colossians was written at least a little before that to Philemon, though both may be supposed to have been written at the same general date and to have been forwarded by the same hands from the apostle, a prisoner at Rome.

How beautiful too is the grace which enjoined distinctly the reception of Mark! Remembrance of the past would else have forbidden a cordial welcome to himself, and so must have hindered his ministry among the saints. Thus, if here we learn the secret of Barnabas's leaning (for he was his kinsman), when the breach occurred with the apostle in earlier days, we learn that real love is as generous as faithful, acts at all cost for the Lord, and where requisite, spite of paining nature, but rejoices to praise aloud and heartily where the grace of God has intervened to the removal of the impediment. Of Jesus called Justus we know no more than that, like Mark, he was of the circumcision; and like him too, consoled the apostle as a fellow-servant—rare thing among those who had been used to the law and its prejudices. The Justus of Acts 18:7 was a Gentile proselyte. Barsabas, the candidate for the apostolate, who was a Jew of course, was so surnamed, but not called Jesus like the one in question.

“Epaphras saluteth you, who is [one] of you, a bondman of Christ Jesus, always striving for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all [the] will of God. For I bear him witness that he hath much toil for you, and those in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” (Ver. 12, 13.) It would be a joy for the saints at Colosse to know that Epaphras, himself a Colossian as well as Onesimus, did not stand higher in the love and value of the apostle (chap. 1:7) than in earnest remembrance of themselves in his prayers for their blessing before God. Remark too that the

doctrine of the epistle (that we are filled full according to all the fullness that is in Christ), far from excluding, is the basis of desire and intercession for the saints, that they may be practically perfect and fully assured in everything about which God has a will. There was no such narrowness as shut him up to a single assembly, though there was the affectionate recollection of need where saints and circumstances were specially known to him.

“Luke, the beloved physician, saluteth you, and Demas.” (Ver. 14) The occupation of Luke was not blotted out because he was a saint and a servant of Christ, and even an inspired writer. Demas, I should gather, was even now distrusted by the apostle, who mentions his name with an ominous silence and without an endearing word—a thing unusual with the apostle. Even to Philemon, about the same time, he is “my fellow-laborer.” In 2 Timothy he had forsaken the apostle, having loved the present age. The steps of declension were rapid; no testimony tells of his recovery. But a more extensive falling off was at hand (2 Tim. 1:15), for, the ice once broken, many were ready to slip through. As for the apostle, he had fought the fight, he had finished his course, he had kept the faith. The men who were little known for building up, were active for leading astray: as one of this world's sages has said, the hand that could not build a hut can destroy a palace. Nevertheless God's firm foundation stands.

“Salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly in his house. And when the epistle has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the assembly of Laodicea, and that ye also read that from Laodicea.” (Ver. 15, 16.) Whether this letter be that commonly known as the Epistle to the Ephesians (and having a circular character), or that to Philemon (who may probably have resided in or near Laodicea); or whether it refers to a letter no longer extant (possibly a letter from Laodicea to Paul, literally), has been a question much contested among learned men. Two remarks may be made which seem clear and certain. 1. The Epistle from Laodicea would be indeed a strange way of describing an epistle written to the church there. It would be natural enough, if it meant a letter which was then there and intended for the Colossian saints also, to whomsoever it may have been addressed. 2. There is nothing to forbid the view that more letters were written than we possess, God preserving those only which were designed for the permanent guidance of the saints. But that the one alluded to here is a lost letter, addressed to Laodicea, is wholly unproved. It is also obvious that the Colossian epistle was directed to be passed on to Laodicea. The letter the Laodiceans were to forward to Colosse may have been addressed to them, but the description necessitates no such conclusion. What links of love and mutual profit among the assemblies!

“And say to Archippus, See to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.” (Ver. 17.) The brethren cannot forego their responsibility and exercise of godly discipline; but ministry is received from and in the Lord. The assembly never appoints to service in the word, but Christ, the Head, though apostles or their delegates (never the church) acted for Him when it was a question of local charge.

Finally comes “the token in every epistle” —at least in his regular province as apostle of the uncircumcision: “The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.”

Chapter 24

Discipline: 19. Job, Part 1

The allusion which is made to Job in James 5:11., viz., “ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy,” is enough to draw the attention of any earnest soul to the study of a history so fully recorded for us

Job is at first presented to us as a pattern man, happy in his own condition, faithful and true in his relations toward God. We see in him a man who had on every side risen above the evil and sorrow which is the lot of man; a remarkable instance and exemplar among men of how God could distinguish from the rest of men—one strong and superior to them; at once for God on earth, and blessed abundantly by God. He was perfect and upright; one that feared God and eschewed evil, and as to possessions and earthly things they were so abundant that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East.

It is important to see that Job was walking on the earth well pleasing to God” and owned by Him as such, when Satan first called in question his fidelity and imputed to him the unworthy motive which was couched in the question “Doth Job serve God for naught?” It affords us the clue to a true apprehension of the nature of the discipline to which he was subjected, when we see that it was not primarily on account of personal failure; but the rather for the purpose of exemplifying to Satan the truth of God's estimate of His servant. It will be seen that much personal failure was betrayed by Job, while under the divine discipline; for though the trials which he suffered were inflicted by Satan, and with the intent to verify his calumny on him, yet they were used of God to accomplish in Job that self-renunciation and faith in God, which did eventually enable him to establish in full blessedness, the truth of the estimate which God had in His goodness given of him. It is wonderful and most interesting to trace the way and manner in which the blessed God at once confound', Satan, vindicates His own judgment, and educates His servant up to the standing he had ascribed to him, and having brought him to it, rebukes Satan by bestowing on Job twice as much as he had before.

We must seek to realize in our minds what it must have been for one in the circumstances in which Job was, to be suddenly plunged into such reverses. We see him but a moment before enjoying the full circle of God's mercies, and at the same time maintaining a scrupulous conscientiousness with God; in the jealousy of his zeal rising up early in the morning, after the feasting of his sons, to offer up burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “It may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts; and this he did continually.” When every known point of the circle was thus carefully and with jealousy of heart toward God watched over, we might have expected, and doubtless Job had reckoned, that there would have been no disturbance of the rest in which through mercy he was set. Doubtless whatever might be the fears, which, like clouds coursing the sky on the brightest day, beset him, he had no idea of the malignant spirit who, by aspersing him before God, only moves the blessed God to surrender him into Satan's bands, in order that He might in the most unequivocal manner prove his integrity and unshaken fidelity to God. We must also bear in mind that while it is God's purpose in His dealings with Job to vindicate

His own estimate of His servant, it is at the same time shown us how He educates or disciplines that servant so as to render him worthy of this estimate.

It was at a moment when Job could little have expected it that the crush came. No doubt he often had his fears; for he says “that which I feared greatly has come upon me;” and this must ever be the case when the soul has no better security for the love than the evidence and presence of its gifts. The gifts are thus a snare to us, and Satan's imputation against us is often in a measure true; our ground for rest and quietness of spirit before God being His kindness and mercies to us, and not simply the knowledge of His love. This is very evident from the violent grief and despair many of His people fall into when they are deprived of any particular mercy. They had rested in the gift more than in God, and the gift was to them the evidence of His love—the love itself not the rest of the heart. Satan knows man's tendency and therefore hesitates not to accuse Job of it, asserting that he had no link with God, or reverence for Him, but on account of His abundant mercies to him. God in His grace had challenged Satan as to His servant that there was none like him in all the earth. Satan retorts, imputing to Job a sordid motive for his allegiance; and asserting that if he were deprived of all which now attached him to God, he would curse Him to His face. The Lord on this, in order to verify His own estimate, and to render Job in himself worthy of this estimate, permits Satan to deprive him of all he has.

In one day, in quick succession, Job loses property, children, everything. Never was a catastrophe so rapid and so complete. “Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped.” He bears these first great waves of adversity in a most exemplary manner, and says, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

It is to be noted that at first a great accumulation of afflictions are better borne than afterward. The strength that is in the heart, the confidence in God, is the resource where the crash is sudden and terrific; and in the rapidity with which Satan used his power, it appears to me he outwitted himself, for certainly sufferings with an interval between them are more trying. Satan, however, hoped that the crash would be so overwhelming, that Job could not but reproach God for the calamity. But extreme difficulty always calls out the latent strength, as with a drowning man; where a lesser difficulty would not. The trial is not sufficient at times to rouse one to effort. It is when the effort has been drawn out by extreme difficulty and has proved unavailing, that real helplessness is felt, and the cloud of despair invests the soul. Job had borne his troubles so well that the gracious God is able again to challenge Satan as to his estimate of His servant. Satan retorts, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life, but put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.” Of course, it fills the cup of misery, if besides being deprived of everything my heart clings to, and the whole scene once so lovely and pleasing to me now a waste—with but tombs of my former enjoyments; if besides this, I have become by bodily infliction a burden to myself! Surely bodily suffering and disease would in such a case be the bitterest way of reminding me of my utter desolation without heart or power to retrieve my condition. God permits Satan to afflict Job with the most grievous bodily suffering; he is smitten with sore boils from the crown of his bead to the sole of his foot. How complete his misery! his wife is overwhelmed, and in her distress falls into Satan's snare, and counsels her husband to curse God and die. Thus everything is against Job. What a moment of exercise to his soul! How he must have wrought within himself as to hope in God! But every exercise, though the sufferer at the time

little knows it, is strengthening the soul in God. The deeper the distress, the deeper the sense of His grace in relieving it; the one only makes a good rooting ground for the other.

Job bears up wonderfully at first. He rebukes his wife, saying, “What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” But he is further tested. His friends come to mourn with and comfort him. If I am passing through discipline from God, which my most intimate friends or relatives do not understand, their intimacy and offers of help and comfort disturb and injure me rather than the reverse. This Job had to encounter from his wife, on one side, and his three friends, on the other; one on the ground of nature, the other on the ground of superior intelligence. What a scene it was! “When the friends lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”

“After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day.” Under the weight of a terrible blow there is such utter exclusion from everything all round, that there is no attempt to complain or to express oneself. And if the soul has confidence in God it is more shut up unto it, while the sufferer is unable to look at himself in relation to things here, and as he was among them. But the moment he awakes to the reality of his relation to everything here, himself must occupy him, unless he is done with himself. The discipline is administered in order to set aside self, and introduce the heart into its true relation apart from self with God. Hence, the effect of the discipline is to expose the secret workings and feelings of self, which otherwise would not have been detected or known, and, if not known, not renounced. Job felt himself now a hapless one, with misery all around him, having outlived every enjoyment on earth, and be cursed his day. What had he lived for, and what should he live for? Little he knew the place he was occupying before God, or how God was preparing him, through terrible sufferings, to vindicate His own estimate of him to Satan. We have now to examine how God effects this His blessed purpose; noting the course which a soul under discipline from God necessarily takes in order to arrive at simple dependence and rest in Him.

The first thought, and the most bitter one, after awaking to a full sense of one's misery, is to curse one's day; a terrible impression, and the one which leads to suicide, when God is not known. But when God is known, as in Job's case, it is the beginning of healthy action; not in the discontent and wretchedness which it discloses, but because the sense of death, utter extermination from everything, is known and felt. I may give way to rebellion and discontent in learning the utter wretchedness of man on earth, but the sense of this is necessary to full self-renunciation. I ought not to blame God for it, but I need to realize it as man's true place. Death, because of such present misery, is preferred. To live in it has no attraction for the heart. This Job feels. He knows not that God seeks to make him a witness of dependence on Himself against Satan. But this is God's way. Discipline may have the effect of making us feel that death is preferable to life, but it is working out God's purpose.

To this experience Job receives a check in the reply of Eliphaz the Temanite. I think we should regard these three friends as representing to us the various exercises which engage our consciences when under this order of discipline. Eliphaz intimates to Job that he deserved these afflictions; “even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same,” and still more (chap. 5:17), that it is not even chastening; for if it were, “He that maketh sore bindeth

up:” thus insinuating that as He had not bound up, it was something more than chastening. In consequence of this, Job is now (chap. 6:7) not so much occupied with his misery, as with his right to complain and endeavor to retort the suggestions of his friend. He gives us a history of his calamities, disappointment in his friends being added to the list—occupied with self-vindication, though at the same time only the more convinced that his days are vanity, saying, “My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life.” What lessons of anguish one has to learn before one sees the wisdom of renouncing self! What has not the soul to pass through in discipline in order that it may be brought to this! How tormented it is with one suggestion and another; which never could reach or trouble it only for the amount of self which exists. It is the possibility of the truth of a charge which makes it painful and irritating.

Bildad replies. This is another exercise to Job. It is well for us to have recorded in God's word an account of the often unexplainable exercises through which we pass when learning the nothingness of man in himself—suggestions claiming to be friends, afflicting us still more sorely. Bildad here severely reproves Job; telling him that the words of his mouth are like a strong wind, and that if he were pure and upright God would awake for him; thus throwing him still more on himself and implying, that his trials are judicial requitals for sin, and not, as really was the case, the discipline of God leading him to the full end of himself. He is now no longer so much overwhelmed with his misery, as occupied with righting himself in the sight of his friends. Painful and cruel work is it to the spirit to repel charges made by friends, of deserving irretrievable misery. Job knew that he had done nothing to deserve it; but what he had to learn was that he was entitled to nothing, and this his friends knew no more than he; they stood entirely on righteousness.

Job now owns the greatness of God. He is turned God ward; yet while he owns the greatness of God and His power, he uses it only to show the distance that is between himself and God; even that they cannot meet on equal terms; but that if they could, he should not fear. It is evident his soul has a link with God, but his friends have occupied him with God as a judge, intimating that the deprivation of temporal mercies is a punishment for sin, which implies of course that the gift of them is the contrary. In this new exercise, he sees God's greatness and does not see God's care for himself: as under His hand, what (he argues) can he avail? He sees no reason in it, regards it as arbitrary, and implies that if he had a daysman who could place them on a common footing, he could make good his case; but as it is, there is no hope. “Oh (he cries) that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!”

Zophar replies, endeavoring to convict him, pressing on him that God “exacteth less of thee than thine iniquity deserveth;” and if there were no iniquity, there would be present mercies. “Thou shouldest lift thy face without spot and take thy rest in safety.” Zophar makes man's acts the measure of God's dealings. He does not see the evil of man in himself, and his consequent distance from God, as without title to any blessing. Job replies. What little way a soul makes when occupied with self-justification! The friends had stung him with reproaches, that his afflictions must be on account of sin. Job, unconscious of any evil that would warrant such suffering, denies it. The reproaches which the Lord bore without reply, though unjustly heaped upon Him, Job rebuts because he has not seen himself as he is before God. He is only judging himself as a man would, and as his friends ought, who really were on no higher ground than himself. God's sovereignty accounts to him for everything. He sees no purpose of grace in God's ways with him, and yet it is evident his soul is gaining ground, for he exclaims, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” and

a gleam of hope bursts in on his path; for he adds, “Thou shalt call and I will answer thee, thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” What a season when the soul passes through all this exercise and anguish in order to emerge from self-satisfaction and rest only in God! yet God's way is perfect, as the end always proves.

Eliphaz replies. (Chap. 15) He waxes severe and unmeasured in his efforts to convince Job that he and his companions have wisdom, and therefore that they are right in their statements that God is now dealing with men according to their merits, that the wicked man travaileth with pain all his days; and he adds, “a dreadful sound is in my ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.”

Unless we study the exercises of our own hearts we can hardly estimate the heart-rending which these censures must have caused Job. They turned him in the wrong direction; they engaged him with himself. He could not deny that he was afflicted; he did not see, measuring himself with man, that he had done any act to subject himself to so great affliction; and his friends harassed him, directing and confining his mind to this one point, that God's doings were all according to man's acts, and therefore, as he suffered so much, he must have been wicked in an extraordinary degree. Job resists (chap. 16), and pronounces his friends “miserable comforters;” and so they were. “Though I speak,” he cries, “my grief is not assuaged; and though I forbear, what am I eased?” He has now the bitterest of feelings; even that God had delivered him to the ungodly. He tastes of our Lord's sufferings as a man. Who can comprehend the bitterness of the sorrow that now devours the soul of Job! “My friends scorn me,” he exclaims, “but mine eye poureth out tears to God.” In all his sense of the terribleness of his affliction and suffering, there drops out now and again the link, that, as a regenerate soul, he has with God. He has not yet seen himself in the sight of God; and therefore he maintains (ver. 17), “Not for any injustice in my hands, also my prayer is pure;” and therefore he looks to plead with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor. He has a partial sense of God's greatness; but he has not the sense of His holiness; and the reason of this is, that he has never been near enough to God; for it is nearness to Him that produces the sense of His holiness. Therefore he concludes that if he could plead with Him, he must be acquitted. We see thus what terrible distress of soul arises from estimating sufferings from God's band according to man; i.e., looking man-ward in respect of them. How much of Job's self is before his mind! He feels that be is a “by-word of the people.” “Upright men shall be astonied at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.” To such thoughts as these death can be time only release. “If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 25

Discipline: 20. Job, Part 2

Bildad replies (chap. 18) in angry and reproachful terms; and in a pointed way traces step by step the course of the wicked; first “taken in a snare, because his own counsel hath cast him down, until he shall have neither son nor nephew among his people. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.” Well might Job reply—thus goaded with the assertion that he knew not God— “How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?” What a wonderful time for the soul, when with conscience and faith in God, it seeks to justify itself, amid all the affliction and sorrow which here judicially and righteously is the common lot of all, and still more when they are for discipline. Job repels the accusation of having been taken in his own snare, saying, “Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.” He ascribes it to God, but cannot see any reason for it. But with all this probing of the wound in the increased sense of being unduly afflicted by God, his spirit is nevertheless strengthening in hope, as we may discover in his words. “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

Chapter 20- Zophar now in the most emphatic manner presents to Job the utter and overwhelming ruin of the wicked. He denounces him without pity. Heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. Job replies (chap. 21) detailing the prosperity of the wicked in order to skew that Zophar must be in error, and yet, though he knows that the reproaches of his friends are unfounded, he has no clear idea of God's will or of any order or purpose in His dealings. Knowing nothing more than that He is omnipotent, and can do as He likes, without being able to see that He always has a distinct end before Him for every one of His ways. “Known to God are all his works from the foundation of the world.” “How then,” he retorts, “comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood.”

Chapter 22- Eliphaz, now for the last time addresses him, and endeavors to make an impression upon him by the enormity of his charges. “Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquity infinite?” reiterating again that false principle, so ready to the carnal mind with reference to God's dealings, that He gives the gold and the silver to them who return to Him. “If thou return to the Almighty thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.” (Ver. 23.)

Now in chapters 23 and 24 there are two points which come out: the first, that Job is sensible of his distance from God, and while sensible of it, desires to be brought near. It is the true exercise of a quickened soul—groping as it were in darkness for what it yearns after. “Behold,” he says, “I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him.” With this there is a sense of the unchangeableness of God's purpose. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him?” And yet the true fear, the solemn effect of His presence is not unknown, for he says, “I am troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid of him.” The second point is that Job turns his eyes on men; he has not found rest or acceptance for himself with God, and now he looks at men; and he sees

that the wicked prosper in the world; yet they have their secret sorrows, and death checks their career. But at this stage of his experience, he is not so much magnifying himself; he seeks to be near God, but fears His presence, because not at rest or in acceptance. Varied indeed are the exercises which a soul must be put through while refusing to see the completeness of its ruin in the sight of God.

Chapter 25- Bildad concludes his strictures, reiterating the greatness of God and uncleanness of man; as if there could be no ground of reparation between them. Bitter words to a worn one seeking for standing ground with God, whom in his spirit, he knew and believed in. Chapters 27 - 31—Job now gives a summary of his state, &c., as he is in himself and also as to his apprehension of God. The greatness of God creationally comes before him; but this never makes the soul conscious of the character of its distance from God; hence, in the next chapter we have Job maintaining his integrity. If not in the light I must maintain my integrity, unless I have broken some law—done some overt act; so here Job thus seeks to relieve himself from the reproach of being stricken of God. In chapter 28, where he finely describes wisdom, it is interesting to mark how, under all the pressure, his soul is advancing in true light and knowledge; and that thus the discipline is effective. The more I see the wisdom of God and His way (as one does sometimes when under pressure) the more depressed I shall become, if not able to connect myself acceptably with God; and as a consequence, I turn back on my own history, and become occupied with myself. Thus Job in chapter 29 dwells on the past, and this is always an evidence of the soul not being right with God; for if it were going on with him it would have greater things than the past to recount. This is especially the case when what it has to recall is self-amiability and God's gifts and goodness, which made up the sum of the young ruler's possessions. If I have a sense of sin from having been a transgressor, then retrospection is necessarily shorn of its charms; but when in misery the Lord can recall a time of uninterrupted blamelessness of life and conduct; the light of God's favor in His gifts shed around it; such a retrospect is attractive and engrossing to the heart. Job's time was before the land was given; and hence as a Gentile he is learning the evil of himself, not by law but in the presence of God and having lived in all good conscience, he found it no easy matter to count all as dung and dross. He is allowed to dwell on it in order to show us how the righteousness which is of ourselves may engage and hinder us; and yet on the other hand how utterly futile the course Job's friends adopted to help him to a true estimate of himself before God, and according to God Himself. Thus still occupied with himself, Job in chapter 29 dwells on his former prosperity, while in chapter 31 he goes seriatim over the goodness of his whole course and ways, judging himself according to man's judgment; and after it all he sums up thus: “My desire is that the Almighty would answer me.” Such are the exercises of a soul which, without having done anything to offend the natural conscience, has not seen itself in the light of God's presence, and therefore knows not the corruption of its nature. If the natural conscience could have formed wherewithal to convict, its action might have been easy and summary; but where the moral sense is not offended, a lengthened process is required for the soul ere it can reach a spiritual sense; i.e., an estimate of itself formed in the light of God's presence.

We now come to another epoch in this interesting history. We have traced briefly and inadequately the patient, searching process by which God leads a soul to discover its utter ruin in His sight. The example before us is one against whom no one could bring any charge. As far as works went, God Himself could challenge Satan and assert that there will none like Job in all the earth; an upright

man and one that escheweth evil. But while either to man's eye or to Satan's eye there was nothing to blame or censure in Job, God would have Job know that in His sight he was utterly corrupt and lost. To learn this is most painful and bitter work to nature. Nature must die. Job begins by feeling that death would be preferable to life, all being misery here. He then, both from his own “mens conscia recti,” and also his knowledge of God's ways (while tortured by the unjust reproaches and surmising of his friends as to his concealed guilt) rebuts the doctrine which they uphold, even that God rules and determines things for man, according to man's works here; that He has no other principles of government; and that man's acts suggest to God a course of action; thus placing God without a purpose, and only like an ordinary sovereign legislating according to the vicissitude of circumstances. Job by all this exercise is strengthened in two points, which only add the more to his perplexity. He is the more deeply convinced of the sovereignty of God, and that all power is from Him; and, secondly, as his friends have failed to touch his conscience, he is bolder in self-justification.

Chapter 32- At this juncture Elihu comes in. This servant of God comes, as we shall see, from God's side, and supplies now to Job the teaching he so much needed. We are not aware often of the severe process of soul which we must pass through before we are prepared to hear of God from His own side. We may have to weary ourselves in very darkness before we are ready to hear the word of light; for light comes from God only; He (Christ) is the “light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world.” All reasoning from man's side, as Job's friends had done, only occupied him the more with himself, and provoked his self-vindication, while it necessarily made him more sensible of the distance between himself and God, and therefore deepened in his soul the need of God. Elihu now shows that it is not true what Job had asserted; that God acts arbitrarily; that “he findeth occasions against me.” His first argument is, that God is stronger than man. “Why dost thou strive against him?” “He giveth not account of his matters.” The first great thing for a soul is to humble itself under the mighty hand of God. This Job has not yet done. But furthermore, adds Elihu, God in dreams deals with man “that he may withdraw man from his purpose.” How gracious, that when all is in the stillness of sleep. God should show His wakeful interest for man, and warn him in dreams! God is full of mercy, as we see. (Ver. 23-28.) When there is confession on the ground of God's righteousness, there is mercy and salvation from God. All these things worketh God oftentimes with man. We get in the case of Isaac an example of the convulsion that occurs when the truth of God regains its power and rule in the soul. He trembled with an exceeding great trembling. Job must now learn this; he had allowed his own mind to judge God, instead of submitting himself to God, and waiting for instruction from Him.

Chapter 34- The next point with Elihu is that God must be righteous. Job had said that he himself was righteous, and that God had taken away his judgment. If God were not righteous, yea, the fountain of righteousness, how could He govern? “Shall even he that hateth right govern? surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” “Who hath given him a charge over the earth?” Elihu exhorts Job to understand that God is righteous and in His righteousness He can act as He will. “He will not lay upon men more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God.” Seeing this to be so, the true place for Job was that of confession. “Surely it is meet to be said unto God I have borne chastisement—I will not offend any more.” Though these varied lessons, these progressive steps in the history of a soul are presented to us as one continued unbroken tale, we must bear in mind, that there are often long and suffering

intervals while each step is being learned. It is the order of their succession that is presented to us here; rather than the suffering which the soul goes through in learning them.

In chapter 35 Elihu touches on a new point; namely, that God is infinitely above man; that man's works can in no wise affect Him. Job must learn that “If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?” “If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” There ought to be perception of the goodness that cometh from God; but on the contrary “none saith where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night,” —when all around is darkness. Job had dwelt on what he was to God, not on what God was to him. And then, “surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.”

In chapter 36 another point is pressed on Job, even that if he looks at things from God's side, he must see His righteousness. Job ought to understand that “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous “He openeth also their ear to discipline” — “He delivereth the poor in his affliction.” Here it was that Job had failed; he had been occupied in justifying himself, instead of having his ear opened to discipline. “Behold God is great.” There is an immense advance in the soul when it comes to this; and regards things distinctly as from God's side. When I have a true sense of what He is, the effect must be to humble myself under His mighty hand, and to wait on Him.

In chapter 37- Elihu leads Job into further contemplation of what God is in His greatness and His works; just as the Lord said “Believe me for the very works' sake.” And this is the introduction, if I may so say, for what we shall find in the next chapter; when God Himself addresses Job apart from any recognized instrumentality, instructing him in His own greatness and power. Job has listened to Elihu, and now prepared for God's voice, God in His mercy, deals directly and closely with his soul. How deep and solemn the exercise; when the soul, alone with God is in His wondrous grace and mercy taught by Him the majesty and goodness of Himself.

In chapter 38 we read “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.” And calls on him to ponder and consider. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” “Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God.” This is the beginning of faith, as also, that he that cometh to God must believe that He is. Job did believe in God as existing, but his faith was not simple and fixed in the might of God; in His greatness. He is now called to consider whether he could explain or know the origin of any of God's works. Could he reach or comprehend them? God challenges him, “Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts, or who hath given understanding to the heart?” In the material world God proves Job to be ignorant of the origin of any of His works; and now in chapter 39, he is required to ponder how unable he is to rule over the animal world. Be it the unicorn, the horse, or the eagle; each and all are superior to Job in strength. How much more He who created and gave them their qualities, ought not He to command supremely Job's reverence and fear! “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?” (Chap. 40) Now it is that Job feels the force of the divine word. Then Job answered the Lord and said, “Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.” He is now brought to a sense of his vileness; but only so far as this, that he will be silent; for he knows not how to answer. He feels condemned, but has not yet reached simple self-renunciation. One may have a sense of vileness, and inability to answer, and yet hope to improve. It may be only a pause to recover from the conviction which the word of God must effect in the soul stunned but not

subdued. If the sense of ruin and vileness were complete, there would be no promise of improvement, or expression that one was doing something better now than heretofore. Hence the voice of God still addresses Job; and he is subjected to the divine challenge again. Chapters 40, 41. This time God presses upon him, that Behemoth, the Leviathan, is a greater creature by many degrees than he; “upon earth there is not his like who is made without fear;” and for this purpose, the variety and order of God's ways with regard to this strange and mighty being, is brought before the soul of Job, who feels himself in the presence of God, and is confounded.

Now it is that he arrives at the end, desired of God, in all the discipline to which He has been subjecting him. Job now seeing God, forms a true estimate of himself, and repents in dust and ashes. The blameless man, in nature good, and as a man upright, when brought into the presence of God abhors himself. As a man, he has whereof he may boast; he may justify himself to his fellows, but not before God. Before, and in the presence of God, he can claim nothing, expect nothing, and feel himself entitled to nothing. In the sight of God's holy eye, his only consciousness of self is to abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.

Job has now done with himself. Happy fruit and consummation of all discipline! And so completely is he freed from himself that, before there is any relief from the circumstances and trial which had been the proximate cause of all his misery and soul exercise and which Satan had brought upon him to prove his hollowness, he can pray for his friends. Superior to his own sufferings, he thinks of his friends before God, and then it is that the Lord turns the captivity of Job, proving (and how deeply we may lay it to heart!) that “the end of the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” Amen.

Chapter 26

Discipline: 21. Hezekiah

Nothing is more interesting or helpful to us than to be taught the ways of God by a living example; one like ourselves in nature and feeling, used of God and empowered by Him to do His will. We see where the grace of God works and where it is hindered; and not only this, but in the vessel we get an apprehension of the way man under similar circumstances would act, as well as a clear perception of what the mind of God is and how it addresses itself to man, and how man is formed and controlled by it. The nature of any great divine working is explained to us through the medium of the human servant; and we see, on the one hand, how God would use the man, and, on the other, how the man failed, as well as how he acted when simply led of God. We require to know both, because unless we do, we cannot get a clear idea of the divine working. In scripture we generally get through an individual the nature and character of the event through which God's servant and chief human agent is passing; and as we study and observe God's instructions to the individual, we arrive at an understanding of God's mind at the time.

Hezekiah comes before us at a very critical period in Israel's history, and the way he is prepared of God and taught of Him for such an eventful time is necessarily very instructive. There is often a great similarity in leading points, between the position which we are called to occupy ourselves, and that occupied by distinguished servants of God. The points of resemblance between the great and the small in God's household are very marked, and the study of His way with a leading servant often helps and assists another servant who is unknown beyond his immediate circle. And yet the ways of God are as truly learned by him, and he is as thoroughly disciplined under His band as the most prominent and distinguished servant.

Hezekiah, in his history, presents to us two things: the first, how he is strengthened and succeeds in renewing the testimony of the Lord in a very exemplary way, at a time when everything had sunk to the lowest state, and was to all appearance in irretrievable ruin; secondly, how he was taught to rest in God through suffering and a conviction of the end and desolation of everything here. It is very engaging and instructive to dwell on a history like this, to observe how God leads on His servant, uses him to do His will and to walk in His ways, and yet teaches him that, however he has succeeded or been a channel of success, still if he turns aside and depends on man, all is forfeited.

Hezekiah's life, in deep broad lines, is a checkered one and deeply instructive. The first notice we get of him is that he “removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan.” (2 Kings 18:4.) This was a bold and decisive act wherewith to open his public career as God's servant, for the high places had existed before and throughout the days of Solomon and until now. (See 1 Kings 3:3.) What manner of discipline Hezekiah had already passed through in order to qualify him for such prompt and decided action we are not told. From the record of his father's ways, and the state of things connected with the testimony of the Lord, we should not be prepared to see a young man of

twenty-five, immediately on ascending the throne, acting with so much vigor and decision. He emerges out of all the waste and debris of former greatness, as if he had no contact with it; as if he had been taught to separate from and denounce all that surrounded him. He takes his place in the scene like another David visiting his brethren in the valley of Elah. Apart from, and yet among them, he addresses himself to remove everything dishonoring to God. The work he does indicates the school he has learned in, the association in which he has obtained his ideas. The roughness and wildness of a mountain home may have unsurpassable charms to one in early youth, until the halls of the learned and the scenes of other climes arrest the attention. The well-ordered mind, the more it sees, the higher the scenes presented to it, the more does it require and seek to conform all within its power and province to its own improved convictions. This is the end of education, and the expected fruit of extended knowledge; the better thing being accepted, the inferior is discovered and refused. The way in which we act, when the opportunity for acting comes, discloses the manner and nature of the principles which we have imbibed. The action and the reformation wrought by the young king Hezekiah testified surely that he had been educated in the divine school in no ordinary way. David's discipline in the wilderness prepared him for his valiant engagement with Goliath; and Hezekiah must have been in some other way prepared and exercised, or he could not have met in so masterly a manner the disorder which surrounded him. The disorders themselves thus discipline and test the servant of God. One submits to them, another groans over them, a third addresses himself to them with feeble and inadequate remedies, with the view to an improvement; but he who has obtained from God in his own mind and spirit what is the true and divine order, can propose or accept nothing less. He makes no compromise—the right thing and the right thing only, according to God in his measure—and this he acts on and enforces, whatever it may sweep away. It is sometimes an apparently very little thing and a thing long overlooked by other servants of God which peculiarly indicates the elevated purpose of the faithful servant. Hezekiah's extermination of the serpent of brass at once establishes him as one whose soul was well disciplined by God for His service; for though we may not always see the discipline, we see fruits which nothing but holy discipline could have fostered and developed. God's honor is first maintained, and Hezekiah is confirmed in strength and asserts on all sides the rights of his calling, and his true dignity as king of Judah. “And the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him not.” But not only did Hezekiah assert and maintain his true place as God's king; he also in a very full and complete way maintained the testimony for God. It is not enough to oppose and resist our enemies, to check or compel them to surrender encroachments; we must also set forth what is the truth of God. Hezekiah not only proves himself stronger than his enemies, but he also devotes himself to the re-establishment of the testimony of God.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened he the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. So largely and fully did he effect restoration and procure blessing that it is said, “So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem.” (2 Chron. 30:26.) And in chapter 31:20 it is summed up: “And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God.” To resist evil and introduce good declares the possession of divine power; it is not one-sided. Where there is conviction or persuasion only, and not divine power, there will always be marked imperfection. “The legs of the lame are not equal.” There may be a great effort to resist the enemy, but there will not be commensurate effort to recover the truth;

while on the other hand there may be an avowed desire to recover the truth with a tampering with what is hostile to it, a cry for the suppression of vice without paying any regard to the testimony of God; or a connivance with that which is really opposed to Christ with a profession of His name. Hezekiah is not of this order; be is not lame; he resists evil and seeks and supports the truth of God in its true force and excellence. He has reached a point which we all admire, and above all seek to attain to.

What I have hastily sketched occurred within the first fourteen years of Hezekiah's reign, a prosperous useful time; but the more useful anyone is, the more he requires to be brought to an end of himself, and find that his all is in God. Hence we find some of His servants are deeply chastened at first, in order to prepare them for a useful course; and some, after a useful period, are brought low and afflicted in order that they may learn bow truly and fully God, in His own blessed self, is paramount to everything. This fourteenth year was an eventful one with Hezekiah, for we read, “Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them.” (2 Kings 18:13.) And again, “After these things (i.e., those which I have glanced at above) and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up and entered Judah;” also in those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. (2 Chron. 32:1.)

Trial from without and from within is upon him. His sickness must have occurred in the fourteenth year of his reign, for from his sickness there was added unto his life fifteen years; and as he reigned only twenty-nine years, his sickness therefore must have occurred in the fourteenth year. Its being related as subsequent to the second invasion by Sennacherib is, I conclude, on account of its having a typical import; for Hezekiah's exercises during this sickness set forth what Israel will go through before their final deliverance, and not any other favor, however great, which may be vouchsafed to them. It is a beautiful and interesting sight to behold Hezekiah for fourteen years (twice seven, a doubly perfect period) walking on the earth before God in dignity and faithfulness. But now we are invited to observe him and to learn from him in far different circumstances, even as oppressed and intimidated by the king of Assyria; and in his own soul before God, deeply and sorely exercised. He appears to have lost himself in the first invasion of Sennacherib, because we can hardly imagine that Sennacherib persisted in his first invasion after receiving the fine which he had imposed. The history is simply this: In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib came up and laid siege to certain cities of Judah. At that time Hezekiah bought him off and stipulated to pay him a certain sum or ransom. Subsequent to this Sennacherib came up again (possibly on his return from Egypt), and then he threatened Jerusalem; and it was between these two invasions that Hezekiah was led by a great sickness into deep exercise with God. For fourteen years he had walked with God and prospered. Then, for the first time, failure appears in his course. Instead of repelling the invasion of the king of Assyria, as he would at one time have done, he essays to buy it off. At the beginning of his reign, without any apparent resources, he had freed himself from the king of Assyria and served him not. Whereas now, after being established in success, and invested with power on every side, there is inability and confessed powerlessness to maintain the position which was taken when nothing but faith favored or authorized him to assume it. What a commentary is this on the oft failure of God's servants! But it is easily accounted for. When I am serving God in dependence on Him, and see His way for me, I am bold in it, even though I may see no means at all by which I can be maintained in it; but when I begin to rest in the

fruits of my faithfulness, the possessions and resources given to me of God, I may fear to imperil them, if not holding them from Him and with Him. Thus was it with Hezekiah. He who had so fearlessly assumed his true place, and the divine rights vested in him, cannot maintain it or them without stooping to the unworthy expedient of buying off him whom he had set at defiance when his faith was in vigor. What a contrast between the confidence which faith in God gives, and that which is derived from the largest amount of human resources! Hezekiah with nothing but God can refuse to serve the king of Assyria: Hezekiah surrounded with great power and prosperity sinks into the place of a vassal.

It was at this juncture I assume that his sickness was inflicted. And surely there was a needs-be for it. In this sickness God will teach him death, and the terribleness of it to man as man. What more touching than Hezekiah's own account of the exercises of his soul when he contemplates death. The Lord intimates to him through the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 38) “Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live.” “Thee Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.” This is an exercise and a discipline which every saint one way or another must enter into and endure. This dreadful moment to nature must be learned and felt. What a moment! when all that man cares for, all that connects him with his own works and will, sinks into dissolution. Man as he is himself no longer exists. The greater his place here, the more extended his occupation, the more pleasing his associations, the more engaged his affections, the more terrible the wrench to which he is subjected in death. Yet it is appointed unto men once to die, and the better a man is localized here, the more poignant and terrific it must be to be severed from it; nay, the better the man is as man and the more useful, the more grievous and insupportable it seems to him. But it is the judgment on humanity; and every believer, in his soul as a man, suffers and goes through this death just as bitterly as Hezekiah did (if he be brought to the end of himself). He was an excellent and an eminently useful man, one who had walked before God in truth and with a perfect heart. His suffering in view of death was not because of a doubt of his final salvation, but it was the contemplation of death as that which must sever him from all that interested and engaged him here. Could any man who felt himself the center of usefulness and power here, independently of other considerations, take it lightly that he should be deprived of all this position and sphere of interest by the stern power of death? Can any one realize what it is to be severed from all he loves and cares for as a man, from all who care for him, and consider him a link to their existence, and not sympathize with Hezekiah instead of condemning him? The experience of Hezekiah tells us how a man of God, a regenerate soul, feels the wrench. Of course we are not taking into account how a Christian, knowing that he has life in Christ at the other side of the grave, apart from and above the flesh, would pass through this ordeal. Yet he too must pass through it. And that he does so victoriously is not because it is anything less than it was to Hezekiah, but because he has received through grace life in the risen Son of God—he does not suffer less but he enjoys infinitely more than Hezekiah. Still the ordeal is necessary for us in order that we should understand that the giving up of our existence as man is a thing that must be now learned morally in the cross of Christ; and that this giving up (that is, death) is no light thing; nay, that it is an exceeding bitter thing, but yet, a thing that must be; and that a man's goodness and usefulness here, instead of mitigating the desperateness of the blow, aggravates it, and imparts a deeper agony to it. The actual surrender of my existence as a man is not the mere pain of dying as a lower animal suffers;

it is the termination of my connection with all that interests and attracts me and makes life valuable and great. The bitterness of death is past when one is so worn by sorrow or sickness that he longs for dissolution; but to be severed from everything here without a heavenly hope, to be no more here for God or for man—this is its bitterness; and this Hezekiah expresses when he says, “In the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years. I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living, I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed and removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward.” This writing of Hezekiah, it will be seen, is the Spirit's account of the exercise which took place in him during this desperate discipline. But when he comes to the words, “O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me,” there is evidently a new light in his soul; he enters into resurrection, in hope. He can now say, “O Lord by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit. So wilt thou recover me and make me to live. . . Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption (there is also the sense of the Lord's forgiveness), for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back..... The living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day.” The discipline has effected its blessed purpose. A terrible ordeal it was, but none other can lead the soul to rest entirely in God as the spring and fountain of life. If I am alive with God, death to man, and man's things become small to me; but then, to realize the actual blessedness of living by the Son of God, and unto God in a life pleasing and suited to Him, I must needs know and realize my death as a man. This is no light thing; for it is the summing up and END of all discipline. If we were simply dead, and allowed the Spirit to maintain Christ in us in everything, there would be no need of the discipline, and there would be nothing in us to die. But the less there is in us to die, the more must death—moral death—have taken place in us; and a very real and a very bitter thing it is. With some it takes place at once, with others by slow processes; but death as death must supervene, and it is in proportion as we realize that life which is in Christ taking its place that we endure the process and are able to say, “The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day.”

Hezekiah has now passed through wonderful experience. He has known what it is to be in the valley of the shadow of death; he has seen the lights here go out one by one, felt the silver cord loosening, and has known the mighty power of God in raising him up again. He has been well disciplined by the tender hand of God: will he now walk as thus taught and renewed in knowledge? The remainder of the history of Hezekiah sets before us the trials to which one, educated as he has been, is exposed; How he is ensnared, and yet how he gives evidence of the benefit of the discipline through which he has passed. It seems a paradox, that one should exhibit special weakness and special strength, after a season of deep and blessed discipline; but so it is. The weakness of the nature is exposed, and the strength of the grace conferred is declared also. It is a mistake which is sometimes made, that grace in a way cloaks the flesh and screens it from discovery. It is quite true, that grace would suppress and subdue the flesh; but it never imparts to it a false color and appearance. On the contrary, where there is most grace, there the hideousness of flesh is most exposed, if it be not judged and subdued. Thus it is not uncommon to see an outbreak of the flesh, or its tendency in nature exposed, where there is a true, deep vein of grace. Peter denies the Lord: his flesh is exposed, while the deep vein of grace in his soul leads him to

repentance. Paul is enriched in his soul with the treasures of glory, and, consequent thereon, there is a need for a check on the flesh, which otherwise would not have betrayed itself. The bad in me, in fact; is brought to light through grace, while also I am more distinctly led on by grace. The bad ought to be discovered before it works, and if I am walking near the Lord it will; but if not, being in grace does not prevent the disclosure of it. If seen and judged before God, it is put away without being publicly seen or betrayed in acts; but if not, grace will not screen it; it will be brought to light, and will there receive judgment from God as it had not received judgment from oneself: for if we judged ourselves we should not be judged. The more we have advanced in grace the more the exposure will be, if the flesh be not subdued by the grace conferred on us; that is, if we are not walking in dependence on God from whom we have received the grace. Hezekiah, in the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon, betrays his nature; he who in deep exercise of soul had vowed, “I will go softly all my days,” is still not proof against the flattery of the world. “Hezekiah [we read] was glad of them and sheaved them the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not.” The man who, through discipline, has learned resurrection, is still not proof against being recognized here and made much of by Babylon. God's servant ought to have refused any such recognition; but he gave way, and consequently brought judgment on his house. Thus he has only survived to entail judgment on his house, and is a striking evidence of how man in his nature is irretrievable; and that when man is acknowledged and made much of, then it is that he is tested. “As the refining-pot to silver, so is man to his praise.” The simple fact of the gratification which it affords to our flesh to be recognized and exalted, is proof positive of the danger attendant on it to us. Hezekiah falls beneath it! What a fall for a man who, in exercise of soul, had learned death and resurrection! Babylon embodies in principle all the selfish independent advancement of this world. To be acknowledged by it is too much for Hezekiah, and the acknowledgment which he in his unbelief and vanity accepts entails judgment on his family; for the favor of the world is deceitful. Hezekiah's susceptible part is exposed, while judgment is inflicted not only on himself but on his nature: for in his family his own nature is judged, and not merely the offense which was the fruit of the nature.

But while in this matter we see the sad exposure of Hezekiah's nature; in another, he is a bright example to us of how a man should act when under apparently overwhelming trials. If the flattery of Babylon disclose the weakness and vanity of his nature, as is always the tendency of worldly prosperity; the invasion and fearful threatening of the Assyrian (2 Kings 18:17) only bring to light the strength of his reliance on God. The great discipline which he has passed through has not been ineffectual. To man he preserves a calm imperturbable dignity. “The king's commandment” with reference to the messengers sent by the king of Assyria was, “Answer him not a word,” but to the Lord he unburdens his heart, and spreads out before Him all his distress. He had before in weakness essayed to buy off the invader; but now he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord. His position and bearing now is the very opposite to what it was with the Babylonish ambassadors; and truly comforting with one who had been raised out of death—who had learned what death really is. He is here as nothing in himself but his hope is in God.

When the Lord promised Hezekiah recovery from his sickness, He also promised him deliverance from the Assyrian. (2 Kings 20:6.) The victory of the Lord is a complete one, over oneself, and over every other oppressor; but the heart has to learn how, as having passed through death, it can endure better when there is death and pressure before it than when there is acknowledgment and flattering recognition.

Hezekiah understands death, and what God is in death, and therefore under the pressure of the Assyrian he turns to God; whereas when he is courted and flattered by the ambassadors of Babylon, he falls under the fatal influence of that system which they personate, and his children and nation in God's government must suffer accordingly. Hezekiah's marvelous deliverance from the Assyrians by the interposition of God is the last event of his life which is recorded in Scripture, and it not inaptly closes the history of his discipline. He has learned that all flesh is grass, and God is made all in all before his soul. When we have come to this, the purpose of all discipline has been effected. May we learn and walk in patience, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing!

Chapter 27

Fragment: Distrust of God

Before Satan introduced lusts into man's heart, He produced distrust of God: when this was brought in, man was easily a prey—all was really done. So with what infinite goodness and surpassing grace God attracts and warrants confidence for the chief of sinners in Christ.

Chapter 28

Scripture Query and Answer: Day-Star?

Q. 2 Peter 1:9. How does the “day-star” (φωσφ■ρος) differ from the morning-star (■ ■στ■ρ ■ πρ■■ν■ς) in Rev. 2:28? It is well known that in Rev. 22:16 the reading ■ρθρν■ς is spurious, and it should be πρω■ν■ς as in chapter 2. B. S.

A. There is only a shade of meaning different in ■ ■στ■ρ ■ πρ■■ν■ς and φωσφ■ρος, one referring to the early appearance, the other to its introducing dawn or light. Peter is speaking of prophecy as a light, a candle shining in a dark place—God's light in the darkness of this world; with that he contrasts Christ's heavenly coming the hope of the saints as bringing in the light of a new day. ‘Ο ■στ■ρ ■ πρ■■ν■ς is merely what it is—its appellative, Christ Himself, still not in the kingdom (that precedes in chapter 2:28, and is found rather in “the Root and Offspring of David” in chapter 22.)

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Chapter 29

Fragment: Faith and Righteousness of God

The person of Christ is the object of faith; but he who believes has part in the righteousness of God, which is revealed as the portion of the believer.

Chapter 30

Fragment: Participles in 1 John

Note the tenses of the participles in 1 John 9, and 5:18 is ■εγεννημ■νος is the state, γεννηθε■ς is the fact, the consequence of which is that he keeps himself.

Chapter 31

Fragment: 2 Corinthians 12

Flesh is seen in three distinct positions: first, when the man is in the third heaven and there has no consciousness of it at all; secondly, in the activity of its own will at the end of the chapter when it is sin; and, thirdly, in conflict but disallowed. Here the man is not unconscious of it, but it is known and conscious weakness, but the soul having Christ's power with it, and this relied on by faith. As respects the sphere it acts and works in, it is a weakness, but thus a testimony to another power which does its own work in this sphere—the power of Christ. The saint is obliged to feel it as weakness because of the tendency to self-confidence and forgetfulness of dependence; and that the Lord alone can do the Lord's work whatever instruments he uses.

Chapter 32

Fragment: Abraham and the World

Abraham gives up the world in liberty, conquers it in power, and refuses it that he may have everything from God. He is blessed of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.

Chapter 33

Fragment: Abraham the First Object of a Promise

There was no promise before Abraham to any person as an object and depositary of it. There was an object of faith in the judgment of the serpent as to the promised seed; but there was no person an object of promise.

Chapter 34

Fragment: Christianity of the Busy Life

The Christianity of the closet, and the Christianity of busy life, are not, as is often fancied, conflicting things. The man who has fellowship with Jesus in his solitude knows how to carry the savor of the fellowship even into the most common affairs. There is need of prayer in this matter. For though we be convinced that there is but one thing needful, we are easily led away, like Martha, to busy and trouble ourselves about “many things.” many things we must needs do and care about, while we are in the flesh; but the work to which Christ calls us is to do and care about these things in such a spirit as to make them part and parcel of our great work—the work of keeping close to Jesus, and of following him whithersoever he goeth. If only willing to leave all and follow Christ, he would make the cross not heavy to be borne but a delight, more pleasant than to the miser is his load of gold, or to the earthly monarch are his insignia of power. “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Chapter 35

Fragment: Difference Between Love and Self

Self likes to be served and thinks itself great; love serves and is great.

Chapter 36

Fragment: God in the Book of Job

It is to be specially noted in the book of Job that in its introduction and close (Chap. 1:1-6 being the history of the book) we have Jehovah. In all the book itself, including the speech of Elihu, we have Elohim, Shaddai, &c. Here we have the ways of God as God in the whole world; in the introduction and close, the interpretation of divine government—we are behind the scenes in revealed dealings. There are springs or sources of action in the beginning and close, in the book facts on which man reasons and from which he draws conclusions. We are above in the former, below in the latter. Compare Psa. 139:15, and Job 3:21.

Chapter 37

Fragment: God's Word

A child of God who sins is entitled to believe that he is forgiven on confession to his father. If he doubts, it is not humility or holiness, but distrust of God in Christ. Probably he is looking for some sign or token; but God will never give this, for it would encourage a soul to undervalue his word

The word is the expression outwardly of what God feels inwardly; and therefore as he puts the highest honor on it, so should we.

Chapter 38

Fragment: Hooker's Doctrine

When I weigh Hooker's doctrine with the word of God, I am not at a loss to judge what are the views of law absolute, and others to which I am invited to look, in contrast with the plain declarations of scripture. Hooker uses them to vindicate those things in the English establishment, for which there is no warrant in scripture. But they equally warrant, though he did not intend it, Popery and modern Rationalism: one contending that scripture does not suffice; the other contending that the Christian conscience has its light independent of scripture, just as scripture does, applying it then to the judgment of statements in scripture, and of course, soon to the rejection of all that reason does not like. Hooker lays full ground for it by insisting that scripture does not prove itself (in which he wholly departs from the first reformers). As regards Popery, Hooker distinctly asserts, not that scripture suffices—that he denies in terms, but—that, as we have reason and scripture, these are sufficient, and tradition therefore is not needed. It is a pity that the national establishment should be founded on such principles. I recognize, not right reason, but conscience; I recognize all use of gifts of ministry, and parental care according to God; but the doctrine of Hooker is low and dangerous.

Chapter 39

Fragment: Hope an Inheritance

The hope in Peter, and indeed in Colossians, though not connected with so high a dispensational place, yet is itself as an inheritance a higher hope, not the inheritance of all things, which, though in a certain sense general since it may continue (Rev. 21:7, Heb. 2), yet is properly the kingdom inheritance of the Son of man, and at any rate of what is below us, but the eternal blessedness itself in the heavenly state with God.

Chapter 40

Fragment: John 3:13-14

Remark the amazing power of the words in John 3:13, 14, thus brought together—the Son of man in heaven, and the Son of man must be lifted up—whether we consider His person, or the grace that is in that “must,” as sheaving how he had thoroughly taken up our cause and identified Himself with us.

Chapter 41

Fragment: Justification: Washed and Accepted

As to justification, there is a point I must remark. Two things unite in it: first, there is the blood which has washed us from our sins; and this is perhaps properly called justification. But in fact we may add to it our acceptance in the beloved. If any one doeth righteousness, he is righteous, as He (Christ) is righteous. For doing righteousness is what flows from the life of Christ in us; but inasmuch as we live of this life by the Holy Spirit, we are united to Christ, and we enjoy His righteousness before God, accepted in the Beloved. Of this, the resurrection is the pivot; for it is the proof of justification, and it introduces Christ in the power of this eternal life (in which we share) into the presence of God. It is around the person of Christ, viewed as risen, that all the truths found in the word turn. The union of the Church to Him is its complement. The resurrection leaves all that could condemn us behind it in the tomb and introduces the Lord into the new world of which He is the perfection, the Head and the glory. Now we are one with him.

Chapter 42

Fragment: Matthew 26

Note, in Matt. 26 (besides his being the Christ, the Son of God as come among the Jews on the earth, living amongst men,) the double position of the Son of man—sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Chapter 43

Fragment: Pictures From Abraham and Joseph

If Abraham gives us the bright and blessed picture of communion with God, in Joseph we find goodness and unsullied integrity of heart toward God in the midst of the power of evil. It is lovely, and in this a beautiful foreshadowing of the Lord in his life, the beloved of His Father. Note, too, that faithfulness is the way of divine, spiritual understanding.

Chapter 44

Fragment: Psalm 102

Psa. 102 - What is peculiar in this Psalm is that it brings out the person of Christ, His divine nature, in answer to His sufferings and cutting off. It is not grace to others by His sufferings, nor judgment on others because of their iniquity in inflicting them. But in reply to the utter loneliness in sorrow and touching appeal to Jehovah of a heart withered like grass, He is owned as Jehovah, the Creator, Himself. It is not what He is for others through his suffering and humiliation, but Himself. The answer is his own glory, the blessed title of His person. This it is which gives it such peculiar interest.

Chapter 45

Fragment: Psalm 69

To correspondents: The sealing of the spirit is connected with the gospel of our salvation. This makes what has perplexed many pretty clear. It is when the gospel of simple salvation is received that we are sealed: so indeed it was with Cornelius.

Chapter 46

Fragment: Resurrection of Christ

The resurrection of Christ, laid hold of by faith, is the pivot of true separation to God. It is the only thing that enables a man to make a clean break with the world and the flesh, as it is the witness of victory over Satan and judgment.

Chapter 47

Fragment: Romans 6

Rom. 6 considers first sin in respect of nature, and then the man in respect of relationship, and subjection and (as noted elsewhere) obedience to a person in contrast with a law.

Chapter 48

Fragment: Romans 6:4-8

I apprehend the “shall” of Rom. 6:5 is not future but consequence. Verse 6 is corroborative of it, the result being the last words of verse 4. Verse 8 is consequence, but on to the future, and this, because there is power in his resurrection. (Ver 9.) But it is power of life, putting of course in a given place by resurrection, but not in simple standing as in Eph. 2:6. No doubt, this is connected with power, as in the end of Eph. 1, but it is not life as here working in us. In Rom. 6:7, it is not justified from “sins;” and, it is clear, a dead man cannot be accused of sin working in him: his state of death clears (justifies) him at once. In all this part of Romans, the apostle speaks of sin, not sins. When he speaks of offenses, the law is introduced.

Chapter 49

Fragment: the Grand Blunder of Schleiermacher

The grand blunder of Schleiermacher, and the source of the worst infidelity now, is that he has taken the Holy Ghost's work in us—very likely in himself for intuition, or specially collective Christian consciousness. He made divine teaching, in which case it is real, to be a title of human judgment on what the Holy Ghost gave. This is, I suspect, the key to the whole system, itself probably the fruit of Kantian philosophy and its offsets. The whole hangs on the Church's not believing in the positive operation of the Holy Ghost. For all that Scherer and Bunsen, &c., pretend on their best side is simply Schleiermacher. Thus the Bible is Christian consciousness there: we judge it by Christian consciousness now. Hence it is, as Schérer says, the mere history of partial apprehension of truth; and of course, as every philosopher trusts himself, we judge scripture. That is, there is no revelation; for revelation must have authority or is false

Be it that the Church was before the new testament and the latter written for believers; yet the question is not thereby touched, whether it was not written by the power and direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost to give certainty and a divine record of those things in which they had been instructed. If the consciousness of believers was there, it was not to reproduce this but something else. It was to confirm and correct theirs by a divine statement of it, and give a sure record of that divinely-taught truth. Thus its being given to believers is, as far as it goes, a proof that it was not merely the expression of religious consciousness as then developed.

Chapter 50

Fragment: the Sanctuary of God

If a man is a Christian, he belongs to the sanctuary of God. God has given him a present place inside the holiest, which faith should use to judge flesh by.

Chapter 51

Fragment: the Whole Truth

It is to be remarked as to scripture, that Paul declares his doctrine (i.e., of the church) completes it (Col. 1:25), and that (Gal. 1:8, 9) he will not have any gospel besides. It would be ■τερον, not ■λλο. Thus we are certain to have the whole truth. The Spirit may apply in grace, may practically develop, so as through him to judge all by.

Chapter 52

Fragment: Without Christ We Have Nothing

If we have Christ, we have all—without Christ we have nothing. You can be happy without money, without liberty, without parents, and without friends, if Christ is yours. If you have not Christ, neither money, nor liberty, nor parents, nor friends can make you happy. Christ, with a chain, is liberty; liberty without Christ is a chain. Christ without anything is riches—all things, without Christ, is poverty indeed.

Chapter 53

Fragment: Worldly Religions

A worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on the earth, is the denial of Christianity.

Chapter 54

Fragments Gathered up: Abel's Sacrifice

Abel's sacrifice was rather an offering to God than redemption. Therewith he could come and be received by faith, and so it is used in Hebrews. It was Abel's offering, not God's redemption.

Chapter 55

Fragments Gathered up: Christ Not Law-Transgressing

It has been wrongly said that, if Christ's whole life had not been law-fulfilling, it must have been law-transgressing. This is simply that He was incapable of going beyond that to which all as creatures are subject. If there is no alternative but law-keeping and law-transgressing, there could have been no act of sovereign goodness and love to sinners; for this is neither. He could not go beyond creature obligations! Such is the theology and reasoning opposed to us.

Chapter 56

Fragments Gathered up: Distinguishing Between Sins and Sorrows

Your comfort and enlargement of heart in walking with God, will depend not a little on your rightly distinguishing between your sins and your sorrows. To take all your natural, it may be sometimes your Christ-like, sorrows to the blood of atonement, as if they were altogether sinful, would have the effect, not of softening your heart, but of hardening it; of bringing not light, but darkness into your soul; not of augmenting, but of diminishing, your love to Jesus. O how Satan strives to make us believe that our Lord is an austere man! How he labors to give us false views and impressions of the character of our Lord! Believe nothing about Christ which the word of God does not warrant. You know well what Christ is, you have been in His company, you have tasted that He is gracious, your experience has taught you that He does sympathize with you in all your afflictions. Come then to Him with all your sorrows, and, oh! you will have good cause to say that He who wept at the grave of Lazarus is still the same, no less Godlike in His power to comfort, and no less man-like in the flowing forth of His compassions.

Chapter 57

Fragments Gathered up: Hooker's Doctrine

Hooker takes up these forms of law, first, a rule imposed by authority, alone held to be such by some, which he extends to any rule by which actions are framed. I have no objection. The first only is properly law, and the difference is all-important; but the second is often in a secondary sense so-called, as the law of faith, the law of the spirit of life, so in natural things, the law of gravity; but scripture, speaking of law as such, uses it in the former sense. The fact of an imposed rule (as contrasted with the voluntary actions of nature, uniform, because it is such), is capital. But to return a moment to Hooker. He classes under the general idea of law, nature's laws, what angels observe, the law of reason (he never speaks of conscience, which is by no means immaterial), Divine law known but by special revelation, human law, supposed conformed to one of the last two. The first two he calls law eternal. God may overrule, he alleges, the law imposed on the creature—nature's law, according to the law which Himself hath proposed eternally to keep. still this eternal and immutable. I quote this to show that as to this highest law, however overruling power may operate, God is, though by His own act imposing it on Himself, immutably bound. Now this is surely unsound. God will not act contrary to His nature, for then he would not be Himself, which is impossible; but it is not an imposed law, or freedom, grace, miracle, sovereign goodness are all taken away from God. The reader must not think this metaphysical. I am speaking of what I have been referred to as setting me right. And we shall soon see it is at the root of the whole matter.

Chapter 58

Fragments Gathered up: Joel 2:30

Joel 2:30 is a new sentence connected with the end of verse 31. Thus the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, in its literal and last accomplishment would be after Jehovah had settled His people in the land: the signs will be before. Its accomplishment consequent upon the reception of the remnant would be on their partaking of the salvation as a sign of favor and blessing.

Chapter 59

Fragments Gathered up: Not Alive Under Sin or Law

We, Christians, are not looked at as alive under sin but as dead—hence not as alive under law but as dead. Let it be remembered that no deliverance from law is deliverance from obedience or commandments. I add “commandments;” for it is not sufficient to be right: Christ's authority must be obeyed.

Chapter 60

Fragments Gathered up: Presence of God

The presence of God keeps everything in its place—nothing else: otherwise the human mind works. John does not worship up in heaven: when others did, his place was to see and record. The living creatures celebrate God, the elders worship. When John sees the angel, he was going to worship him. What a difference the presence of God makes!

Chapter 61

Fragment: Genesis 3

Gen. 3 presents only the earthly or governmental consequences of sin. Whatever were the developments of relationship, or the experiences of saints which necessarily savored of the truth, the full separation from God which sin causes was only brought out when he himself was revealed and indeed could only then be. Such is what we find in Rom. 1:18.

Chapter 62

Fragment: What Proves There Is a God

What proves there is a God proves that we cannot know or conceive an idea of Him—that is, that there must be a cause for what exists. There is a God; for nothing can exist without a cause; but that is not God. I am sure there is a God; for I am sure that what exists cannot exist without a cause; but what cannot exist without a cause is not God. It is, after all, only saying that we arc finite. I must believe that He is. The impossibility of conceiving existence without a cause (which proves there is a God) is the impossibility of conceiving Him who is that cause and exists without one.

Chapter 63

Fragment: Grace and Law

The difference between grace and law is that grace depends on what God is for me; law, on what I am for God. In the presence of God no one is proud. It is away from Him (as to the consciousness of it) that pride works.

Chapter 64

Fragment: The House and the Body

In Eph. 4:3-6, though the subject is enlarged and the character of the unities defined, yet there is clear reference to the end of Eph. 2—the house as well as the body. God is not, that I am aware, said to build the house. “Ye, coming as living stones, are built up.” so “ye are builded together.”

Chapter 65

Fragment: Hebrews

The epistle to the Hebrews puts the saint (and strictly the Jewish remnant) in perfect present connection with heavenly things and places, but connects them with the whole course of previous revelations, and also with the coming dispensation.

Notes on Isaiah 33

The Spirit of God, having given us a blessed picture of the King Messiah reigning in righteousness, here contrasts with it a certain spoiler who is not expressly named by our prophet. But we need not find much difficulty in identifying him, if we remember the last prophecy of Ezekiel that describes a hostile Gentile power. It is remarkable that he there describes Gog as one who had been predicted before. Hence it is certain that this marauding power is not peculiar to the later prophet, who tells us in chapter 33:8-13, “After many days thou shalt be visited at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought, and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the lend. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?” The next chapter comes in to show in detail that if there be that which might seem inconsistent with their security, if God permits that there should be a dark cloud gathering for a while over Palestine, it at length falls on their foes themselves; not on Israel. This appears to be the same enemy which is here introduced. It is the last effort of the great coalition against Israel, which led to the overwhelming destruction of the assembled nations, specially of the East when Israel will have but to help themselves to their arms, and their mere burial will occupy the conquerors, and still more the spoiling of their arms and appurtenances.

I do not doubt that the Assyrian, or king of the north, in the end is thus described. Gog will, as I suppose, have then accomplished his long-cherished designs on Constantinople and the Turkish empire in its chief dominions. Now “the Assyrian” is a familiar subject of prophecy. This may account for the statement that they were known before. There must clearly have been predictions of him previously to Ezekiel's time, though some may have prophesied things not committed to writing. By the way some have been too anxious to show that the apostles never wrote anything but what we have got. It is quite enough to know that all intended to be of permanent use to the Church and for God's glory is preserved. It is certain apostles taught (2 Thess. 2), and quite possible they may have written, things which were not meant of God to be preserved as part of the Scriptures. But there is a character of perfectness about what we have, which to my mind precludes more. That this is not at all an exorbitant idea is evident from the fact that the apostles preached many discourses that are not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Of course we have only a very small part of what the apostles preached, as the evangelists were led to select only from what our Lord did. To have added more would have been rather to encumber Scripture. Had more communications even of the apostle been added, it would have marred the perfectness of God's written word. We must have confidence in Him. He manifested His will in that all which He designed for the permanent instruction of the Church was kept by His power in the midst of

thousands and thousands of enemies who would have gladly destroyed the Scriptures if they could. Never more in Christendom has this dislike of the word of God betrayed itself than now. But the efforts of the enemy only bring out God's power, wisdom, and goodness for all who love Him, as they will to the ruin of those who hate and despise Him.

To return, however: it is only Isa. 33 which plainly connects itself in character with the northern leader of Ezekiel, unless we identify the Assyrian also with that power, which seems to me within certain limits to be true at the close. However that may be, the moral traits of this foe are sufficiently plain. “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.” (Ver. 1.) This covetous foe appears to be the last which comes up, and so far distinct from “the king of the north,” which title is not limited to the end. But assuredly it is a ruler of the same sort, insatiable and treacherous. The Spirit now draws out the prophet as personifying the godly in Israel to cry to the Lord. “O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.” (Ver. 2-4.) How blessed to have Jehovah as the arm to lean on and do valiantly for us. How complete the reversal when the proud and countless foes yield their spoil to be gathered like that of the caterpillars or locusts. It is the Lord's doing and may well be marvelous in our eyes. “The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure.” (Ver. 6, 7.) Thus Jehovah Himself has taken them in hand, and all becomes a spoil for Israel, and their proud hopes are blasted forever. Note that at this very time Zion shall be filled with righteousness and judgment. The doom which swallowed up the beast and the false prophet, and the chivalry of Europe is a lesson heard in vain. Blinded by superstition as well as the lust of universal empire, Gog dreams of destroying Israel, not believing in the presence of Christ, or thinking Him a mere human king. Thus they too will come to their own destruction.

The next verses portray the straits of the people of God and their despair before deliverance appeared; nor is danger ever apt to be more felt than when blessing, that seemed to be ours, is once more in jeopardy. “Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.” (Ver. 7-9.) But man's extremity is God's opportunity, as they say; and so will the Jews then prove. “Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.” Had He chastened His people sore, and should the insolent foe be unpunished? “Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath as fire shall devour [not Israel, but] you, and the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.” (Ver. 10-12.) It is the Lord who undertakes to dispose of their enemies and thus addresses them. Lime may be hard, but fire ere long reduces it to powder; and thorns, let them be ever so troublesome to those with whom they come into collision, are notorious when cut up for burning with singular rapidity.

Next, attention is drawn (ver. 13) to the notable display of God's ways, as well as to the effects of these trials in showing out the true character of men even in Zion. “Hear ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my right,” followed by the most animated description of the alarm of the ungodly, and of the divine assurances to those that fear His name and walk in righteousness. “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (Ver. 14-16.)

Then follows (ver. 17-19) a sublime picture of Israel in their conscious blessedness. They should behold the King in His beauty, no longer cooped up within the beleaguered city, but free to look at the most distant part of the land or the earth. Their hearts should meditate terror, now happily and forever past; but then it is the more sweet to look back and think of the never-to-be-forgotten rescue, when the wisest were at fault—at fault in counting up human resources, as if they could avail—at fault in overlooking the only sure Deliverer, though He be not far from every one of us. On the other hand, they should see no more, hear no more the foreign foe, but look upon Zion, the Mount Zion which Jehovah loved. “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.” (Ver. 20-22.)

Is it not utterly vain to apply words like these to the days of Hezekiah with some ancients, or of the Maccabees with others, or to gospel times with thoughtless moderns? Even supposing that the rest of the circumstances of the Jews at either of these epochs approached the strength of the prophet's language, which is not at all admitted, who, in the face of approaching captivity, of a continual servitude to the Gentile powers, of a still more calamitous dispersion under the Romans, the effects of which last to this day—who, I say, can affirm that Jerusalem has been seen a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down? How can one hitherto apply to that city, yet trodden down of the Gentiles, the precise and most precious declaration, “Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall the cords thereof be broken?” Let in the light of the future for that people and place, and all is changed; the difficulty is at an end, and no wonder; for there “the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.” And thus there is not the smallest necessity for dislocating the prophecy from all connection with its historic basis, or diverting its consolations from those whose sorrows it was given to assuage and dispel, in proportion to their simplicity and strength of faith. No, whatever of comfort we may glean, whatever hopes of future triumph from its bright anticipations we may gather, let us rejoice that God is here, speaking of afflicted, tempest-tossed Israel, who in that day will find in Jesus of Nazareth their long-estranged Lord, Jehovah of hosts, who will prove Himself to be a better safeguard than those broad rivers, of which Babylon or Nineveh might boast against Jerusalem. But a broad river has its dangers as well as its beauty, facilities, and sources of protection: so both these cities proved, in

opposite ways, to their cost. Jerusalem has all these privileges without the perils, and incomparably more in Jehovah. What if no galley with oars went there, what if no gallant ship passed by, will not Jehovah be their judge, Jehovah their lawgiver, Jehovah their king, and so save them pre-eminently of all nations on the earth? And why should we weaken their claim to advance our own—we who are called into heavenly seats of glory, the object of the Savior's love as His Bride on high?

To Jerusalem the King, then, will be their delight, and boast, and tower of strength. Had not the mightiest of old been broken when but a typical Son of David was there, looking onward to Him who will surely reign there ere long? And what will it be when the Assyrian in his last phase—when Gog—essays to take Zion at the close of this age? “Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail; then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the lame take the prey.” The triumph of Israel is complete, and the more so because it will be the Lord's hand for them, not their own. “And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord. Thrice happy they who now can rejoice in Israel's prospect, conscious themselves of a still better portion in Christ, and in a still better country, that is, an heavenly.

Chapter 67

Notes on Isaiah 34-35

The Spirit of God has here brought together the earthly extremes of unsparing judgment, and of unmingled mercy; these things in two races naturally akin, but so much the more manifesting this divergence and the divine dealing with each from beginning to end. These nations, so judged and so blessed, sprang from the same stock, from the same father, from the same mother, and branched out into twin brothers, Esau on the one hand and Jacob on the other. The land of Idumea is the center of the one picture, as of the other is Zion. The proud elder must serve the younger. There was from their birth, and before it we may say in antecedent revelation, much to strike the mind in these sons of Isaac and Rebecca, much that would cleave to their posterity till His coming who will not only judge righteously the past but impress the future with the signs and substance of His own glorious presence.

Yet the early history seemed little to answer either to prophecy or to its fulfillment. “Duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Kenaz,” and their successors flourished in the land of Edom, while the sons of Israel were strangers in a land that was not theirs and ere long proving it a furnace of affliction in bitter bondage. But so it ever is— “that was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.” If God's people hope for that they see not, they must “with patience wait for it.” He who is sovereign allows that the flesh should show its character to the utmost, save where special mercy interferes to arrest and restrain because of other wise and gracious purposes. But His mercy it is, shown of His own good pleasure, which roused to madness the unbending arrogance of Edom who never looked to God with a broken spirit even in his deepest need. On the other hand, it was no small moral test for the sons of Israel, that, spite of the divine promises to them, Esau's descendants should be long settled in peaceful enjoyment as lords of their soil, while Jacob and his seed were sojourners on sufferance, soon to be slaves and slaves for a long while in the land of Ham. Half the space that separated the promise from their triumphant exodus saw them a mere family group; and if they afterward shot up rapidly into a people, it was in circumstances of increasing oppression and degradations. This was no small trial of faith whether they looked on this side of the picture or on that. Esau had been long established in power and peace and plenty, while Israel lay among the pots of Egypt and the accursed race of Canaan ruled in their land. And the Bible contains, in the same books, the promise and the trial which early appearances made for faith, and presents all calmly as the word of One who sees the end from the beginning, which therefore needs no apologies, puts forward no explanations, but claims the confidence of His children who know Him whom they have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep against that day that which they have entrusted to Him. The Bible does not in a demonstrative way force the truth of God upon His people; on the contrary great simplicity of faith is demanded that we receive it unhesitatingly, trusting God, spite of appearances for the present and delays for the future.

Had you looked more closely and spiritually into Jacob's life, you might have expected long discipline, even as he, their father, was seen lying on his pillow of stone, but the Lord holding out the vision of glory before him. This might have prepared for the thought of trial first, then of

gracious blessing. So, later, there was first the crushing of all natural hopes, and then the name of victory conferred. (Gen. 32) Thus what we have in Jacob's early history prepares one for the vicissitudes of his sons. He was a poor, trembling man with plenty of faults, shrinking from the presence of his brother, in whom might appear much that was attractive naturally. But God saw under it all that the flesh is a false and proud thing, enmity with God, who allowed that the flesh should show out in him, the despiser of his birthright, its real character. Present things were his life; hence profane unbelief and slight of the things of God. All this and more came out prominently in Esau, as they were to be verified in his race. If Gentiles, at any rate they had a blood relation with the people of God But their very connection with them, though a sort of transition between Israel and the nations around, was the occasion of envious enmity and ruin. They were to prove that it was not only an Egypt and a Pharaoh who were raised up for God to manifest His judgment upon, but that God would do just the same to the sons of Esau, and that Esau's flesh would betray the bitterest defiance of God and His people.

The great northern enemy of chapter 33 seems to be historically last; but morally, the account of Edom's judgment is kept for last, perhaps as being so near to Israel by nature. After that great enemy the Assyrian is destroyed, still, here is Edom's doom decided. When God was dealing with Israel in blessing or chastisement, you have Edom disputing the right of God to bless His people, and taking delight in their shame and sorrow. God resents such spite. And was it not in his race, that despised the birthright? This, no doubt, accomplished the purpose of God; but then He admirably makes His end to agree with His word and means. Though a question of His own sovereignty, yet this goes hand in hand with His righteous ways. Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, yet God brought out at the critical time, that there was also the seal of righteousness. Certainly, Esau deserved to be cast off by God, though Jacob justly traces everything to His mercy and grace. Thus the transgression of selling his birthright confirms what God had already given out as a question of His own disposal. Esau shewed that he did not value his birthright, present existence being dearer to him than any blessing of God. Jacob was utterly wrong in following his mother's deceitful plan to hinder Isaac's wish and secure the promise. He ought to have waited in peace and confidence, expecting God to make good His own word. But weak as he was, and wrong more than once, yet one thing you do find in Jacob, not in Esau—a heart for God, a faith that valued the promises of God; he might be apt to drop into his own ways, and to form plans for himself, for he was indeed “that worm Jacob,” as Scripture calls him; but still at bottom there was a heart that slave to God and His word. So, when the struggle came, when God wrestled with His servant, there was nature that needed to be withered up, lest he should suppose that because of any vigor of his own he prevailed. Still on blessing from God he was set, and would not desist till he had the assurance of it. If flesh was there to be judged, surely divine faith was very manifest. Hence Jacob becomes brighter towards the close, when the flesh was practically set aside.

So with Israel. Though there will be the judgment of their unfaithfulness yet the day will come when the nations too will be judged, not borne with; and how will it then fare with Edom? When Israel was in the wilderness, Esau stopped their way. The power of God could have smitten him down (as He had determined long before), but the time was not yet come. So Israel struck not a blow upon their guilty brother, but rather turned back like a rebuked child. Ah! it was the token in its patience that a still more tremendous judgment was in store for Edom; for there is nothing so ominous as when God takes patiently the iniquity of men. If there be remonstrance, it shows there

is, as it were, a hope; but if all is borne silently, it is the solemn sign of judgment that will fall as surely as it lingers. Blessed as it is for those who walk in grace, there is nothing that is so evident a token of perdition to the world as the saints passing through it without lifting a finger in their own defense or on God's behalf. Alas! we know that the Church has failed in this, as Israel after their sort. But their path through the wilderness was a type of the journey of faith, in grace; the earthly people and things being the shadow of the heavenly.

Possibly there may have been a preliminary judgment, at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's onslaught on the Jews. I should judge from the Psalms (see especially Psa. 137, “Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom,”) that there is a connection between that and Edom: that is, this may have had a partial accomplishment in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. For though on his coming up against Jerusalem, the Edomites helped him to destroy the Jews more effectually, they themselves were not spared by the conquerors. In Psa. 83 we find Edom connected with the Assyrian, the great enemy of the ten tribes. As we have seen with Babylon, the conqueror of the two. “Keep not thou silence, O God. . . They have taken crafty counsel against thy people. . . Let us cut them off.” All confirms what has been already remarked. In the confederacy against Israel, figure “the tabernacles of Edom.” It is the first power mentioned, of course, not as the mightiest, but as setting on the others to Israel's ruin. Being neighbors, they would have a better knowledge of the people and their land, and so be the more dangerous, besides the moral bearing of the case. There are also the Philistines, Tire, and the various peoples that lived near the sea coast, as well as round about Idumea and the contiguous regions. Then we find the great power of Assur mentioned as having joined them. So the Spirit of God classes Edom with Israel's final adversaries, as He had done already by Moses and Joshua with their earliest. There is an evident connection between their rise and the gradual course of their history through Scripture. Now at the close we find distinct prophecies applying to Edom. “They are confederated against thee.” (Ver. 5.) All their confederacies God will break up, before the judgment falls upon Esau. They will have joined themselves unto Assur, but that great power, like the lesser ones, will be directed against God's people in vain, great and small alike hostile, joining to aim a more effectual blow upon Israel, but to the destruction of themselves.

God, we may see, always goes back to the beginning when He judges. In the time of the Babylonish captivity, why did He judge Israel? He looks at what they did in the wilderness. It was because of Moloch and Chiun. (Amos 5:26.) They had learned to worship their images in the wilderness, and therefore should be carried captive beyond Damascus. God, when the time of judgment comes, traces up to the root of evil. So our wisdom as Christians, when we fail, is to go back to our first departure. We never get right by merely judging this or that outbreak, but we should always find out the cause. We do not else gather Deeded strength, nor is any sin rightly judged by merely judging the manifested effects, but we must probe into the hidden sources of the mischief. It is not enough to judge our acts; judging self is a very different process. We need to discern the springs within ourselves. If we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. It does not mean pronouncing judgment upon any particular fault, but judging their real cause, and not occasions merely.

Such is the Christian way of judging; it is not occupation with the surface, but with that which is underneath, the hardly seen roots of the acts.

But I must return to my subject. With unerring wisdom God goes back to what Esau did from the beginning of his history. He had waited long and patiently, nearly a thousand years, and now shows His perfect knowledge of the course and end; but when the end does come, God invariably traces all up to the beginning.

I need not dwell on all the dark account. The full stroke of judgment comes upon them at the day of the Lord. Here, though the scene is laid in Idumea, it is a question of all the heathen. This is referred to here. “Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling, fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.” (Ver. 1-9.) The day of the calamity of His people! if there is anything He repeats over and over again, it is the day of their calamity. He means to remember us in blessing, and there is nothing that more rouses His judgment as when there is anything sorrowful and that strikes their hearts—that men should take advantage of that to behave themselves proudly against them. There was never a truer picture of the spirit of man than at this very time. It is just the feeling of Christendom towards those who are seeking to walk in the way that is pleasing to God. If there is anything that fills them with shame, it is used to wrong them, or to speak evil against them. This is the present feeling; so that we may see how true these principles of God are and how solemn it is for us to realize the duty that becomes us at the present time.

There will be such slaughter that it might seem as if the very mountains themselves had melted into blood. There will be one destruction upon the mountains of Israel, but another special carnage in Edom. It is important to bear in mind that this is a future judgment, because if any one were to apply it rigorously and in all its extent to the times of Nebuchadnezzar, confusion must result, perverting either Scripture or the facts. The contrary indeed was seen then. The nations had it all their own way. There was no such thing as God having a great sacrifice of all nations, though treacherous Edom suffered. The real fulfillment will be at the end of the age, though even then will be merely a tremendous convulsion of nature. The total dissolution of heaven and earth will be at the end of the millennium. The Spirit of God puts the scenes together here.

In most singular conjunction with this terrible picture of the vast solitude for man, created as it were only for ravenous beasts, and birds of prey, and reptiles, God turns and shows that the day that beholds this desolation for Edom inaugurated Israel's blessing. Nor is it only Israel rejoices, but God will form a large and enlarging scene for His own glory, where erst was misery and barrenness. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.” (Ver. 1, 2.) Not merely fertility, but

there will be every joy, fruitfulness, beauty. And assuredly man's deeper wants are not forgotten. “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Ver. 3-10.)

God will then and thus show that, whatever Satan had brought of sin and woe into this world, goodness and mercy were His own delight. Such is the time that is coming for the earth, though an awful storm ushers it in. While all evil came through sin, and there is not an atom of the lower creation that does not bear some trace of Adam's fall, there will surely come the day of Christ, the last Adam. It seems to me, however, that in the world to come judgment will leave its effectual mark. On the land of Edom the destruction will be unsparing, and the land will be left as a scar upon the face of the earth. I do not say that Edom will be the only one, for Rome also will be proved to be the vile corruptress, as in Paganism, so in Christendom and in anti-christendom. But when the proud lie of the eternal city is punished forever, then the poor and despised Jew comes forward, as it is said here: “Strengthen ye the weak hands,” &c. (Ver. 3, 4.) Vengeance then is their salvation. Take all its fullness of meaning. It will be accomplished to the letter. God will prove that not a word of His mercy to Israel and their land can fall to the ground. “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shalt not bass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Ver. 5-10.)

Thus fitly does Isaiah close the first main division of his magnificent prophecy.

Chapter 68

Notes on Isaiah 36-37

These chapters form the first portion of the historical episode which severs the earlier half of the prophecy from its latter half. They are of importance not only for the weighty facts they present (for this is sufficiently done and in a two-fold point of view in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles), but for their connection with the two sections of the book of Isaiah. No doubt, the incidents had their value, and so also the record of them, as the most conspicuous seal which could then be affixed on the prophet's character; for the danger was extreme, the distress of the people intense, the antecedents of the King in opposition to the Assyrian by no means reassuring, the confidence of the enemy boundless. Yet was the word of Isaiah distinct and soon most punctually verified.

But there are deeper grounds for the introduction of this historical matter into the midst of the prophecy. It was of moment that the believer should have the inspired and therefore sure means of discriminating between the part which was thus accomplished and the part which yet awaits its fulfillment. We can now readily see that the Shalmanesers and the Sennacheribs of the past have not exhausted the terms and scope of the prophecy; we can understand that enough has been done to form an adequate type, an historical basis, for that which is to come and to make good every word that proceeds from the Lord. Any mind can judge that the overthrow of the Assyrian—as the precursor of Babylon's supremacy, the captivity of Judah and the long times of the Gentiles—widely differs from the final judgment of the Assyrian, when Babylon in its last phase is itself destroyed and the times of the Gentiles close in the glory of Jerusalem and Israel under David the beloved, their king, and the new covenant in the pleasant land.

No king had shown such trust in the Lord since the days of David as Hezekiah. But his faith was tried. With alacrity of heart he had made the Lord his object, from the day he ascended the throne. “He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.” (2 Chron. 29:3.) He inspired the Levites and priests with somewhat of his own desire to renounce long indifference for loyalty to Jehovah. “Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.” The vessels which were cast away in king Ahaz's reign were once more prepared. “The king rose early and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. Atonement was made for all Israel, for the king commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel.” What governed all was “the commandment of the Lord by His prophets.” He was the first king, since the rent of Ephraim under Rehoboam whose heart sought that all Israel should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. Godly predecessors felt it too little—thought not of it—certainly did nothing toward it; ungodly predecessors would have desired nothing less, however much they would have seen all Israel re-united under their own scepter. Hezekiah clave to the Lord and sought for all Israel the same thing. And though his overtures were laughed to scorn and mocked by most, “divers of Asher, and Manasseh, and of Zebulon humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the band of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and

of the princes, by the word of the Lord." The old altars to their false gods, at any rate unhallowed, unauthorized altars were taken away and cast into the brook Kidron, the images were broken, the groves were cut down, the high places disappeared: The due honor of the house and servants and service of Jehovah was provided for as written in His law. "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

"After these and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria had entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself." Was it not strange? A great work had been wrought in restoring the defaced lineaments of the worship of the true God throughout Judah; yet this was no sooner done, than the enemy came to swallow them up! These who judged not by Scripture but by providence would at once be stumbled. Was it not plain that Hezekiah had done wrong in rejecting the traditions of his fathers? Was not God now chastening him and them for his rash reformation? Had he not lifted up his sacrilegious hand to destroy the brazen serpent that Moses made, treating with contempt as a piece of brass the venerable sign of divine grace to their perishing fathers in the desert, to which the children of Israel had till his days burned incense? Was the Assyrian a judgment?

Moreover, the pious king did what he could to fortify himself, sent the lowliest message to the proud Assyrian, gave him all the silver in the Lord's house, and stripped off for him the gold from its doors and pillars; but in vain. There was little of the simplicity, strength, or wisdom of faith in all this: no wonder that the blessing of God was not with him there, and that the enemy was emboldened to ask all. Rabshakeh is sent from Lachish to insult king Hezekiah, to blaspheme the God of Israel, and seduce the people to surrender at discretion to his master. Along with this, truth is mingled; for there were those (not Hezekiah) who did look to Egypt for help. But the aim of all was to reduce the Jews to despair, and to accomplish the designs of Assyria. Hence the very piety of the king, his zeal for Jehovah in throwing down the altars of false gods, is cunningly perverted into a charge of robbing the Lord of His honor, from whom (he pretended) his master had received his charge to come up against Hezekiah. Thus the enemy knows how to give a religious gloss to his own wicked devices as easily as he can blacken the most faithful of God's servants. What a mercy to have the unerring standard of His word to test and be tested by!

The entreaties of Eliakim (ver. 11), that Aramean should be spoken rather than the Jewish tongue only drew out further and audacious insolence; for Rabshakeh stood and cried in that very tongue to the people on the walls, warning them against their king and commending to them the hard terms of deportation to the east, in the face of the overthrow of the nations already broken by the Assyrian. Little did the blasphemer think that there listened to his taunting demand whether Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem, not Eliakim, Shebna, and Joab only, nor the men on the wall only, but Jehovah Himself. It was now His affair; and now at length the faith of Hezekiah begins to shine once more, whose commandment it was to answer him not.

Chap. 36. His clothes rent, the king covered in sackcloth repairs to the house of the Lord, and inquires of the prophet who returns the Lord's answer that they were not to fear the words of blasphemy; for the Lord would undertake the matter and send back the Assyrian to perish in his own land. (Ver. 1-7.)

Still confident, Sennacherib from Libnah sends a letter of similar import to Hezekiah, who spreads it before the Lord with earnest prayer for His intervention. (Ver. 8-20).

Isaiah again returns the answer of the Lord God of Israel: “Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him; the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.” (Ver. 22-25.) Insult as he might, himself or his servants, the Assyrian must learn that God knew all about him making him but the instrument of His own dealing with the nations. This work done, he must go back humbled and smitten, for he had exceeded his commission; and would God sanction his rage against Himself? (Ver. 26-29) After a sign of coming good to Judah (ver. 30-32), the Lord pronounces His decree. (Ver. 33-35.) “Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.” (Ver. 36-38.) The total fall of his kingdom followed a few years after. Those that walk in pride God is able to abase. How blessed to hear His voice and know His love! Real as it was however, it was no more than a shadow of the great chief of the nations of the east in the latter day; even as Judah's deliverance and blessedness under the son of David of that day, was but the witness of a brighter day and a more enduring glory, when Jehovah shall exalt Him that was low and abase the high one. “I will overturn, overturn, overturn: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it [the diadem] is; and I will give it him.”

Chapter 69

Notes on Isaiah 38-39

The history we have seen in the preceding chapters is but a testimony to the total destruction which awaits the final Assyrian, as well as his hosts, in the latter day, and upon the mountains of Israel. This will be the more striking because he will, first of all, be allowed to capture Jerusalem and slay a portion of the men and treat with indignity some of their women. Jerusalem must pay the penalty of its sins. The Assyrian, or king of the north of Daniel, will then retire southwards for other projects of ambition; and coming up again, when the Lord meanwhile has owned His people Israel, he will be forever put down and destroyed.

This being so, it is evident that the mention of these historical circumstances, and no other, in the midst of our prophecy, is a remarkable sign, not only that their character is typical, but also that God would make plain to His people how far the prophecies already given had been accomplished. They might thus be encouraged to take what was already verified as an earnest of what was to Rome in full delivering power and glory. Nothing since that day has in the slightest degree resembled these intimations of the prophets. The past Assyrian, after having lost an immense part of his army, returned to his own land and there was killed by his sons. The future Assyrian, after a partial success, is to come up a second time, and there and then be overwhelmed. The difference is made particularly manifest by the introduction of the past history here, typical of yet greater things, as we know from direct prophecy in chapters 28, 29, not to speak of other scriptures.

But now in chapter 38 we see another thing: Hezekiah is sick, and apparently unto death. The king in this shadows forth the spiritual work God will by and by accomplish in His people. For Israel is destined in that day not only to furnish a grand external display of His power, but to experience a deep internal change—the great practical lesson of death and resurrection. This we learn not in our souls alone, but still more profoundly according to the full scope of grace and truth in our Lord Jesus Himself.

We find, then, Hezekiah given up to die, but he humbles himself before the Lord, who sends word by the prophet that he was to live. And here we have exercise of spirit; at first, exceeding sorrow, not unmingled with fear, with regrets at leaving the land of the living, and a certain shrinking from God. Is it possible that any professing to know and teach the truth, do not perceive that this is not life and incorruption brought to light by the gospel—not what we should look for in a Christian now, though Hezekiah was as truly a saint of God as any Christian? The working of the Holy Spirit in a godly Jew was necessarily modified, deepened, heightened for the Christian, because of accomplished redemption.

When believers, Jews or Gentiles after the flesh, are brought to the knowledge of Christ now, they are entitled to the same high privileges. If they see or enjoy them not, it is because the flesh is not judged; they are merely following in this respect their own thoughts instead of entering into the new revelations of God founded on a dead, risen, and ascended Christ, made known by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The natural thought and hope even of a converted Jew then was to

live long upon the earth. He could not say “to depart and be with Christ is far better.” It was in the land of the living he desired to praise God; as he said, “the living, the living shall praise thee.” They looked not within the veil; they saw not the Forerunner for them entered in. No such precious sights were revealed to their faith, though they did most truly expect, by God's teaching, a coming Messiah to deliver and bless them. But they could not yet know death vanquished, nor raise the song of resurrection, nor look on a known Savior there through the opened heavens. Hezekiah goes through the sign of death; he was sentenced however to it and shrank from it: earnestly pleading, he hears the sentence reprieved. This is the token of the spiritual work God will effect in Israel—not only deliverance from foes without, but deliverance from the power of death working in them. But the Millennial kingdom will not furnish to Israel, or any other on earth, the faith or experience of the Christian, properly speaking; nor will they be raised from the dead or changed to go through that reign, but after it for eternity. The valley of dry bones is merely the symbol of their resurrection from death, when they are as a nation caused once more to live, though I doubt not there will be a real spiritual work within; but still it will be a very different thing from our portion either now or when we are caught up to meet the Lord.

“The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick I said, I shall go to the gates of the grave.” (Chap. 38:9, 10.) That was to him the most terrible of all things. What can more pointedly differ from this than the triumphant language of 2 Cor. 5, for instance? There the apostle says, “In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon.” “We are always confident, willing rather to be absent from the body [the very thing good Hezekiah was not] and to be present with the Lord.” Living here, “we are absent from the Lord.” You, no doubt, find the king turning his face to the wall; but who could imagine such a thing of dying Stephen? If a Christian were simply looking at Christ, it could not be so. It is not for any of us to say what chastening might fall on self-confidence, or negligence of walk, or anything else unjudged: God might smite the pride of heart which looked down upon a person thus tried. In Old Testament times there could not be the rest and peace and joy of heart created by the revelation of Christ's work and glorified person.

In Hezekiah's case, God took him, as thus manifesting the feelings of a godly Jew, to be the sign of the quickening of the Jews, who will by and by go through a spiritual process which is likened to death and resurrection. In the future, however, I gather from other Scriptures that their outward and inward deliverances will be in the inverse order of that which appears in the history given here. The quickening of at least the remnant will precede their external triumph. Ere the antitypical Babylon has been smitten, the Jew will go through no small spiritual sifting with God, and then the mighty outward deliverance will follow when the last Assyrian is broken and disappears. Thus distinctly is the future marked off from that which has been already accomplished. God will work in them first, and then display His power in their behalf. He gives us now in Christ that in which we shall be displayed at His appearing. Thus we know death and resurrection, because we are taught everything in Christ. “Therefore being dead with Christ, why, as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances?” They will be like men living in the world; and so they will have their splendid temple, and their venerable priesthood, and their imposing ordinances, “touch not, taste not, handle not.” The seventh or sabbath-day will be resumed. In the Millennium it will not be the Lord's day but the sabbath-day. God will renew His sabbaths instead of continuing the first day of the week, the Christian's memorial of redemption. The sabbath-day occurs once more beyond doubt in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

Thus God will have prepared His people Israel for their future glory, not by what we know now in the gospel, but by what we have seen represented by Hezekiah's sickness. He prays that he may not be brought to the gates of hell. “I said I shall not see the Lord.” (Ver. 19.) To see the Lord in the heavenly country is far better than to see Him in the land of Israel. Our joy is that we are to be with Him in heavenly blessing, as we know ourselves in Him in heavenly places even now. Such thoughts never enter the king's mind according to these words. He desired as a Jew that his life might be prolonged to see the Lord's glory here. So Israel will see the Messiah in the land of the living and be themselves brought under the shadow of His wing, spite of all their mighty foes. The pure in heart shall see God. We shall be with the Savior and see Him as He is (not as He was, but as He is), and be with Himself above in the Father's house, in the presence of God. But here on the contrary the king mourns over his failing strength. “Mine age is departed.” “He will cut me off with pining sickness” — “as a lion, so will he break all my bones.” He repines at God's will, not having a dead and risen Christ to interpret all by. He views death in itself, or its bearing on himself, here. How deeply even saints needed a revealed Savior and a known redemption! “Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter.” Then in verse 15, “What shall I say? He hath both spoken to me, and himself hath done it.” Now light begins to dawn somewhat more. He has asked the Lord to undertake for him; “He that hath spoken to me,” &c. He began to appreciate better the blessed truth that it is not what we say to the Lord which is the great matter, but what the Lord says to us, and more than that, what the Lord does for us. “I shall go softly all my years.” (Ver. 15, 16.) All this trial was just the needed discipline and good for him. “So wilt thou recover me.” He anticipates his being delivered. “For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” Israel will know this in that day and surely be brought out of their distresses. (Ver. 18, 19.)

However blessed it all may be, as showing us the working of God in the heart of a real saint of old and the type of the future ways of God to be made good in the hearts of the Jewish remnant, need I repeat that God does not give this as the full standard we ought to apply now? It is a serious thing, this misappropriation of Scripture, through attempting to lump together all its testimonies, old and new, as if all must be about one and the same thing. Thus what is of earth for the Jew is jumbled up with what is of heaven for the Christian: the result is a mere waste of uncertainty. Of course the Spirit of God never allows the real children of God to suffer all the consequences of their folly. There is a merciful preservative from going through with their mistakes. But still the loss is great indeed. How much we have to desire, that we may be enabled to feel, serve, walk, and worship as Christians entering into all the will of the Lord concerning us, not as fools but as wise! All depends on a better knowledge of Christ, for this is the only sure and holy way. God's will as regards His people on the earth depends on His counsels and ways at any given time in His Son. Where is Christ now? He is at the right hand of God, cast out of the earth, as He said, “I go to my Father.” That is, He has total rejection here but all glory there, as may be seen in John 13 - 17. He is thus separated to heaven, as He says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” Not, of course, that there ever was anything impure in or of Him: such a thought of Christ would be blasphemy. It was taking a separate place from the earth, setting Himself apart from all here below as the heavenly Model-man, so to speak. This is the key to Christianity. It is the power of the Holy Ghost working in the hearts of God's children upon earth and forming them after the fashion of Christ in heaven, on the basis of His death and resurrection which has justified them by faith. Thus it necessarily supposes Christ's cross, resurrection, and ascension, and that we know ourselves in Him there. (John 14:20.) We become heavenly because

we know Him there. “As is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly.” When Christ comes in glory by and by, and takes the earth under His government, and in the truest sense fills the throne of Jehovah over it, the saints here below (not those risen and glorified) will be earthly. They will be regenerate; but it will be for the earthly things of the kingdom of God. So the Lord says, “If I have told you earthly things,” &c. (John 3) There is the earthly department of His kingdom no less than the heavenly. To confound them, or the scriptures that relate to them, is to ruin the distinctness of revealed truth, and to sink into half-Jews, half-Christians. The new age, or dispensation, will accordingly, as far as earth is concerned, be the forming man here below, according to the character in which Christ will be displayed and deal. It will be no longer the Spirit making us heavenly because of uniting us to the Head on high. Christ will then govern the earth and its inhabitants as King, instead of gathering out from the world into one as His body. This may serve to show what a wonderful place is ours, in the midst of all the ruin of the outward framework of Christendom.

Chapter 39, I apprehend, owes its place here chiefly as a basis for the very weighty place which Babylon (whither Judah was going into captivity) holds in the controversy which Jehovah has with His people. Hezekiah had not walked softly when the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan came to congratulate him, but sunk to their level. Wherefore the Lord sent the threat of sure judgment. All he had vainly spread before their eyes should be swept into the city of confusion, the chastiser of Jerusalem's idolatry; only it should not fall in the days of the pious king.

Notes on Isaiah 40

A sensibly different portion of the prophecy now opens on us. No longer is the overthrow of kings and peoples in the foreground; nor are we occupied as before with the various Gentile enemies that long beset and troubled Israel. Hence, most appropriately introducing it, stands a touching controversy between God and His own people. We are evidently not looking here on God's dealings without; we enter within. Thus judgment begins as ever at the house of God: and more closely and thoroughly than the same process in the preface of our prophecy. (Chap. 1) More was wanted than ways and judgments in providence. There are moral wants and spiritual wrongs which must be taken if the people are to be blessed according to God; and what makes the distinction so much the more striking is the fact that we shall find Babylon again in a totally different aspect from that which had been seen as yet, not so much in her aspect of worldly magnificence and power, but in her sad notoriety as the source and bulwark of idolatry on earth. Evidently this accords with God's pleading with His people, and His distinct unfolding of the chastening that He caused to light upon them because of their idolatry, and even worse spiritual sins, as we shall see. Thus not political but spiritual wickedness, is here before us: into which they had been drawn by the enemy, to set them into opposition to God Himself. And this gives rise to an altogether different character of revelation and even style of address “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” graciously lets us see the end of all. In the beginning of the book the Spirit of God appealed to Israel as the people then were, showing us God's judgment of their wickedness and the bringing in of the glory of the Lord. Here, too, the same Israel are guilty, and the glory of the Lord is to be established surely; but before we behold the distressing picture of what they really were in His eyes, He begins with sure words of comfort, so that the heart of every saint would be strengthened at the very outset with the assurance that they were the object of divine mercy, and thus would the better bear to hear what the Lord must tell them of their grievous faults.

The chapter before formed a kind of link with what follows; for there we had the prediction of their captivity to Babylon; which, as has been often remarked, bolds a peculiar place. Babylon being the beginning of the great image of Daniel, becomes also the type of the last. The head of gold received supremacy from God in a more direct form than any of the other powers, which were only successors in the line. The grant of imperial power was immediate from the God of heaven to Nebuchadnezzar, who thus typified in a certain sense the image from first to last. More particularly the fall of Babylon prefigured the overthrow of the world-power in the earth, and represented the final judgment of that system of universal supremacy than begun, and if not still going on, only suspended; for the image-power has not yet been struck by the stone, and is awaiting its re-organization before it is dissolved forever. Its components are at present in a broken state, but by and by they will again coalesce with an appearance of amazing and renewed strength, which its last head will use directly to oppose the Lord of lords and King of kings. This Rev. 17 clearly shows us; for the judgment of Babylon and the beast as there set forth is not yet accomplished.

Babylon has thus a special place as being the power of all others that was allowed to enslave Jerusalem, and the house of David, from whom the Deliverer of Israel was to spring. Now we know

that this Son of David is actually come, that He was presented to Israel and rejected by them, that He suffered death on the cross, and is gone up to heaven, where He has taken His place, not as Son of David but as the rejected Son of man who is the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is there, the great high Priest of God as well as Head of the Church, seated at the right hand of God, where and whence He acts in power and love, sending down whatever is needful for the good of the saints and for the testimony of God here below. That is what Christ is now doing, not at all as yet fulfilling the prophecies of the Son of David as such. Hence anyone who takes up the Old Testament to find the full and clear announcement of what occupies Christ now, must either give up these prophecies as dark and unintelligible, or he must put a false gloss and violent strain on them to eke out such an application as their full scope. In truth they refer to the future, not to the present; and to Israel, God's earthly people; not to the heavenly Church, save in certain general principles or special allusions to the Gentile parenthesis, which the provident wisdom of the Holy Ghost took care to furnish in order to confound God's adversaries. Then there are displays of God in moral ways from which, though about Israel rather than ourselves, we can and ought to extract for our own souls that which is most helpful and cheering. For God is good, and full of tender mercy to Israel; and He is surely not less full of grace to us. If He is love to the people He will govern, can He love less the children He now adopts to Himself by Jesus Christ? There are, no doubt, great differences between the saints He calls now, and those who are to be blessed in the age to come. Now it is His Church, Christ's body, the children He is bringing into the place of heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Israel will inherit the promises made to the fathers; but we, if Christ's now, are heirs with the firstborn, not merely of “the fathers,” but of God the Father.

When we take up the prophecies thus, not biased with the foregone conclusion of finding ourselves in them, but simple and free to understand them as they are written, and the proper objects God was speaking of, nothing can be clearer or more certain. Here, for instance, He calls to comfort His people. The ground He puts it on is, that the warfare of Israel is over. The Lord now interposes. Bad as Jerusalem's sins were, she had to His reckoning of love, suffered double what her sins deserved. He is not looking at the sins of Jerusalem apart from Christ, but as it were through Him. If there were no suffering Messiah connected with Jerusalem, nothing would remain but her sins and their judgment. But God always looks at Christ for them and can thus say so, “Comfort ye, comfort ye.”

Next we have the manner in which the comfort will be brought home to them. Here we have a grave and interesting insight into God's ways. “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness.” The allusion is evident to John the Baptist, who was “sent from God” to bear witness of the true light and prepare a way for the Messiah. In the midst of his testimony he was slain. Messiah too came, and in the midst of His testimony He was slain. Master and servant, they were both cut off by wicked hands. Thus God's work was, as far as man could see nipped in the bud; and hence the world is yet in misrule, confusion, in sin and misery. When God really fulfills for the earth what He has at heart, there will be manifest power of blessing to His glory. But look up, not down, and read in the risen and glorified Christ the proof to faith that the cross, the very thing that seemed the total ruin of all the counsels of God, is in truth their eternal basis and justification, by which He is and will be forever glorified; the cross of the Lord Jesus is the triumph of grace, as the resurrection and ascension are its righteous answer; but it is a triumph known only to faith. The world sees not heaven opened nor Him who is there—saw in the cross One who suffered to death. In the Acts of

the Apostles man's rejection of Christ is constantly contrasted with God's raising Him from the dead. Thus we see that man and God are in complete opposition. The cross is not thus looked at in the light of God's purposes, but of man's wickedness. In the epistles the truth chiefly insisted on is the cross, not so much as the crowning point of all man has done against God, but as the deepest exercise of the grace that God feels towards guilty man. Not that grace was created by the cross; it was in God before the coming of Christ, and because of it He sent His Son. The propitiation is the fruit of God's grace, not its cause. Propitiation vindicates it, judges and puts aside all the sin on man's part that otherwise would have proved an insurmountable barrier. But the love was on God's part from ever. lasting. We must bear this in mind in looking at propitiation, which indeed is the strongest possible proof of His love, while it equally proves His holiness and necessary judgment of our sins. John's testimony was a call to repentance in view of Messiah's advent: his baptism therefore was a confession both of sins and of Him who should come after himself. It was “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,” not the person nor the work of Israel's Hope. But Israel as a whole was blind and deaf; the testimony was interrupted, the Messiah refused. There was therefore a twofold accomplishment, the people's unbelief thus intercepting and breaking off the thread of God's ways, while His counsels abide irrefragable, accomplished, through their unbelief, in the cross as they never else have been. The way of Jehovah was not yet prepared nor was there a straight-highway in the desert for God. Man was put on his responsibility and heard the cry only to sin; by and by God will make all good in grace by His own power. But every valley shall be exalted; every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh (not Israel only) shell see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Ver. 3-6.)

Thus plainly you have, as far as its scope goes, the sure purpose of God. Every difficulty, depths, heights, rough or smooth, all must disappear; for God yet means to make this earth the scene of His glory. A most blessed prospect it is, that the sin, misery, and weakness of man, the groaning of all creation around, the wiles and power and presence of Satan must vanish and give place not to the revealed grace of God in Christ, which has shone we know in the despised Nazarene, but to the revealed glory of Jehovah, when all flesh shall see it together. It cannot refer to the day of the judgment of the dead because it will not be “all flesh” nor any flesh whatever, but the dead raised before the great white throne. But here it is a question of man living in his natural body on the earth. The Jew was apt to overlook the judgment of the dead at the end of all dispensations; the Gentile is just as negligent as to the judgment of the quick, though it be confessed in the commonest symbols of Christendom. As infidelity increases, the rejection of this truth is, perhaps, more complete now, than ever since the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

In the dark ages, people at least believed enough to be panic-struck from time to time; but now Christians are accounted fanatics if they testify of these coming judgments. But none the less will God cut short the course of this world, and the glory of the Lord be revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together. This John the Baptist had to announce; only the first word committed to him, and already accomplished in its measure, was the preparing the way of Jehovah. Hence I think that the third verse does not solely refer to the mighty changes of the new age, but includes also such a moral preparation as befitted the coming of the Lord in humiliation. Thus, for the time, it went no further than God's working in the hearts of a remnant, whose souls were made to be in a measure

prepared for the Messiah. We know that such was the fact. See John's disciples leaving him to follow Jesus, and John delighting in it. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Hence says our Lord in Matt. 11, “If ye will receive it, this was Elias that was for to come,” clearly showing that to faith, John the Baptist was Elias (compare Mark 9:11-13); but, as a matter of fact, the full predicted circumstances are postponed till the great day that is coming (compare Mal. 4). Thus he is to come, not before the Lord takes up the Church, with which he has nothing to do; but before the proper blessing of Israel, with whom he has a great deal to do. John the Baptist went before Jehovah-Jesus in the spirit and power of Elias; but Elias himself publicly vindicated the true God in opposition to the apostasy of Israel and to the discomfiture of the priests of Baal. He will return by and by, and resume a work of the most solemn character before the great and terrible day of the Lord. John Baptist anticipated this, in the way of preparing a remnant for receiving Him who should and did come.

Next, the “Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?” Here follows the substance of John the Baptist's testimony, though it may be still more manifest in the end of this age. “All flesh is grass.” It is man morally and universally. “And all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.” Could a man use this to think well of himself? Verse 7 cuts down all boasting— “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.” It is not its beauty, but its frailty God refers to. The moment you have God testing its character, if it were only by the breath of His nostrils, all flesh comes to nothing; and this, too, in Israel, not in Gentiles only: “surely the people is grass.” Nor is this all; He utters its sentence again and again. The reason for the first repetition seems to be the emphatic judgment of “the people,” that is, the Jews. The second case is particularly connected with the resource for faith. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.” These two truths are of no less importance at the present moment, as we know how Peter used them for the Christian Jews from the first. They will be urgently needed when God begins to work in the Jews once more, when they painfully learn, feel, and prove the utter worthlessness of man as he is in divine things. Even now the men of the world are making no small strides; but they will do greater things; and the devil will mature and display his plans as they have never been witnessed in the world before; and what will be their security? “The word of our God shall stand forever.”

But as the Church really came to view, as the heavenly mystery of Christ, or rather part of it, when all hopes of the earth and man for the present (and always as far as they are concerned) were buried in Christ's grave, so I believe, as the end draws nearer, we do greatly need with simplicity to rest upon God's word. We may, as only knowing in part, understand but little, but it is a poor feeling and unworthy to be called faith, only to believe His word when understood. Not that it is not sweet and cheering when we consciously enter into any of its depths; but intelligence of the word is the gift of grace and product of faith, not the ground why I believe. God sends me His testimony and my soul bows to it, setting to my seal that God is true. Am I a sinner without peace or even hope, or any real anxiety before God? That word comes and pronounces to my conscience that all flesh is grass. My soul is laid bare. If I do not believe God, all my life and death will be just the proof of my folly and sin. But if I submit to the humbling yet gracious testimony of God, while proving its truth in what I am, I enter into the comfort and strength of His own word, and I, too, am made to stand through that same word. “The word of our God shall stand forever.” Our experience follows, and confirms, of course, the truth of the word; but breaking down and God's word is the

only standing ground. Yet outwardly the word of God is just like the cross of Christ. There may well be difficulties, to such as we are; and it seems a weak thing to confide in for eternity; but, in truth, it is more stable than heaven and earth. So in 2 Timothy, the apostle, anticipating the ruin of Christendom, casts the man of God on this unfailing resource.

But we turn in the next verse to the special earthly object of God's affection—Zion. It is the symbol of the grace of God working in Israel, also the center of the royal glory that is about to be revealed in Israel. “O Zion that bringest good tidings,” &c., (9-11.) There can be no doubt, the Person who came of old and will come by and by, is Christ; in a word, the same Jesus is not only Christ but Jehovah. He is here spoken of as the God of Israel, Jehovah, whose reward is with Him and His work before Him. First of all, is His coming in power; next, with all tenderness of heart, as One taking compassion on them, because of their defenseless and exposed condition. Then (ver. 12 et seq.) when we come to inquire who this great and loving Deliverer is, He is no such mean conqueror as Rabbis dreamed of and the carnal desires of Israel so long clung to; He is the Creator. Even then it was God's warning of His judgment on the idolatry of Israel, which is the first great question in this part of Isaiah's prophecy. The people would follow the Gentiles in their following after idols. But before the Spirit of God deals with this iniquity, He first of all identifies the Messiah with God, and who and what He is, as the eternal and only wise Creator and Governor of all things. This accordingly gives an occasion for a glorious description of God. “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” (Ver. 13-17.) Then He challenges the folly of those that set up graven images as His likeness. “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” (Ver. 18-26.) Lastly, He falls back on what He has been to His own from the beginning. “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly

fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Ver. 27-31.) He cannot deny Himself, nor fail to strengthen the weakest that wait on Him.

Notes on Isaiah 41

This chapter, if it be not a second part with the preceding one as the first, is a most appropriate sequel. For the Lord, having opened His counsels as to Jerusalem and its comfort (after many vicissitudes and troubles) at His coming in power and glory, turns now to the Gentiles, challenging them to meet Him in judgment. He had there been displayed in His shepherd care over Israel, in His might and wisdom over all, needing no counselor, and the nations counted less than nothing and vanity, so that comparison or image was futile, and Israel's unbelief was the more deplorable because of His special goodness to all amongst them who waited on Him. Now He says (ver. 1) “Keep silence before me, O islands, and let the people[s] renew their strength: let them come near, then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment.”

Cyrus is the text. It is no question of a past name of renown, but of a future deliverer, of whom God knew all; man and his idols could say nothing. Before the prescient eye of the prophet stands the mighty conqueror of Babylon. None but the true God, who made him the instrument of His designs in providence, had anticipated his rise. Jehovah here describes him, but typically (in the manner of the prophetic Spirit) as the shadow of a greater than Cyrus, who should forever overturn the idols of the nations, judge their pride, and deliver the people of Israel from all their captivities. “Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them and passed safely, even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.” (Ver. 3, 4.)

It is as vain to drag in the gospel of Christ here as to interpret Jacob and Israel in chapter 40 of Christendom. Nor is the plea at all valid that the Jews will never more meddle with idols. Matt. 12:43; 24:15, not to speak of the Revelation, are clear evidence confirmatory of Isa. 65; 66, and of other passages in the Old Testament, which prove that the end of the age will see a fatal revival of idolatry, the return of the unclean spirit with the full antichristian power of Satan, which will bring down the Assyrian scourge on the Jews and also the Lord's coming in vengeance. The last state of that generation then which rejected Christ will be characterized both by idol-worship and the Antichrist: so that, on this score, there is no pretense for turning aside the expostulation to the Gentiles that are now baptized, or for interpreting Jacob and Israel of Christendom as some have done who ought to have known better. Again, it is absurd to say that the gospel could be foreshown by the first one raised up from the East; for, among the Jews, the East was always reckoned from Palestine, never Palestine itself. The Rabbinical idea (strange to say, espoused by Calvin) was not so unreasonable: the allusion, they thought, was to Abraham, who was a righteous man called out of Mesopotamia. But all else fails. For who could think that his exceptional sally against the kings of the East who were returning after their successful raid into the valley of the Jordan, or the incidents of Pharaoh and Abimelech, duly answer to the giving up of nations and subduing kings, making his sword as a column of dust and as the driven stubble his bow in resistless progress? Still less does it suit the testimony of Christ in the gospel. The comparison of

chapter 45:1, 13 may convince any thoughtful mind that Cyrus is really in view, but of course ultimately as foreshadowing the triumph when He comes in His kingdom, putting all enemies under His feet, instead of gathering souls out of the world in one body for heaven as He is now doing by the Holy Ghost's power through the gospel. (Comp. also Ezra 1:1-3.) If the Babylonish captivity of Judah was the divine chastening of their idolatry by means of the chief patron of idols on earth, the fall of Babylon was a tremendous blow on its own idolatry, predicted as it was by the Jewish prophet long before either event. These were among the reasons which made the first success and the final ruin of Babylon so important in Scripture, They were bound up with God's ways in His people. And hence the answer to the infidel sneer touching the silence of prophecy respecting America. What has the discovery or growth of the new world of the far west to do with Israel? From the New Testament, again, all such matters are excluded, because the rejected Messiah involves not only the disappearance of Israel and the kingdoms of the earth from the foreground, but the calling of the Church for glory in the heavenly places as the body and bride of Christ, at least until the corruption of Christendom becomes morally unbearable and the age ends in the judgment of apostate Jews and Gentiles, under the beast and the false prophet, when Christ and His glorified saints appear from heaven, and the godly remnant of Jews here below become a strong nation, the earthly center of His kingdom under the whole heaven.

Hence the suitability here of confronting in this very connection “Jehovah, the First and with the last,” the One who had wrought and spoken. Why were the gods of the nations silent and powerless? why were the boasted oracles dumb? If the fall of Judah, moral necessity as it was, (unless Jehovah must sanction His own dishonor in the midst of His people and sustain them to give His glory to a graven image), made His power questionable in a Gentile's eyes, let them learn in the downfall of Babylon which the Jews alone knew generations beforehand, even to the name and race of him who was its instrument, that His righteousness and wisdom were no less than His power, and that the chastised Jews were the people of His choice. “The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.” (Ver. 5-9.)

The honor to which Cyrus was called by the way, was no change in His purposes or affections respecting Israel. Not Cyrus but Israel was His servant. (See ver. 8, 9.) “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall

carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." (Ver. 10-16.) These last words, however, render it beyond just doubt that the prophet carries his eye far beyond the immediate occasion and presents not the condition of the Jews under their Persian or other Gentile lords, but days still future when Israel shall take them captive whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors. It is impossible to apply to the same period Nehemiah's language (chap. 9) and the prophetic description here. "Behold we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress." (Ver. 36, 37.) Here the word is in manifest contrast: "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small," &c.: figurative language, no doubt, but figures neither of servitude, nor of the grace of the gospel, but of triumph when the true Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings and Israel shall flourish and tread down the wicked in the day that shall burn all the proud and lawless as an oven. The Maccabean and Apostolic triumphs of Vitringa and others are a burlesque on a sound interpretation. Not only must we leave room for the future but for a total change from the character of God's actual working in and by the Church. Now it is grace building living stones on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; then it will be the awful descent of the Stone cut without hands on the statue of Gentile empire in its last phase, which corresponds with the judicial functions of Israel there described in that great day.

Not that refreshment will fail from Jehovah for Israel. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." (Ver. 17-20.)

The Lord then recurs to a renewal of His challenge to the Gentiles and their idols, but in terms of justly increased contempt for their trust in a thing of naught, again grounding His appeal on their ignorance of the scourge of idolatry who would come from the north and east. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: an abomination is he that chooseth you. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. For I beheld, and there

was no man; even among them, and there was no counselor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." (Ver. 21-28.) There was not even reason—nothing but insensate folly in men owning as gods things which could neither speak nor hear. "Behold they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion." (Ver. 29.) Human helps to devotion are the death-bed of faith.

Chapter 72

Notes on Isaiah 44-45

The opening verses (1-5), seem to be the proper conclusion of the foregoing chapter. The salvation of God is worthy of Himself, even as it springs from His own grace, and can have no end short of His own glory. Hence it is that not only God blots out His people's transgressions for His Son's sake, and will not remember their sins, but that He would banish their fear and fill them to overflowing with His blessing. “Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jacob, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.” (Ver 1-5.) There is not the slightest need, nay, nor even room for diverting these exceeding precious promises from Israel to the Gentile. It is quite true of course that the wild olive graft enjoys all this too; but the word of the Lord is pledged and sure to Jacob His servant. The express object is banishing the dread of the conscience stricken Jews after their long departure from the true God. Elsewhere express allusions to the call of the Gentiles during that interval appear as notably in Isa. 65; but the point here is the consolation of the ancient people when grace is at work on their behalf.

Some, like Fry, from whose general teaching better might have been expected, were led into this misconception by not understanding how the next section (ver. 6-20) could have any just bearing on the future ways or dangers of the Jew. But this is to overlook a large part of Scripture, and a solemn portion of that wonderful people's destiny. For two thousand years idolatry has not been their snare, but other characters of evil, leading to and consequent on the rejection of their Messiah. This, as we shall find, has its place in our prophecy from chapter 49 to 57; as the general picture is portrayed with signal precision in Hos. 3:4. But it is certain both from the Old and the New Testament that in the latter day they will fall once more into their old love of idols, along with the acceptance of the Antichrist, thus finally reproducing together the two sins of the past which had, each of them, brought on them such stern judgment providentially, from God's vengeance: and “there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Comp. Matt. 24:15, with verse 21.) There is thus no ground for turning aside these plain predictions of Isaiah from the literal Israel of whom he speaks so often and emphatically to the apostate churches of Christendom. Idol-worship is here, no doubt, and will surely not go unpunished; but the mass of the Jews in future days will fall for the last time into that besetment, and worse. Hence, while the remonstrance of the prophet bore on the evil of his own days, there need be no question of its being requisite for the Jew up to the end.

And who can assert the glory of the true God? who expose the folly of false gods, like the Holy Ghost? “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it,

and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men; let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry and his strength faileth he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof be eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Ver. 6-20.) The sarcastic shafts of classic poets are poor in comparison for beauty or power, not to speak of their worthlessness morally; for mere ridicule, which ends in leaving the satirist at the shrine of his despised divinities, is the mirth of a fool which ends in sorrow and shame without end.

Not so Isaiah: "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to

subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." (Ver. 21 - chap. 45:1-4)

The challenge of Jehovah which begins with verse 5, does not appear to me a were repetition of that in chapter 44:6, et seq., but in a very interesting way meets the special evil into which those fell who under Cyrus overthrew Babylon and its idolatrous vanities. For the Persians were famous for their dualistic scheme of good and evil, light and darkness, Ormusd and Ahriman. What can be more pointed in view of the awful confusion of this scheme than the words that follow?— "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands. Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" (Ver. 5-10.)

If the Lord reprove with woe upon woe all striving with Himself and fault-finding with His ways, how graciously He calls on His people in the very next verse to ask Him of things to come about His sons and to command Him unto the work of His hands? (Ver. 11.) He who made heaven and its host, earth and man upon it, was the raiser up of Cyrus to build His city and liberate His captives, "not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts." The haughtiest of the Gentiles should yet own God to be in Israel, as strangers once owned the power of the Spirit in the Church. Then when the last idol-makers shall go to confusion, Israel shall be saved in Jehovah with an everlasting salvation. (Ver. 14-17.) Jehovah, the Creator, had not spoken in secret nor bid the seed of Jacob seek Him in vain: He speaks righteousness. The closing appeal is exceedingly urgent, grand, and triumphant: "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Ver. 20-25.) The commentators clash as to the "escaped of the nations." But the conjecture of Mede is far from the mark: for he puts the expression along with Rev. 21:24. He ought to have known that "the nations of them that are saved" would be the converse of Isaiah's phrase, rather than a parallel But it is a bad reading,

probably from a scholium of Andreas, and contrary to every authority of value, all of which have simply the “nations.” Our prophet widens the salvation in these concluding verses: Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” So in the next verse, “unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” This extends beyond “all the seed of Israel who shall be justified and glory in Jehovah.” It is clearly applied to the Lord Jesus by the Apostle Paul, in the largest extent, and with the utmost depth of its meaning. (Rom. 14, Phil. 2)

Chapter 73

Notes on Isaiah 46-48

These three chapters close this section of the prophecy, the discussion of Israel's guilty love of idols in presence of the doom of Babylon, the patron of idolatry and the instrument of the punishment of the Jews for that sin.

Chapter 46 in the most spirited way contrasts the fall of the helpless objects of Babylonish worship with God's gracious care of Israel. “Bel [their chief god answering to the Zeus of the Greeks] boweth down, Nebo [answering to the Greek Hermes] stoopeth: their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beasts. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.” (Ver. 1, 2.) Thus, chief or subordinate, these false deities could do nothing for their votaries, and could not deliver themselves. The victorious foe carries them off as part of the spoil.

On the other hand, Jehovah had carried Israel from their national birth to their old age: “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” (Ver. 3, 4.)

Next follows the challenge to whom they would liken the God of Israel. As for the Chaldean gods, it was but a question of gold and silver, which the goldsmith made up, and the people fell down and worshipped. (Ver. 5, 6.) “They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth, from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.” Nor is this the only appeal. It was well to bethink them that the gods of the nations were beneath those that adored them; but the prophet adds (Ver. 9), “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.” Cyrus is here again cited as a striking proof of the reality of God's dealings with His people, and this both in foreknowledge, in declared purpose, and in providential ways. This leads to the concluding call: “Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.” (Ver. 12, 13.) Such is the end.

Chapter 47. shows us the degradation of Babylon itself, as in the preceding chapter we had judgment executed against its gods.

“Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take

vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms." (Ver. 1-5.) The anger of God at His people was no justification of their merciless behavior (Ver. 6), and their confidence in the stability of their resources would be the precursor of ruin. (Ver. 7-10.) "Therefore shall evil come upon thee thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know." What made the taunt the more cutting was Babylon's boast in their sorceries and enchantments; but even so, they could not profit nor prevail. (Ver. 11-15.) As they could not predict, still less could they save.

Chapter 48. is a more direct and exclusive appeal to Israel, to those that come forth "out of the waters of Judah." It is a beautiful homily to His people (Ver. 1, 2), explaining why God had long foretold, and then suddenly acted. They could not thus defraud Him of His praise. (Ver. 3-8.)

In verse 9 Jehovah tells them why He had not cut them off. "For my name's sake, will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." (Ver. 9-11.)

Then (Ver. 12 et seq.) comes a tender expostulation, accomplished in measure at the return from captivity, but to be fulfilled by and by more fully. Cyrus had not acted without the God who had called him by name. Nor was it (save judicially) he who had ordered things for Israel. The word is, "Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob." The moral is "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." It is a misconception of Israel's future to imagine that no future question arises between God and them as to graven images.

Chapter 74

Notes on Isaiah 49

A NEW division of Isaiah opens here. It is no longer Babylon and idolatry and a destruction viewed as the overthrow of image worship in the earth. Here it is the far deeper question of Christ Himself and His rejection by the Jews. We shall find that this portion, from chapter 49, runs down to the end of chapter 67. Where, as the former said, “There is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked,” so the latter ends with “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;” “Jehovah” being in contrast with idols, and “my God” connected with the still deeper badness of the people in refusing the true God and eternal life, even the Lord Jesus their anointed King. They were wicked in both respects; wicked in going after false gods of the Gentiles; wicked yet more in rejecting their divine Messiah.

The chapter opens with a call to the isles to listen. “Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from far;” because the Lord had called Israel from the womb, and made mention of his name from the bowels of his mother. There was a great providential preparation. “He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (there was thus protection also), “and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” Such was the purpose of God about Israel.

“Then I said (says Christ) I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught.” Christ substitutes Himself for Israel. They had been the servant nominally and responsibly; Christ becomes the true Israel and servant of God, when the other proved false. Nevertheless, even in Christ all comes to nothing at first. “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.” The failure, apparently, of the purposes of God in the first instance from man's wickedness only leads into a better establishment of them and to a more glorious form and display in result. “And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.” This is the comfort of Christ, that although the work was not done, and Israel would not be gathered (how often would He have gathered her!) yet would He be glorious. “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

The original thought was to gather Israel, but Israel would not be gathered. Then, says God, That is a light thing, I will gather the Gentiles also. But He is first given as a light to the Gentiles. It is rather going out than gathering in: at any rate that is the turn given to the passage now, under Christianity. While Israel is not yet gathered, Christ becomes a light to the Gentiles. But God's purpose never fails, and so we find, “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth” (it is clear that Christ is now viewed as a rejected person, the cross being the great expression of that rejection) “to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful and the Holy

One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people (that is, of Israel) to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." It is evident that this supposes that all is in ruin, but that the Lord Jesus is the destined repairer of all the breaches. "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim." (Ver. 10, 11, 12.) It is the return of Israel that is here predicted from all parts of the earth, but a return after they have been dispersed there; so that not only from the north and south, but even from the land of Sinim—that is, from China—they finally emerge and gather in Palestine.

Then we find a call to not merely the isles, but heaven and earth. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains." This is in view of the Lord's comforting His people and showing energy to His afflicted. It is the last days and the Lord reviewing His goodness and calling upon all the universe to be joyful. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But the Lord pleads with Zion's reproach and says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee." (Ver. 15-17.) The enemies of Israel disappear, and Israel comes forward, long forgotten apparently, but now to be established forever. And so God calls upon them to lift up their eyes, "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, the place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell." (Ver. 18-20.) It is the harvest of joy after the long sowing in tears. And now there seems no room to stow away the children. "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" (Ver. 21.) It is the joining together of the dispersed of all Israel, those who had been forgotten. At the present time the Jews are the only ones known of Israel, but those will be the ten tribes. The Jews will have the certainty that they are Jews and yet will not know them. They have been hidden away. But now the Lord has lifted up His hand to the Gentiles, and He says, speaking of the Gentiles, "They shall bring thy sons in their arms." The very kings and queens would be their nursing fathers and mothers, and would bow down before them. "And thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Such will be the moral state of Israel in that day. They shall wait upon the Lord and shall not be ashamed.

But further; they will have no reason to fear their enemies. The last verse shows that the same God who shows such incomparable mercy to Israel, shall bent down all those who had plundered them. "But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will

save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." (Ver. 25, 26.) It is the condign vengeance of God upon the enemies of Israel. Such is the future that Jehovah guarantees to Israel after the rejection of the Messiah. It is impossible, therefore, to apply this chapter to the return from the Babylonish captivity; it speaks of the far more complete ingathering at the end of this age. It is the new subject of Christ's rejection by His people, and of their gathering in after He has been made a light to the end of the earth. But when Zion might have thought herself entirely forgotten, the Lord turns His hand upon these little ones and puts down the nations of the earth, and either their kings and queens become the servants of Israel, or He makes an example of them in divine judgment.

Notes on Isaiah 50

Our last chapter set forth the vast change which turns on the substitution of Christ, the true Servant of God, for Israel His servant publicly and responsibly but in truth the slave of His enemy. The new sin of the people ensued thereon, not idolatry, but rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, only consistent in their unbelief and opposition to God. They would none of Him or His law; they had followed heathen gods; they now refuse His anointed Servant. But this leads in the wisdom of God to the immediate blessing of the Gentiles in the day of grace, as it also becomes in result the basis of the ultimate restoration of Israel and the joy of all the earth in the day of glory. The chapter accordingly sketches the whole sweep of God's ways from the rejection of Christ to the triumphs of the last days.

In chapter 1 we are in presence of little more than a single point in that great circle of events; but is it not the center and pivot of all? The humiliation of Jesus, the servant of Jehovah but withal Jehovah Himself, their own Messiah, despised not of strangers merely, but of His own people! Deliverance and glory were sure in the end. But so was the shameful divorce of Israel meanwhile; so was the sale moreover of Israel. How was this? “Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.” (Ver. 1.) It was no churl who found his wretched pleasure in putting away the wife who displeased him; it was no selfish parent who relieved his own necessities at the expense of his children. And the proof of their rebellion appears in verses 2, 8: “Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.” His coming, His call was unheeded, though He had already since the days of Pharaoh proved what He was in the behalf of His people.

Did the Jews question this? Did they say to Jehovah, as the Gentiles by and by will to the King coming in glory, “When saw we thee,” &c.? Here is His answer by anticipation: The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” Nor this only: “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” Jehovah had deigned to become a man on earth, and here to walk in obedience, owning God; and this Christianity alone fully explains; for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were most truly and equally Jehovah. And He who came thus to do the will of God as man here below, was, as we know, the Son, who, Himself God, and Jehovah, could look up and say, “The Lord God hath opened mine ear,” &c.

It is not the same truth here as in Ex. 21, where the Hebrew servant might have gone out free, but says, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free—and is brought to the doorpost before the judges and has his ear bored through in sign of perpetual service. So did

Christ, the true servant and Lord of all He too has pledged Himself to serve eternally. Again, it is not the same as Psa. 40, where “mine ears hast thou digged” is cited from the 70 (so in Heb. 10), as “a body hast thou prepared me.” The boring of the ear found its answer in the Lord's willing subjection to death in which He identified Himself with the need and interests of master, wife, and children. The digging of the ear was not after He became a servant but rather in order to it. Thus was He formed as it were to be a servant, a body fitted in which, though He were a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. For indeed He did become a man and a servant in this world. Isaiah looks at a time intermediate—neither incarnation, nor death, but His path in life, wherein the opened ear marks lowly intelligent attention to His Father's will, as the closed ear is significant of disobedience or indifference to the communications of God.

But obedience (especially public service) in such a world as this could only be, to such a One as He, continual, and to us hardly conceivable, suffering.

Hence the issue at once follows: “I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” How solemn the thought; and what a picture of God in the presence of man! His humiliation (which should have made Him infinitely more precious, as being the incomparable proof of His love) gave the desired occasion to man under Satan's leading to insult Him to the uttermost.

But still He goes on—yea, to death, the death of the cross. “For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.” (Ver. 7-9.)

Thus the Lord challenges His foes and sees their ruin sealed in their momentary triumph over Him whom, if man slew, God raised again from the dead. Notice here what has been often pointed out, that the Apostle Paul cites this passage in the close of Rom. 8 and applies to the Christian what the Spirit here applies to Christ. It would be childish to deny its application to the Lord because of this; but it is hardly less childish to overlook the precious intimation that the same Spirit applies to us now what He uttered then of God's vindication of Christ rejected. Such is the Christian's blessed and present privilege—association with Christ risen after God undertakes to glorify Him whom the Jews (and Gentiles) cast out.

The closing verses make this yet plainer and prove its importance. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” (Ver. 10.) For thus we have distinguished most definitely the Christian from the future Jewish remnant. The mystery was yet bid in God. Christ magnified and delivered was revealed: our place, not then revealed, is now seen in Him risen and glorified. They, on the contrary, walking in darkness and wanting light, will be called to trust in the Lord and stay on their God, when there is nothing else to lean on. But they will find a glorious deliverance when He appears. We are children of light now, children of day before it dawns upon the earth; we follow Him in spirit where He is, yea are brought to God and free of the holiest while here.

As for the apostate mass of the Jews, their portion plainly follows. “Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” (Ver. 11.)

Chapter 76

Notes on Isaiah 51-52

In chapter 1 we have seen the divine Messiah in the depths of humiliation, but the Lord Jehovah helping and justifying Him. In chapter 53 (which really begins at 52:13) we shall see Him “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,” when Jehovah “laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Compare Psa. 69; 22) Between these everlasting foundations of blessing for Israel (or for any), the Holy Spirit gives us awakening appeals of the utmost force, interest, and beauty. It is a complete whole, consisting of seven distinct parts (chap. 51:1-3; 4-6; 7, 8; then, 9-16; 17-23; 52:1-10; lastly, 11, 12), and tracing the gradations of the godly Jewish remnant from their deep distress, fearing Jehovah and obeying the voice of His servant, though in darkness as yet and having no light, but gradually advancing till they stand in the full glory that was promised them.

The first remark to be made is one of no small importance as affecting the interpretation or rather application of this prophetic strain. It is not under the head of Babylon, but of a rejected Messiah. And in fact the attempt to apply to their state after the return from Babylon either the calls of righteousness to them, or the calls of the Spirit in them, or the final word as a priest to Jehovah abandoning their old seats of impurity, is not worth a refutation—hardly a notice.

Chapter 48 closed that part of the subject. Chapter 49 opened the new complaint and ground of judgment God lays against His people—not idolatry judged by the captivity in Babylon, but the refusal of Christ, the ground of their dispersion and distresses under the fourth empire. Therefore was Israel divorced from Jehovah; but a remnant, poor in spirit, by grace obey the voice of His humbled servant. Their moral restoration and final triumph are here brought before us in as orderly a way as is compatible with the boldest flights of the sublimest of the poets.

The first appeal to hear (ver. 1-3) is to them as following after righteousness and seeking Jehovah. Such will be few indeed at first. They may feel themselves alone, the mass of Israel being apostate like the Gentiles. But they are exhorted to look to Abraham and Sarah. “For I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” Then faith must count on no less but more manifest blessing, after all their sorrow now at its worst. “For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shalt be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” (Ver. 3)

The next (ver. 4-6) goes farther and calls them Jehovah's people and His nation: “Hearken,” &c. [the word is a different one from that more general term in ver. 1, 7, and implies attention.] It is a total mistake in Bishop Lowth to think the address in this case is made not to the Jews but to the Gentiles, “as in all reason it ought to be!” It was the more required as a comfort for the Jews, because they have been so long called Lo-ammi. (Compare Hos. 1; 2) The peoples are distinguished, for whose light His judgments should rest, as His arms should judge them, while His righteousness and salvation established forever should be the portion of Israel.

The third (ver. 7, 8) calls them to hear, as knowing righteousness and having Jehovah's law in their hearts. Why should such fear the reproach and revilings of men whom the moth and the

worm, little and feeble as they are, should devour?

Similarly the Spirit now answers, as it were in the remnant. First (ver. 9.-16) they call for the power of Jehovah to assert itself against their mighty foes, as of old against proud Egypt. “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Ver. 9, 10.) They predict their deliverance in verse 11, and the Lord's reply to their trembling hearts in terms as full of pathos as of grandeur in verses 12-16.

Next (ver. 17-23), the Spirit of God summons Jerusalem to arise and stand up, with a most vivid description of her reeling under the Lord's judgment without one of her sons to guide or help, and of His taking the cup from her hand, not here to drink it Himself, but to put it into the hands of their oppressors.

Then, thirdly (chap. Id. 1-10), Zion is called to awake and put on strength: “Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.” The days of Egypt and of Assyria should never return: no more should the uncircumcised and the unclean come there. Beautiful then in their eyes, as in His, are the feet of him that brings good tidings and publishes peace. Before (chap. 40), the cities of Judah were told, “Behold your God.” Now Zion hears, “Thy God reigneth!” The watchmen lift up their voice, singing, not warning; the very wastes of Jerusalem, so long forsaken, sing together in their irrepressible joy. “For the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” (Ver. 9, 10.)

Lastly, the strain closes with the peremptory call to act consistently with the holiness of the Lord and of his sanctuary. “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; he ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” It should not be, as of old, in hurry and anxiety, however guided and delivered even then. But the greatest triumphs of their fathers fade in the glorious intervention of Jehovah which the children now know. “For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.” (Ver. 12.) It is in truth and in its fullest display the day of the Lord when Israel forever leave the unclean Gentiles, henceforth to be a richer blessing to them than their evils had been a snare and ruin to Israel.

Chapter 77

Notes on Isaiah 52:13-15 and Isaiah 53

This section is complete in itself, though it assumes the truth already before us in chapter 1., pursues it farther and more profoundly, and thus completes the foundation of all that follows.

The elder Jewish interpreters did not contest the application to the Messiah. Thus Jonathan Ben Uzziel expressly speaks to this effect in the Chaldee paraphrase (given in the Antwerp, Paris, and London Polyglotts). So the Talmud Babyl. (in Tr. Sanhedrin, cap. helek, fol. 98) applies to the Messiah 53: 4. Again, the book of Zohar confirms this in the comment on Exodus (fol. 95, col. 3), and the Mechilta (according to the Jalkut Shimoni, part ii. fol. 90, col. 1) is no less distinct, as even Aben Ezra, Abarbanel, and other distinguished men among their later authors confess. I am indebted to another who has supplied some of these references for the striking fact that even now, in the prayers of the synagogue used universally, there is the clearest witness to the same truth. For instance, at the Passover they pray in these terms: “Hasten and cause the shadows to flee away. Let him be exalted and extolled and be high, who is now despised. Let him deal prudently and reprove and sprinkle many nations.” Again, in the prayers for the day of Atonement, there is as plain an allusion to the righteous Anointed bearing the yoke of iniquities and transgression, wounded because of it, and men (or Israel at least) healed by his wound. The translator (D. Levi) tries to turn part of the prayer aside to Josiah, as do some of the Rabbis; but the prayer. expressly alludes to the Messiah in one of these references to Isa. 53 just cited even according to the same person.

The more modern writers, who dread the ancient application of their fathers, have invented a double means of escape, either by some distinguished man like Josiah or Jeremiah, or by the Jewish people elsewhere styled “my servant” in the prophecy. But in vain. This section is so punctually and exclusively applicable to our Lord that these efforts only prove the will of unbelief and its failure. We have seen already in the beginning of chapter 49 Christ, the servant, substituted for Israel who had been altogether wanting.

We have seen in chapter 1 that the godly Jews are exhorted to obey the voice of this servant of Jehovah, humbled though He has been among men, but vindicated of God.

“Behold” (says God now through His prophet), “my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” (Ver. 13-15.) What can be less congruous than the facts of Josiah, Jeremiah, or the Jewish people? Neither the king nor the prophet had any such destiny as could be fairly brought into this remarkable contrast of, first, deep shame, then wide and lofty glory before subject nations and kings. And though it is true, as we have often noticed, that “my servant” sometimes applies to Israel in this prophet, there are always definite contextual marks which render the decision by no means difficult or doubtful. This is made evident and certain from chapter 53, where there is the most obvious distinction between the

individual in question and the people who esteemed Him not, though He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows, yea, was wounded for their transgressions, and brought healing to them by His stripes when bruised for their iniquities. To identify this suffering One with the people from whom and for whom He thus suffered, and to whom He afterward brings such signal blessing, is the grossest confusion on the face of the matter.

But let us turn to the wondrous words of our God from these strange vagaries of men. Chapter 53 opens with the confession and implied complaint of the unbelief of men, yea, of their own unbelief; for Israel, now broken down in sense of sin, acknowledge that it was not merely those without who heeded little the report of the Messiah, but that they too themselves had been hard and rebellious against Him. “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Ver. 1-6.)

The close of the last chapter (ver. 13-15) gave us Jehovah's contemplation of His Anointed, once put to shame and now on the summit of glory before every eye. Then His people trace, in view of Him, their past and most guilty blindness, as they think of His wondrous humiliation, their misjudgment of His life and death, and their present perception of its cause in their sin and misery from which He had come to save them. When they had of old beheld His path of shame and sufferings from first to last, they understood neither the grace which brought Him down so low nor the glories that should follow. They had regarded Him, on the contrary, as an object of God's displeasure and justly cast out and trampled on. But now they are taught of God and avow before Him and men that, underneath all that humiliation and, as they wrongly thought, personal obnoxiousness to His judgment, a deeper work was being done, even atonement. (Ver. 5.) This opens the mouth in lowly confession of sin; as the heart can then feel its past evil way, and each judges himself before God.

In verses 7-9 Jehovah expresses His delight in the moral beauty which shone in the suffering One, affirms on His part the explanation of the enigma of the cross, though up to His death and burial man was allowed his way in disposing of Jesus. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: be is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” (Ver. 7-9.) The plague-stroke was upon him for the transgression of the people of Jehovah. It was not the outward fact simply of a rejected Messiah to which He was pleased to submit, the awful proof of man's and Israel's moral state; but there is this divine key, and the far more wondrous meeting of a more hidden and a deeper need, even expiation.

Israel then reiterate the blessed truth with their Amen, pursuing the glorious consequences as far as it is theirs to see them. “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, be shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” (Ver. 10.) Here it is the atoning work, and the suffering of the Lord is dwelt on, and its aspect as the all-efficacious offering for sin. It is blessedly true that the death and blood-shedding of the Savior must be for propitiation; but it is as false a thought as the enemy of souls ever insinuated that this propitiation or atonement is or could be according to God and His word without His sufferings specifically, yea that suffering which was the deepest expression of God's judgment of our iniquities when He who knew no sin was made sin for us and forsaken of God. His blood and death when viewed as expiatory and not as the evidence simply of man's wickedness, are the blood and death of Him who really bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and endured the to us unfathomable judgment of God, when not the Jews only but God hid His face from Him. Can a Christian slight this divine abandonment of Him who suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God? He may, but only as he may be guilty of grievous, not to say fatal error.

But that wherein lay the strength and main stress of His sufferings was this invisible weight that none could see that gazed on Him; but He felt more than all the rest. In this are three things.

1. The weight of sin. 2. The transferring of it upon Christ. 3. His bearing of it.

“1. He bare sin as a heavy burden: so the word of bearing in general, ■ν■νεγκεν, and those two words particularly used by the prophet to which these allude, ■■■ ■■■ are the bearing of some great mass or load, and that sin is. For it hath the wrath of an offended God hanging on it, indissolubly tied to it; of which who can bear the least? Yea, to consider in the present subject where we may best read what it is, it was a heavy load to Christ, where the psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ, complains heavily, ‘Innumerable evils have compassed me about. Mine iniquities' (not His, as done by Him, but yet His by His undertaking to pay for them) they ‘have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart faileth me.' And sure that which pressed Him so sore, who upholds heaven and earth, no other in heaven or earth could have sustained or surmounted, but would have sunk or perished under it. Was it, think you, the pain of that common outside of His death, though very painful, that drew such a word from Him, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Or was it the fear of it beforehand, that pressed a sweat of blood from Him? No, it was this burden of sin, the first of which was committed in the garden of Eden, that then began to be laid upon Him, and fastened upon His shoulders in the garden of Gethsemane, ten thousand times heavier than the cross which He was caused to bear: that might be for a while turned over to another, but this could not. This was the cup He trembled more at, than that gall and vinegar after to be offered Him by His crucifiers, or any other part of His external sufferings. It was the bitter cup of wrath due to sin that His Father put into His hand and caused Him to drink, the very same thing that is here called the bearing our sins in his body.'... Jesus Christ is both the great high priest and the great sacrifice in one. And this seems to be here implied in these words, Himself bare our sins in his own body;' which the legal priest did not: so He made his soul an offering for sin.' He offered up Himself. His whole self. In the history of the gospel, it is said, His soul was heavy and chiefly suffered; but the bearing in His body and offering it, that is offenest mentioned as the visible part of the sacrifice, and in His way of offering it, not excluding the other. Thus we are exhorted to give our bodies in

opposition to the bodies of beasts, and they are therefore called a living sacrifice, which they are not without the soul. Thus His bearing in His body imports the bearing in His soul too." —The Works of R. Leighton, Jerment's edition, 1805. Vol. 1, pp. 370-376.

I may add that this was a point of objection by Cardinal Bellarmine to Calvin, who maintained the same doctrine as is carped at now-a-days, and not merely by rationalist speculators, such as Mr. Maurice and his friends. It seems to me a peculiar mind which could cite 1 Peter 3:18 in a paragraph designed to prove that reconciliation or atonement is never in connection with Christ's sufferings specifically. It is false that the statement they oppose separates His sufferings from His blood and death: on the contrary, while distinguishing for other points, the object was to insist on the inseparableness of His sufferings with His blood and death for atonement. The admission that they are not separated in the Spirit's mind for atonement is my thesis, which he yields; but he is wrong in saying, "the two are never separated." It is merely inattention to Scripture and unworthy of an answer.) The chapter closes with Jehovah's confirmation, repeating the glorious results of both grace and government, and in each case connecting them with the work of salvation. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Ver. 11, 12.)

Notes on Isaiah 54-55

How beautifully seasonable is the voice of the Spirit calling on Jerusalem to sing, after His own clear and full prediction of Messiah rejected of Israel and bruised of Jehovah in atonement! Indeed the last section of the prophecy gave us a most striking and instructive rehearsal or dialog between God and His people, about Messiah, His sufferings and the glories that should follow. Fitly therefore follows the invitation to her who had sorrowed so long and so justly now to rejoice because of her new blessing in His grace.

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” (Ver. 1.)

Never ought it to have been a question who is meant. As usual, however, the commentators have confused what is plain and agreed in scarce anything but departure from the true sense and aim. The occasion of stumbling they have in general found, partly in their habit of excluding the Jews from the prophets and so judaizing the Christians (limiting themselves to the past and present, without taking in the future), partly from a misunderstanding of Gal. 4:27-through mixing it up with “the allegory” of Sarah and Hagar. But who does not see that the citation of the prophet connects itself rather with Jerusalem which is above, in contrast with Jerusalem which then was? When the prophecy is fulfilled in the millennial day, God will count those who now believe to be Jerusalem's children, as well as the race to come in that day. Doubly thus it will be verified that more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife. For what fruit of the most flourishing times, say under David or Solomon, could compare with the gathering in of the Christian saints since the Jews lost their place as the recognized witness and wife of Jehovah, or, again, with the vast progeny which the Lord will give her after her long desolation, when His reign shall be displayed over the earth? Consult chapters 49:18-23; 60:8, 9.

It is important to see, on the one hand, that though it is according to scripture to regard Christians mystically as the children of desolate Jerusalem far outnumbering those of her married estate of old, the Church, on the other hand, is not yet presented by God's word as in the relationship of the wife either desolate or married.

The bride, the Lamb's wife, will not have made herself ready till she has been caught up to heaven glorified, and the harlot, Babylon, the anti-church, has been judged of the Lord God. The real position of the Church meanwhile is that of one espoused; her responsibility is to keep herself as a chaste virgin for Christ. The marriage will be in heaven, just before the Lord and His glorified saints appear for the destruction of the Antichrist and all his allies. (Comp. Revelation 19).

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the Jews, or Zion if you will, had the place of nearness to Jehovah, which is represented under the figure of the marriage-tie, that she had been faithless and played the whore with many lovers, even the idols of the Gentiles, and that in consequence she was divorced, she became a widow and desolate under the righteous dealing of God. No one in

the least familiar with the prophets can have failed to notice this and more said of Israel. Then it was she became barren and did not bear. Praise is still silent for God in Zion; but the vow shall yet be performed to Him; and the barren-one shall sing and be no more barren but bear, astonished to find during those days of literal barrenness such an abundant harvest in the saints glorified on high, whom grace has been the while actively bringing in.

Nor is this all. “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.” (Ver. 2, 3.) The land, the earth must be filled with a suited seed; for Jehovah shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah and His name one. Yea, Jehovah deigns to be the husband of Zion, not now a testimony and display of responsibility of man under law, but in the efficacy of grace when glorying is no more in the flesh but in the Lord. “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.” (Ver. 4-6.)

Thus, and thus only, our chapter flows in its own proper channel: the exclusion of Israel by and by, and the appropriation of it to the Church as its intended scope, produce nothing but violence and confusion. It is not true that God has forsaken the Church even for a small moment, nor that in a little wrath He hides His face for an instant from the Christian. Of the Jew as such it is precisely the fact: as surely will He gather His ancient people in His mercy forever. “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I bid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that Lath mercy on thee.” (Ver. 7-10.) No doubt the application to the Maccabean epoch falls infinitely short of the terms of blessing and indeed casts no small slight on the character of the word of God. But this is the fault not of scripture but of its misreaders. A people are in question who, having once stood in full favor and near relationship to Jehovah, forfeited it for a season, and finally are restored more than ever and forever. There is but one such people: impossible that God should fail to have mercy on Israel.

“Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee

in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." (Ver. 11-17.) Thus it is not everlasting mercy alone re-instating the ancient people, but along with it images of beauty and glory with which the Lord will adorn them.

Truth will be theirs, for they all shall be taught of Jehovah; peace too, great peace shall be enjoyed; and established in righteousness, they shall be far from oppression and fear, though not from hostile intention, as we know from Ezek. 38:39 at the beginning of the millennium and from Rev. 20:7-9, at the end. Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is Jehovah.

Chapter 55 does not, after these remarks, call for many words. Its connection with what goes before is plain and makes its own bearing evident. The call is to Israel, but in such largeness of language as to warrant an aspect to the Gentiles. "He, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." (Ver. 1-4.) Here plainly some outstanding One is referred to, as to whom no believer need. hesitate. It is the Lord Jesus, but in relation to Israel (ver. 3), and withal a witness and commander to the nations. (Ver. 4.) The thoughtful mind—at least taught of God—will not overlook the divine application of verse 3 to the resurrection of our Lord, contra-distinguished from the use of Psa. 2:7, in Acts 13:33, 34. His resurrection is both the security for the accomplishment of what was promised to Israel and the occasion for the outflow of the grace which calls and shall yet call Gentiles into a share of God's blessing and of the knowledge of Himself. Before death and resurrection, though He could never deny His deeper glory and grace to the faith that saw either, He was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Crucified and risen, He is the attractive object for all indiscriminately. And the spirit of this wide grace breathes fragrantly through this chapter. "Behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Ver. 5-13.)

Chapter 79

Notes on Isaiah 56-57

The two chapters before us carry on the same line of truth we have seen since the rejection and atoning death of Christ came distinctly into view, and pursue the consequences of that infinite fact. As far as a natural division goes, I should be disposed to close the first subject treated in them with verse 3 of chapter 56, and then to take from verse 9 to the end of chapter 57 as completing not the second only but the entire section, which began with chapter 49. According to this, we should have here, first, the ways of the Lord founded on the Messiah's death for sin in respect of the godly, even outside Israel; and, secondly, His ways, when He was despised with the ungodly, not merely outside but in the midst of Israel. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.

Some have drawn from the Lord's citation of a clause of this section, that He intimates its then approaching accomplishment in the Christian Church. Now I do not deny that we have broad moral principles, as of grace on God's part, in Isa. 55, so in its flowing out to the Gentiles in Isa. 56, which are now realized in the gospel and the Church, even more fully than anything here developed. But we ought not to overlook the fact that neither in Matthew nor in Luke is the Lord represented as quoting the reference to all the nations: an omission the more notable, inasmuch as in both these gospels, above all others, though in each for a special reason, we have more respecting the change of dispensation then at hand, and the call of grace going out to the Gentiles than anywhere else. I cannot but gather thence, that, though in fact as the full citation in Mark shows, the Lord did quote the words of our prophet without abridgment, yet this marked exclusion of “all nations” in the two gospels which most insist on the change from Israel to the Gentiles, is meant to intimate that no such application was then in His mind, but simply the gross perversion of Jehovah's house of prayer into a den of robbers before His eyes, even as Jeremiah reproached the Jews of his day. There is nothing, therefore, if this be correct, to turn aside the fulfillment of this blessed fruit of the cross from the future, however large the terms may be, and this not without purpose on God's part.

The chapter, then, opens not with a call to sinners, as such, to repent and believe the gospel; but to the people of God to keep judgment and do justice, though the reason assigned is in no way the law given by Moses, but “my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” When the apostle unfolds the glad tidings, he says that God's righteousness is being revealed in the gospel; that it is manifested apart from law. Clearly this goes farther. Salvation is come, as we find in Eph. 2, “For by grace are ye saved through faith;” though, in view of our resurrection and glory, we as truly say that it is nearer than when we believed. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The righteousness is established and we are justified in virtue of this already; but we await through the Spirit the hope, the glorious issue, proper to that righteousness, when even in the body we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son: “whom he justified, them he also glorified.” But this is the language of the New-Testament apostle, not of our Old-Testament prophet, who is occupied with the earthly people and their hopes, but in God-given terms of such comprehensiveness as to justify the largest ways of grace. “Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it,” &c. The following verse (3) is

even more express: the most distant," the son of the stranger," and the most desperate, "the eunuch," were not beyond the reach of God's merciful and mighty blessing. And this is repeated in the most forcible language as to both classes in the subsequent verses 4-7, concluding with the expression of Jehovah's mind to be known and read of all men, that His "house should be called an house of prayer for all people." "The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him." (Ver. 8.)

The second part (from 56:9 to 57:21) stands out in startling contrast at first sight, but I doubt not it flows from the same principle. The grace which goes out ever so actively to the most miserable is of all things the most intolerant of evil; and its dealing is ever most delicate and jealous with those that are near enough to be so much the more responsible to reflect the Lord brightly.

The Gentile oppressors are first invited to lay waste. (Ver. 9.) Those who ought to have watched and tended the beautiful flock of Jehovah not only slept, but they awoke to their own greed of gain and love of present ease, as indifferent about God as about His people. (Ver. 10-12.) On the other hand, the Shepherd of Israel neither slumbered nor slept, and if the righteous perished without a soul's laying it to heart, it was but His hand after all taking the righteous away from the evil to come. (Chap. 57:1, 2.)

Next, the prophet under various figures of uncleanness arraigns the idolatrous Jews. (Ver. 3 et seq.) The sketch is most energetic, and the general scope is plain. The only allusion which strikes me as calling for particular notice is found in verse 9, "And thou wentest to the king with ointment." This will be the climax of their heartless desertion of Jehovah, and rejection of the Messiah. They received not Him who came in His Father's name; they will receive another who will come in his own name. The spirit of this has been often verified, doubtless; but it awaits its full final signature in the Antichrist of the last days. He is "the king," as abruptly (but so much the more strikingly) brought in here as in Dan. 11:36-40. Unbelief as blindly acquiesces in the false and evil, as it ignores the truth and hates righteousness and grace. "The king" is not "the woman," "the great whore," but rather what works the destruction of Babylon, though only the more audaciously opposed to God and the Lamb. The Jew will play a solemn part during this last struggle in the end of the age. The king will be in the land and city destined for the Messiah; the center of the Babylonish system is the great city of the west, Rome: but God will destroy the one, and the Lamb vanquish the other.

In the midst of this harrowing description of coming wickedness and woe, the Lord contrasts with the hopeless destruction of the apostate Jews him that trusts in Himself as destined to possess the land (so long the prey of one usurping stranger after another) and to inherit His holy mountain (even to this day the boasted spoil of the infidel). "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him." (Ver. 14-11.) "Except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake they shall be shortened." Yea, the Lord will heal, lead, and comfort.

He creates thankful praise. Peace is His word, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near; but as for the wicked, like the troubled sea that casts up mire and dirt, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” Let the Jew take heed. Certainly the wicked of that people shall not escape.

Notes on Isaiah 58-59

To these chapters one might add chapter lx. as completing this series. It is the opening of the last section of the prophecy. (Chap. 58 - 66) The Spirit had closed both His counts against God's ancient people, their idolatry, and their rejection of the Messiah, with the consequences and the certainty of judgment, and not peace for the wicked on either side. We have now a sort of appendix, consisting of moral argument and appeal to the people, with a positive revelation of Jehovah's intervention and their establishment in glory and blessing. For no prophecy of scripture is of isolated interpretation, but links itself with the kingdom of the Lord in the last days, however it may apply to lesser and passing circumstances in the prophetic days, or the times that succeeded. Prophetic scripture does not interpret itself apart from that grand system; though verified from day to day, it looks onward to the final scenes connecting what wrought in the past with the state of things which will necessitate the Lord's appearance on the scene to introduce His own day.

The notion of some that Protestantism is in question is as unfounded as the unbelief of an older day which turned aside the prophecy from Israel because no part of the blessing has as yet been accomplished in them as a nation. The quotation of the prophecy, as employed by the apostle in Rom. 11, appears to me to refute, both by giving us as the divine key, the future salvation of that Israel which is now for the most blinded and has stumbled at the stumbling stone. The time too is rendered certain; it is unquestionably not present any more than past, but future. For, as the Spirit there interprets the prophecy, we are not to look for its fulfillment in the salvation of all Israel (chap. 59:12), till after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, whereas this is only going on now and not therefore complete. Hence the moment is not arrived even for commencing to apply to Israel.

For the Lord's hand was not short, nor His ear heavy: it was their iniquities and sins which caused the breach. (Chap. 59: 1, 2.) And what a picture follows in verse 3-15! Hands and fingers, lips and tongues, all polluted and perverse; justice not called for, truth unpleaded; vanities and lies, mischief and iniquities; subtlety of evil and ever-increasing virulence; active but vain corruption and violence. What sanguinary feet! what iniquitous thoughts! What wasting and destruction in the crooked paths where peace is unknown! Hence without judgment, they walk in darkness, grope like the blind, and are in desolate places as dead men, whether raging as bears or mourning as doves, salvation is far off, because of multiplied transgressions and departure from God, with truth fallen in the street and equity unable to enter, and the godly a prey, so that the Lord was displeased that there was no judgment.

But such utter moral chaos, hopeless for man, was the call for Jehovah. “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands be will repay recompence.” (Ver. 16-18.) It is the picture of the mighty intervention of God for His people in the last days, though not at all

resembling what He will do for the heavenly saints. These He will remove from the scene of their pilgrimage to heaven; His people He will deliver from their enemies by judgment. “According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.” Thereby He will teach the nations wisdom, or at least the beginning of it. “So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” It is not, on the one hand, a mere outward interference, but the power of the Spirit will accompany it. On the other hand, it is not the action of the Spirit in the absence of the Lord, as now in Christianity; for “the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.” The apostle (Rom. 11:26) cites it, with the Seventy, as His coming out of Zion. Doubtless both are true and each appropriate in its place. He must come to that mountain of royalty in the Holy Land in order to come out thence; and He will come to the righteous remnant, the Israel of God, even to such as turn from transgression in Jacob, as He will also turn away ungodliness from Jacob. There will be conversion of heart before the Lord appears in the extremity of their distress and to the destruction of their foes; but that appearing will deepen all their feelings toward Himself and bring them into peace and blessing fully and forever. “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever.” (Ver. 21.)

Notes on Isaiah 60

As we have had the failure and guilt of Israel in idolatry and the rejection of the Messiah, traced down to their reception of “the king” as well as idols in the last days; so now we have not a pledge or promise of covenanted blessing under the Redeemer-King, but the scene of joy and blessing and honor for Zion when the hour arrives for His glory to be revealed here below. There is no ground for doubting that, as before we had the dark picture of God's earthly people, so here we are permitted to behold the sure anticipation of the brightness in store for them.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.” (Ver. 1-9.)

There is no question here of God's glory revealed in the face of Christ on high and made known by the Spirit to the heart; the earth itself is the theater of this divine display. Another point to be noticed is that, immediately before the time arrives, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples. Plainly therefore it is a false interpretation of prophecy that light is to be diffused universally when the time of earthly glory for Israel, as well as heavenly glory for the Church, dawns on the world. Zion is to be visited in the mercy of God, when the Gentile lands are enveloped in the grossest ignorance of God. (Ver. 2.)

Again, there is a point of striking contradistinction to the present dealings of God in verse 3. For now the fall of the Jews has been the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; but here all is in contrast (as indeed Rom. 11 also teaches us) that their reception shall be to the world life from the dead. So here, when Jehovah's glory shall be seen on Zion, Gentiles shall come to that light and kings to the brightness of its rising.

The gospel goes out, its light is diffused far and wide, though only as a testimony; for it admits not of the power which binds Satan and changes the face of creation. But in our chapter Jerusalem has its proper central place, as the metropolis of the earth when all shall be settled and governed according to God. (Ver. 4.) Nor is it only sons and daughters that thus come to Zion from far, but

strangers too. For there is then to be no such state of things on earth as the Church of God, one body, Christ's body. On the contrary, Gentiles and Israel, though blessed by Jehovah, will be distinct and kept so, however harmonious. So too it is the day when outward things are to be no unmeet offering to the Lord: camels and dromedaries, flocks and herds, land and sea shall pour their tribute before His feet. To think of serving God thus would be to go back to beggarly elements from the revelation of heavenly and eternal things in Christ; whereas gold and incense will be in season, and sacrifices will be then acceptable for His altar and the house of His glory. But no such joy shall be for the isles and the nations and creation generally till the Holy One of Israel glorifies Zion, rescuing her from the stranger that now treads her down to her sorrow and their own loss. But He shall arise and have mercy on that royal hill, and His servants take pleasure in her stones and favor her dust. Not till then shall the heathen fear His name, and the kings of the earth His glory.

But when the Lord builds up Zion, all shall be turned. “And the sons of the strangers shall build up the walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.” (Ver. 10) God will make this felt universally in due time, after punishing those who think to gain all by the overthrow of His people. “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” (Ver. 11-20.)

Here is evidence overwhelming, were more wanted, that the Church on earth or in heaven is not in question, but the ancient people of God blessed according to the promise and prophecy. For righteousness dealing according to an earthly measure is the rule; and it is the day also not for an elect witness, but “thy people shall be all righteous,” and this in prosperous power, instead of knowing the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable to His death. “They shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.” (Ver. 21, 22.)

Notes on Isaiah 63:1-6

These verses connect themselves with the close of chapter 62, following up the coming of the Messiah as the Deliverer of Zion, no longer forsaken but sought out, and all her dispersed children now gathered in with a most vivid sight, as it were, of His return from executing vengeance on their Gentile foes. The scene of the slaughter is laid in the land of Edom and the city of Bozrah. Horsley I consider quite wrong in denying any mention of these places here, while admitting them in chapter 34. He would translate the proper names as appellatives thus: “Who is this that approacheth all in scarlet, with garments stained from the vintage? This that is glorious,” &c. But this able man had overlooked the chapter just referred to, where the scene demands the proper names. This consideration, in my judgment, gives conclusive support to the ordinary translation.

But commentators in general contradict each other without being able to strike out divine light from the words of the prophet. Thus Origen, Theodoret, Tertullian, and Jerome, may illustrate views which have too long prevailed, so far as to lead the compilers of the English Common Prayer, to read it for the Epistle on the Monday before Easter. They actually regard the scene as prophetic of the Savior suffering for our sins, instead of seeing in it the Avenger of His long-oppressed Israel; as a pledge of mercy, not as a threat of judgment. Hence the good Bishop of Cyprus thinks the prophet here points out the Lord's ascent to heaven, lays stress on Edom as the red land, connects the pierced side and blood and water with the blood-stained garments; and sees the destruction of the devil and all his host in the treading of the winepress. Calvin justly objects to such a perversion of the prophecy; but he is quite as far from the true mark as any when he proceeds to apply it not to Christ, but simply to God Himself as such in His dealings of old with the Edomites, and other enemies of His people, when He broke them by the Assyrians of old. This is to make the word of private, isolated, interpretation, dislocating it from its true aim and scope in the illustration of the glory of the Lord Jesus, not at His first advent, but when He comes again. Luther's notion is strange enough: he regards it as a prediction of the punishment of the Jews or Synagogue, not an infliction on their enemies for their rescue in the latter day. The Jew, as is commonly known, conceives that the divine wrath which impends over Rome as the full meaning of the enemy here named Edom, is the real thought. Bishop Lowth rightly combats Grotius' hypothesis that Judas Maccabaeus and his victories make the subject of it; or the subsequent exploits of John Hyreanus, his brother Simon's son. “It may be asked [he adds], to whom, and to what event does it relate? I can only answer, that I know of no event in history to which, from its importance and circumstances, it can be applied, unless perhaps to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity; which in the gospel is called the coming of Christ and the days of vengeance. Matt. 16:28; Luke 21:22.” This suffices to prove the bewilderment of Christian writers down to our times, which is yet more confessed by some, like the last, owning that “there is no necessity of supposing that it has been already accomplished.” Vitringa, as usual, is more sober than the mass; but there seems to be no good reason for treating, as he does, the local references as mystical; for when this great day arrives, the world will behold a wonderful reappearance, not of Israel only, but of their ancient rivals and enemies, which, like the ten tribes, men of the world

assume to be forever extinct. It will be the day of reckoning for the nations, and the end will righteously answer to the beginning. At any rate, there is nothing valid enough to set aside the plain mention of these localities, nor the fact of an utter overthrow of the Gentile enemies of Israel there.

But the great truth which is overlooked by almost all is, that it is no question of the heavenly Church, but of the earthly people, Israel. The Church is removed from the scene by grace to meet the Lord, and be with Him in the Father's house, though surely also to appear with Him in glory and to reign with Him over the earth. But not such is the character of the deliverance of Israel; and of this Isaiah treats, like the Old Testament in general. It is by the execution on earth of judgments, which have for their object the salvation of the Jews and the destruction of their enemies. This accordingly accounts for terms, which are hard indeed to be explained where men think of the Church in these verses. Believe that Israel is there, and what more proper than such a description of their Deliverer, as “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save,” or “The day of vengeance is in my heart?” Is this the way we think of His love to us or His attitude even to the world while we are passing through? How can verses 5, 6 apply to Him as Head of the Church? Bring in the question of Israel delivered for His kingdom here below, and all is consistent and clear.

It is then the Lord, Jehovah-Messiah, who is here seen in the prophetic vision, returning victorious from the spot which more than our prophecy declares to be the theater of the wrath which shall be poured out unsparingly on the foes of His people. “Who is this,” asks the prophet identifying himself with the people, “that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?” His answer (for it assumes the form of a dialog) is, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” “Wherefore,” asks Isaiah again, “art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?” “I have trodden,” answers He, “the winepress alone: and of the people[s] there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.” Manifestly it is no picture of Christ forsaken of God nor even rejected of man, but of His treading down the opposed nations, as grapes in a wine-press. It is not infinite love suffering infinitely that sin might be judged, and God glorified about it, and thence able to justify the believer from all things. It is One trampling down in fury, and the blood of His enemies sprinkling His garments, not His blood washing them in divine grace. It is not the day of grace but of vengeance, though along with it the year of His redeemed is come when the scattered and peeled people shall be brought to Zion with everlasting joy on their heads. Now it is the day of salvation for the Gentiles, who believe, while wrath to the uttermost is come on the Jews who believe not.

Chapter 83

Notes on Isaiah 63:7-19 and Isaiah 64

The last section brought together at its beginning the Lord's first advent, at its end His second advent, with Jerusalem as the special object here contemplated in His earthly plans. We now enter on the closing part of this great and varied prophecy. There are two divisions in it. The first, that which affords us our present theme (from ver. 7 of chap. 63 to the end of chap. 64), consists of a most urgent intercession by the Spirit in the mouth of the prophet on behalf of Israel with Jehovah. The second is His answer which carries us to the end of the book.

Even the least enlightened of modern commentators admits that we open with what seems designed as a formulary of humiliation for the Israelites in order to their restoration. “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” (Ver. 7-9.)

Nothing is more suitable than this exordium, whether one thinks of the Lord first or His people next. Mercies acknowledged lead to fresh mercy. He was not changed in His lovingkindness, nor they in their deep need of it, as only He could show it to them. Hitherto His love had received no return, nothing but bitter disappointment. Yet what could exceed His tender care? “But they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.” (Ver. 10-14.)

It is evident then that God will work morally in Israel. No external deliverances for themselves nor execution of vengeance on His and their foes will suffice for His great purposes, any more than for His own glory or their real good. Hence, the Spirit will exercise them in confession and in supplication before Him. As the verses already looked at set out their ingratitude and self-will in presence of His unmerited goodness, so the next takes the form of prayer. “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our

adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." (Ver. 15-19.)

They are broken in heart and turn in affiance of spirit to the Lord. Had He of old said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie? Now they say, Surely thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Yet do they own that there had been judicial hardening over them, erst over Pharaoh and his people. How deep and persevering the sins that could turn the Lord against His own people as against their enemies of old! and this too so long! for Israel had enjoyed their inheritance but a little while: long, long had their adversaries trodden down Jehovah's sanctuary, and Israel had been as those on whom His name was not called.

This leads out the heart in still more earnestness.

"Look down from heaven" suffices no more. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! when thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou earnest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Ver. 1-4.)

It is interesting here to note the great difference for which the accomplishment of redemption gives occasion by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Compare 1 Cor. 2 We see that God now does reveal the things He has prepared for them that love Him. We do not wait for the emergence of the great High Priest to know our blessedness; for while He is still in the holiest, the Holy Spirit, as the apostle teaches, has come out and given us to enter in as anointed of Him and made free to go boldly within the veil. Indeed for us the veil is rent, and all things hidden are revealed. But Israel (and the prophet speaks of Israel) must wait till they see Him whom their fathers so guiltily pierced, though I doubt not their heart will be truly converted to the Lord, born again but not in peace till they actually behold Him.

Hence we have in what follows the language of true repentance. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those in continuance, and we shall be saved. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou bold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?" (Ver. 5-12.)

Notes on Isaiah 65

This chapter begins the answer of Jehovah to the appeal of His people, in which He explains not only what is now an accomplished fact, but also what is still going on. “I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.” (Ver. 1, 2.) The last two verses of Rom. 10 leave no ground for hesitation as to their bearing. They furnish an inspired comment on our opening verses, and prove beyond controversy that the first intimates the call of the Gentiles which is now proceeding, as the second is the aggrieved witness on God's part of that which gave occasion to their call—the rebelliousness of His ancient people Israel. It is an enemy's work to slight the New Testament use of the passage, as is done by rationalists in order to limit the prophecy to the Jews of the times before and after the Babylonish captivity. Besides, what can be more inconsistent with the evident contrast at the same epoch between verses land 2? The inspired application we might never, unaided, have discovered; but, once made, it approves itself to the spiritual understanding at once as exactly tallying with notorious facts. Grace is sovereign and goes out now to those who never so much as looked for it—to the ungodly Gentiles who had till now stood in no recognized relationship with God. But in turning from Israel, God was entirely justified by their iniquities: after all their advantages, His name had been blasphemed among the Gentiles through the chosen people. Most gracious was He then in calling from among the Gentiles; most righteous in discarding the Jew. This the Lord proceeds to prove by a detail of Israel's insulting wickedness in verses 3-5: “A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.”

It has been objected by some that these idolatries and superstitions, covered over with hypocritical affectation of holiness, did not occur after the return from Babylon. But we must bear in mind that the Holy Ghost in prophecy deals with the evils then existing or in progress, the judgment of which is not met by providential chastisement, such as the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar. Just as the idolatry of the wilderness was only checked from time to time, but not judged fully till the nation was carried into captivity beyond Damascus. (Amos 5) So these evil ways which Isaiah describes did not meet with adequate condemnation till God turns the stream of His calling into other channels. The principle indeed is fully confirmed by the use our Lord (John 12) and the Spirit (Acts 28) make of Isa. 6. The judicial sentence so long suspended from the days of the prophet only fell in the gospel times. It is just so here. But we must bear in mind what we have seen already, that idolatry is to revive in the latter days, when the Jews settle themselves in their land before the Lord comes, judging the evil and establishing the good in order to His millennial reign.

I cannot but think too that the closing words of this divine censure intimate the long patience of God; so that, flatter themselves as they might that He did not heed the character of their misdeeds

as they might, judgment would at length demonstrate, that, however loath to break silence, He will recompense the iniquities of both fathers and children. “Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.” (Ver. 6, 7.)

This might seem to threaten total and hopeless ruin to the ancient people. But no: God had promised; and the unfaithfulness of the people, however surely judged, cannot make void the promises of grace. Hence in verses 8-10 God proceeds to make known, not the bringing in of the Gentiles during Israel's temporary excision from the olive tree of promise and testimony on earth, but the reservation of a portion, the germ of a nation, blessed and a blessing, from Jacob and Judah, according to His early pledges to their fathers. “Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judith an inheritor of my mountains and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.”

Then in verses 11-16 the Lord contrasts the apostates and the elect of the people, the idol-worshippers and His own servants, with their respective destinies. “But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.” The old evil will be judged at the close; just as inquisition for all righteous blood will then be made. It is a time of judgment which ushers in days of unparalleled enjoyment for this earth: that is, it is the end of this age, and the dawn of a new one when former troubles are forgotten.

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.” (Ver. 17-19.) The true key to this is that the predicted change from present things begins at the commencement of the day of the Lord and is only complete before that day gives place to eternity. This alone, as it seems to me, will be found to reconcile all the scriptures which treat of the subject. So in Christ the Christian can even now say that “old things are passed away: behold all things are become new;” while in fact this will only be literally verified when he is changed into His image at His coming. Just so the beginning of the day of the Lord will be an incipient accomplishment of “new heavens and a

new earth," when Jehovah creates Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy; but the absolute fulfillment awaits the close of the millennial day, when to the letter all things shall be made new, the earth and heavens that now are being not shaken only but dissolved, the sea forever gone, and a new heaven and a new earth appearing, wherein righteousness shall dwell, and God shall be all in all. The New Testament naturally dwells on the full issue ultimately involved in the prophecy, as we may see in 2 Peter 3 and in Rev. 21:1-8. But the Jewish prophet, as naturally, was led of the Spirit to dwell on the earliest pledge of this blessing in its dawn on the land and capital and people of Israel.

That Isaiah does embrace this earlier phase as bearing on the Jews and Jerusalem will be manifest to every attentive reader. For the entire description here suits the millennium rather than eternity. I have already pointed out the special place of Jerusalem and her people. Now this of itself suffices to prove it; for though the new Jerusalem possesses an eternal character of special glory, the New Testament is explicit that on the new earth all such distinctions as an earthly city or people melt away for eternity.

Next, verse 20 is decisive against the notion. For death is not wholly extinct in the state of things prominently before our prophet. It is exceptional, but still exists as an instrument of judicial infliction. Man will then fill his days, which he has never yet done—not even before the flood—no, not even Methuselah himself. Not one as yet has stretched across ten centuries. This will be the rule for the righteous who are found alive on earth when the Lord reigns for the thousand years. So thoroughly will death be not the rule but the exception that one dying a hundred years old will be but a child; and even so he that dies at a hundred years will be a sinner under some express curse. In eternity death will not exist.

Again, it is written here that "they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." (Ver. 21-25.) Now, sweet and worthy of God as all this is, it is not heavenly nor eternal in the full sense, though an earnest of final blessedness. It is God's vindication of His character on earth and of His faithful promises to Israel there, when power shall be on the side of righteousness, and the works of the devil shall be manifestly destroyed here below. Not even disappointment shall be known, for before men call, the Lord will answer and will hear while they speak. And the long-groaning earth, freed from its travail, shall yield her increase. The very beasts shall share the general joy, with one solemn and marked exception. Did the enemy of God and man choose one animal to be the vehicle of his temptation with the mother of all men? Even in the otherwise universal joy, God cannot forget this, and would have men also to remember it when that active spirit of evil is debarred from his ravages. So if "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together," and the lion shall eat straw like the ox," non the less shall dust be the serpent's meat. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

Notes on Isaiah 66

The concluding chapter of our prophet pursues what was begun in chapter 65—the answer of Jehovah to the supplication which precedes them both.

“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made.” (Ver. 1, 2.) It is not that God did not accept the house which king David desired, and his son Solomon was given to erect for His glory. It is not that He will not have a sanctuary in the midst of Israel in the glorious land; for He has revealed it minutely, with the feasts, sacrifices, and appurtenances, by Ezekiel. (Chap. 40 - 46) But it is another thing when His people rest in the sanctuary, as of old in the ark to their own shame and discomfiture before their enemies. So it was when the Lord left the temple—no longer God's but their house—left it to them desolate, Himself its true glory being despised and rejected. So Stephen charged home on them these very words. (Acts 7:48-50.) It was not he, nor Luke, but Isaiah who declared that the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; and this in full view of the exceeding magnifical temple which Solomon built. Heaven is His throne, earth His footstool. What can man do worthily for Him to rest in? He needs nothing from man's resources! His own hand has made all these things in comparison with which man's greatest exertions are puny indeed. Once more among the Jews at the end of the age shall be file state of things which draws out this rebuke of their own prophet. Trusting in the house that they are at length allowed to build in Jerusalem, they must prove afresh that an unbelieving idolatrous heart desecrates a temple, and that not thus can sin be settled between God and the sinner. Earthly splendor in such circumstances is but gilding over iniquity. It is real hypocrisy.

“And all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (Ver. 2.) Thus the line is drawn here as before between a godly remnant, and the people apostate as a whole. Hence their oblations are vain. “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. (Ver. 3.) The English Bible follows the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic, as well as the Chaldee paraphrase. Houbigant, Bp. Lowth, Horsley, De Wette, &c., omit the terms of comparison (inserted in italics in the A. V.) which in their judgment mar the true sense. Their translation makes the verse to intimate the combination of ritual observance with open wickedness and Gentile abominations. Otherwise the statement is that their impiety made their acts of worship to be so many horrors.

In either view they had chosen their own path of self-will and disregard of God for the evils they loved; but God's retribution would not be wanting. (Ver. 4.) “I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spike, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.” No delusions among the nations were more complete than Israel's have been and are yet to be; and the evils

they dreaded, and sacrificed all to avoid, were just what befell them, and must till the end come. Did they refuse the Messiah? They have been a prey to false Messiahs, and shall yet bow down to the Antichrist. Did they own no king but Caesar? In Caesar they found a destroyer. Did they fear the Romans would come and take away their place and nation? All the world knows bow punctually their fear was accomplished; and yet the end is not. Greater abominations shall be seen in them; greater delusions, greater fears, and greater fulfillments. The abomination of desolation of which the Savior spoke (citing not Dan. 11:31, which was then past, but Dan. 12:11, which is still future) must yet be set where it ought not, in the sanctuary at Jerusalem; and then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It is impossible to interpret either Matt. 24, or Dan. 12, or our chapter, of the Roman siege: but the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.” (Ver. 5-14.)

Thus no longer by testimony to the heart but by manifest judgment will the Lord decide between cattle and cattle. The infidel scoff, which so long harassed the heavenly people, will then be put to shame among the poor in spirit of the earthly people. The Lord will be glorified to the joy of such as trembled at His word before He appears, to the eternal infamy of those who knew Him not and doubted His interest in His despised confessors here below. For Christ and for the Church, they were raised or changed and taken on high leaving the world without a blow or even a notice. But it will not be so for the Jew by and by: “A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies.” The Roman destruction is no adequate fulfillment of this; but it shall be fulfilled to the letter of many prophecies. (Compare Isa. 18:3-7; 9:3-5; 29; Zech. 14:1-4.) And then shall follow the new birth or ingathering of Zion's children, no longer to be Abraham's seed alone but his children in deed and in truth. As nothing of the kind followed the capture by Nebuchadnezzar, no more did it ensue when Titus took Jerusalem. No outpouring of vengeance on the guilty city, followed by blessing unexampled for fullness and without sorrow, has as yet appeared to satisfy the terms of the prediction. Sudden as it will be, it will also be permanent. It will be the day of the Lord when man's and Israel's sad history is to be reversed; and those who loved and mourned for Jerusalem shall rejoice for her and share

the rich results of her blessedness. Yet is it in no way the character of gospel joy which blends inward comfort by the Spirit's power with shame and sorrow and rejection in the world. Here, contrariwise, “when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb, and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.” It is the future day, not of grace and salvation only, as it is to-day, but of vengeance also, when the Lord will not stop the words as once He did on earth. Then He was proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord and this only. By and by He will both proclaim and accomplish that year and the day of vengeance. For this is in His heart, and the year of His redeemed is come. Both will be fulfilled then without let or delay. It will be the introduction of His day, and the millennial reign.

“For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. For I know their works and their thoughts it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.” (Ver. 15-18.) The efforts of ancient and modern commentators to apply this passage, like the rest, to gospel times, are desperate, but vain. It is unequivocally a day of judgment, not the glad tidings of salvation by His grace; it is His revelation from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and on them that obey not the gospel. It is evident that the Jews in that day will not only set up their ritual again, but be addicted to heathen abominations. It is the day of divine recompenses when old evils will revive and amalgamate with novel iniquities, that all may come before the Lord in judgment, and a new era dawn on both Jew and Gentile over the earth now purged. It will be a question then not of believing the grace of God, but of seeing the glory of Jehovah that is to be revealed.

“And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.” (Ver. 19, 20.) Vitringa's argument on verse 19, that no future call of Gentiles can be here intended, because those named have long since known the God of Israel, seems to me of no real force. For even Christendom will then be in a state of apostasy (2 Thess. 2); and, besides, the hearing of Jehovah's fame and seeing His glory refers to the manifestation of Himself that will then be made here below.

Thus an unsparing divine judgment will be executed on all the gathered nations when the Jews are dealt with in their pollutions; and those that escape of them will be sent of God to the distant nations ignorant of what He has wrought. Gentiles bring back all the Jews remaining outside the Holy Land. It is, I suppose, the detail of the prediction in chapter 18:7. From all nations shall this offering to the Lord be brought, and by every means of conveyance. Before this it will have been only the Jews and not all Israel.

All this seems to me not the same as the gospel or its effects, but in the most certain and evident contrast with it. The offering now is characteristically of the Gentiles, as we see in Rom. 15:16, and as experience shows. Jews are no doubt now as ever converted, but they are comparatively rare. The prophet contemplates the day when all Israel shall be saved, when the apostates have been surprised by the divine judgment. And as to any supposed difficulty of reconciling with John 4:21 Jerusalem as a center for all nations, it is imaginary, or rather depends on the confusion of the hour that now is with the day that shall be. Our Lord was contemplating the time of His rejection and His approaching absence in heaven; the prophet had in view the day of His glory for the earth. Distinguish the times, and the objection vanishes. Jerusalem has no place in the Christian system; it will have a greater and holier place than it ever had in the coming day of Jehovah.

Hence it is obvious that the ordinary strain of argument and interpretation, popular, from the days of Origen and Jerome down to the present, is founded on a total confusion of things that differ. Christianity no doubt is very distinct; but that the new age must be a repetition of the same aims, principles, and ways, is an error quite as great as that which fancies the gospel to be only a continuation of the law. Israel shall be established forever before the Lord. “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” (Ver. 22, 23.) There is no solid reason for doubting the literal bearing of the prediction. New moons and sabbaths shall once more figure in the worship of Jehovah; but it will be no more so contracted as of old, for “all flesh” shall share in it, though (from other scriptures we may gather) on no such exalted ground or such nearness to the King as His chosen people. His house shall be literally a house of prayer for all people, which will in no way hinder the greatness of His name among the Gentiles, or the offering of incense to it, or a pure offering in every place.

And as His honor is thus maintained, so is His fear. Not only shall there be an awful outpouring of wrath on His adversaries at the end of this age, but Jehovah will keep up a salutary warning nigh the very spot where His glory dwells. “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” (Ver. 24.) There is nothing really obscure in this, save to those who regard the passage from a Christian point of view. In its own connection it is most simple, solemn, and expressive.

Chapter 86

Fragment: Understanding O. T. Scriptures

The great hindrance to our understanding the Old Testament scriptures is our putting ourselves into them. God's faithfulness, of course, is always true; but when the Spirit of prophecy comes to speak of the people, and state of the people, e.g., hiding the face from them, we know they do not apply literally to us. He does not hide from us—His face is shining on us in Christ. Does He hide His face from Christ? We may be in a sad state of soul and not enjoy: that is another thing. We lose our place if we put ourselves in the place of the Jew. We have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, and He is the Spirit of adoption.

Chapter 87

Jesus Christ Come in the Flesh

The ark and the camp were, in some sense, necessary to each other during the journey through the wilderness. The ark, seated in the tabernacle on which the cloud rested, had to guide the camp; and the camp, in its order, had to accompany and guard the ark and all connected with it.

This was the business of the camp. There was to be subjection to the will of Him who dwelt in the cloud; dependence on Him who led them daily; conscious liberty because of having left Egypt behind them, and hope because of having Canaan before them. Such a mind as this was to be in the camp; but its business was to conduct the mystic house of God onward to its rest, “the possession of the Gentiles.”

Then journeying through that desert would not have constituted divine pilgrimage. Many a one had traveled that road without being a stranger and pilgrim with God. In order to be such, the ark must be in their company.

The mind of the camp, of which I have spoken, might betray its weakness, or forget itself, and this might lead, as we know it did, to chastening again and again. But if its business, of which I have also spoken, were given up, there would be loss of everything. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, instead of the ark of Jehovah, and the camp, therefore, had its road diverted to Damascus or Babylon, far away from the promised Canaan. (Amos 5:25; Acts 7:13.)

And thus it is with ourselves. We are to maintain those truths or mysteries which the tabernacle and its furniture represented: and the Apostle commits our entrance into Canaan to that. “If ye continue in the faith;” and again, “if ye keep in memory what I have written unto you.” Our safety, our rest in the heavenly Canaan, depends on our keeping the truth.

This, however, is to be added—that not merely for our own safety sake, but for Christ's honor is the truth to be kept.

This is to be much considered. Supposing, for a moment, that our own safety were not concerned in it, Christ's honor is, and that is enough. Such a thing is contemplated in 2 John 10: the elect lady was inside the house—she was in personal safety, but she has a duty to perform to “the doctrine of Christ;” so that if one come to her door, and bring not that doctrine, she must keep him outside, and refuse to have him where she is.

Title to entrance is confession to that doctrine, a confession of “Jesus Christ come in the flesh,” a confession that involves or secures the glory of His person. A full confession to His work will not do. The one outside may bring with him a sound faith as to the atonement, sovereignty of grace, and like truths; but all this is not a warrant for letting him in. There must be confession to the person also. “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son: if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he

that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Surely this is clear and decided. I believe that this is much to be considered. The truth touching Christ's person is to be maintained by us, even though our soul's safety were not involved in it. I grant that our salvation is involved. But that is not all. He who owns not that truth is to be kept outside. It imparts tenderness as well as strength to see that the name of Jesus is thus entrusted to the guardianship of the saints. This is what we owe Him if not ourselves.

Those journeying from Egypt to Canaan will not do. Let the journey be attended with all the trial of such an arid, unsheltered, and trackless road, still it is not divine pilgrimage. A mere toilsome, self-denying life, even though endured with that moral courage which becomes pilgrims, will not do. There must be the carriage of the ark of God, confession to the truth, and maintenance of the name of Jesus.

Now, in John's Epistles, the name "Jesus Christ" expresses or intimates, I believe, the deity of the Son. The Holy Ghost, or the Unction, so filled the mind of that apostle with the truth, that "the Word" which had been "made flesh" was God, that though he speaks of Him by a name which formally expresses the Son in manhood or in office, with John that is no matter. The name is nothing—at least nothing that can interfere with the full power of prevailing assurance, that He is "that which was from the beginning," the Son in the glory of the Godhead. This is seen and felt at the very opening of the first epistle, and so, I believe, throughout. (See chap. 1:3, 7; 2:1; 3:23; 4:2; 5:20; 2 John 3-7.)

In the thoughts of this epistle, "Jesus Christ" is always this divine One, so to speak, the eternal Life manifested. With John, "Jesus Christ" is "the true God." Jesus is the "he" and the "him" in the argument of his first epistle; and this "he" and "him" ever keeps before us One who is God, though in assumed relations and covenant dealings.

The confession, therefore, which is demanded by them is this—that it was God who was manifested, or who came in the flesh. (See 1 John John 7.) For in these epistles, as we have now seen, "Jesus Christ" is God. His name as God is Jesus Christ. And it is assumed or concluded that "the true God" is not known, if He who was in the flesh, Jesus Christ, be not understood as such; and all this simply because He is God. Any other received as such is an idol. (1 John 20, 21.) The soul that abides not in this doctrine "has not God," but he who abides in it "has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

This, I judge, is the mind and import of the required confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." I here speak of God under the name of Jesus Christ, and it is, therefore, the demand of a confession to the great mystery of "God manifested in the flesh."

The very adjunct (as another has written to me), "come in the flesh," throws strongly forward the deity of Christ; because if He were a man, or anything short of what He is, it would be no such wonder that He should come in the flesh. And verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1 guide us to John's thoughts in the use of the name "Jesus Christ." That which was from the beginning, the eternal Life which was with the Father, was the Person he declared to them. The words "with the Father" are important, making it evident that the Son was the eternal One, the name of this eternal Son being Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to compare the close with the commencement of this epistle—"this is the true God and the [with the article] eternal life."

I desire to bless the Lord for giving my soul fresh assurance on such simple ground of Scripture, that this duty lies on us of maintaining the honor of the name of Jesus.

1. As the born One—holy, meeting God's mind in the nature or human material.

2. As the circumcised One—perfect under the law, meeting God's mind in it.

3. As the baptized One—meeting God's mind in dispensational order and righteousness.

4. As the anointed One—meeting God's mind as His image or representative.

5. As the devoted One—meeting God's mind in the covenant of grace to sinners.

6. As the risen One—sealed with God's approval in victory for sinners.

Thus does He meet all the mind of God while providing for us. All was magnified in Him and by Him, all made honorable. God's proposed delight in man, or glory by Him, has been richly answered in the blessed Jesus. While in His person he was “God manifest in the flesh,” in the succession of His stages through the earth He was accomplishing all the divine purpose, delight, and glory, in man. Nothing unworthy of God was in the man Christ Jesus, His person, experiences or ways.)

Chapter 88

Jesus Led of the Spirit

There is a subject of considerable interest in the earlier parts of the gospels, but more especially to be found in Luke, Mark, and Matthew, since these three display Christ in His human relationships as the devoted servant of God, or as the perfect man in the midst of mankind, or in the narrower circle of the nation as the only true Israelite—the Messiah, the promised seed. The subject of interest to which I would call attention is introduced to us in what has just been said as regards the characteristic differences of each evangelist, and is nothing less than the fact, that the Lord in His lifetime on the earth regained, and beyond measure surpassed, every position in which God as Creator, or Almighty, or Jehovah had been discredited, and forced into the strange place of a Judge; whether by Adam's sin and forfeiture of Eden, or by man's break down as the servant of God, or by the nation of Israel's rebellion in Canaan, and its consequent dispersion to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Let us begin with the example last named and call to mind, as Matthew describes to us, the state of Israel when the real son of David, and son of Abraham was given the faith of the nation at His birth in Bethlehem. Under the Roman yoke, as the Jewish people were, instead of under the direct government of their Jehovah God (as was their normal position in the world), carried into Babylon as they once were, and, lastly, made tributaries to Caesar—these are sufficient contrasts with the times of Jerusalem and Solomon to assure any who need such a proof of the displeasure of Him who had sold them into the hands of their enemies. The whole line of prophets opens out to us the moral causes and political reasons of this favored nation's overthrow and punishment in the righteous ways of their Jehovah— “God of the whole earth.” In brief, their pathway out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, by Moses, and the overwhelming destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts, were but the inauguration of a new race of people, with whom God had bound Himself up by promises and covenants, which threw them out into the pre-eminence that marked their every step with Jehovah, the God of Israel. The responsibility was equal to the height of this distinguished nearness; therefore both are declared under that one charter of their true liberty— “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you For all your iniquities,” saith the Lord. Egypt, the wilderness, Jordan, and Canaan once shone bright, magnificently bright, as they were led on by “the pillar and the cloud,” the “visible glory,” and the “ark of the covenant.” What a people is this called out to make a history for themselves, and under what auspices! How grandly they come out with Moses under the strong arm of Jehovah's deliverance, and how victoriously they enter into the land with Joshua, under “the captain of the Lord's host.”

But where was all this glory gone when Tents was born into their midst? “Ichabod” had been written as a premonitory warning in the days of Eli, and Ezekiel had witnessed the departure of the glory in his times, only to be exceeded by the actual poverty which marked the royal house and illustrious lineage of David when Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ, closed up that line and gave room for the offended pride of the people, “Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary?... And they were offended in him.” That wonder of the world has collapsed, and a theocracy has broken down when connected with the

responsibility of the nation, as the Creator had been previously outraged in the person of Adam, the man upon whose fidelity hung the destiny of the whole world. Alas, for mankind and the bright prospects of Israel besides! All is gone out in darkness and disgrace that once shone so brightly; the whole is in ruins, one vast overthrow; the hour of Satan's triumph and man's defeat! God has been dishonored everywhere and on all points—wherever He came out to walk with His creatures. The walk in the garden—how short! and the walk with Israel, the beloved people. How all is become the witness of God's righteous indignation and of man's punishment! The cradle of heaven-born hopes and promises is turned into the grave of the saddest disappointment and shame. Satan seems to be master of the whole position, walking to and fro throughout the whole earth, in the title and power which human transgression and God's holiness had put into the devil's hands. Will God leave all this that He created for His own praise and delight in the hands of the enemy? Has He no resources adequate to such an occasion? Has Revelation no one in reserve to make such an extremity as this the grand opportunity for vindicating the glory of God against Satan?

What an hour! what a new moment in the everlasting interests of God and His creatures is this! and how answered and met? “When the fullness of time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.” He who alone could be the light in the midst of darkness like this has come forth from God, and is come into the world; has taken on Him “the seed of Abraham;” has taken “part with flesh and blood” to be made “perfect through sufferings.” What a relief and resource to us, as we are now called to trace the new history and ways of “flesh and blood” in this Jesus-Emmanuel; for, having come upon no less an errand than to glorify God in the very place where He had been outraged, and to finish the work which was given Him to do, now comes the question, Where will this Jesus, the Messiah, begin this mighty work—the complete vindication and reinstatement of God by Him “who was found in fashion as a man?” His first steps will be surely over the pathway of His people Israel's disgrace, according to that word “out of Egypt have I called my Son;” on that spot He will plant His feet, and light up once again, with more resplendent glory than ever attached to their earlier history (when “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”), the way that He will make for Himself, as He passes from Egypt into the wilderness with John the Baptist, and down into the waters of Jordan with His repentant people in their confession of their sins, that He may join them as the fulfiller of all righteousness. He is up to the height of the faithfulness of God, the Jehovah of Israel, and He is down to the level of the remnant's condition and state. What a new link is this in Jordan between God and His people! and how different from their triumphant march over that river with Joshua, and the typical ark of the covenant before the God of the whole earth! If, however, this new place of John and Jesus, and the remnant and Jordan, bring up their reminiscences and regrets, in comparison with the illustrious journey of the same people with Moses and with Joshua, yet the scene before us in Matt. 3, is morally resplendent in its own peculiarities. The nation or the believing remnant must learn the holiness of their Jehovah, whose almighty, power they had celebrated on the shores of the Red Sea, and looked at in the light of “the holy, holy, holy One of Israel;” they had now to find that self-same power against them, to drive them out from the very land into which it had once set and defended them, The Jehovah that teaches with a strong hand has set them their lessons now, according to what they have been towards Him; and it is at this point that Jesus by His forerunner identifies Himself with the remnant, who are morally in the place corresponding to the ways of God in righteous government towards them. They are come out at the call of John the Baptist, instead of Moses, when the “I am” had

sent him as the deliverer in power; and are confessing their sins with the hope that the kingdom of heaven which John preached as at band should be set up under the Messiah who was to come after him. The antitype of the ark of the covenant is now in Jordan with them; and “thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” from the lips of Jesus is but the counterpart of that other word which tells us “it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” It is upon these new associations between the Messiah and the people and between Jesus and Jehovah that the heavens will fold themselves back in approbation and delight. They have found their relief in the activities which have given the remnant in Jordan their resource. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God Eke a dove descending and lighting upon him.” The heavens in their history had long ago gathered blackness in the days of Noah and had folded themselves up in impenetrable silence till now. For what had they to look down upon with satisfaction, or for the God whom they concealed to commend? But to the man coming up out of Jordan they will delightedly open, and the voice from within, as well as the dove from without, will alike tell of God's vindication by accrediting Him who has done it as “my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” What new relations are witnessed to here, and what a new starting point is this! The priests' feet stood firm in Jordan, but never after this fashion. True the nation may have forfeited every title to blessing and have been turned out of Canaan to take the place of repentant sinners; but who is this stranger in their midst and yet no stranger? and what is He with them for, and what will His identification with them procure for them in the title of righteousness towards Himself and as the securer of grace and forgiveness to them? These are the new questions. But the heavens and “the Spirit like a dove” have united themselves with the man upon earth, and that man “the beloved Son.” Jehovah is once more set in relation with His ancient people, not under the new covenant as yet, but by means of Him who will be in due time its mediator, though at present the only true Israelite and the veiled Messiah. Man in the person of Christ supplies to Jehovah the ground and reasons for coming out afresh as the “leader” according to His own righteous government of this new man! “It became him for whom are all things and by whom to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Israel and man had not only broken down before God in Eden and in Canaan, but had put power into the bands of Satan; for the wages of disobedience are thus turned into capital for the devil; and if this Second man is equal to all emergencies and Calls on one in His position, He must overcome him who overcame Adam, and will be led into temptation, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” Man in the garden and Israel in the wilderness had fallen under the temptations to which they were exposed on their way into rest. “They could not enter, in because of unbelief.” As a man come into the midst of all that was “groaning under the bondage of corruption,” what course will He pursue in His active love but that of “perfect through sufferings?” And consequently He will be pre-eminent as “the man of sorrows” and acquaint Himself with grief. “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses;” moreover He will go down into poverty and say, “foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” He will accept no exemption from the range of human griefs and sorrows and sufferings, but be the One in their midst who will go more fully than any else possibly could into their sources and extent, on account of His own inherent perfectness and so take up all in the real feelings of manhood, yet according to God and with God. Strange sight! then was Jesus “led up of the Spirit” and a fresh moment of interest is come; and

another question is to be tried—will He who has just been marked out by the heavens allow Himself to be tempted of the devil, that He may conquer every where by life and morally too in life, where all else have been overthrown, till at last Jesus will by His own death “overcome him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage?”

Who leads this Jesus into the wilderness? and why must He be “led of the Spirit” “to be tempted?” are inquiries which we may very well make, and which get their answer and meaning as we see the devil leaving this victorious One, and angels coming and ministering to Him! Regaining the place which Adam lost can never be the measure of His paths, who, in making a new position for Himself, surpasses every previous one. Thus, if we inquire what He was to God, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” is the answer. Do we ask what He was for man? “The Spirit in the form of a dove,” alighting on Him and abiding, is the unmistakable reply. Do we ask what He was for Israel? Let Egypt, the wilderness, and the waters of Jordan with John and the remnant of that day and the opened heavens, say. If we further inquire what He was as regards the devil, man in the person of Christ is master of the entire position, and has made all His own. He who fasted forty days and forty nights and was afterward an hungered could not be moved away from His allegiance to God nor out of the place of devotedness which became Him as the true servant. He closed His heart against all that the devil had to offer to the extent of “the glory of the world.”

Man had dishonored God as creator long ago, but this second bows to what it became God to do, and is led to be tempted that He might go lower than all mere human responsibility and failure, and likewise go higher for God than any previous claims had demanded from man. Thus He will go up to the mountain top, and take His seat as the great expositor of the mind of Jehovah, as regards the principles on which the in-coming kingdom should be founded, and the style of behavior suited to those whom He would introduce into it; for they are to be “perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect,” who makes His “sun to shine upon the evil and the good.” Moreover Moses said on his mountain, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but this expositor will say, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him,” and “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” There is no compromise anywhere: God and the relations with His creatures, even conduct and responsibility under Christ's presence, and personal care in the midst of His disciples, are raised; the claims and holiness of God are alike met and exceeded in doctrine on the mount, and in loving obedience by Christ Himself. The devil is nowhere with this last Adam (after his temptations in the wilderness) till Gethsemane, where the last efforts are tried by Satan to terrify that heart by death and the grave, which he could not shake by the blandishments of the world.

Man, in the person of Jesus, has gone down under everything, having emptied Himself and been obedient to death, even the death of the cross: and what could God do on His part but raise Him up over everything, and give Him a name above every name that is named not only in this world but in that which is to come? God has man to glorify as the righteous reward of His obedience and sufferings, and, finally, His death, the death of the cross, where He made atonement for our sins by bearing them, and suffering the just One for the unjust, and putting out of sight all the hindering causes of sin and guilt forever. By the blood-shedding of Christ, God has been set free from all the calls of judgment which pressed for punishment and death; for Christ has died in our stead. He

has liberated God. So that having a Man in the heavens whom He has glorified, the counsels and purposes from everlasting in Christ can now come in, and God even go beyond Himself, in all that He had ever set up in creation and Israel, by bringing in His own mysteries, “the things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” And who has done all this, but that very Jesus-Emmanuel who has also carried His believing people outside the range of death and judgment, to make us partakers in a life with Himself, the risen One, which, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, will enable us to take up every principle of conduct, and to be satisfied with nothing less than to live Christ over again till He comes to have us with Himself where He is!

In the mean time, while waiting for Him, what dignity attaches to the saint of this dispensation as told, “Ye are the temple of God,” and “the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.” And again, “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body [and in your spirit, which are God's].” The Lord Jesus made a position for Himself as a man when upon the earth, and elevated doctrine and practice to such an extent that He will at last die to put God in the place of a Justifier; and, by His own session at the right hand on high, become the head of life to His Church, that His members may go back and take all up in living power which He ever spoke or did, and be in this way superior to all that became mere man as man; and finally that they may be like Himself in nature, righteousness, and glory, as the proper manifestation of the unfettered power of God on behalf of Christ and the Church forever. B.

Chapter 89

Jesus the Willing Captive

(John 18:1-10)

Two points attract and fill our hearts in this passage. First, the perfect willingness with which Christ gives Himself up, the unhesitating way in which He presents Himself to the armed band come out to seek Him, fully knowing what was to befall Him. “Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way,” proving to us, while He offers Himself, there is a full and perfect deliverance for us. “Of them which thou gavest me, I have lost none.” The Lord presents Himself, that none of us might even be touched with the power of the enemy. It was the same self-devotion on the cross, though here it was the power of Satan, but He had gone through it. When led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, He bound the strong man, and introduced present blessing into the world; but we as men were unable to profit by this, because of a moral inward incapacity to receive the blessing that came. Outwardly, it was received in healing diseases, &c., but men had no heart to receive Him. If He turned out the legion of devils from him that was possessed, they turned Him out. The hearts of men in such a condition were glad to get rid of Him, and this shows another and a deeper evil to be remedied—that man morally has departed from God, and that he is himself irremediable—that nothing will do, but a new creation, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” Thus, here the Lord has not only to conquer Satan, but to underlay man in his moral departure from God. “This is your hour” — “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” Satan brings all this darkness and death to bear on the soul of the Lord, his object being to get between His soul and God. So, the more pressed by Satan, the nearer to God. Therefore, it is said, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly;” and in consequence He receives nothing at the band of Satan, but of His Father. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Before He left Gethsemane, the whole power of Satan was totally destroyed. He had gone through the hour with His Father, and now takes the cup at the hand of His Father, as an act of obedience. He is now as calm as when doing any other miracle (healing the servant's ear), as if nothing had happened. It was their hour, and the power of darkness was upon them, not on Him. “Whom seek ye?” — “I am he.” “As soon then as he said unto them, I am he, they fell backward and fell to the ground;” but He presents Himself again (as he says in John 11:31. “But that the world may know I love the Father... Arise, let us go hence”), saying, “Whom seek ye?. . . If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way,” and they were not touched, as a token of the complete deliverance of us all.

At the cross He cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He went through the hour in Gethsemane, and here drinks the terrible cup. His soul had drunk the cup of wrath, and only one thing remained. He said, “I thirst,” this He said that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and crying, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, he gave up the ghost.” Here we learn the perfect deliverance that has been obtained for us, and that all is perfect light and joy for us. If I look at Satan, I see his power annihilated and destroyed. If I look at wrath, He has drunk it to the dregs. He entered into all the darkness and the wrath of God, but before He went out of the world He had passed through it all, and went out in perfect quiet. The work is so perfectly done that death is

nothing. “His hour being come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,” He passes out of Satan's reach and beyond all wrath to the Father. No believer is under the power of Satan. Thus Israel of old, though once under Pharaoh in Egypt, but when delivered was never under the power of the Canaanite, except when he failed, as we know in the case of Ai; so we may fail too, but we are in that new creation that has passed all the power of Satan and the wrath of God. Do your souls realize the truth that Christ has “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light,” so that our souls are brought into the light as He is in the light? It was not true when He was down here; but now we are brought into the light where there is no darkness at all. May our souls know and enjoy the true and perfect deliverance that is our portion in Him!

To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and our privilege. The search after novelties which are foreign to Him is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But He who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know him; or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him and not to feel that He is everything! That is to say, that He satisfies us, and that, by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

Chapter 90

John 1

This first chapter of John brings out all the various personal glories of Jesus, excepting Head of the Church and High Priest. He is the Word, Life, Light, Son of God, Lamb of God, Messiah, King of Israel, And Son of man. He is King of Israel, according to Psa. 2, and Son of man according to Psa. 8 where all things are spoken of as put under Him. Philip is a type of the remnant of Israel.

In the two days of chapter 1 we have the ministry of John Baptist and the ministry of Christ. “The third day,” in chapter 3, is a shadowing forth of the marriage, when Israel shall no more be “desolate,” but “married.” It is millennial glory, in its two features, the marriage having to do with the despised residue of Israel from verse 1, and the judgment of evil in Jerusalem, shown forth from verse 14.

Looking at the beginning of chapter 1, we see what the grace is in which God deals with us. Christ is displayed as Light. He was the perfect manifestation of God in whom is no darkness at all. Christ is beyond the region of law. The law never brought to God. It only showed us what we ought to be before God, but could never bring God to us or us to God.

In Christ it is God displaying Himself in grace. Jesus did not come to judge; that He will do hereafter. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” &e. “In the beginning was the Word.” He is Creator. “All things were made by him.” In him was life. He was a divine person (and that was essential) and He communicates eternal life. This Life was the Light of men, not of angels—the light, not terror, of men; but He showed what everything was and thus convicted their consciences. In Him men saw what they ought to be, for He brought the image of God down into their very path and reflected God's light on it. All that God was might be seen in His character. Holiness, love, truth, patience—all were displayed in Him. He never was moved or flattered. All was displayed in a man, and therefore it is intelligible to men. When I am impatient, vexed, heated, I can understand the patience of another towards me. Look at Him, and see perfect patience at all times! It was living goodness displayed in Him—perfect sinlessness, which I cannot appreciate, but which I may understand, just as, when I am cold, I understand the value of a fire. No selfishness in Him. Take a day, and see how much you are spending upon self! How much thinking about self! How much did Christ think and spend for Himself? Selfishness is easily detected in one another, because of the selfishness within.

This was not God merely telling men what they ought to be, but here was the thing brought before men. He was Light and He was Life, and that in the midst of all the evil amongst men, displayed on earth, not in heaven. They had the living exercise of all this before their eyes, not a story of what God was in His nature; but every day He was displaying the perfectness of God amongst men. He was there in living reality. He ever was and is now love, holiness, &c., but there it was displayed. What wonderful, distinguishing grace this is! He did not take the nature of angels, but “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” He belongs to us as men—suited to us. Now we see where the terrible sin of man comes out. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not” — “He was in the world, and the world knew him not” — “He came to his own, and his own

received him not” — “They saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him.” Thus the wickedness of the heart was fully shown—proved to be reprobate. God came in, but there was no sense of His grace or holiness felt. There was no desire to discern or to have God when He comes, for they had lost all moral discernment of good and evil. What bad hearts we have! No person takes pleasure in Christ naturally. Well, amongst such reprobates Christ comes. He comes to call men's attention to the light. They were liking evil, drunkenness, &c., not liking to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. 1); and there was no turning of heart to Christ when He came. This makes it more manifest what grace has done. The question to each is, Have you seen any beauty in Christ? have you any delight in Him?

John's ministry is of no good—it turns to no good. God sends His messengers to tell people of the Light, and to call their attention to the Light. He takes pains, as it were, to rap at people's consciences and tell them Christ is coming. He sends a messenger before His face to prepare His way. Men might say, If the Light is there, it will shine all around, and we shall see it. No! God sends to tell them it is there, but they do not regard it.

Another thing is, when quickened of the Spirit and there is light in the heart, then we can justify wisdom's ways. “Wisdom is justified of her children.” John came for a witness to the Light. He was not that Light. Christ is just what is suited to the heart, where grace is working. See Simeon, Anna, the Samaritan woman, the Syrophenoecian woman. The greatest reprobate He is suited for. He is the Light of every one, whatever condition they might be in. He brings out what was—is—in them; and in another sense, besides this, He was the Light, for man being a sinner, he needs forgiveness, and Christ could forgive their sins. If He had come in glory, men would fly away if they could from Him. But when a person is diseased, instead of flying away from the doctor, he will tell him all. So the poor awakened sinner may tell all to Christ.

The world did not know Him. Pilate said, “What is truth?” when He who was “the truth” was standing before him. “His own received him not.” The Jews were those who said, “Away with him, away with him.”

Verse 12 speaks of some who did receive Him—a little remnant, and “to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” They were born of God. When the power of God works in the conscience and heart, it produces life. New, eternal life is given. Christ was not the mere display of life, but “in him was life,” and to those who believe Christ is “our life.” The word produces faith in the soul. I believe the word, and life is communicated by the Spirit of God. “Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth.”

Mark what faith knows Him to be. This is more than the mere manifestation of life. When life is given, the person who is born of God is a son, not a servant but a son. The servant does not abide ever in the house, but the son does. If my servant behaves ill, I can turn him out; but with my son, I may whip him, but do not turn him out. When we are born of God, we are brought into His house as His own, and He makes no mistakes in what He does. What I am as a child depends on what my Father is. He gives power to become the sons of God, that is, to take this place; and we are wrong if we do not own our privilege. He has made us sons, and we ought to take this. We are flying against His grace and truth if we do not take it. We are put into the same place with Christ. He is there as the Son of the Father. We only want eyes open to see Him. The Father is displayed in the Son, and when I see the person of Christ, I am born of God and become a son. The Father's

ear was always open to Christ, and it is always open to us. If we ask for foolish things, in His kindness He will not give them us, but there is nothing we ask for that He cannot do, for He has all power in heaven and earth. Many things we may ask for of another who has no ability to give us what we want; but not so with God.

Verse 16. He makes us partakers of His fullness. “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” If I see what the Son is, I see what the Father is; for Christ was in the bosom of the Father, in the most intimate place in the Father's love. When I believe in His fullness, He brings me into the possession of the same there is in Him. Christ has declared God. “No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “I go to my Father and your Father.” “Ye are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26.) It is not presumption, and it is by having the affections centered on Jesus, I realize it.

“There is one among you whom ye know not.” I am not worthy to unloose His shoe. This is John's testimony of himself, but he says, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Now He is gone away, but He is still “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” The result of His coming to take away the sin of the world will be that the world, instead of being on the ground of sin before God, will be free from sin, when the new heavens and the new earth come forth, when old things have passed away, &e. To us it applies now in another way. Bad hearts we have still—naughty children continually, but there cannot be the allowance of sin, if the Spirit of God is in us and God has taken away our sin.

God has provided a lamb, a victim for sin—a lamb for our need, but it is God's lamb for Himself. We have not to find a lamb, but God has found it and set it forth to us. It is not now we having to bring a lamb to God, but He bringing His to us. What grace! Abraham said, God will provide Himself with a lamb for a burnt-offering, and God has provided a lamb.

Then see the perfectness of this victim. It is God Himself has done it, and it is a perfect lamb, taking away sin; so I get a perfect conscience. This Lamb of God, this spotless One, was set up three and a half years before He was taken up to glory. Then there was the perfect satisfaction for my sins by His death, the offering of this perfect One, “the red heifer without spot, and upon which never came yoke.” He had neither sin in itself, nor the yoke of sin, but was perfect.

“The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Then God has thought about my sins, and this is the change the knowledge of grace makes, that I am glad for God to know all my sins. Suppose there was one left undiscovered, it might come up against me in the day of judgment; but God knows all, and has known them to put them away.

Verse 30. We find not only the Lamb set forth here, but all through this part we get Christ as a man, anointed of the Father—not only “the Lamb of God,” but a man sealed with the power of the Holy Ghost; and this is of great importance, for because of it I not only have my sins put away, but a power that links me with heaven. The Spirit descended and abode upon Him. It was not so with a prophet. The Spirit came upon a prophet, but never abode upon him. In Christ's birth the Holy Ghost acted divinely—that is another thing; but this was the Holy Ghost coming and anointing with power and remaining on Him.

Being quickened, born of God, I have some one to reveal the things of God to me. The new nature could not do that; but I am sealed and anointed of the Holy Ghost and have the earnest of the

inheritance. I am sealed till the day of redemption, i.e., glory. The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit dwells in him, and is power in him to resist his own will, and it is that which will raise him up at the last day. Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away sin is first known. Then we know Him as the accepted man at the right band of God, as in the Epistles of Paul.

In this chapter, then, we have, first, the Father's love revealed, as Christ enjoyed it; secondly, Christ is looked at down here as the Lamb of God, &c.; and, thirdly, poor and helpless things that we are, we have the Holy Ghost in us to work in power, and bring forth fruits of the Spirit. And hence now the character of all sin in the believer is, not that he breaks the law, but that he grieves the Spirit.

Chapter 91

On John 11

In this chapter we have an example of the way in which our hearts are often bound down by circumstances. We see too that while the Lord answers the cry of our hearts, He does not act in the way we expect, but according to His purpose, His object being to give us the experience of present power to deliver in the trial. We learn Him better by this, while the circumstances may be such as to make us doubt His love; but as in this case, the Lord is not defeated in His ways and purposes. The Lord seems to leave us sometimes, while He goes somewhere else. We feel that which touches our own hearts, and for want of confiding in His love are often cast down by the circumstances. He wants that to take full effect upon our hearts, the end of His purpose being to make us know Him better. Bethany was a kind of home to the Lord Jesus. There was sorrow come in there. It was His intention to meet the need of the hearts of these sisters, but He does it in such a way as that the glory of God. should be accomplished. What a mercy! When all the world is against Him, here is something to prove Him to be the Son of God. There is a remarkable testimony given to all His titles before He goes to the cross—Son of God, Son of David, or Christ, Son of man, &c. It was a wonderful position for Lazarus to be thus the means for the display of Christ's glory no the Son of God. Christ had healed many people, but here was something special. There is nothing like confiding in God, that He will do the very best thing. He might have gone off and healed Lazarus, and they were ready to reproach Him for not having come. Even Mary, as well as Martha, says, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Their feelings governed, or rather smothered their faith, so that they could not look beyond present circumstances. It is hard for our hearts to believe it is all right when He does not come directly. Their hearts were buried under the power of death. They had no understanding of the present living power of the Son of God which was above and beyond death.

When Christ talked of going into Judea again, the disciples say, “The Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” &c. See the entire, unhesitating dependence on the Father's will in Christ, so that He is willing to do or not to do according to his direction. He was the perfect servant. He waited God's time.

All through this chapter there is the sense of the power of death reigning. God's mercies indeed there were, but death was there. The disciples had affection to their Master and said, We will go and die with thee (though when the time came they were too feeble to go, and yet they were sincere in thinking they could) they had no thought but of death in going; they had no thought of the power of God bringing in life. When Jesus came, He found he had been dead four days already. Martha said, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” The presence of Christ gave her a certain degree of confidence, but no sense of the power of life in Him who came into this place of death. “Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.” She answered, “I know that he shall rise again at the last day.” Every Christian believes in a resurrection at last; every one has the faith that Martha had, which was all the Jews knew about. Mary was no better yet either; but see the Lord's answer to it, “I am the resurrection and the life,” &c. That is what they had no apprehension of. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever

liveth and believeth in me shall never die; believest thou this?" Not a word! She believed, according to Psa. 2, that God would bring in His begotten Son again. She believed in the Christ who should come into the world, but she could not get any farther. It is a good thing to remember this sorrowful fact, that when He goes one step in advance of what we have generally believed, there is no power in us to receive it. Men are ill at ease. They find no savor in what is said. There is nothing more distressing to an unspiritual Christian than the presence of a spiritual one. He wants to get out of the way; his desires and appetites after Christ not being lively, he wants to retire from His presence. Martha gets away. She had before been careful and cumbered about much serving. It was all right to serve; but if she had not been cumbered, she would have rejoiced to see Mary sitting at His feet, and would not have tried to get her away when she had the best thing. It was right to prepare—it would be for any saint, but much more for the Lord Himself.

So here, "Mary sat still in the house." There was much wanting in Mary's faith; but she had the waiting spirit, and the instant she get a call from Christ, she is ready to go directly—she has nothing to do but to go.

Ver. 31-33 indicate much unbelief. They thought blessing might have come in the way of healing in life; but they had no thought of the power of God in the place of death. "Jesus groaned in the spirit." This was His entering into the sense of the power of death; something like the groanings in Spirit that cannot be uttered; though, of course, He knew what He was going to do. He said (ver. 34-38) "Take ye away the stone." Now Martha's energy comes out: she was an active, busy person, but full of unbelief. "Lord, by this time he stinketh Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" There was His power coming in. What we find here, and more blessedly still, in Christ's own resurrection is divine power coming into the place of death. They could put the stone, they could weep over him they left there. This power of death had come over all the nature of man; and what could they do? Weep over him and leave him there, but what was that? Nothing.

Death is the harbinger of judgment; that is the terrible thing in death, if there is only death. It is the messenger of the king of terrors, and we see the entire weakness of man under it. You cannot save yourself from dying. From the prince to the peasant death is master of them; they cannot escape. Man, with all his wisdom, science, and skill, cannot keep life. Death carries terror with it when it is thought of; they put all the trappings they can to hide it; but there is terror in it to the spirit of man. It is the consequence of sin. There is the weakness of man shown out in it, and the power of Satan over him, and it is the harbinger of judgment (I am speaking of what death is in itself), and that the resurrection to judgment will not free you from, but rather announce the judgment; it is not over now to an unconverted man, he will be raised again to judgment. Death comes as the witness to that; it takes a man out of this living scene to judgment. Thus God coming in resurrection is no help to a man dying in sin. We have here the Lord's sympathy coming into the place where men were. He wept not for the loss of Lazarus. He knew He was going to raise him; but in His human nature He was entering thoroughly into the sense of the power that death had over the spirits of men. We see in this chapter it was death, and nothing else, resting on their spirit. It was the same story with them all. Even Martha says, "I know that he will rise again in the last day;" but it meant nothing for present power of life.

There was more than sympathy in Christ: there was help. A kind man can go and show sympathy, can weep, &c., but leave the stone there. Christ could go in the power of divine life, with the perfect sympathy of a man too, and bring the power of life into it. He can bring in just that which we want. There is no kind of remedy for us in all this scene: we must give it up. Death is the just judgment of God; there is no escaping it; it is written on man's nature; there is no escape for man as such. The next thing we see is that Eternal Life which was with the Father come down and manifested here, where He is “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The Eternal Life comes into the place where death is. He takes the cup due to us, and brings in life where death is. This scene is before He dies Himself. With the widow of Nain's son it is the same—death disappears before Him. Just as much as the first Adam is under death, so the Second man is above death. He comes into the place where death was reigning. Lazarus lay there; Martha speaks of the stinking corpse; but the same power that brought the first Adam into existence brought him up from the grave.

There is another life too which is the comfort for us. Resurrection is put first— “I am the resurrection and the life” —because men are under death; but what matter if a man is dead, if I can raise him? “I am the resurrection He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live.” There was the power of life in Him. For those who are alive when He comes again, there will be no death at all, even of the body (He being the antidote, as it were). So that the power of death is gone when He appears. It will be literally true of some when He comes.

There was, indeed, more than sympathy in Christ. We were lying there in death; He goes into the very place where we were, under the sentence of sin, under judgment, under wrath. He gives Himself up when there. He takes it out of His Father's hands, in the garden of Gethsemane when going through it in spirit with His Father, He says, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” There was the power of darkness, and the malice of His enemies, and the cup of wrath from God. He went under death only in grace, being obedient unto death. Grace brought Him where sin brought us. He took up the whole case, and the consequences of sin, and it is done—finished.

Lazarus never went so deep under death as Christ. God's wrath was the cup given to Him, the righteous One. “He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” It was for the sin of man, “the wages of sin;” but He goes down into it in the power of life. Just in the measure He knew the power of life was the terribleness of the power of death, and according to His holiness was sin abhorrent to Him. His nearness to His Father made it all the worse. He goes down and comes up out of it: there is an end of it. Where is a man when life has come in? There is an end of death— “O death, I will be thy destruction.” There is an end to the meaning of death; with it, sin is gone, judgment is gone, the cup of wrath is drunk, and Christ enters into His Father's presence with all the fresh delight of having done His Father's will in going under it. “Therefore,” he says, “doth my Father love me,” &c. Every question between God and man is settled forever for the believer. He, as a man, is gone with fresh blessedness into His presence; all the rest is gone, all the old Adam gone, its power gone. “In that He died, He died unto sin once.” All Christ put Himself under is gone. There I get a Man in God's presence—an accepted Man, and I am called upon to trust Him. I see in the cross of Christ that I was in myself hopelessly under it, or He would not have gone under it. Now for a believer there is not Satan's power at all—physically, of course, it is there, but morally it is totally gone. When death comes to the believer, he is “absent from the body, present with the

Lord."

With Lazarus, it was resurrection to natural life. We have something better. He was quickened and brought back to sit at the table where Christ was then, but now we have the life He has; we are raised up and made to it together in heavenly places in Him. (Ephesians) We have the life that Christ has—a life that cannot die any more (the body, of course, I am not speaking of now). I have the righteousness that Christ has; He is my righteousness. All that He, sitting at God's right hand, has, I have, and nothing less. "We are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Then what is there of the old? Nothing. I have my place in Christ before God, and I can say, "when I was in the flesh," but now not in the flesh. There is the power of life in Christ apart from all the old Adam life, and all that belongs to it, though still working in me; but in this earthen vessel I have new power of life in which I live to God. It is the same power of life in which Christ was quickened after bearing my sins. Then what do I wait for? I am not waiting for life, for I have it; nor for righteousness, for I have it. What then do I wait for? To be made like Him: "when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him." I am waiting to be "clothed upon with the house which is from heaven" —for mortality to be swallowed up of life. The power of life in Him will take up the body and swallow up the mortality of it. He, by that "power by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself" will lay hold of the body and conform it to His own. He has been through death and has come out of it; therefore the apostle says, "We are always confident, knowing that whilst at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." Death may come to me; but I have a life beyond, that death cannot touch; and the body shall be raised when He comes. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." "We shall bear the image of the heavenly." Christ has taken us up in the power of life to make us completely like Himself, and the change of our bodies or the raising of them will be the last thing He has to do in conforming us to Himself.

We have to seek the power of life over death now practically. Why let nature die, if it can be recovered? No, it cannot be recovered; it is to be reckoned dead; it must go through death practically. The system of monkery went on a wrong principle altogether. If you stunt the tree, you have not changed it; you may change the fruit, but it will only do mischief. You must cut it right down. The sap is bad, hopelessly bad. Monkery sought to die as to flesh, because the consequences of sin were there, but without having a life in which there was power to do it. But we have a life: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God: mortify therefore your members," &c. Cut off all the old shoots of the tree. We have to seek that the "life of Christ may be manifested in our mortal bodies." The power of His resurrection is what we have to learn. We have to remember that in ourselves is no good thing. If you have a will of your own, it is sin. Doing our own will instead of God's is the principle of sin. Did Christ do His own will? No; "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." What, you say! with all these beautiful qualities in nature to reckon it dead! Ah, but whose are those beautiful qualities? You reckon them yours: self comes in. There are beautiful qualities, but what are they for? is the question. For yourself and not for God; it is your use of the qualities that is the point. So we see the Lord taking up the vilest and most wretched people, and passing over the Pharisees, &c. He did not come, as He says, to save the righteous (of course He knew there were none righteous really), but His principle was to save sinners. I should not have a last Adam nature given, if the first Adam nature would have done. The thing is done in Christ. I am in the Second man; but in practice it is a different thing. All kinds of exercises we may have to bring us to this point—Christ everything. He is life, peace, strength. The soul rests in Him; there is a

confiding spirit. To the fathers, in 1 John, it is said, “Ye have known Him that is from the beginning;” and, again, the second time they are addressed in the same way. They had learned Christ and needed nothing more: it is to be practically emptied of self.

May we remember what our standing before God is! Christ has passed through death, judgment, sin; it is all over, and He has brought us into the very same condition, past it (not in body yet), but brought to God, into His presence. May we know the liberty wherewith He hath made us free—beyond, past it all, and walk in the power of the new life in which He has set us by grace.

Chapter 92

John 14

This chapter is an answer to the distress of the hearts of the disciples, and in it we get two things set before them: first, the glory of Christ's person; and secondly, the coming of the Comforter.

The first great truth that He brings out is that they belong entirely to another place. This world is not good enough for them. He was going away from them, and this was something to trouble their hearts. Therefore He brings before them Himself, as the object of comfort, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” By believing in God, you get comfort; so it will be by believing in Me.

The occasion was a sorrowful one surely; for to know Christ and yet not to see Him, not to have Him with them, might well trouble the heart. They had taken Him for their portion, and left everything else. They had so entirely confided in Him, so rested on Him, that His going away might well trouble them.

The great broad principle set forth in answer to this is comprehended in what He is. And it is as though He said, Do not suppose I am going away to be alone in heaven. No, it is for you I am going. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. There is “room enough and to spare.” This was another thing to comfort them—a place in the Father's house. The home of the Christian is there where He is. He is not going for Himself only, just to relieve Himself from the desolateness of the world. He was going to His home as the First-born among many brethren, and all the rest will have their place there too.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself.” This is the language of affection. He does not say, I will send for you. No, that would not satisfy the heart— “I will come.” He would not be content without having them where He is, and without coming to fetch them. He could not leave them down here in this polluted world. “Where I am, there shall my servant be.” And there will be the word for them, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter,” &c. He takes their hearts out of this world altogether—not their persons yet indeed, for they were to be left without Him for a season.

We see the absolute intimacy that existed between them from 1 John, “That which was from the beginning.... which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,” &c. They knew Him well, so that when they were to go, they would not be going to a strange place, because they knew Him there. If my father were gone away to a distant country, my heart would go after him there, and would be more at home in that place where he is, than here, although I know not that place, for I have never seen it. Note that the Lord never supposes for a moment the slightest doubt of their being there. There is the most perfect certainty for them, because Christ would be there Himself. The question of fitness could not come in; for does not Christ know whether you are fit? There would be difficulties in the way—in the world “tribulation;” the road may be rough, but the home is certain. He has taken our sins and blotted them out, and therefore He can speak as one who knows the full value of the redemption.

“Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Suppose I were going to a strange place, I should want to know the way. He says, “I am the way,” &c. I am going to the Father's house, and you shall be there too. And what makes the blessedness of a Father's house? The Father being there and brothers and sisters there, it is not the place nor the state that we think about in connection with the Father's house (though there are these as well); but the great thing to our hearts is who are there—the object in the house—the Father is there. None can go to the Father “but by me.” If I know the Father, I know where I am going. It is He makes it a home to me. When the prodigal returned to his father's house, there was great rejoicing—the fatted calf killed, &c.; but it was the spring of joy in the father's heart that made them all so happy there—servants and sons.

Jesus says to them,” He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” As if He had said, You have got the thing you are looking for, if you have got me. You have not to wait to get to heaven to know Him. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” If they knew where they were going, they also knew the way— “I am the way,” &c. In seeing the way in Him, I find I have got to the Father, before I get home to the Father's house. He has done that work which makes me fit to be there. He has come down and brought the Father to me through the efficacy of his work. Then I have got home in one sense. How can I get farther than to the Father Himself? You have the thing you are seeking after. You have found the Father in Me, and you have found the way to it.

When Christ is first revealed, it makes us feel our unfitness, but He purges the conscience. The work which has purged sin away is done. The believer is justified from all things. If a man believes in Christ, he has a new nature. Can the flesh believe in Christ? “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,” &c. The soul that believes has all the efficacy of Christ's work, blood-shedding, and sprinkling. I have the happiness Christ has. What is this? All that results from unhindered fellowship with Him. Another thing is the power by which we enjoy it—another Comforter, and this given to be down here. It is here the Father reveals the Son, and this would be a Comforter that would never leave them.

Every one who believes in Christ, resting on His work, shares the blessings of this Comforter.

A person is not a Christian unless he is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is not known as an object (though He distributes to every one severally as He will), but He is in us—living spiritual power in us. Christ did not dwell so in us. Christ was with them three years and then went away from them; but the Holy Ghost never goes away, and is promised to be in them “a well of water,” &c. The effect of the Holy Ghost's power is to bring Christ back to us; not in person, as an object, but Christ becoming, by the power of the Holy Ghost, life in me. “To me to live is Christ,” &c. Christ Himself is He whom the Holy Ghost shows to me. There is a blessed living object in Christ which I do not find in the Holy Ghost. They could not say of Him, “We have handled him,” as of Christ. “In that day ye shall know,” &c. They were very muddy as to this before, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father—in the Godhead is this blessed One who was down here as a servant” and ye in me, and I in you.” Is this home strange to me? No; I have been eating with Him since His resurrection. Not only do I know Christ as an object, but this Holy Ghost makes me know I am united to Him. There is consciousness by the Holy Ghost of this union. And does the one who knows he has it think much of himself for that? No; there can only be wonder and astonishment at the grace; and there is nothing so humbling. The law may torture the conscience, but grace humbles. They could not know it while He was here; but they would know it

in that day, when they are “members of his body,” as Paul speaks.

Then there are responsibilities which belong to us as such. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.” “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” If God has loved us in sovereign grace and goodness when sinners, He has also gracious affections towards us when we are saints. There is the every-day government of the soul in His hands. He that loves me shall be loved of my Father. This is not a question of whether they were to be saved, but the daily manifestation of Christ to the heart. A father might take care of his children and love them when they are pleasant; but he cannot manifest his favor to them, if they do not please him. He will not fail to keep them according to the prayer of Jesus, “Holy Father, keep them whom thou hast given me.” He will keep them, but this is the way He keeps—revealing Himself in happy intercourse according to their walking with Him in obedience.

Mark the position of believers: until we make our home in the Father's house, He makes His home in us.

Chapter 93

John 17:17 and 19

Remark, in John 17:17, 19, two distinct characters and means or sources of sanctification, the difference of which is full of interest and instruction. Christ is the Word and the Truth (i.e., He expresses God and tells the truth of everything) as coming from God and revealing Him. The disciples were not of the world as He was not; quâ disciples, they had the communication of what Christ revealed of God, all the Father said to Him, and their moral nature too. He prays as to the form of this, that they may be sanctified through the truth: the Father's word was truth. This makes the sanctifying power, the revelation from the Father in the Person of Christ. But in verse 19 it is not what Christ is as revelation of the Father, but what He is as model set before the Father in glory in heaven, and this as man. Then the truth revealed this too, and thus sanctified them. So that the first part is the revelation of God through Christ, the Word and Truth; the second is the true communication of what He is as man before God, according to His thoughts and counsels in glory. This gives a very remarkable fullness and reality of character to our sanctification through grace. We are really set apart to God in conformity to these two aspects of Christ; we are formed after them in our nature and walk.

Chapter 94

The Character of John 6

The character of John 6 is important in connection with all in divine blessing as an entirely new thing. Not only is Christ that eternal life which was with the father, but the nourishment of this life is equally heavenly. He is the bread which came down from heaven—the bread of God, too, whose good pleasure is in Him. The heavenly and divine nature has its heavenly and divine food. In this world it is death to the old thing. It takes that form and power when it has to do with the old nature and its objects by entering into the scene in which this moves and to which it belongs. Hence we must eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood. Life was communicated which has not to struggle to a place it has to gain, but is come down from one to which it belongs—a wholly new thing.

Chapter 95

Fragment: “Follow Thou Me”

Alas! how the heart can spring up, when set at ease, after all manner of dealings with it. Peter, so humbled, so wonderfully restored by exhaustless grace, must know what shall happen to John. What ease! He loved John surely; and it served as occasion to revelation. Still the Lord must say, “What is that to thee?” and turn back to the “Follow thou me.”

Chapter 96

Scripture Query and Answer: Judgment Seat of Christ

Q. (1.) Rev. 3:10. - The promise here seems made to a particular class described as those who have kept the word of Christ's patience, and who appear to be contrasted with those who “dwell upon the earth,” which, I presume, expresses a moral condition. If this be so, on what ground can the whole Church take this promise to themselves? Some of them, it is sadly to be feared, have practically forgotten that they are “strangers and pilgrims,” and are too much at home in the world to have been much exercised in keeping the word of Christ's patience. And yet one cannot but hope some of these have truly bowed to the name of Jesus, and it may be, did at first “run well.” The promises to the few who had an ear in Laodicea are yet of a different character from those made to some of the other churches. The white stone and the hidden manna, for instance, express an intimacy of communion with the Lord which one does not get in Laodicea, so that it is a difficulty to me how the whole company of believers at this moment may take all these precious promises to themselves, irrespective of moral condition. It is not forgotten that all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Still the specialty of these addresses to the churches must be intended to teach something. Those who are “saved, yet so as by fire” (though immeasurable grace to be saved at all) do not seem to be in the same position as those to whom “abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord” is vouchsafed. Further, is it quite clear that the “keeping from the hour of temptation” means removal from this present scene? In John 17, when the Lord prays that His disciples should be “kept from” the evil of the world, it is plain He does not mean that they should be taken out of it.

Q. (2.) Heb. 10:17. - “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” How is this to be understood in connection with 2 Cor. 5:10? Will the sins of a believer's unconverted days be again brought before him at the judgment seat of Christ? Yours respectfully, INQUIRER.

A. (1) A human attempt at precision sometimes leads us astray. The blessing meets the particular want of the Church and characterizes the ways of God towards it as to the encouragement needed for its faith; but this does not mean that that Church exclusively has the blessing. Thus in Laodicea he that overcomes will sit on Christ's throne—the lowest degree of promise, I apprehend; but this does not mean that only they will; for all will. Escaping the hour of temptation is not true only of Philadelphia; all who have died in the Lord before it comes will have escaped it. But this characterizes the blessing of Philadelphia, because they come so near towards it that a promise to escape it is of the greatest value to them—a cheering and welcome message and truth in their weakness and consciousness of the power of evil and little strength. Others than those of Ephesus will eat of the fruit of the tree of life, others than those of Smyrna will not he hurt of the second death; but those were the suited encouragements to lead to overcome in the states and difficulties there described. We must seek elsewhere a positive revelation on the subject, and not draw conclusions, nor, I would add, the least weaken the warning; for the warning applies to the state in which Philadelphia is. A like conclusion has been drawn from “all those that love his appearing,” and “to them that look for him will he appear;” but all the wise virgins were awaked to look for Him, and even others too. We must distrust conclusions from Scripture, however man's mind enters into

them. Those in Laodicea who open to the Lord reign with Him; and He enters in and sups with them, and they with Him—have their part with Him in fellowship and joy under His reign. I do not say there may not be specialty in results which take the shape of reward; but the promises apply to the state of the church in which they are found, and woe to him who neglects them so applied, not to the exclusion thereby of others. Thus in Thyatira the whole millennial blessing of Christ Himself and the reign are promised, because it is the close of the ecclesiastical system, and the whole succeeding blessing is substituted for it: Christ, the heavenly Christ Himself, and the kingdom of power and judgment, for those who had been oppressed by the idolatrous rule of Jezebel. The quotation from John 17 proves exactly the contrary of that for which it is cited. That to which etc applies, they are to be kept wholly out of: they are not to be taken ■κ το■ κ■σμου, but they are to be wholly and absolutely ■κ το■ πονηρο■; so here wholly and absolutely not ‘through' and ‘in.' but ■κ τ■ς ■ρας.

(2.) It is not as if God forgot the things, but He does not remember them—hold them in His mind—against them in any way. If I say I forget as well as forgive, it only speaks of the completeness, not, if the thing is called up, that my memory has ceased to know it as a fact. If I give an account of myself to God, I must do it completely or I should lose something of the goodness of Him who has called and saved me. Paul lost nothing in saying, “Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue,” &c.

Chapter 97

Scripture Query and Answer: The Lord's Supper and the Breaking of Bread

Q. As a recent dissenting work on “Baptism, &c., by Typicus” (Jackson, Walford, and Hodder), ventures to impugn the application of the terms “breaking of bread” in Scripture to the Lord's Supper, will you notice his arguments or assertions briefly?

ENQUIRER.

A. The writer begins with these words: “Of late we have frequently heard these words used as a designation of the Lord's Supper.” Certain Christians are understood to use it thus uniformly, and the error, he fears, is in danger of obtaining currency elsewhere. He boldly proceeds to show that it “nowhere occurs in Scripture to represent our Lord's institution!”

First, where can this man's acquaintance with facts be? Is he not aware that he himself is broaching a novelty of no ordinary magnitude? Does he not know the importance attached to the truth of this application of the scripture phrase by the body of the Reformers in opposing transubstantiation? They too appealed, from the earliest antiquity, to the entire roll of the Christian writers who touch upon the Lord's Supper. Nay, it was not a party view of the Protestants; for the Romanists laid equal stress on the same phrase as unquestionably referring to the Lord's Supper, in order to gather a seeming justification for administering the eucharist in one kind and withholding the cup from the laity. “Typicus,” therefore, starts with the confident rejection of that which no heat, nor conflicting claims in the mighty struggle of the sixteenth century could blot out from the common recognition of all, whether Papists or Protestants. I do not say his objection has never been mooted before; for what notion has not been? But it is certainly strange to find a person so entirely uninformed as to a plain matter of fact (owned all but universally and from the remotest times) as to insinuate that it is a sort of sound heard but of late frequently. I admit, however, that the decisive question remains—what saith the Scripture? If I have referred to facts, it is merely to show that the Christians he alludes to had really no debate with others in calling the Lord's Supper “the breaking of bread, “because it has never been seriously disputed in Christendom. I shall now prove that Scripture exposes his error, as much as notorious facts have been ignored by him.

He cites Lam. 4:4, Acts 27:35, Luke 24:30, 35. But the utmost he can draw thence, is—that which no sober Christian ever doubted—that the act of breaking bread is not limited to the Lord's Supper. It is a question of context, as with the use of almost every phrase in the Bible or anywhere else. Δι■κονος is frequently employed for a domestic who is not a bondsman, frequently for general service from Christ Himself downwards. Does it therefore never mean an official deacon? This is a case exactly parallel: what is its value?

“Typicus” proceeds to notice the texts which do apply: Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, &c., but with utter misconception of their force. Reasoning or expounding it cannot be called, but the merest assumption. He says that Acts 2:42, refers to “ordinary meals;” but why? Does the doctrine of the

apostles, do the communion before, and the prayer immediately after, refer to external matters? The only fair question is, whether the phrase did not embrace along with the Lord's Supper, the Agape, or love-feast, which in primitive times—at least before 1 Corinthians—accompanied that Supper. But the spiritual concomitants in the verse, both before and after, prove that an ordinary meal is not meant.

Again, in verse 46, two religious facts are stilted in evident connection, their continuing with one accord in the temple, and their breaking bread at home, distinct from their partaking of food (which last does refer to ordinary meals) with gladness and singleness of heart: in all they were found praising God, and having favor with all the people. The twofold τε hinds together their resort to the temple and their breaking bread at home (for of course this Christian act could not be celebrated there); but a fresh construction parts off from both the taking of their common food, though I doubt not that for them even this had the halo of God's gracious presence around it.

It is therefore plain and certain that, in giving its central place to the breaking of bread, the Christians whom “Typicus” blames are subject to God's word; and that there is departure from that word where His children merely go to sing or pray or hear a sermon, save at ram intervals, which is the line of things to which he invites his brethren. But “Typicus” is also inexcusable in forgetting that there is a deeper cause of separation from the various sects of Christendom—the universal exclusion of the Holy Ghost from acting freely by whom He will in the Christian assembly. (According to 1 Cor. 12; 14).

As for Acts 20:7, neither italics nor capitals will relieve “Typicus” from the charge of unbelief, nor add a particle of strength to the weak assertion that “there is not the slightest evidence to prove” that it was the Lord's Supper. The language is decisive that it was then the practice of Christians to come together on the first of the week, and this to break bread. (Comp. also 1 Cor. 16:2.) The critical reading (■μ■ν), which rests on much the best authorities, seems to me stronger than the vulgar one (μαθητ■ν,), which probably grew out of a desire to make easier sense with α■το■ς. Nothing is simpler: all came together to break bread, but with prominence given to Paul and his companions in “we,” the family word. Again, the direction of the apostle's discourse was naturally to those of 'Irons, which drew him out at great length, “we” coming in again in the next verse. Dean Alford, I know, thinks that the Agape followed, but he does not doubt for a moment that the breaking of bread means, or at least includes, the Lord's Supper. To me it seems the gravest objection to the inclusion of the Agape (which was a real meal, though not a mere ordinary one), that the apostle had himself, previously to this date, severed authoritatively the two things, because of the disorder which had entered at Corinth from their connection. Is it not harsh to suppose that he broke the Spirit's rule as to this given in his own inspired epistle? The Agape, no doubt, continued long, but thenceforward separate from the Lord's Supper. In verse 7 of this chapter it is intimated that “to break bread” was what drew together on the resurrection day; from verse 11, it would appear that Paul after his discourse as well as the matter of Eutychus, broke (riot bread, hit) “the (τ■ν) bread.” There is no ground to talk of a second time. How this indicates that the sanctioned practice for all on the first day of the week was “a meal—Nothing More,” I cannot divine, save as knowing that man's will may account for anything.

As even “Typicus” admits the application of 1 Cor. 10:11 to the Lord's Supper, I have no controversy with him here. This only need be remarked, that, in the first of these scriptures, the

expression—Lord's Supper—does not occur, but only in the last. With this fact before his eyes it is absurd, then, to argue so confidently that Acts 20:7 cannot mean that Supper because the explicit designation dues not occur there. I should have thought the inverse conclusion more reasonable: that, 1 Cor. 10:16 bring confessedly the Lord's Supper without being thus styled, Acts 20:7 may be so too, and similarly Acts 2:42, 46.

What can we think of the heart or intelligence of one who, in the face of these passages fails “to find any trace in the Scriptures of the celebration of the Lord's Supper by the apostles more frequently than once a year?” This almost incredible inference is due to the author's head being muddled with the type of the Passover and with types in general, of which Ire manifestly does not understand the alphabet. The paschal supper falling yearly is a reason to his mind for a yearly Lord's Sapper which supplanted it unless the Christians were otherwise instructed, which he thinks they were not! He suggests, however, that “a more frequent observance is doubtless conducive to the interests of the Church.” No wonder that one who begins with slighting Scripture, should think, next, that man—himself—is able to improve on it and furnish something more for the interests of the Church. The readers of the BIBLE TREASURY will not desire to hear more of such men unless God peradventure be pleased to give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. But it seemed well to dispose briefly of these assertions; for, if confidently made, they are apt to impose on the ignorant when the mass of Christian professors know the Scriptures or the power of God so feebly as in our day. Speculation blinds the Dissenters, as much as tradition closes the eyes of the Tractarians or their allies.— “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

“As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do skew the Lord's death till he come.”

Chapter 98

Fragment: Love and Purpose in God's Revelations

There must be love and purpose in God's revelations and in revelations to man, that love and that purpose must refer to man, while it reveals God; and this the first of Genesis does admirably. It seems to me, as, indeed, I do not doubt it is, perfect in this respect. And the question between us and the rationalist is, not whether the scripture gives scientific knowledge (most surely it does not), but whether its contents are God's thoughts or man's thoughts of the subjects it treats of. It does give us man's thoughts when man stands responsible (and that, of course, it must do to have a full moral picture); but God's view and thoughts of all this scene, with the perfection of man in Christ, but a second man. In the case before us, in this most simple account, we have all the needed phenomena, on which man speculated, ascribed to the right source, and put in their place, and all man's thoughts met. Elsewhere we have man's thoughts, schemes of emanations, personifications, and theories. One little chapter answers them all divinely.

Chapter 99

Fragment: Love in 1 Corinthians 13

1 Cor. 13 - Here love is spoken of only in its working in or toward man, though its spring be the divine nature, love itself in us, which has its supreme joy in God Himself. But here it is as in precept for its manifestation in man's ways. But note that Paul did not speak of “past” or “perfect” here; that is only of knowledge. He does not say of love that which is perfect is not come. Of course, it does not fail nor pass away.

Chapter 100

Notes on Luke 1:1-4

There is no gospel which more shows the mind and love of God than this of Luke. None is more truly and evidently inspired. Nevertheless there is none so deeply marked by traces of the human hand and heart. This is its characteristic object in presenting Christ to us. Luke had, as the work assigned him of the Holy Ghost, to delineate our Lord as a man, both in body and soul. This he does not only as to facts which are related about Him, but in all His course and teaching in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. It is emphatically a man we see and hear, a divine Person, no doubt, but at the same time a real proper man who walks in perfect dependence and absolute obedience, honoring God and honored of Him in all things.

For this reason I believe it is that Luke alone opens his gospel with an address to a particular man. You could not have Matthew, consistently with the purpose and character of his gospel, addressing it to a man; nor is it conceivable of Mark or of John. Luke so writes with the most admirable propriety. “Whereas many have undertaken to arrange a declaration concerning the matter fully believed in among us; even as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having thorough acquaintance from the outset with all things accurately, to write to thee in regular order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest truly know the certainty of accounts [or things] in which thou hast been instructed.” Thus Luke was led of God as one who had a thirst and loving desire for the good of Theophilus, and fitly addresses this gospel to him: and this we shall find in harmony with its character throughout. It was not for him only, of course, but for the permanent instruction of the Church yet none the less was it written to him. Theophilus was laid on the heart of that godly man to be instructed in the things of God, and this draws out the workings of the Spirit of God in him to expound the way of God as shown in Christ more perfectly.

Theophilus appears to have been a man of rank, probably a Roman governor. This seems the reason why he is called here “Most Excellent,” or, as we might say, His Excellency. It relates to official position, and not to his character morally as a man. It is evident be was a believer, but only partially instructed. The object of the evangelist here was to give him a fuller understanding of “the way.”

At this time there were many accounts of Christ in vogue among Christians. The “many” spoken of here who had undertaken to draw up these accounts of our Lord, were not inspired. Luke does not charge them with evil intent in what they wrote, still less with falsehood, But it was clearly inadequate, as being no more than the fruit of a human effort to relate the matters fully believed among the Christians. They did not accomplish the work so as to set aside the need of a fresh and above all a divinely given narrative of the Lord Jesus. Only we must carefully remember that the difference between an inspired writing and any other, is not that the other is necessarily false, and that the inspired one is simply true. There is much more than this. It is the truth as God sees it, and with that special object which God always has in view when He furnishes an account of anything. A gospel is not a mere biography, it is God's account of Christ governed by the special moral

object He was pleased to impress on it. This is characteristic of all inspired writings, whatever their form or aim. Inspiration excludes mistake, no doubt; but it does much more than that. It includes a divine object for the instruction of the faithful in the display of God's glory in Christ. These “many” biographers spoken of by Luke were unauthorized by the Spirit of God. They may have entered on their self-imposed task with the best motives, and some or all may have been persons in whom the Spirit of God was (i.e., Christians), but they were not inspired any more than one who preaches the gospel or seeks to edify believers, There is a weighty difference between the leading of the Spirit in a general way, where flesh may more or less impair the truth enforced, and the inspiration of the Spirit, which not only excludes all error but gives what was never given before. Luke was inspired; yet he does not put forward his inspiration. And what then? Who does? Matthew, Mark, John, Paul, or any other? When people write an imposture they naturally pretend to this or that, and are apt most to claim what they have least or not at all. They may talk much about inspiration; the inspired writers, as a rule, take it for granted. It is self-proved, not posted up. The special character that distinguishes these writings from all others to the heart and conscience, gives the believer the certainty of inspiration. For, I repeat, the Holy Ghost not only excludes error, but writes with a divine object, and communicates the truth as none but God can. And these proofs are such as to leave the unbeliever without excuse. Light wants nothing else to show itself.

Observe one marked difference here claimed between these many uninspired writers and Luke's Gospel.

They had taken up the tradition of such as had been from the beginning of the Lord's public life eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. It was founded upon oral testimony. But Luke takes particular pains to let us know that this is not said of his own Gospel. He does not attribute it to the same sources as theirs; but claims an accurate and thorough acquaintance of all things from the very first (■νωθεν). He does not explain his sources any more than other inspired men; but he does contrast the character of what he knew and had to say with those who merely drew up a report from the earliest and best tradition. This is of high importance, and has been often overlooked. Like Matthew he goes back to the very first and even before Matthew's relations; for he gives us not only the circumstances that preceded the birth of Christ but the account of all that pertained to His forerunner's birth.

Thus, though Luke does so far say that “it seemed good to me also” as well as to them, nevertheless he otherwise distinguishes his own task entirely from theirs. He does not tell us how he had his perfect understanding of all things from the very first; he simply lays down the fact. Again, it seems to me that the reason why he alone gives us his motive for writing, without putting forward his inspired character, is of all interest. Not only is it unusual in the sacred writers, but also Luke has the human element so predominant that it would be somewhat inconsistent with it to dwell strongly on the fact that it was God's word he was writing. He above all therefore would rather avoid bringing it out prominently or formally, though he proves practically, that every line was truly inspired.

The regular (καθεξ■ς) order was not that in which the events occurred. Such a mere sequence is by no means either the only order or the best for all purposes. To Luke it would have been an arrangement infinitely inferior to the one he has adopted. All it means is that he has written his account from the very first in a methodical manner. What that method is can only be learned from

studying the gospel itself. It will be proved, as we proceed, that Luke's is essentially a moral order, and that be classifies the facts, conversations, questions, replies, and discourses of our Lord according to their inward connection, and not the mere outward succession of events, which is in truth the rudest and most infantine form of record. But to group events together with their causes and consequences, in their moral order, is a far more difficult task for the historian, as distinguished from the mere chronicler. God can cause Luke to do it perfectly.

Again, Luke writes as a man to a man, unfolding the goodness of God in a man—the man Christ Jesus. Hence all that would exemplify humanity, as in Christ and also in us before God, is brought out in the most instructive manner. He writes for the help of his excellency, Theophilus, that he might truly know (■πιγν■ς) the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed. God thus takes care of those who know Him, though it may be imperfectly, and He would lead them more deeply into the understanding and enjoyment of what He is now communicating to man by His grace. “To him that hath shall be given.” It is the way of God. Theophilus had been enabled to receive Christ and to confess Him. Hence, though Luke sets forth with particular care, how truly the gospel was preached to the poor (see chap, 4, 6, 7), yet his gospel as a whole is addressed to this man of rank, now a disciple. Circumstantially there is no man so much to be pitied as to the truth of God or who so needs the grace of God as one who is great in this world, because he is peculiarly open to snares, temptations, and cares of the world, which war against the soul and threaten to choke up the seed of the word. Therefore we have the gracious care of Him who knows so well what the heart of man needs and who, despising not any, deigns to provide for the great man now made low, and assuredly feeling his poverty, in spite of rank or riches.

Notes on Luke 1:5-25

That the Gospel of Luke has a special aspect towards men at large, that it displays the grace of God towards the Gentiles who had been so long forgotten, or seemed to be so in the outward dealings of God, is very plain. Nevertheless some have found, as they thought, an insuperable difficulty to their admitting this to be the characteristic business of Luke, because we find for instance at the very beginning a striking occupation of the writer's mind with the circumstances of the Jewish people before, at, and after the birth of Christ. In fact, none of the gospels introduces us so thoroughly into the whole routine of their state and worship, with their relation to the worldly powers: first of all to the king that then ruled over them, Herod the Great; and, in the next chapter, to the Roman Empire.

But I think it will be found, if we look below the surface, that there is no real inconsistency between such a preface as we have in Luke, and the general regard that he pays to the Gentiles in the rest of his gospel. In fact, it answers closely to what we find in the ministry of the apostle who had Luke for his companion in labors. For although Paul was so emphatically the apostle of the Gentiles, the uncircumcision being delivered over to him as the circumcision was to Peter; none the less was it Paul's habit in every place first to visit the Jews, or, as he says himself, “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” So it is precisely that Luke begins with the Jew; discloses God working in the midst of the remnant of that people before we find the intimations of His mercy towards the Gentiles. So far from inconsistency on the part of Luke with his purpose, this very introduction of the Jews in the beginning of his gospel seems even to be morally necessary; because God could not, so to speak, go out to the Gentiles according to the analogy of His dealings from the beginning and His promises to the Jewish people, unless there were first the manifestation of His goodness there and the unheeded effect of it as far as the Jews were concerned. God proves amply His mercy towards Israel before He turns to the nations. Israel would none of Him or His kingdom: the Gentiles would hear.

Hence we find that, although Luke's be the Gentile gospel, there is first this full and bold outline presented to us of the working of God's grace among the Jews.

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.” Thus we have the living picture of the state of things then going on in Israel. There might be a foreign prince over them—an Edomite, and high priests in strange confusion, as we shall see shortly; but for all that there was a priest duly married to one of the daughters of Aaron, Zacharias, of the course of Abia. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Low as the state was in Israel and outwardly most irregular, nevertheless, in the midst of all there were godly ones: and the only thing that enabled any to walk after such a sort in Israel was the faith of the coming Messiah: this at least had not disappeared. On the contrary, God's Spirit was working in the hearts of a few, preparing them for the One who was coming. Zacharias and Elizabeth were among these few. They w ere expecting in faith, the

effect of which, where it is real, is to give power of walking rightly. The only souls who walked well, even according to the law, were those who looked beyond the law to Christ. Those who merely rested in the law broke it, though the law might be their boast. On the contrary, such as looked for the Messiah were faithful, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”

It is the same thing in principle now. There are those who cry up the law as a rule of life, but such never carry themselves well even according to that standard. On the contrary, those who go forward in the sense of God's grace, knowing the full deliverance of the believer in the redemption that is in Christ, do really manifest the righteousness of the law; as it is said, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” If I am walking after the law, I do not fulfill it; if I am walking after the Spirit, I do. The same doctrine appears in Gal. 5. If we walk according to the Spirit, there are good fruits: “against such there is no law.” On the contrary, the law justifies the fruits of the Spirit, but the Spirit never justifies the ways of any man who finds his rule of life in the law, which is and must be to a sinful man a rule of condemnation and death. There is no power of grace, unless Christ be the object of the heart.

Such was the case with this godly pair in Israel. The aged priest and his wife were really (i.e., believingly) looking for the Messiah. Their hope was no fleshly desire to exalt themselves or their nation in earthly power; though it remains true that Israel will then be the head and the Gentiles the tail, when Messiah comes to close their last fiery tribulation and deliver them from their foes. But in that day the hearts of the godly remnant will be lifted above pride or vanity; they will bear to be exalted above all other peoples of the earth. Such is the divine counsel according to prophecy which God will surely accomplish in its season.

Observe how faith leads to faithfulness. Those who merely look to the law (i.e., as much as God requires) never accomplish His righteous requirement. In every case one must be above any obligations in order to fulfill them. I must have faith in God's object in order to fulfill God's will. If my mind is occupied with Christ, I shall be able in the same measure to glorify God.

Thus it was with Zacharias and his wife. They looked in faith for the Messiah: hence they were righteous, and walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Nevertheless they had a disappointment of heart which answered to the stake of things in Israel. “They had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years.” They had prayed about it, as we find afterward. Though Zacharias seems even to have lost sight of his own prayer, yet God had not. And so “it came to pass, that while he executed time priest's office before God in the order of his course” —for here be was faithful to the requisition of daily duty— “according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” We have thus a full and lively setting forth of what was actually going on then in Israel. “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” In this form such a visit was unknown for a long while. It was a gracious intervention of God (not merely betimes, as we find in another gospel, for the healing of sicknesses and weaknesses of the people, but) for the more glorious purpose of announcing the forerunner of the Messiah Himself. Was it so strange after all that he was to be born beyond nature of this godly

couple One could not have anticipated such a thing; but once announced as God's intention, how wise and suitable our hearts see it to be! When Zacharias saw the angel “he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (i.e., the gift of God). “And thou shalt have joy and gladness: and many shall rejoice at his birth.” (Ver. 12-15.) It was calculated to strike the eye and heart of any godly Israelite, being manifestly God's gift. The Lord was faithful to His people and His purposes. There were many who at this time were looking for the Messiah. We know even from heathen authors that there was a strong, general, and ancient tradition (no doubt derived from Balaam of old, and Daniel later, and the Septuagint), that at this time a great prince was to be born in Israel, who would lead that nation on to supremacy. Hence they would naturally heed this extraordinary birth, and the singular course of life which John the Baptist ever followed, as well as his preaching when the time for it was come.

“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.” He should be a Nazarite, separated to the Lord, not only in outward separation, but with inward and special power of God. “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.” (Ver. 16.) This would be the characteristic aim of his mission—to recall them to God from whom they had departed. “And be shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Ver. 17.) Elijah was the prophet who took up the broken obligations of the people. Hence it is that be went to Horeb. Thence it was that Elias had his great commission from before God; there he went through the scene we have so strikingly described in his history. Horeb was the place where the law was given, and Elias went back thither, feeling how deeply the people had departed from God. John should now recall the people in the spirit and power of Elias. It is repentance; it is not of course the great work of God in putting away sin—that could only be done by one, even Jesus the Lord. Neither is it the power of the Holy Ghost shed upon Israel. This also could only be done by Christ. He is, as we find in John, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world..... the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” But John could at least do his own work by God's grace given to him; he should go “before him in the spirit and power of Elias.” This is a remarkable testimony first, because it is said he shall go before the Lord, i.e., before Jehovah; a plain statement of the dignity of Jesus. He was really Jehovah; and this messenger of His should go before His face, next, “in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” There was no union, but alienation; everything was broken in Israel. Sin always produces such dislocations. But John should “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children;” that is, he would be used of God to unite them in affection, and also to instruct them morally, or lead “the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” Hence, in all respects, both in affection and in moral power and wisdom, his mission was “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Such would be John's work” to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

“And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” Unbelief works just when God was about to accomplish this signal mercy—a remarkable but by no means infrequent case which we would do well to apply to our souls. That is, when God means mercy to us, we are too apt to limit the Lord; to doubt Him even when the blessing comes very close to us; to put some difficulty in the way, yielding to the

suggestions of the enemy and the unbelief of our own hearts. Zacharias accordingly asks how he should know it, The angel answers, “I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (Ver. 19, 20.) A measure of chastening was thus put upon Zacharias—a sign to others, but at the same time a rebuke to himself. The very fact that He was struck suddenly dumb would awaken the attention of the people. They would see that an extraordinary occurrence had taken place and might be led to think about it. On the other hand, when God had sent His angel to tell him that these things should be done, Zacharias showed his unbelief in requiring another sign. Hence his chastening. God's words should be fulfilled in their season spite of his unbelief. Mercy removes the stroke in due season.

“And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.” (Ver. 21-23.) Each priest had to serve in his course from sabbath to sabbath; so when the week was up, he leaves. “And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived and hid herself five months, saying, “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach from among men.” (Ver. 25.) The feeling of Elizabeth under the circumstances was just as godly as the unbelief of Zacharias was a striking witness of what is so natural to us all.

This closes the opening incidents which the Spirit of God gives us by Luke.

Chapter 102

Notes on Luke 1:26-80

It was the angel Gabriel who was sent to Daniel to make known of old the Messiah's coming and cutting off in the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks. Now he comes to Mary, the espoused of Joseph, and announces to her, “the virgin” of a still older prophet, the birth of that same Messiah. No wonder that he salutes her as a favored one, with whom the Lord was. Blessed was she among women! Mary, though troubled, pondered what might be the meaning of this salutation. The angel bids her not fear, for she has found favor with God. She is the chosen channel of the wondrous purposes which should yet fill the world as well as her own people with blessing—the appointed mother she is to be of One in whom God was about to solve all the difficulties that sin had brought into the world by a righteous triumph over it—nay, to make it possible for God to bless those who believed, sinners though they had been, and to make them righteously triumph through and with Himself.

Therefore he says, “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus” —a divine Savior. “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” This is another and quite different glory, which evidently combines with saving power His title of Messiah. “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Even in its lowest domain, how far is His kingdom from being a mere human dominion!

“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” She does not doubt, but she asks confidingly. Hence there is no smiting dumb nor any sign of unbelief, as in the case of Zacharias, who asked, “Whereby shall I know this?” There may be a question in the spirit which needs an answer, but betrays no lack of faith. There might be one not so dissimilar in form, but which really sprang from unbelief. God does not judge according to appearance but the heart.

The angel accordingly explains in all grace to Mary. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” It was not to be nature but divine power. “Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God,” and not merely Son of man. This is exceedingly important. “Son of God” is a title that belongs to our Lord both in His divine glory before He became a man and here; for, in this place when He became a man, He did not cease to be Son of God. As incarnate He was still the Son of God. So, again, when He rose from the dead, the same thing was true; He was the Son of God as risen again. It is plain therefore that it is a title that appertains to Him in the three conditions in which Scripture represents our Lord. He was the Son of God when He was purely and simply a divine person; Son of God when He became a man; Son of God when risen from the dead and gone out of this world to heaven.

But there is another thing also to note, that His taking manhood did not in the smallest degree connect Him with the taint of man's fallen nature. This was absolutely counteracted by the singularity of His conception, which was effected through the power of the Holy Ghost: “therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” Thus He was holy,

not merely in His divine nature, but in His humanity. He was emphatically the Holy One of God: without this not only would salvation have been impossible for us, but even His own acceptance as man would have been out of the question. We have therefore in this passage the most important truth as to the birth of this wondrous child, and the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. Much here given is peculiar to Luke. Mary is informed also of what God was doing to her cousin Elizabeth, for as the angel added “with God nothing shall be impossible.” She bows at once to the will of the Lord, with the words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

Mary then arises, enters into the house of Zacharias and salutes her kinswoman, Elizabeth, which gives occasion to the wonderful obeisance that was paid even by the unborn babe, Elizabeth's child, to her the predestined mother of the Messiah, in honor of the Messiah Himself. The consequence was that Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, breaks out into all acknowledgment of the place that God had given Mary. “And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” It is remarkable how beautifully it is owned that even the child that was yet to be born was the Lord. We find just the same thing with Mary herself. She has no notion of being taken out of the place of a needy sinner, whilst the miraculous birth of John does not detract from Elizabeth's sense of the glory of the Messiah, but rather adds to her sense of it. She owns at the same time that God had shown singular favor to Mary's soul. “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” She knew what had happened to her husband because of unbelief, and contrasts with it Mary's meek, because believing, heart.

Mary answers, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” It is remarkable how simply scripture has met beforehand the monstrous unbelief of man which lowers God, as much as it exalts a human being. Mary had no thought of such exaltation. She says, “All generation, shall call me blessed,” but not a Blesser. She was the object of blessing, not the giver or mediatrix of it. “For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name (not a word of her own). And his mercy is on them that fear him (not that pray to or worship me) from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree” —alluding to her own place as well as Elizabeth's. “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.” It is remarkable how Jewish the character of the joy is, and the acknowledgment of the mercy.

So Mary abides with her cousin three months and then returns to her own house. “Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered: and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard how the Lord had shown great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.” The general thought was to call the child after his father's name; but the mother, who alone can speak for it, directs him to be called John. Zacharias is appealed to and writes, “his name is John.” And immediately the punishment of his unbelief departs from him. His tongue was loosed and he spake and praised God; which filled all around with fear, astonishment, and anticipation of what this child would be.

Zacharias breaks forth into a strain of praise. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” It is remarkable the grace that does not so much look at his own house as at the house of God's servant David. There was faith here. During the season of his dumbness Zacharias had pondered the ways of the Lord, and the Holy Ghost, as He had filled Elizabeth, and as He had filled the babe from his mother's womb, so now filled Zacharias who prophesies the end of these wonders. “That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear.” It is important to observe how thoroughly this savors of Old Testament hopes. It is not a question of sins merely but of being delivered from their enemies, which last is assuredly not, nor ought to be, the feeling of the Christian now. Does not the Christian serve God, delivered from his sins, in the midst of his enemies? So when the Lord comes, it is simply a taking him up out of the midst of his enemies to be with Himself in heaven. Whereas the Jew cannot but look for the destruction of his enemies when the time of his deliverance comes. Here then the language is, “That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” Such is the expectation of Israel according to the Psalms and the Prophets.

“And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways” —an allusion clearly to Malachi as well as to Isaiah. “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.” It is not that the Jews will be without the remission of their sins; they will have that, beside deliverance from their enemies. All this is on account of the bowels of “mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

Such will be the condition in which the Jews will be finally met by God; there will be a special darkness more immediately before the light shines out upon them. It was when they were in bitter degradation under the Gentiles, as well as in moral darkness that the Lord came the first time; still more will this be the case when He comes again. There will be renewed bondage under the power of the west; a stranger king will reign in the land, and a special delusive power or Satan will be there: but the Lord will appear to the discomfiture of all their foes and the full deliverance of His people Israel.

Meanwhile “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.” We have seen that, before the large universal character of the gospel of Luke appears—the grace of God to man, there is the utmost care to skew the goodness and forbearance of the Lord in meeting Israel as they then were. Thus they have the responsibility of refusing their Messiah, before God lays the foundation of the richest grace to man generally.

Chapter 103

Notes on Luke 2:1-20

We have had the forerunner of Jesus and the announcement of the birth of Jesus. But now this chapter opens with a providential event which we find nowhere else in the gospels, and yet which explains a fact that is found in the first gospel as well as in the third. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His parents were in the habit of living in Galilee. How then, if the ordinary residence of His parents was at Nazareth, which was at one extremity of the land, could He be born at Bethlehem which was almost at the other?

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (or enrolled).” Caesar Augustus was the then Emperor of Rome, the last human kingdom of Daniel. Even the holy land was put in subjection to these imperial powers, and Caesar used his power and marked it in this that he demanded the presence of every man in his own city, as if all belonged to him. It was a testimony to the total subjection of the habitable world to himself, not to Christ. This indeed will in due time be according to God, the fruit of His own power, when Jesus is manifestly exalted and God's direct power is vested in His hands, who, being Himself a divine person as well as man, will thus exercise all the power as man, yet without derogating in the smallest degree from the rights and authority of God, yea, displaying them gloriously before the world, as He has already established them before God and to faith in the cross.

With Caesar Augustus however it was far different. Even the people of God were placed in servitude; and wonderful to say, the mother of the Messiah was among those, as well as His legal father, who had to pay obedience to the decree of the Roman Emperor. They went up accordingly for the census to their own city, the city of David, Bethlehem, thus accomplishing the prophecies. And what made it the more remarkable is that in verse 2 we are told that “the census itself first took place when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” It was not effected at the time here in view as proposed, but was sufficiently carried out to call the parents of our Lord from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, which accomplished not man's census, but God's prophecy. God took care that it should be just fulfilled enough to carry out His purposes. It was not till some years afterward that Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Then it was carried into effect fully; but meanwhile all went up to be enrolled, each to his own city.

Therefore “Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.” From the time that a woman among the Jews was espoused, she was considered legally the wife of him to whom she was betrothed. Thus the Lord while really Son of His mother Mary, was legally of Joseph; and both Joseph and Mary were of the royal line. The Lord Jesus therefore represented David on both sides; but, as the law required, He was the descendant of Solomon on the legal side. For no matter how unquestionably He might have been the Son of Mary, descended from the Nathan stem, He could not have been according to law the Messiah as long as there was a living representative of the

Solomon branch. But the Lord, being the legally reputed Son of Joseph as well as Mary's Child, was precisely so descended as to be in every required respect “David's Son,” the Messiah. I say this quite independently of His divine glory which was demanded for other and far deeper reasons.

Thus then “while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke always loves to present moral features. Accordingly there is an intimation very instructive for us in the circumstance that it was in the manger Jesus was laid, not in the inn. There was no room for them in the inn. The Lord of glory when born into this world was laid in the manger. What a picture of the state of the world! There was no room for Him who was God in the world! The children of men according to their means found their place in the inn as it suited them. Those who had money could command a place proportioned to what they were willing to pay. But the parents of the Lord were in such poverty as to be thoroughly despised at the inn, and the only place where they could find a shelter for the Babe was a manger.

But this did not hinder the outflow of divine grace any more than it could deny, except to unbelief, the divine glory of Him who was laid there. Unbelief never receives that the Lord of heaven and earth could be born in such circumstances and of such parents. In fact to be born at all, to be really a man, to know beyond all other men the bitterness of the world, the scorn and hatred of men, and finally the cross—all this is utterly stumbling to unbelief. But this is just the truth of God, and the only truth that really makes known God or delivers man. And those that receive it are the simple. Grace makes them such, especially the lowly. It can make the proudest simple, no doubt; but it addresses itself in particular as the rule (and Luke marks the fact) to those that are despised on the earth as Christ was.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.” Nevertheless there was no reason. Man, because he is a sinner, is afraid of God, but in truth “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The angel in the spirit of this says, “Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be” —but not exactly “to all people.” For although Luke does finally proclaim the saving grace that goes out to all men, he begins within the strict limits of Israel, and shows God faithful to His people and willing to accomplish all His promises if they would receive Jesus. But they would not, and therefore God was morally justified in turning from the despising Jews to the Gentiles. The true way of understanding this clause is, “which shall be to all the people,” meaning the people of Israel. This is confirmed in the next verse. “For unto you is born this, day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” It was the Anointed of God that their fathers had long waited and looked for. The Child was now born, the Son given, and unto them, as said the prophet.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” “A babe” it should be. And so it was: a most significant sign—a Messiah, not in power and glory as the Jews expected, but a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, who in grace was subject to all the realities of the circumstances of a human birth and infancy, and who was found in fact, as to external position, lying in a manger.

But if such was the place of obscurity that He entered, all the world being really out of course and God unwilling to allow such a thought as a sanction by His Son of the state of men in sin, if He gives Him therefore a place as it were outside, on the other hand there was suddenly “with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will in men.” This is comprising in a few words the whole scope of divine purpose. The manifestation of the Son, now man, leads to this, not exactly the moral ground of it, or the means by which it will be brought about, but the result as illustrating to their unjealous eyes, God's good pleasure in men (not angels). First of all, there is “Glory to God in the highest.” Up to the birth of Jesus, all had been disappointment in man. The creature had broken down under the best circumstances, and every attempt by any other means to correct it had brought either destruction to men or rebellion against God, growing worse and worse. The deluge had not mended the world, but simply destroyed men. The law had only aggravated the condition of man, provoking their sin into open transgression and sealing them up in condemnation.

But the birth of the Lord Jesus is at once the signal for the angels to sing, “Glory to God in the highest.” It would not be merely glory to God below, but in the highest, throughout the entire universe of God, and expressly in its highest places—glory to God at length everywhere. On earth, where nothing but war had been against God, and with man, confusion, misery, and rebellion—“On earth peace.” Nothing less than this would ensue from the birth of the Messiah, though not all at once; but the heavenly host take in the magnificent issues of His birth who is father of the age to come. That birth, too, was the expression that God's complacency is in men. There could not be a greater proof of God's good pleasure than this; for the Son of God did not become an angel but a man. He was God from all eternity, but He became man. This bore witness, irrefragable and evident to every one who reflects, what an object of love men were to God. The heavenly host therefore only sing of these great outlines. They do not enter into detail; perhaps they did not know how any one was to be brought about. But the great fact was there before them; the Lord from heaven was this babe, the object of contempt to man, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, perhaps as no other babe was. No wonder it drew out the loudest songs of the angels. They see God's glory in it; they see men thus the object of His infinite love and condescension; they anticipate peace for the earth, spite of all appearances, spite of Caesar Augustus or his decrees, spite of the Roman armies, those massive iron hammers that battered down the nations, the beast that trampled what it could not devour—spite of all this, “Peace on earth.” They looked at things as the scene for displaying in man (because the Son was now man) God's glory and grace; and they were right.

When the unwonted vision passed away, the shepherds say one to another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

Thus, in their artless way, they acted upon what was made known to them, upon the report of the angels; and when they had proved its truth, they spread the news. They were anticipating thus far the way of grace. Tidings of such great goodness and joy could not be, ought not to be, confined to the breasts of those to whom it was first communicated. They made it known wherever they could. “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” A deeper feeling no doubt

wrought in her mind. The time was not come for the propagation of the gospel which was in store: the basis for it was not even laid. But she who must needs have been intimately interested in the wonders that surrounded her—she weighed all, and treasured it all up in her heart. The shepherds, too, simple men, favored as they had been of God, returned, glorifying and praising Him “for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

Chapter 104

Notes on Luke 2:21-38

We now see the Lord Jesus under the law of Moses, as in the earlier verses, born of woman. For “when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” This name refers both to His being Jehovah and a Savior, as we are told in Matt. 1:21. Here the fact simply is mentioned. Nevertheless we have here—beyond what we have in Matthew—the Jewish evidence of the poverty of the holy family, as we had before the contempt of man proved in the lowly circumstances in which the Lord was born. (Ver. 7.) “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord); and to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.” Now we know from the Pentateuch that this sacrifice was a provision where the parents were extremely poor. Thus Luke preserves the two traits that we have noticed as the characteristics of his gospel. First, there is the evangelist showing that the Lord met Israel thoroughly according to all the divine ordinances—that He was presented in the strictest compliance with the law “to the Jew first.” The next feature is the display of moral principles manifested in all that surrounded the Lord on His coming into the world, as well as His ways in it. To the poor the gospel is preached; and the Lord did not preach the gospel to the poor as One who was a rich and mighty and distinguished Patron, though entitled even as man to the highest place on earth. But though He was rich, the Lord Jesus tasted what it is to be poor and despised in all its reality. It was not as a benefactor, which is the way of the world; their great ones are called benefactors, when they spare of their bounty for the destitute. As it is said, “They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so.” And as we are commanded not to act thus, on the other hand Jesus was surely not so, but the very reverse. Infinitely above all, He nevertheless took His place with the least, with the most obscure and overlooked in the land: and this, as we see, from the very beginning of His earthly course.

But if there was no natural éclat but evident humiliation in the facts of our Lord's infancy, what was there not of moral glory? This again it was most suitable for Luke to notice, and he alone does so. “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” The consolation of Israel was come; the Person who brought it in, and who would make it good in due time, was here. But, further, it was revealed to Simeon “by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” These and the like revelations were vouchsafed before the canon of Scripture was complete. “And he came by the Spirit into the temple.” It was a part of that same goodness of God, who would give suitable witnesses, that this godly man came in at the very time when the parents brought in the infant Jesus to do for him “after the custom of the law.” But he sees that there was in that babe One altogether above the law. In grace He might become subject to it, and His parents were of course quite right in paying every due deference to its ordinances. But Simeon “took him up in his arms and blessed God, saying, Lord, now lettest

thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." The law of Moses never could give a sinful man to depart in peace—so to speak, it never ought. Peace must be in order to be real and righteous, from the God who gave the law present in grace, present as man in this world, and present to suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust. And so He was, for such was Jesus. No wonder then that he whose eyes were touched with a better eyesalve than that of earth could see God and his salvation in the Babe, could say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." It was not imagination, but sober faith; it was "according to thy word." It was not a mere craving desire nor a sanguine hope. There is nothing so sure as the testimonies of God and His word; and he had an intimation that he should not see death until he had seen the Anointed of Jehovah. But to depart in peace according to the Lord's word was a matter of broader interest; it was for others who might not see the babe. To him, however, it was pledged and performed. "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." This was what kings and prophets had desired to see, and now Simeon saw it in the person of Jesus. And so, as it was grace of the most marked character in the favor shown to the aged Simeon, he enters more or less into the dealings of grace by the power of the Spirit of God. Thus he pursues it: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." —not now "all the [Jewish] people," but "all the peoples." Again, it is "a light," not exactly "to lighten the Gentiles," but "for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." To this godly man there was an intimation of the momentous change that was at hand. The salvation of God could not be restrained to one people; if God's salvation was upon earth it must at least in result be before all the nations; as Paul said, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." That goes farther DO doubt, because it supposes the work done, as well as the person manifested; nevertheless the principle is the same, and it is here.

But, further note, "a light for the revelation of the Gentiles." This is an unusual expression and to be weighed. The Gentiles during God's dealings with Israel were in the dark. Those were the times of ignorance, and God winked at their ways. But now, says the apostle, He commands all men everywhere to repent. There is no excuse for ignorance longer. The light shines, the true light. Christ was that light, and He is a light for the revelation of the Gentiles. This is the time during which Israel is blinded, and the long-hidden Gentiles are revealed, brought out of the degradation in which they had hitherto lain. But when God has accomplished His work among the Gentiles, that which is added here will be made true, "and the glory of thy people Israel." This verse is very important as showing what was to ensue when Israel would reject the Messiah and before they shall be brought in by and by. This is not the order that we find in the prophets. There the Lord wherever He is presented as the glory of Israel, is also seen as blessing the Gentiles subordinately to the chosen people. Here the reversed order is, I think, significant; "a light for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." The predicted and regular state of things will follow this exceptional period during which the Gentiles have been revealed. Nevertheless once God has brought the Gentiles into light, He never puts them back into darkness. But this will not hinder Him from bringing Israel to the highest pitch of earthly glory above all the Gentiles. Thus God's wisdom will secure that His goodness to the Gentiles shall never pass away, but at the same time He will accomplish His ancient and special promises to Israel. During the present dispensation these two things are necessarily separated. The Gentiles are being revealed now, and though hereafter they shall not cease to be revealed, Christ will be the glory of His people Israel. Now He is, as it were, their shame, or rather they are His; because they crucified Him, and

they have not yet repented of their sin but added to it their contempt of the Spirit's message of forgiveness on faith in the gospel.

“And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them.” Now too he is given to supply the key to the fact that the glory of the people Israel should be postponed. He “said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” The personal sorrow of Mary is alluded to, who is to be a witness of the crucifixion of her own son. Luke always brings out these touches of human affection and sorrow. This is a part of his province, because he particularly portrays the Lord Jesus as a man; and in accordance with this he brings out the feelings of those so nearly connected with Him as His mother. The moral object and effect is added with equal propriety— “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Such is the issue of the rejection of Jesus. If men's hearts are set upon present glory and ease, the cross of Jesus scandalizes them. If their hearts, on the contrary, are taught of God to feel the need of redemption through the blood of the Savior, then the cross of Christ is most welcome and sweet. If divine love has value in our eyes; if the alienation of the world from God is strongly felt by their hearts, then the death of Christ will have its just place more or less. On the other hand, to self-righteousness, or self-will, or worldliness the cross of Christ is just hateful and repulsive in the measure in which it is understood. Where there is the sense of need, where there is the teaching of God, where there is entrance into divine love, where the world's position in His sight or the place of faithful testimony for God is appreciated, there the cross rise, in its value before our hearts. Thus the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, and by the cross above all other tests.

God, however, brings in, beside Simeon, another witness, Anna the prophetess, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

As Simeon was said to be just and devout, so the Spirit loves to record a blessed account of this believing woman, Anna. If he, too, had the spirit of prophecy, so had she. “She was a widow of about fourscore and four years which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” The subjection of these godly ones in Israel to ordinances, or their submission to God according to the law, is carefully noted here. “And she coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” The present guidance of God is equally conspicuous in her case as in that of Simeon. There was then, as ever, a remnant according to the election of grace; and God took care that the testimony should reach those whose hearts were prepared for Jesus. Grace might and would in due time go out to the very vilest; but God first of all makes Him known to those whose hearts were already touched, waiting for Jesus. The moral wisdom of such ways seems to me equally apparent and admirable.

Such is the presentation of the Lord as yet in Jewish circumstances, given by our evangelist, though not without hints and predictions which look out to a larger vista of divine goodness.

Notes on Luke 2:39-52

Turn was the full recognition of the law of the Lord, while the person of Jesus is brought before us with all evidence as the great manifestation of God's grace. This surprises some. They are apt to set law and grace in contradiction to each other. Now for this there is no just reason. It is true neither of the person of Christ nor of His work, any more than of those that are Christ's. In no case does law suffer through the grace of God, but on the contrary, it never receives so important a testimony either to its authority or to its use as through grace. Indeed it is grace alone which accomplishes the law. Other people talk about it and employ it for their own importance; but in point of fact they weaken it, and even teach or allow in their doctrine that God mitigates it under the gospel, instead of maintaining all its real authority. This is very strikingly shown in our Lord's case, but it is equally true both in the cross and in Christianity. Hence in Rom. 3 we read that through faith “we establish the law,” because the believer rests upon the mighty work of Christ on the cross, which gave the most solemn sanction to the law that it ever received or could have. Faith beholds Jesus suffering the curse in all its depth and its bitterness; whereas, in the view I am opposing, God is conceived to depart from the rigor of the law in order to show mercy. The doctrine of the apostle shows, on the contrary, that Jesus underwent the extreme judgment of God for sin and bore all that God could display against our evil when imputed to Him. Therefore nothing but grace remains, so to speak, and becomes the portion of those who believe. Thus faith establishes the law, as legalism undermines it in order to let off the guilty. It is the same principle with the people of God. In Rom. 8 it is written, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” It is not merely fulfilled in Him, but in the Christian; it was established in the cross and it is fulfilled in us “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” The reason is because the new nature in the believer always loves the law of God and is subject to it, as nothing else is. This displays itself in the ways of the believer, in holiness, obedience, and love. For he that loves has fulfilled the law; as the apostle says elsewhere, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Hence we find that in the case of Christ who was the proper manifestation of God's grace, there was the fullest homage paid to the law; though personally His own title was above law, yet was He in grace made under law as truly as He was made of a woman, and this fittingly and righteously to accomplish redemption.

“And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.” The law was owned in Jerusalem; grace takes its place among the insignificant and despised and outcast and good-for-nothing in the eyes of men: indeed, not only in Galilee but in a place proverbially obscure even there—Nazareth. What a wonderful witness of the way of divine grace! People when they choose a place are apt to consider what pleases them most and will answer their interests best. What pleased God most and answered the interests of grace best was Nazareth. There His Son spent His earliest days. “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” How entirely

independent of human culture, of anything that man could bring from without—this child, the Son of God, filled with wisdom; but as it is written, “the grace of God was upon him.”

“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.” It is this, their yearly visit to Jerusalem, which accounts for their being at Bethlehem when the magi came up from the east. Certainly their arrival was not immediately after the Babe was born. It can hardly be doubted that it must have been on one of their regular subsequent visits, when they not only went up to Jerusalem, but, as we can understand, they turned aside to Bethlehem which had now more than ever the deepest interest in their eyes, as the birth-place of the Child that had been given them—the Messiah. On the occasion of this visit, at least a year after His birth, the Magi came up and found the young child with Mary His mother and presented unto Him their gifts. And this accounts for the fact that, when Herod found it out, he ordered the children to be killed from two years old and under. He would scarcely have done this, cruel a man as he was, had the child been just born; but because at least a year had passed or more, to make sure of his purpose, he orders all to be killed from two years old and under “according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.” This causes at first sight a difficulty, because the child is again seen in Bethlehem, whereas we are told that they lived at Nazareth. But there is really nothing to perplex the weakest believer. Luke supplies the link by telling us of the annual return to Jerusalem, while Matthew gives us the additional scene of the visit of the magi to Bethlehem according to prophecy. Nothing would have been easier than, when they were at Jerusalem, to have turned southward to Bethany—nothing more natural than that they should revisit the scene of the most important event in their lives. Indeed never had anything in interest approached the birth of Jesus since the world began. It was to be eclipsed, or at the least outshone by the greater and altogether incomparable work of His cross. But this was not yet come.

We are next given to see that, when He was twelve years old, a remarkable illustration of His youthful days takes place. “When they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.” (Ver. 43, 45, 46.) A more attractive sight morally there is nowhere even in God's word. Just at the ago when there is apt to be neither the simplicity of the child nor the exercised good sense of the man, we find Jesus thus engaged. Others of like age were, no doubt, bent upon their play, or the indulgence of curiosity in such a city, frittering away the most valuable time, that never can return, before the bustle of human life begins and the great struggle in which so many lose themselves continually. But Jesus was found lowly, and at the same time filled with wisdom, using the golden opportunity, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them (a proof of His humility), and asking them questions, a proof of His interest in the scriptures. It was not enough that the Lord wakened His ear morning by morning to hear as the learned: it was not enough that He gave Him the tongue of the learned that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. But here it is the ear and tongue of the learner in the use of the means at the command of any child in Israel. However taught of God He might be immediately, here He was none the less sitting in the midst of the doctors of Jerusalem, both hearing them and asking them questions. It was not teaching them, though perfectly competent and personally entitled to do so as the Son of God. No doubt His very questions were most instructive, such as never had been

heard in this world before. Still, this beautiful picture displays the perfect propriety of the child Jesus. For though He was God, He was man; and not only man, but in this special stage of His manhood, as a youth, He shows all deference to those who were older than Himself. Had He acted upon right, He was the Lord of that temple, He might have taken up the word of Malachi, which bore witness to His coming there in power and glory. He might have claimed as Jehovah "suddenly [to] come to his temple: and who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." But no. He, the Master, is found there as the disciple of the word of God, as one that does not for Himself dispense with, but, on the contrary, would seek the profit of that word which was in the lips of these doctors. It was, after all, His Father's word: so He hears them and asks them questions. "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." Thus His questions led to the manifestation of divine truth; so yet more His answers, as it is evident from this that they also put questions to Him.

And when His parents "saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Thus from early youth our Lord had the consciousness of being the Son of God above all earthly claims. But exactly as grace acknowledges the law, so the eternal Son acknowledges His human place as the child of Mary. He asserted and proved that He was really the Son of the Father in His own consciousness and that consequently He must be about His Father's business. It was not open to, or possible for, Him to set aside His Father's will. This was the first object before His heart. But spite of all this devotedness as Son of God, spite of His parents not understanding what He said, He comes down with them "to Nazareth and was subject unto them," while His mother keeps all these sayings, little understood, in her heart.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." Thus we have this fresh notice of the Lord's growth outwardly as well as inwardly. How can we reconcile such intimations with His being God Himself, though man? Most evidently He was always perfect, but then He was the perfect babe, and the perfect youth, as we shall also find Him to be in due time the perfect man. At any given moment He was absolutely perfect, and yet He grew. He advanced from a babe to a youth and from a youth to a man. And so it was, that, as He grew up, the perfection was in exact harmony with His growth, and proved itself to be so both to God and man. If the immaculate and holy Babe was precious in the sight of God, yet more as youth, and most of all the developed maturity of a man.

It is thus therefore that, while all was perfect and always so, still that perfection admitted of progress; "and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." But all this, we may observe, is in precise accordance with the spirit and design of our evangelist, and in fact found in this gospel alone.

Chapter 106

Notes on Luke 3:1-14

The dates are given in Luke reckoning from the years of the Roman Empire. Judea is but a province of it, the Herods are in power. All this was a very humiliating and significant circumstance for Israel—impossible if the people had been faithful to God. But God does not hide the shame of His people; on the contrary He makes it manifest by this very fact—He gives it a record in His own eternal word, the word that liveth and abideth forever.

“Now, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip Tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.” We see from this that, although the high priests were there, yet even this holy office was affected strangely by the new circumstances of Israel. There was not one high priest but two; there was disorder that not only dislocated the people politically but tainted their religious relations. However, God was faithful and His word “came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness” —even in spite of these circumstances, but in the wilderness. It is no question of the city of the great King now, but of the wilderness; and John the Baptist's dwelling in the wilderness, and the word of God coming to him there, speak volumes as to the real state of the Holy Deity, It was not to Zion that the word of God came.

Accordingly, John “came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Ver. 3.) Repentance was what characterized John's preaching; not but what repentance was and abides always a truth obligatory upon every sinful soul that comes to the know, ledge of God. Under Christianity repentance, so far from being lessened in its character, is deepened yet you could not say that it is characteristic of Christianity—faith is much more so. Hence in Galatians the apostle speaks of “when faith was come.” When repentance was come would be no description of the new thing, whereas in John the Baptist's preaching it was the emphatic word that description the character of his message. John came therefore “preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” He had indeed a peculiar position. It was not law simply nor even prophets, though in truth he was the greatest of prophets; none had arisen greater than John the Baptist. But it was one who was the herald of the Messiah whom he proclaimed to be just at the doors—yea, in their midst, as he says—and in view of His immediate coming he calls men to repentance. It was the confession of utter failure with respect to the law and despising of the prophets, but it was also to confess their sins in view of One just coming who could and would forgive their sins. He preached therefore “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” This was not arbitrary but of divine authority. “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.” He was really sent to baptize with water; but at the same time there was an intimation given to him that he should see the Spirit descending upon some special individual—the Messiah; and that the Messiah should be a baptizer (not with water, but) with the Holy Ghost. This was his peculiar mission. Christ and He alone baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and this the Lord Jesus did when He went up to heaven. But John baptized upon earth with water. No

doubt under Christianity baptism with water still continues and has a very important meaning—I do not doubt a good deal deeper than John's. It is not merely baptism unto repentance that “they should believe on him which should come after him.” But now baptism is founded on the faith of Him who has already come and died; consequently, the great point of Christian baptism is burial (not into Christ's life of course, but) into His death. John could not say this; He saw a living Christ though he spoke by the Holy Ghost of His being “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” How far he entered into the meaning of what he said is another matter. We know for certain that when he was thrown into prison himself afterward, he was somewhat offended or stumbled and sent some of his disciples to ask, “Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?” It is clear therefore that he looked for a Christ in power to break the chains of the oppressed and to deliver the captives, as well as to preach the gospel to the poor. But to see a Savior despised and rejected more and more, and himself His forerunner languishing in a prison, these were altogether new and strange thoughts to John the Baptist. Nevertheless God had taken care that his lips should proclaim the mighty work of Christ in both its parts, as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, and as the One who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

Now we have John the Baptist acting here according to Isaiah the prophet. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Only the Spirit of God in Luke takes pare to give it the utmost breadth, “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.” We have not this elsewhere. In Matthew, Mark, and John, the quotation stops short of this. But Luke, though he begins with the Jew, does not end with him; but very decidedly goes out to all the nations. Hence expressions that would add largeness and comprehensiveness are particularly added by the Spirit here. (Ver. 4 - 6,)

But another peculiarity of Luke is exemplified here also. There is not only exceeding breadth given to the ways of God, but also the word of God in its moral power is continually enforced. So when John the Baptist speaks to the multitudes that come to be baptized of him, be warns them, as the other evangelists do also, to flee from the wrath to come and not to presume upon their privileges of birth, saying, “We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Moreover, already “the ax is laid unto the root of the trees;” judgment was at the door; “every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Ver. 7-9.) This process was what was now going on. So far we have what is common to Luke with Matthew. But we have afterward what is peculiar. “And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?” and then we have John the Baptist's detailed exhortation to different classes of men. “He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise.” (Ver. 10, 11.) Although John called to repentance, it is a poor and superficial sorrow for sins that simply owns the past and judges, however strongly, the evil that has hitherto broken out in our ways. John lays down suitable conduct for those who professed to repent. God was acting Himself for His own glory in the spirit of this same grace. Repentance prepares the way for grace; it is produced by grace of course, but at the same time it leads into a path of grace.

So also (ver. 12, 13) when the publicans came to be baptized, instead of dismissing them contemptuously as a mere Jew would have done, He answers their question, “Master, what shall

we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Notoriously they were extortioners, their rapacity was proverbial, they plundered the people of whom they were the official tax gatherers. The soldiers similarly (ver. 14) "demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." It is clear that there we are warned against violence and corruption, the two great features of men left to themselves. But, besides, contentedness with their wages is pressed upon them. It is remarkable how much the spirit of contentment has to do not only with the happiness of a soul but with its holiness.

There is scarcely another thing that so tends to disturb our relationship with God and man as discontent. It makes an individual ripe for any evil. It helps, on a great scale, to the revolutions of nations and other social ruptures. On a smaller scale, it subverts the equilibrium of families and the right attitude of individuals as nothing else can. So we read of "unthankful, unholy" classed together by the Spirit of God. We also find unthankfulness mentioned as leading into idolatry. The Gentiles not only did not glorify God as God, but they were unthankful, and they fell into all kinds of moral depravity. There is nothing more important than to cherish a thankfulness of heart, sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, having confidence in His goodness, and also in the certainty that He has given to ourselves individually exactly the thing that is best for us. But the only way to be thus content, whatever may be our lot, is to look at God as dealing with us in Christ for eternity.

There is thus, under the most homely words of John the Baptist, real moral wisdom from God suitable to men's circumstances here below. We have not here heavenly things; these are the fruit of Christ's redemption. Nevertheless, the sketch that is given us of John the Baptist's teaching, is eminently practical, and suited to deal with the conscience and heart. And we shall find this to be always true as we advance farther in our gospel.

Notes on Luke 3:15-38

John the Baptist's appearance in Israel at this moment struck them the more, because, in consequence of Daniel's famous prophecy of the seventy weeks, and it may be other scriptures, they were at that very time waiting for the Messiah. The expectation was general over the East, no doubt through the Jews who were scattered abroad. Therefore a man so distinguished as John the Baptist was for righteousness raised the question whether he were the Christ or not. But his answer was always distinct. He pointed to the fact of his own baptizing with water. This was peculiar to him and a sign to Israel. But even his (if I may so say) coming by water gave him the opportunity of contrasting One who had come after a far different sort, even looking at power, not to speak of blood. Jesus “came by water and blood.” The point however that John contrasted with the water is His baptizing with the holy Ghost. It was a person infinitely greater than himself, One whose dignity was such that the tie of His sandals he was not worthy to unloose; One not only mightier and more dignified, but who would be distinguished by baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire—baptizing with the Holy Ghost as the fruit of His first advent; and baptizing with fire as the accompaniment of the second. When the Lord Jesus comes again, He will baptize with fire; He will execute the solemn judgment of God upon the world. Baptizing with the Holy Ghost is what makes the Church (that is God's present assembly) separate from the Jew even.

The Acts of the Apostles may serve to make this particularly plain. When the disciples were with the Lord after His resurrection, He spoke to them of the things concerning the kingdom, besides giving them many infallible proofs of His own life in resurrection after His suffering. Among the rest He told them that they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. The Lord therefore distinguished John's from His own mission by this. He baptized with the Holy Ghost, John only with water. Accordingly not many days after this, on the day of Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Ghost became a fact. The Lord shed forth what was then seen and heard: the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they were thus baptized (as Paul afterward taught—into one body; that is, the Church). Of the baptism with fire, you will observe, the Lord does not speak one word. The reason is that this was not to be accomplished then. When John was looking onwards, he sees both, but when Christ had actually suffered on the cross, He announces the one and not the other. Baptism with fire will take place when the Lord will be revealed from heaven “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is plain from verse 17.

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.” This is the baptism with fire. “And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.”

Then we have in Luke's remarkable manner a compendious description of John up to his imprisonment. “But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.” The object is to present a full picture of John; and hence Luke does not adhere to mere

time any more than Matthew does. Whatever adds to the moral description is Luke's province. John was faithful not only to the lower classes but also to the highest. His testimony to Christ was decisive, making nothing of his own glory in order to exalt the Lord; and he suffered for it too: he was shut up in prison because of righteousness.

And now the door is open for presenting Jesus. “When all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened.” How lovely the picture! The Lord, perfect as He was, did not keep Himself aloof from the people. Morally separate from sinners, nevertheless their confession of sin, which was implied in their baptism, attracted the Lord's heart, and He would be with them, though Himself absolutely sinless. The Holy Jesus also being baptized and praying—so thoroughly was He found taking His place as the dependent man upon earth, and while He was praying—the heavens were opened “and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” The heavens had never been opened before, except in judgment when Ezekiel had seen them. But now there was an object upon earth that even God could look upon with delight. There was none in heaven that was adequate to draw out and fix the attention of God; nothing could elicit His complacency: a creature could not, but Jesus, because He was not only God but perfect man, was precisely what met the love of God—of His heart. It was God's delight to look down and see a Man who could answer to all His affections and nature and mind and judgment about everything. This is beautiful, and shows what the grace of God is in connection with His being baptized when all the people were. Man as such knows nothing of the mind of God. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts; and the heavens now answer to Jesus on the earth and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him.

From the very first the Holy Ghost had to do with Jesus as man; we were told so in the first chapter, where it was said (when Mary inquired how she was to be the mother of a child) that the Holy Ghost should come upon her. But Jesus was much more than thus conceived of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him. This is what is called by Luke in Acts 10 His anointing of God; “Now God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.” The anointing of the Holy Ghost was not to counteract the evil of human nature—this was already secured by His miraculous conception. There was no taint of evil whatever in the humanity of Christ; all was perfectly pure, and there being a total absence of sin, sin in nature as well as in act. But now there was more than this; there was the Spirit of God poured upon Him. Him God the Father sealed, and this when He was baptized, before He enters upon His public service. It was the expression of God's perfect delight in Him, and it was also power for service. He alone of all men needed no blood to fit Him, as it were, to be anointed with the holy oil. I speak now after the language of Exodus and Leviticus. Others of His people would receive the Holy Ghost, but this only in virtue of blood, His atoning blood being put upon them. Where the blood was put, the oil could be. But Jesus as man receives the Holy Ghost without blood shed or sprinkled. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove. I do not doubt that the outward form of the Spirit's descent was in relation to the character of Christ, just as the cloven tongues as of fire were in relation to the place and work of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. It was not merely a tongue, but a divided tongue, showing that God was now going out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. If it was a tongue of fire, whatever the grace, it was in the divine judgment of all evil. But in

Christ's case there was neither one thing nor the other. In bodily shape the Spirit came down like a dove, the emblem of what is proverbially pure and gentle to the last degree. “Holy, harmless, undefiled” —such was Christ.

But more than this, the voice came from heaven which said, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” This voice is of all importance too. It manifested that Jesus was the delight of God as man, not merely in consequence of a work that was going to be done; it was the person that was owned, and His person too after He had identified Himself with the people that were baptized. They must not mistake nor misinterpret His baptism: it was the baptism of repentance for them, but thoroughly in grace for Him. He had nothing to own. He was about to enter upon a great work, but baptism was in no way the expression of need on His part nor to fit Him for what He was entering upon. “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” —not only I am, but I have been well pleased. It is retrospective and not present merely.

Then we have in a very remarkable manner the genealogy of Jesus introduced. It ought to strike any thoughtful mind that the Spirit of God must have sufficient reason for introducing it here. The natural place we might think for such an account of our Lord's ancestry would be when He was born, or even before His birth, as we have had one in Matthew. A Jew would require it there, and has it there in the first gospel; but here it is introduced when He is baptized. The reason is just this, that the genealogy here is brought in not so much to skew whence Jesus was naturally, or rather legally, to meet the difficulties of a Jew and to prove He was truly the Messiah according to the flesh, but to bring out the person of Jesus on the human side as the Father had just owned Him on the divine. Accordingly the genealogy is very peculiar in this—that it traces Him up to Adam and to God. Why so? Clearly this has nothing to do with His being the Messiah; but it is expressly to manifest One whose heart was toward the whole human race. It is the genealogy of grace as Matthew's is of law. It is not one traced down from the two great fountains of blessing for Israel, Abraham and David, the stock of promise and the line of royalty. Here it is tracing Him up; this wonderful person owned as the Son of God, who is He? So the Spirit of God deigns to show that He was, as it was supposed (He was legitimately counted) the son of Joseph. This implies that the writer of the gospel was perfectly aware that He was not a mere man, that He was not Joseph's son except before the eyes of men. I presume that the genealogy was really Mary's, but (Mary being Joseph's wife) He could be, as was supposed, the son of Joseph and so on. This will accord with the character of the gospel, because the Lord Jesus was not a man in virtue of His connection with Joseph but with Mary. The reality of His manhood depended upon His being the son of Mary; nevertheless He was, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was of Heli. Heli, as I take it, was the father of Mary; hence the genealogy here traces Him through Nathan to David; this was His mother's line, as it appears to me. In Matthew He is derived through Solomon, which was Joseph's line. Therefore, as the law required, it was the father who gave Him His title, and thus He had a strict legal title to the throne of David. The great point in the Jewish system was the father. Thus Matthew gives us Joseph's royal genealogy; but Luke furnishes the maternal line through Mary. This indeed was the real one for Christ's humanity; and the object of Luke was to attest the grace of God displayed in the man Christ Jesus. The humanity of Christ has the largest place throughout this gospel.

If we have to bear our own reproach, it is because we were not bearing the reproach of Christ. When the eye is not on Jesus, we are like Samson shorn of his locks, and our weakness as well

as folly will come out. Let us remember that our rash words and foolish ways dishonor God in this way—that they stumble those who do not know His grace by giving the appearance, as far as we are concerned, that these things are compatible with the grace of which we talk.

Chapter 108

Notes on Luke 4:1-13

Is none of the synoptic gospels has the temptation a weightier place than here. Matthew confronts the Messiah with the great enemy of God's people; and, giving the three closing acts just as they took place, reports them as they illustrate dispensation, and the great impending change, which is emphatically his theme. Mark notes the fact in its due time, and the devotedness of the blessed Servant of God thus tempted of the devil in the wilderness, with none but the wild beasts near, till at its close, as we know also from Matthew, angels came and ministered to Him. John characteristically omits the circumstance altogether; for it clearly attached to His being found in fashion as a man (when He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men), and not to His being God. To Luke it was of capital moment; and the Spirit, as we shall see, saw fit to arrange the order of its parts so as the better to carry out the design by our evangelist.

Here is noted the transition from Jordan of Jesus, “full of the Holy Ghost.” (Ver. 1) It might not at first sight appear to be a likely path; but the more one reflects, the more one may see its wisdom and suitability. He was just baptized, sealed of the Spirit, and, above all, owned by the Father as His beloved Son, forthwith led in the Spirit into the wilderness; and there He was forty days tempted of the devil. The principle is true of us too. Sons of God by the faith of Jesus, and consciously so by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we too know what it is to be tempted by the devil. Temptation is hardly the way in which the devil deals with his children; but when we are delivered, such conflicts begin.

The first in order, and this in Matthew too, is the appeal to natural wants. “And in those days be did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” The Lord at once takes the lowliest ground, really the most elevated morally, that the sustenance of nature is not the first consideration, but living by the word of God. He waits for a word from Him whose will He was come to do. He refuses even in His hunger to take a single step in the way of satisfying His sinless wants without divine direction. The true and only right place of man is dependence; and He, having become a man, would not swerve from the dependence which referred to God instead of following wishes of His own: indeed, His will was to do God's will. “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Ver. 4.) Such was the true estate of man, and his right relation to God; and Jesus therein abode, in circumstances of the greatest trial, the bright contrast of the first Adam who left it where all circumstances were in his favor.

Historically Israel were so tried and failed totally, spite of that constant lesson in the daily manna of their dependence on God and of His unfailing care of them. They hardened their hearts, not hearing His voice; so that forty years long Jehovah was grieved with that generation and said, “It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” But the heart of Jesus was toward His Father and He with the full power of the Spirit refused to supply even the most

legitimate wants of the body, save as obedience. “My meat,” as He said later, “is to do the will of him that sent me.”

The next here (the third in Matthew, and as I believe in the order of occurrence) is the worldly appeal. “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Ver. 5-8.) But here I must observe that the best authenticated text leaves out of the Lord's answer to the devil “Get thee behind me, Satan; for.” And a little reflection shows that, as the external authority demands this omission, so it seems necessarily to follow from the change of order in which Luke was, I doubt not, guided of God. For the vulgarly received text would give the strange appearance that the Lord told the adversary to get behind or go away, while Satan is represented as staying where he was and tempting the Lord after a new sort. Omit these words, and all flows on in exact connection with the context. Internal evidence is thus in harmony with the external.

In Matthew where the words occur in the third place, as in fact it was so, the command to get hence is followed by the devil leaving Him. Thus all is as it should be. In Luke where the transposition occurs, the necessity for omitting the clause is evident; and so it was.

The Lord rebuts the worldly temptations by insisting according to the written word on worshipping the Lord God and serving only Him. Homage to Satan is incompatible with the service of God.

Lastly comes the religious trial. “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Ver. 9-12.) Here the devil would separate the way from the end, omitting this part of the Psalm which he cites. The Lord replies with the saying in scripture, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” To trust Him and count on His gracious ways is not to tempt. The Israelites tempted Jehovah by questioning whether He was in their midst or not; they ought to have reckoned on His presence, and succor, and rare. Jesus did not need to prove the faithfulness of God to His own word; He was sure of it and counted on it. He knew that Jehovah would give His angels charge over Him, and this not outside, but to keep Him in, all His ways. Thus foiled in His misuse of scripture, as everywhere else, the enemy could do no more then. And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him for a season. (Ver. 13.) Jesus, the Son of God, was victorious, and this in obedience, by the right use of the written word of God.

Chapter 109

Notes on Luke 4:14-29

It is important to notice that the temptation in the wilderness preceded the active public life of the Lord, as Gethsemane preceded His death in atonement for our sins. It is an utterly false notion that this defeat of Satan in the wilderness was the basis of our redemption. Such, I believe, is Milton's view in his “Paradise Regained.” But this theory makes victory to be the means of our deliverance from God instead of suffering, and gives consequently the all-importance to living energy, rather than to God's infinite moral or judicial dealing with our sins on the cross; it puts life in the place of death and shuts out or ignores expiation. The real object and connection of the temptation is manifest, when we consider that it is the prelude to the Lord's public life here below, in which He was continually acting on His victory over Satan. When the enemy came again at Gethsemane, it was to turn the Lord aside through the terror of death, and specially of such a death as His on the cross. In the wilderness, and on the mountain, and on the pinnacle of the temple (for there were three different sites and circumstances of this temptation) it was to draw Him away from the path of God by the desirable things of the world.

But however this may be, Jesus now 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.” This is the general description, I apprehend; but the Spirit of God singles out a very special circumstance which illustrates our Lord in the great design of this gospel. It is peculiar to Luke. “He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.” It was in fact the beginning of Isa. 61. This is the more remarkable because the connection of the prophecy is the total ruin of Israel, and the introduction of the kingdom of God and His glory when judgment takes its course. Yet in the midst of this these verses describe our Lord in the fullness of grace. There is no prophet so evangelical, according to ordinary language, as Isaiah; and in Isaiah there is no portion perhaps of the whole prophecy that so breathes the spirit of the gospel as these very verses. Now what can be more striking than that this should be read on that occasion by Christ? and that the Spirit of God gives Luke alone to record it? Our Lord takes the book and reads, stopping precisely at the point where mercy terminates. It is the description of His grace in ministry; it is not so much His person as His devoted life, His work, His ways on earth. In fact it is pretty much what we have in Acts 10 “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.” Immediately after in the prophecy follows “the day of vengeance of our God.” But our Lord does not read these words. Is not this, too, extremely remarkable? that our Lord should stop in the middle of a verse and read what describes His grace and not what touches on His judgment? Why is this? Because He is come only in grace now. By and by He will come in judgment, and then the other verses of the prophecy will be accomplished. Then it will be both the year of His redeemed when He will bless them, and the day of vengeance when He will execute judgment upon their enemies.

Meanwhile, all that He was about to do in Israel for the present was only gracious activity in the power of the Spirit. To this accordingly God had anointed Him— “to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;” and this is what He was to preach— “the acceptable year of the Lord.” “And he closed the book.” Now nothing, it is plain, can more aptly suit the object of the Spirit of God in Luke, who is the only writer inspired to record this. All through the gospel, this is what He is doing. It is the activity of grace among men's misery and sins and need. By and by He will tread the winepress alone, He will expend the fury of the Lord upon His adversaries; but now it is unmingled mercy. Such was Jesus upon the earth and so Luke describes Him throughout. No wonder therefore that He closed the book. This was all that was needful or true to say about Him now; the rest will be proved in its own time. The judgment of God in the second advent is as true as the grace of God that He has been showing in the first advent.

Another thing too is remarkable and proved by this. It is that the whole state of things since Christ was upon the earth till the second advent is a parenthesis. It is not the accomplishment of prophecy, but the revelation of the mystery that was bid in God that is now brought to view. Prophecy shows us Christ's first and second advents together; but what is between the two advents is filled up by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who is forming the Church wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Prophecy always supposes Jew and Gentile. The Church is founded upon the blotting out of this distinction for the time being. It is during the period when Israel does not own the Messiah, which stretches over all the interval between the two advents of Christ, that this new and heavenly work proceeds.

The Lord therefore stopped dead short, and closed the book. When He comes again, He will, as it were, open the book where He left off. Meanwhile, His action was exclusively in grace. The Lord draws their particular attention to this; for when He returns the book to the officer who had it in charge, He sits down. People were all gazing at Him in wonder. He tells them, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

But unbelief at once betrays itself. “Is not this Joseph's son?” They could not deny the grace, but they contemn His person: “He was despised and rejected of men.” In point of fact, unbelief is always blind; He was not Joseph's son, except legally—He was God's Son. “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.” His answer to their thought; was, that “No prophet is accepted in his own country.” Nevertheless grace shines out all the more because Christ was rejected. It is remarkable that He does not vindicate Himself by power; He does not work any miracles to make good the rights of His own person, but appeals to the word of God, the Old-Testament scriptures, for what suited the present time. “I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” Grace, therefore, when Israel rejects (and they were doing so now), goes out to the Gentiles. Sidon was under the special judgment of God, and there was a widow there, bereft of all human resources, and she was the one to whom God sent His prophet in the days of deep distress. When Israel themselves were suffering from a terrible famine, God opened stores for the desolate woman in Sidon. Thus grace goes outside His guilty people. So too in the time of Elisha the prophet. Many lepers were in Israel, “and none of them

was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Grace is sovereign, and in the days of Jewish unbelief Gentiles are blessed. This scripture showed; and how beautiful this was and in keeping with Luke! It paves the way for the going forth of the gospel. When Israel rejected the Lord Jesus, the grace of God must work among the Gentiles, among those who least expect and deserve mercy. How did the men of Nazareth relish this? They were "filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." This is the expression of the hatred which follows rejection of grace. When self-righteous men are convicted of wrong without feeling their guilt against God, there are no bounds to their resentment; and the enmity of their hearts is most of all against Jesus.

Chapter 110

Notes on Luke 4:30-44

The result of the Lord's first appearance at Nazareth in the synagogue was that, though He Himself characterized His ministry from the word of God, or rather the Spirit of God had already anticipated it as He then openly proclaimed it, as being the ministry of grace, by reading this scripture and declaring that it was that day fulfilled in their ears, man soon turns from it in anger and dislike. Attracted at first, he revolted from it afterward, because grace both tells out the ruin of man and always insists on going out wherever there is need and misery. Nevertheless the Lord did not make it plainly known. that grace should go out to the Gentiles till their rejection of Himself began to manifest itself. And now the same men who were so smitten with the charm of grace at first were ready to turn upon Him and east Him down headlong from “the brow of the hill whereon their city was built. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.” His time was not yet come. He “came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.” This wag what Jesus showed. It was not first miracles and then glory, but the truth of God. The word, not a miracle, forms the connecting link between the soul and God; no miracle can do this—nothing but the word of God. For the, word addresses itself to faith, while a miracle is done as a sign to unbelief. But as God produces faith by the word, so He also nourishes it by the word. This proves the immense value of the word of God; and Christ's word was with power.

“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil.” This is the first great work that is recorded in Luke. Our Lord seems already to have done mighty deeds in Capernaum (that is in this very place) before He went to Nazareth; but Luke begins with Nazareth, in order to characterize His ministry by that wonderful description in the word of God which opens out grace to man. Now we find Him in Capernaum, and the first miracle recorded of Him here, whilst He was teaching in the synagogue, was the cure of a man possessed with a spirit of an unclean devil which had the consciousness of the power of Jesus. For the demoniac cried out, saying, “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” It is remarkable here and elsewhere the “I” and the “we” —the man himself and yet the identification with the evil spirit. Moreover this possessed man says, “I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” This appears to be the same character in which Psa. 89 speaks of Christ, where it says, “The Lord is our defense; and the. Holy One of Israel is our King.” It is a psalm full of interest because the Holy One there the sole groundwork of the hopes of the people, as well as the stay of the house of David, otherwise ruined. It is just the, same thing in our gospel; save that Luke goes but more widely. The point of Psa. 89. is that every hope depends on Him. Israel have come to nothing; the glory had waned; and at length departed; the throne is cast down to the ground. But then He is the king; and therefore it is perfectly secured. The shame of God's servants shall be removed, and their enemies shall surely be put to perpetual reproach, after the downfall of that pride, and all the painful discipline that the people of Israel shall pass through. '

Here the unclean spirit prompts the man to acknowledge Jesus as this Holy One. But He refuses such testimony; He did not even receive the witness of men, how much less of devils! “Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy Peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and sake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.” He has thus shown that the power of Christ must first put down Satan (but not without a certain allowed humiliation for man;) that this is the chief evil which pollutes and oppresses the world; and that until Satan's power expelled, it no good to expect full deliverance: We must go to the source of the mischief. This; therefore, is the earliest of the miracles of Christ brought before us by Luke. But then there is also compassion—deep and effectual pity for men. So our Lord, when He leaves the synagogue, goes into the house of Simon. “And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her: And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.” Not only was there power to dismiss the disease with a word, but there was, contrary to all nature, strength communicated to her. A great fever leaves a person, even when it is gone, exceedingly weak, and a considerable time must elapse before the usual vigor returns. But in this case, as the healing, was the fruit of divine power, Peter's wife's mother not only arose, but ministered unto them immediately.

The same evening, “when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.” It made no difference. It was not only that He could cure the fever, but He could cure everything. “He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.” Another thing to be noticed is the manner of it, the tenderness of feeling—He laid His hands on them. This was in no way necessary; a word would have been enough, and the Lord often employed nothing more than a word. But here He shows His human compassion—He laid His hands upon them and healed them. Devils also came out of many, but we find Him here keeping up the testimony to man of the power that Satan had in the world. There are few things more injurious to men than forgetfulness of the power of Satan. At the present time there is exceeding unbelief on the subject. It is regarded as one of the obsolete delusions of the past. But we find most clearly demons going out of many, not in any one peculiar case, “crying out and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God.” These acknowledged the Lord, not as the Holy One of Psa. 89, but as the Anointed One, the Son of David, of Psa. 2. He was the King of Israel in both cases. But the Lord accepted not their testimony in any instance. He really was the Holy One and the Son of God, but it was from God that He took His title, and recognition by the demons He refuses. They knew that He was the Christ. What a solemn thing to find that man is even more obdurate than Satan! for the demons were more willing to acknowledge Jesus than the men even who were delivered from the demons, and who were healed of all their diseases. Man for whom Jesus came! What a proof of the incurable unbelief of man and the certain ruin of those who refuse the Son of God! Devils believe and tremble. Man, even when he does believe with his natural heart, does not tremble. He may believe, but he is insensible in his belief. Can such faith save him? The only faith that is good for anything is that which brings in the sinner in his need and ruin before God, and which sees God in infinite mercy giving His Son to die for him. Anything short of this ends in destruction; and so far from natural faith bettering a man, it only brings out his evil and turns to corruption the more speedily. It is a kind of complimenting the Son of God, instead of

a lowly and true owning of man's own condition and God's grace.

But there is another thing which this chapter brings before us—namely, that our Lord departs when it was day “into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.” The great object of the coming of Christ was to preach God's kingdom; it was bringing God and God's power before men—God's power visiting man in mercy. No healing of diseases or expulsion of demons could satisfy the Lord. And when He had by His miracles attracted attention in any place, it was the more reason for going to another. He did not seek His own fame; another should come in his own name who would. But for our Lord Jesus to attract a name, was a reason for departure, not for staying.

Notes on Luke 5:1-11

It will be remarked that the account of the call of Simon and of the rest of his companions, at the lake of Gennesaret, is given not only more fully in Luke than in any other evangelist but in a totally different connection. In Matthew and Mark we find it mentioned immediately after our Lord began to preach, when John was reported to be put into prison. The first thing named then is when Jesus was “walking by the sea of Galilee, be saw two brethren, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers; and he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Both in Matt. 4 and in Mark 1 the account is given in general terms. We have far more detail in Luke. Is this an accident? Contrariwise, it is the fruit of a gracious design of God. Luke had the task confided to him more than any other of bringing out God's grace toward man and in man. Along with this he had also to lay bare the working of man's conscience and heart, especially under the operation of the Spirit of God.

The Lord then is shown us calling Simon not at the time when it actually occurred, but in connection with the development of this great purpose—calling men to be associated with Himself. Hence this notice of their call, which had taken place some time before, is reserved till the opening and character of His own ministry have been fully set before us; His reading at Nazareth with grace and nothing but grace to man—not judgment as yet, for He stopped before it; His subsequent comment when they began to show their unbelief, even after their confession of the gracious words which had proceeded out of His mouth; His proof from the law that the unbelief of Israel turns the stream of grace toward the Gentiles, the intimation of what God was going to do now and their subsequent deadly wrath and indignation; then His course in the power of the Holy Ghost, but above all, His word with power, not nevertheless without mighty works, as in dealing with Satan's dominion over man and all the physical consequences of it, the healing of all diseases and the casting out of demons. But especially He preached the kingdom of God, and that far and wide, fame among men being only an additional reason for moving elsewhere.

Thus it is man by the power of the Holy Ghost, entirely above Satanic working and human weakness, delivering mankind and ministering the word of God as the sole means of spiritual strength and association with God, as the Spirit is the source of all that is good and great according to God. But even this is not enough for His grace; He would associate men with Himself in good. Hence in the next scene before us, the Holy Spirit skews us the Lord calling others. He rejoices in the habitable part of His earth, and, His delights are with the sons of men; He associated them with Himself. It was not only for men's pardon that He came, but for salvation and all its fruits. Simon Peter, being the more prominent of those now called, is brought into the foreground. If he is to help others, he must be first helped himself; and man cannot be truly helped without raising the question of sin and settling it in the heart, as well as by Christ outside ourselves.

The Lord now effects this. Standing by the lake, He sees two ships there, and the fishermen engaged in washing their nets, when the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God. So he

enters “into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and asked him to thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the crowd out of the ship. But when he ceased speaking, he said to Simon, Thrust out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft.”

The work must be carried within. Even the word may seem to fail, but it may be followed up by some act or way on God's part in order to drive it home to the heart. He tells Simon therefore to thrust out and let down the net for a haul. A seaman is apt to think that he understands his own business best; and Simon answered saying, “Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” Thus, feeble as his faith might have been at this time, it was real. He bows to One who naturally could not be considered to know anything of a fisherman's work, but Peter has confidence that He is Messiah and learns that He is this and far more, that He had the mind and grace of God. It would be now shown whether He had all power at His command. Simon had reason to know that He had divine energy as to men on earth; but now there was a new thing, One who had dominion over the fish of the sea. Sin had greatly hindered the exercise and even proof of the large dominion which was originally granted to them. But here was the repairer of all breaches: in Peter's ship was the Second man, the Lord from heaven. “And when they had thus done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes.” The failure of human resources, as they are, to avail themselves of the blessing, is made manifest. Their net brake, and they beckoned unto their partners in the other ship to come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking. The help of man is as vain as man himself, even for the blessing of God. The day was coming when the net should not break, no matter how large the fishes nor how great the variety. But this is reserved for another age, when the Second man shall reign in righteousness and power. Here we see the feebleness of this age.

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and they that were with him, at the draft of the fishes which they had taken.” Now comes the deep moral result for Peter's heart. The greatness of the Lord's grace as well as His power brought his sinfulness more than ever before his soul. A strange moral inconsistency follows. He casts himself at the Lord's feet and says, “Depart from me.” But he does not depart from Jesus. Rather does he fall down as near to Jesus as he can; yet he says, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” He confesses his unfitness for the presence of the Lord, yet would not lose Him for all worlds—goes to Him, yet feels and owns that He might justly go away from such a sinner. Thus the Lord, who knew the heart, did that which was eminently calculated to act upon Simon, who knew the powerlessness of man as he is to do what the Lord had done. They had all shown how unable they were; they had “toiled the whole night, and taken nothing.” But the Lord not only knew all but could do all; and this brings up sin on Simon's conscience.

But, further, the Lord's answer thereon was, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt be catching men.” He banishes the fear so natural to the heart where sin is, which is even increased at first by the action of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost only removes fear by the revelation of Christ, His work, and His word. His operation is to make us know what is calculated to produce fear as well as to lead us to Him who alone by His grace can banish it. The effect of the state of the first man when rightly viewed is to fill with intense fear and horror: as to himself he could not but fear; from Christ he hears, “Fear not.” And who is entitled to be heard? “My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me.” It is blessed to learn from God that our sinfulness, while not only

naturally but even spiritually it ought to produce torment, is met and fear is cast out by the perfect love of God in Christ. Our Lord, on the ground of that great redemption which He was about to bring in by His blood, was entitled righteously to say, “Fear not.” This was the divine way of forming one that was afterward to become a fisher of men. He must be in the experience of the blessing of grace himself before he was fit to be the witness of it to others.

“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.” Such was the power of grace; it made all things little in comparison of Christ, and of what Christ becomes to the man who believes in Him.

Chapter 112

Remarks on Mark 10:46-52

A new division of our gospel here opens. It is the Lord's final presentation of Himself to the nation as Messiah. His ministerial work was closed. Here He is viewed as Son of David.

“And they came to Jericho.” That city which first opposed itself to the entrance of Israel into the land of promise, but fell by the mighty power of God, when His people submitted themselves to His word by Joshua: that city which brought the predicted curse on him and his sons who reared it again; that city whose waters were healed, and from whose land barrenness was taken away in grace by the prophet, is the scene of a remarkable display of beneficent power, in answer to the faith that owned the promised Seed and King.

“And as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, at by the wayside begging.” I do not doubt that it is the same incident which is recorded in Matt. 20 and in Luke 18 But the differences are so great as to have occasioned doubts of this in some. The truth is that each is perfect. Matthew gives the double cure—true to his habit (see chap. 3) and the exigency of Jewish witness. Luke so states it that the careless might infer that the cure took place as the Lord went into (instead of as He came out of) Jericho. His moral order required the juxtaposition of the tale of Zacchaeus and the parable of the nobleman, as illustrating the scope of the two advents, and hence displaced of necessity the story of the blind man. But Luke takes care to say, not “as he was come nigh unto Jericho” (as the English Bible and others), but “as he was nigh to Jericho,"■ν τ■ ■γγ■ξειν α'■τ■ν ε■ς ■ερι χ■ without saying whether it was His coming or His going. He was in that neighborhood. Some MSS. give, “the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, sat,” &e. The Sinai copy has “blind and a beggar.” As usual, our evangelist relates the facts and even names with characteristic precision. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me.” No expression of unbelief on the part of others could stifle his own cry of faith. It was, no doubt, in keeping with his wants to call on Him to whom Isaiah of old testified, “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened.” Others knew this scripture as well as Bartimaeus, but he claimed the blessing from the despised Nazarene. They said they saw, and therefore their sin remained. As for him he was confessedly miserable, poor, and blind; naked, too, he was content to be, if he might the more readily cast himself on the Lord. The multitude, not feeling their own need, had no sympathy with one who felt his, and sought to drown his importunity. But it was God who had laid it on the heart of the blind beggar—God who, in his appeal to the rejected Messiah, rebuked the incredulity of His people as miserable, and poor, and blind as he, yea, more so, incomparably more, because they felt it not, and owned not their king. For them He was but Jesus of Nazareth. “And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

The application of this title is the more strikingly in place and season here, because it is the first occurrence and, one may say, the only instance in Mark, common as it is from the first to the corresponding chapter of Matthew. The nearest approach is in the Lord's reference to Psalms in

chapter 12. This, as well as chapter 11:9, 10, may show how truly guided of God Bartimaeus was—the type, doubtless, of the remnant of the latter day, whose eyes will be opened of the Messiah before He is in publicly-recognized relationship with Jerusalem.

But let us turn to the foreshadowing of the “mercy that endureth forever.” No rebuke came from Jesus. On the contrary, He stood still and said, Call him. “And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth for thee. And be, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.” Mark, not Matthew, mentions the cloak cast off in the alacrity that hastened at the invitation of Jesus; yet Matthew, not Mark, was an eyewitness.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? The blind man said to him, Rabboni [My Master], that I may recover sight. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Go, thy faith hath healed thee. And immediately he recovered sight, and was following Jesus in the way.” Luke alone adds the expressed moral effect on the part both of the blind man and of all the people that saw the miracle: be glorified God, as they gave Him praise. But this is thoroughly the province of Luke, as must have been observed, in fact, by every reader of ordinary attention.

Chapter 113

Remarks on Mark 11:1-14

The Savior now proceeds on His last journey to Jerusalem, His final presentation of Himself, as far as testimony went, as the Messiah. His prophetic task had been accomplished and refused; the great work of atonement lay yet before Him. Between the two comes His royal progress, we may call it, to the city of the Great King. Nevertheless, as He was the predicted Prophet like unto Moses, and yet never man spake like this man; as He was the antitype of all the sacrifices, and yet they were but the shadow, not the very image, of the coming good, so there was a character wholly diverse from the manner of kings, in the King of kings and Lord of lords, as He came to His own possession here below, His peculium, raising and settling the question whether His own people would receive Him.

“And when they came nigh to Jerusalem [unto Bethphage], and unto Bethany, to the Mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith to them, Go into the village that is over against you; and immediately on entering into it, ye will find a colt tied, upon which none of men hath sat: loose and bring it. And if any one say to you, Why do ye this? say, The Lord hath need of it; and immediately he sends it here." (Ver. 1-3.)

It is preeminently a scene under the governing hand of God. He would and did control the feelings of such as witnessed the colt taken; even as He afterward directed the deeds and acclamations of the multitude by the way. “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Indeed this is so much the case that I suspect “the Lord” is here, as in Mark 5:19, left purposely vague. The Lord had need of the ass's colt, whether they referred the title to Jehovah or to the king who thus came in His name. If their faith really recognized the Messiah in Jehovah, it was most true, and so much the better for those who did; but I am not sure that it could be asserted as the intention of the Spirit to imply that so much was meant in either of these cases. It is only in the two closing verses of this gospel that we can certainly gather that He is designated “the Lord.” The suitableness of this reserve till the statement of His final triumph by our evangelist who devotes himself to His service here below is strikingly beautiful, and equally so in its absence before, and in its presence then.

“And they went away and found a colt tied to the door without at the crossway; and they loose it. And some of those standing there said to them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said to them even as Jesus said: and they suffered them. And they bring the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on it; and he sat upon it. And many strewed their garments on the way, and others beds of twigs, having cut them from the fields. And those that went before and those that followed cried out saying, Hosanna! blessed [be] be that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed [be] the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest.” (Ver. 4-10.)

It was a singularly bright testimony to the ways of God; and this not alone in the ever-adorable One who thus deigned to offer Himself to the acceptance of His people, but in the suited cries of the multitude, little as they realized the truth of their own words or the gravity of the situation for their nation and city from that day to this. God, I repeat, was moving in the midst. He would have a

testimony, true but despised, to the King, humble Himself as He might. Matthew points out the fulfillment of the prophetic oracle in the strange sight of that day. Luke adds “peace in heaven and glory in the highest” in the praise to God which filled the mouths and hearts of the disciples, as well as the blessed Savior's lament and tears over Jerusalem. It fell more within the domain of Mark to say that He “entered into Jerusalem into the temple; and having looked round on all things, the hour being already late, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

Matthew, as often, does not distinguish the stages of the transaction. From his account you could not gather that the Lord merely looked round on all, the first day of His visit, and that not till the following day did He cast out those who desecrated the temple with their buying and selling as he alone describes the approach to Him there of the blind and lame (Matt. 21:14) to be healed. I am aware that some have tried to solve the difficulty by the assumption that Matthew gives us a purging of the temple on the first day, Mark on the second. But this appears to me definitely set aside by the precision of our evangelist's language about this second day, who tells us (ver. 15) that then, not on the first day, He began to cast out those who sold and bought in the temple.

John, on the other hand, entirely omits this cleansing of the temple, but records (chap. 2.) what no one else has done, an early act of similar character before our Lord entered on His public or Galilean ministry. But this is exquisitely in keeping with the whole scope of his gospel, which starts as it were with the point to which the other evangelists gradually conduct us—the utter rejection of the Lord by His people, who abhorred Him, as He could not but loathe them.

There is a similar merging of a twofold account in one view, if we compare Matthew's description of the cursed fig-tree with Mark's. “And on the morrow, when they came out from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree from afar having leaves, he came, if perhaps he might find something on it; and having come up to it, he found nothing but leaves: for it was not the time of figs. And, answering, he said to it, Let none eat fruit of thee any more forever. And his disciples heard.” (Ver. 12-14.) Had it been fig-season, the fruit might have been already gathered; but as it was not, fruit ought to have been found there, unless the tree were barren. Thus it was, the emblem of the Jew, fruitless to God, however abounding in the semblance of life before men. Leaves the tree had, but no fruit. Hence the doom was pronounced, not more surely verified in the fig-tree then than ever since in the empty profession of the Jews.

Chapter 114

Remarks on Mark 11:15-33

After hearing the doom of the barren fig-tree, they come to Jerusalem and enter the temple, whence the Lord began to cast out those who sold and bought therein, overthrowing the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of the dove-sellers, and suffering none to carry a vessel through the temple. This He followed up by teaching openly what is written in Isa. 56:7, Jer. 7:11—God's purpose in the temple and meanwhile man's selfish misuse of it. “Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers.” (Ver. 15-18.) The prophetic reproof was not powerless, but it fell into a soil fruitful only in thorns and briers, worthless, and nigh to that curse, if not under it, which had just lit upon the type of their estate. “And the chief priests and the scribes heard [it], and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the multitude were astonished at his doctrine.” Truly their end was to be burned: God was not in their thoughts, but man; and self, not conscience, governed them. But what a picture! The righteous, elect Servant, the Son of God, hated to death—not of the crowd who, if thoughtless and fickle, at least hung on unwonted words of holy vindication of God, of goodness toward man, of stern rebuke for the proud perverters of sacred things. Alas! it was these, the chiefs of religion, the theologians of that day, who quailed before the light of God and sought only to extinguish it, that they might still preserve their influence among the men they loved not, but despised. And is the world, or its religion, better now?

What could detain Jesus in such a scene, the more revolting because it a as in title and responsibility “the holy city?” Nothing but the errand of holy love on which He came. Hence at the approach of night, His work for that day done, He retires once more without the city. (Ver. 19.) Who but the enemy could have insinuated the blasphemous thought that it was because that city was too hallowed ground for Him to rest on as yet?

As they passed next morning, the sight of the fig tree dried up from the roots recalled the curse of yesterday to Peter. The Master's answer was, “Have faith in God” —a more pointed form of speech than that in the Gospel of Matthew, and of the gravest moment for the servants of God in presence of the guilt and ruin of that which seems fairest, or at least is most esteemed among men. As the fig-tree symbolized the people in their religious pretensions, now manifestly vain and so judged of Him whose right it was and is, “this mountain” appears to denote rather their “place and nation,” which in their unbelief they strove hard to keep under Roman patronage. (“We have no king but Caesar.”) Strong as it stood in Jewish eyes, before the faith of the disciples it was doomed and soon about to be violently rooted up and lost in the sea of Gentiles. Such is the declared efficacy of faith; but another requisite is (which faith indeed would effect) the spirit of gracious forgiveness toward any who might have wronged or otherwise offended us. (Ver. 25, 26.) In Matthew this has its place in the Sermon on the Mount and especially in the prayer, as the retributive converse appears in the parable of the merciless servant. In Luke the principle comes out in another shape.

The next visit to Jerusalem (ver. 27-33) confronts the Lord, as He walks about in the temple, with the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, who demand by what authority He was doing these things, and who gave it Him. Jesus pledges Himself to speak as to His authority, if they answer His question as to John's baptism—was it of heaven or men? It was an appeal to conscience; but conscience they had none, save a bad one, which at once shrank into reserve, fearful to commit itself, not afraid to trifle with God and man. For they reasoned with themselves that, allowing John's baptism to be of heaven, they must receive his testimony to Jesus; asserting it to be of men, they must forfeit the people's favor, John being universally held to be in very deed a prophet. They preferred therefore to shelter themselves under a seemingly prudent ignorance. Who were they, then, to question the authority of Jesus? If they could only say “we know not,” their incompetency was confessed. Those who could not solve the question of the servant were surely not qualified to judge of the Master. In truth, their incapacity was, if possible, less than their hypocritical wickedness: the will was at fault yet more than the understanding.

The Lord might well be excused answering such a question to such men. What a position for those who examined His authority to find themselves in! Left under the shadow and shame of their own avowed ignorance in the presence of the gravest religious problem then before them, they are obliged to bow to Him who closes the inquiry with unspeakable dignity, and with the most befitting wisdom, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Lord, Thou knewest all things; Thou knewest that these men hated Thee!

Chapter 115

Remarks on Mark 12:1-17

The parable with which this chapter opens, sets forth in a few plain words, and in highly pregnant touches, the moral history of Israel as under the dealings of God. In what follows we have the various classes of Israel successively exposing themselves, while they were attempting to perplex the Lord. They thought to judge Him; the result was, they were themselves judged. But in the parable with which the chapter begins, the Lord sets forth God's dealings with the nation as a whole. “A certain man planted a vineyard and set an hedge about it.” There was everything done on God's part both to give them what was of Himself, and separate them from the rest of sinful men. They were duly warned against contamination by heathen corruptions. He “digged a place for the winefat.” There was every suited preparation for the full results of their work, and there was also full protection, for He “built a tower.” Thus the owner let it out to husbandmen, and “went into a far country.” This set forth their responsibility. The Jewish system in the past is man under probation. “At the season He sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.” It is the moral trial of man exemplified in Israel's conduct. Man is bound to make returns to God, according to the position in which God has set him. Israel had every possible advantage given them by God. They had priests, religious ordinances, fast-days, feast-days, every help of an outward kind and even miraculous testimony from time to time. There was nothing wanting that man could have, short of Christ Himself; and even of Him they had the promise, and were after a sort, we know, waiting for Him as their King. They had promises held out to them, and a covenant made with them. In short, there was nothing they had not that could be of any avail, had it been possible to have got any good thing out of man. But can any good thing come out of the heart? Is not man a sinner? Is he not utterly defiled and unclean? Can you get a clean thing out of an unclean? It is impossible by any means used, to act upon man. You may bring a clean thing among unclean, but if a creature merely, it becomes defiled. If it be the Creator, He can deliver, but not even so by merely coming down into the midst of men. It requires more than this—His death. Death is the only door of life and redemption for the lost.

The Lord, then, gives the history of what they did render to God. The servant being sent, “they caught him and beat him and sent him away empty.” There was no fruit to God—nothing but evil. There was insult to Himself and injury to His servants. “And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away (not only empty, but) shamefully handled.” One sin leads to a greater sin where it is not judged. “And again he sent another; and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.” They are rapidly sliding down the descent to destruction. There remained only one possible motive to act upon the heart of man. “Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son.” Would not one be acceptable who was infinitely greater in dignity and absolutely without a fault? For even prophets had faults; though there was great power of God in and by them, they were encompassed with infirmities, like other men. But the Sun was perfection: what if He were to come? Surely they must feel that the Son of God had an incomparably higher claim upon their affections and their reverence. And so it would have

been, had not man been utterly lost. And that was the moral lesson as to man brought out in the cross. Man was then proved to be utterly corrupt. God allowed it to be shown to the uttermost practically by the people of Israel. Nothing proved it so completely as the mission of the Son of God. The trial then closed in His rejection: but His rejection was their rejection before God. Man, no matter how tried or how greatly privileged, ends in proving his total opposition to God, his hopeless ruin in His sight. “But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” It was an opportunity for the will of man not to be lost. Satan led them on to wish to have the world to themselves. This is what man most values—to shut God out of His own world: and it was consummated by no act so much as by their killing the Lord Jesus—by His cross. It was man's rejection of God in the person of His Son. Henceforth he was shown to be evidently not only weak and sinful, but God's enemy. Even when He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself man not only preferred but was determined to have the world without God. In fact this manifests that the world lies in the wicked one; and Satan, who was really the prince of the world before, became, on the casting out of Him who was God, the god of the world then. Man must have some god over him; if he rejects the true God in the person of Christ, Satan becomes his god not really alone, but in this case manifestly. “And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.” This closes the probationary measures. “What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.” Nothing is said here of their rendering Him the fruits in their seasons, as we have in Matthew. It is the breaking of the old links with Israel (indeed with man), and the giving the place of privilege to others. But more than that; the destruction of the old husbandmen follows. This has already taken place in part in the downfall of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem. Nor is this all. “Have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” The Spirit does not here introduce the further fact related in Matthew. Not only is the stone to be exalted, the rejected prophet to become the exalted Lord (that is quite in keeping with Mark's object), but in Matthew the other positions of the stone are developed more. First of all, He is a stone of stumbling on the earth; and next the stone, after His exaltation, falls upon its enemies at the close and grinds them to powder. This is connected with the prophecies and their accomplishment for both the Jews and the world. The Jews did trip upon Him in His humiliation when He was upon the earth; but when they finally take the place of adversaries, not only in unbelief, but in deadly opposition, forming indeed the chosen party of His great enemy, the Antichrist—upon them He will fall destructively at the end of the age. In Mark, however, it is simply that the rejected stone is exalted. This at once was felt by the hearers. “They sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him and went their way.”

Now comes the trial of the different classes into which the Jews were divided. “They send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch him in his words:” ominous alliance! for ordinarily the Pharisees and Herodians were bitterly hostile to each other. The Pharisees were the great sticklers for religious forms; the Herodians were more the courtier party, the men who cultivated every means of advancing their interests in the world, as the others did for securing a religious reputation. But where Christ is concerned, the most opposed can unite against Him or His truth. “And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.” They stooped to flattery and falsehood to effect their malicious end. What they said was, no doubt,

true in itself, but it was utterly false as the expression of their feelings and judgment about Him. “Is it Lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not?” Shall we give, or shall we not give?” They wished to involve the Lord in a Yea or Nay that would compromise Him either with the Jews or with the Romans. If He said, Yes, then He was giving up the hopes of Israel apparently; He was but sealing them up in their bondage to the Romans. How could he be a truehearted Jew or still more the Messiah their expected Deliverer, if He left them as much as ever slaves of the Roman power? If He said, No, then He would make Himself obnoxious to that jealous government, and give them a handle against Him as a setter-up of seditious claims for the throne of Palestine. But the Lord replies with consummate and divine wisdom; and “knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” This answer was complete and absolutely perfect: For in truth there was no conscience in them. Had they felt aright they would have been ashamed of the fact that the money current in their land was Roman money. It was their sin: and man, while he rejects Christ, refuses to look at his own sin. The Lord Jesus leaves them where their sin had brought them, makes them feel that it was their own fault and sin that had put them under the Romans' authority. He simply says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” If you are here by your own fault, subject to Caesar for your sins, own the truth of your state and its cause, and pay what is due to Caesar; but forget not that God never ceases to be God, and see that you render to Him the things that are His. They were neither honest subjects of Caesar, nor were they, still less, faithful to God. Had they been true to Him, they would have received the Lord Jesus. But there was neither conscience nor faith.

Chapter 116

Remarks on Mark 12:18-44

“Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked, him saving, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed; last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.” (Ver. 18-23.)

Here again it was merely a difficulty. The Sadducees were the infidel party; and all the apparent strength of infidelity lies in putting difficulties, in raising up imaginary cases which do not apply, in reasoning from the things of men to the things of God. The whole basis is false assumption. The Lord says to them, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures neither the power of God.” They betrayed as usual, their ignorance of the Scriptures, spite of much pretentiousness: else they would not have put such a case. As for difficulties, what are they to the power of God, supposing there were difficulties to man? But what is beyond the power, and conception of man, is very possible to God: all things are possible even to him that believeth. But the truth is that it was total ignorance to suppose that in the resurrection state such a contingency could arise. The question, besides, took for granted the resurrection, which was exactly what they denied.

Skepticism is habitually crooked—not less false than superstition. Whose would this woman be who had the seven husbands successively? The answer is, she would belong to none then. There is no such thing as a resumption of earthly ties in the resurrection. People do not rise from the dead as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters or servants. Next, the Lord meets the question, not on the ground of their difficulty or mistake, but on its own merits according to the word of God. “When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how, in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”

This portion He takes not because it is the clearest scripture in the Old Testament, but because it is in the books of Moses, which these Sadducees chiefly valued. God never gave the land of Israel in actual possession to Abraham or Isaac or Jacob when they were alive in their natural bodies; yet He did promise them the land, not merely to their children but to themselves. Therefore they must rise in order to have that land so promised to them. God gave them the land in promise; but they never possessed it: they must therefore possess it another day. And as this possession cannot be in their dead state, they must live again in order actually to have the promised land. The resurrection therefore is proved from God's declaring Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. It is impossible that the promise He made them should not be fulfilled.

Then come the scribes. One of them “having heard them reasoning together and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” The scribe was obliged to acknowledge the Lord's wisdom.

He comprises the pith of the law of God in these two extracts—the love of God which is unlimited, the love of one's neighbor not with all the soul and strength, but “as thyself.” The first is loving God more than oneself to the exclusion of every other object as a competitor: the second is loving one's neighbor as oneself. In effect he that loves God and his neighbor has fulfilled the law, as the Apostle says. Grace goes farther than that—even to the total renunciation of self. The grace of God which assimilates the Christian's spirit, according to the power of his faith, to the revelation which He has made of Christ, leads a person even to death for his brother's sake; “we ought to lay our lives down for the brethren” still more for Pod and the truth. “And the scribes said unto him, well master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings, and sacrifices.”

He owns in his conscience that thus to love God and one's neighbor is far better than all upon which the Jews put such stress and value—the outward forms and ceremonies of the law. But there he ended: he saw not Christ; grace therefore was unknown to this man. So that all the Lord could say to him was, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” Still he was outside; for grace alone brings into the kingdom of God through the knowledge of Christ. And whether a person is near or far off from the kingdom of God, it is equally destruction if he does not enter it. This scribe owned what was in the law; but he did not know what was in Christ. The grace of God that brings salvation he knew nothing of Duty to God and to his neighbor he owned. He set to his seal that the law was just and good (and so it is); not that God is true as revealed in Christ. After this no man durst ask Him anything more. They were answered and silenced in everything.

The Lord now puts His question. It was a brief one and totally different from the points raised by men. Man's questions were founded either upon present things, or upon improbabilities to his mind, or upon the casuistry of rival duties. Christ's question is founded directly on the Scriptures, and more than that, on the mystery of His own person, that only link of souls with God. Christ's question had nothing of curiosity in it, nor was it merely one for conscience, but for searching into God's ways and implicit submission to the revelation of Himself. “How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?” It was true the Lord did not deny that the scribes saw the truth; but He raised a question which, if answered truly, holding fast the Scriptures, would have led them to the truth about His own Person. In a word, it was this: How is Christ David's Lord as well as David's Son? The scribes saw truly enough that He was David's Son; but David writing by the Holy Ghost said that He was his Lord. How are these two things to be put together, the lower truth with which the scribes were occupied, and the higher one on which the Holy Ghost specially insists? How was Christ David's Son and David's Lord? The link and foundation of it was this, that while He was man, and as man David's son, He was much more. In order to be David's Lord, He must be a

divine person, but more than that, He is exalted into that place. The Lordship of Christ rests not alone on His being a divine person; but because He was rejected as Son of David. God has exalted Him to be both Lord and Christ. This opens the whole question of Israel's treatment of Christ, as well as of Jehovah's attitude toward Him. In Psalm 110 we read, “Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Here it is not God sending His well-beloved Son down to the vineyard of Israel; but, when He was cast out, raising Him to His own right hand in heaven. Thus it involves their owning that Israel must have rejected their Messiah, and that, when rejected, God sets Him at His own right hand in heaven. This, evidently, is the key to the present position of Israel, and leaves room for the calling of the Church; in a word, it is the mystery of the person of Christ and the counsels of God, that follows upon His rejection.

But He does more than this. “He said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts.” It is not only that the doctrine of the scribes is utterly imperfect, but even in their ways there was much that was morally low and bad. They loved the honor of men, religious honor peculiarly, and therefore the chief seats in the synagogues, besides the uppermost rooms at feasts. Everything that would contribute to their ease and honor in this world was eagerly sought. More than this, they devour widows' houses; that is, they take advantage even of the sorrows of people that would expose them to be more entirely under their influence. Along with this there was great religious ostentation, for a pretense making long prayers. “These shall receive greater damnation.”

But now the Lord singles out those with whom He had sympathy on the earth. “Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much, and there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing; and he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury.” The reason He gives: “for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” God does not go by the amount given; He judges not by what is contributed, but by what is kept behind for self. In this case it was nothing—all was given. Those who gave of their abundance reserved the greater part for themselves; but the test of liberality is not what is given, but what is left. The much that is kept for self-enjoyment is the proof of how little is given. But when there is nothing left, but all is cast into the treasury of God, there is the true working of divine love and faith. There is what God values, because it is the expression not only of generous giving, but of entire confidence in Himself. This poor woman was a widow, and it might have seemed that she of all others was entitled to keep what little she had; but no, little as it was, all is for God. The dealing with such a small sum might have been a trouble to those who would have to count it, but it was noticed of God, valued by Him, and recorded for us, that we may confide in God, and may give whatever is according to His mind.

Chapter 117

Remarks on Mark 13

In the succinct account which Mark gives us of the prophetic discourse of our Lord on the Mount of Olives, and of the questions that led to it, we have the favored hearers specified more particularly than elsewhere: Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Mark is characterized by this minuteness of detail, although his is much the shortest of the Gospels.

The Lord in answer to their question to tell them when these things should be (that is, the overthrow of the great buildings of the temple) and what the sign should be when all these things should be fulfilled, warns them to beware lest any man should deceive them. This admonition is common to all three Evangelists who give the discourse. But here we shall find that the Lord's warnings and instructions are very evidently in view of their service. This has been all through the character of Mark. Christ Himself is the perfect servant of God, the prophet here below preaching the Gospel and doing works according to its spirit. So, accordingly, even in His prophecy, He is the servant still, giving them that which would be of such high importance, not only for their souls but in their work. It is not only prediction of coming judgments, but forewarning and admonishing them in their testimony. They were to beware of deceivers. Next, they were not to be troubled by external appearances, such as wars and rumors of wars, &c.; but in presence of either one or the other, they were to know that the end should not be yet.

In addressing the Church there is great stress laid on an attitude entirely reversed: to it the end is at hand. The language is quite different from this, and it is the more remarkable because the Christian knows that these troublous times of the end are to fall upon the Jewish people, not upon the Church. They are retributive because of the rejection of the true Christ by the Jews; whereas the Church has received the true Christ, and therefore does not come under these judgments. Hence the Christian is always impressed in the word of God with the assurance that the end of all things is at hand. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. The point for the disciples at the mount of Olives (inasmuch as they were representing not Christians but the remnant of Jewish disciples in the last days) is, that, although these distresses and troubles that precede the catastrophe of this age would come, the end is not yet. The Lord was providing doubly for them. He was giving instruction that would be true even then and up to the fall of Jerusalem; and He was making that instruction to suit the latter days also when Jerusalem should be besieged a second time and fall in a great part at least, the scourge being sent of God, the great Assyrian power, who will come down upon Jerusalem, because of the abomination that maketh desolate.

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Ver. 8.) The end therefore was not yet. But now He turns aside to introduce an instruction that is not given in the other gospels in this connection. Even where there is anything similar, it is found at an anterior time and for a mission on which they had been sent out and from which they had returned. Not that I for a moment doubt that the Lord did give it here also. The fact simply is that Matthew and Luke were led of God to convey similar language to us elsewhere;

whereas Mark was inspired to give it here: the Lord no doubt gave this instruction on both occasions at least. “Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Ver. 9-13.) This is clearly a guidance for their service in the midst of these prophetic events. It is evident also that it suits Mark in a way that is peculiar to himself.

Then we come upon the final scene. “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Ver. 14.) It is plain that this is the general truth that is found elsewhere. “And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.” (Ver. 15-20.) Then we find an outburst of warning, not merely as before, but even more determined. “And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or lo, he is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders.” It is evident that there is a final appearance, a fresh cloud of these deceivers in the latter days, as there was at the earliest application of this prophecy; and this to seduce if it were possible even the elect. But they were warned, “Take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.” (Ver. 23.)

Then comes the power of God interfering to cut short the wickedness of man as well as the tribulation. “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light.” Figures may be used; but it is clear that it is God who interposes in power; for man cannot accomplish all that is meant, neither can Satan. God alone can change or deal with the sources of power. “And the stars of heaven shall fall and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.” (Ver. 25.) The sense is plain, although in figurative language, showing a total revolution and overthrow of governmental powers. “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; and then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.” (Ver. 26, 27.) It is still the Jewish people, or rather the remnant of the nation, the elect of Israel. Accordingly the parable of the fig-tree is appended. “Now learn a parable of the fig-tree. When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near.” The fig-tree is the acknowledged symbol of the people of God. “So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Ver. 28-31.)

But the Lord also tells us in language peculiar to this gospel, “of that day and that hour, knoweth no man, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” He had thoroughly taken the place of Son upon earth. I do not think that it refers to Him, viewed in His highest character, as one with the Father, but as Son and prophet upon earth. The title of Son applies to Christ in more ways than one. It is true of Him in the Deity, true of Him as born into the world, and true of Him also in resurrection. It is the second of these that we find here; as in the very first verse of this gospel we find it said, “Jesus Christ the Son of God.” I do not doubt that refers to His being Son of God here below, begotten in time, not the only-begotten of the Father, as we find so often in John. Looking at it in this way, there is little difficulty in understanding that He should speak as not knowing that hour, because He is speaking in His capacity of minister in the place that He took here below, the prophet that was serving God upon earth. So He did not know that hour. We read of Him in Luke as growing in knowledge as well as in stature. “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.” He was always perfect, perfect as a child, perfect as a young man, perfect as a servant; but nevertheless all these were quite distinct from what pertained to Him as the Son, one with the Father in Godhead. So here, without derogating from His own intrinsic glory, He could say that “neither the Son but the Father” knew of that hour.

“Take ye heed, watch and pray” is the application. (Ver. 33.) And then He gives a parabolic instruction in the next two verses, admirably adapted to this gospel. “The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants.” (Ver. 34.) Again, it does not say that He gives authority to every man, but “to every man his work.” This entirely harmonizes with Mark. Christ Himself was the great servant. But now His service was past; He was going away and taking the place of Lord on high. So He gives authority to His servants, and to every man his work, to each and all their due place. Remark, it is here not so much gifts as “work.”

“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Ver. 35-37.) This is decidedly a suited word for a servant watching in the absence of One who was gone, who left His house, but who was coming back again. Thus, from first to last, Mark is true to the great tone, and character, and object of his gospel. It is to show the perfect servant even in His prophetic testimony and to maintain those in a spirit of service who are waiting and watching for Him here below. The disciples in their then state represented not Christians, but the remnant in the latter day, who will be substantially in the same position.

Chapter 118

Remarks on Mark 14:1-25

We have here a supper at Bethany and a supper at Jerusalem: one of them simply a supper in the house of those whom Jesus loved; the other a new thing instituted at the paschal feast which it was to set aside, while for the Church it was to be the standing memorial of the Lord Jesus that should follow.

But these two suppers have a very weighty place, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ being not only the great central truth of the latter, but also in the former, what the Spirit of God brought before the spiritual instincts of Mary. She felt it, though not from any positive communication to her, but from that love to the Savior which the Spirit made sensitive of the danger hanging over Him in a way she could not express. The Lord, who knew her love and all that was at hand, interpreted her act as done with a view to His burying. On both occasions the disciples enter most feebly into the good and the evil, but God Himself made manifest His own hand and mind as that which governed all. This is the more striking, because on the occasion of the supper at Bethany, or rather connected with it, the chief priests and scribes, though they sought how they might take Jesus “by craft and put him to death,” had fully determined that it should not be “on the feast-day lest there be an uproar of the people.” God, however, had already from of old decided that it was to be that day and no other—on the foundation feast of all the feasts, on the passover, which was, in fact, the type of the death of Christ. Thus we have God and man at issue; but I need not say God carries out His own will, though He does it through the wicked instrumentality of the very men who had resolved it was not so to be. Indeed it is always thus. God does not govern only His own children; even the destruction of wicked men is not the carrying out of their own will but of God's will. Therefore it is written, “who were of old ordained to this condemnation.” Again, they were appointed to stumble at the word, being disobedient. It is not that God makes any man to be wicked. But when man, fallen into sin, goes on in his own self-will, loving darkness rather than light and enslaved to Satan, God nevertheless proves that He always holds the reins, and keeps the upper hand, and even in the path their lust or passion chooses to take, fails not to accomplish His own will. It is like a man who, under intoxication, thinks to carry out some purpose of his, seeks, for instance, to steer to some place on the right hand, but really tumbles into a ditch on the left. So man after all cannot but do what God has determined beforehand. His will is powerless save to evince his sin. God's will always governs, though men prove themselves inexcusably wicked in the way it is brought about. Just so here. Man resolved to kill Jesus, but made up his mind that it should not be on the feast-day. God had arranged long before they were born that on the feast-day their deed was to take place. And so it did.

As we have seen, also, the supper at Bethany gave occasion to the first conception of the treachery of Judas. Satan put it into his heart. It was a scene of love, but such a scene draws quickly out the hatred of those that have no love. Mary's worshipping affection for the person of the Lord and her sense of His danger led her on till the house of Bethany was filled with the sweet odor of the ointment she poured forth. But Judas roused the carnal mind of the other disciples; be had no communion with her: Jesus was not precious in his eyes. He, therefore, was carping where

Jesus was the adored object of Mary. It was so much taken from his own ill-gotten gains. He only pleaded the cause of the poor, and stirred up the other disciples about it—so that “there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?” But love, while it would lavish all, never wastes anything; self does, idle folly does, but love never.

The Lord pleaded her cause. “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.” There is no work so good as that done on Jesus. Works done for Jesus' sake are good, but what was done to Himself was far better. She had done not the least of what grace had wrought up to that day. “She hath done what she could she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Most fitly though of grace is this woman's good deed bound up with the name of Jesus, wherever He is preached here below. We have not her name here; we learn it was Mary the sister of Lazarus, and this from John who appropriately lets us know, because he tells us of Jesus calling His own sheep by name. Here the point was not so much who had done it, but that it was done—the ministry, so to speak, of a woman at such a time who loved the Lord Jesus, in view of His burial. Further, we gather from this how one corrupt person can defile even those who have true hearts for Christ. The disciples were quickly caught by Judas's fair pretenses on behalf of the poor and allowed his insinuation to lead themselves into murmurings which reflected on Christ, as much as they slighted the devotedness of Mary.

In contrast with the love of Mary, Judas goes forth “to the chief priests, to betray him unto them.”

But now comes the supper of the paschal feast at Jerusalem, where the Lord acts as master of that institution and creator of a greater one. As on His entrance into Jerusalem, they had demanded in the name of the Lord the ass's colt, saying that the Lord had need of him, so here “He sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, “Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.” It was One who, though He was going to die, still went there with royal, divine rights; He had not forfeited His place as Messiah though going to suffer as Son of man on the cross. He, therefore, takes possession as the Master, and the goodman of the house at once acquiesces in His claim. All was before His eyes. There was no lack of power to act upon the conscience and affections of men. He could have turned all others as He bowed this man's heart. But how then should the scriptures have been accomplished, and sin blotted out, and God glorified? It was necessary, therefore, that He should go to the cross, not as any victim of necessity, but as one whose will was only to do the will of His Father, accepting all His humiliation from Him.

“And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?” There was conscious integrity in the disciples, weak as they might be, and fleshly as we know from Luke they were, even in this very scene. But the Lord answers, “It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son

of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." It was man's sin, Satan's guile, God's counsel, and Christ's love. But none of these things altered the wickedness of Judas: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." He was ordained, we may say, for this condemnation: he was not made wicked by God, but his wickedness was made to take this shape in order to fulfill the counsels of God. One of that company which was chosen to be with Jesus here below, was to prove this awful truth—that the nearer a man is externally to blessing, if he does not receive it into his heart, the more distant he is morally from it. There was but one Judas in Israel, and he was nearest to Jesus; there was but one who united all the privileges of such companionship with Jesus to all the guilt of betraying Him.

Then in verses 22-25, He institutes the supper—His own supper. It was not the paschal feast; and we learn from Luke that He would not touch the paschal cup. He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drank it new with them in the kingdom of God. He refused that which was the sign of communion in things here below. His Father, God, was before Him, and suffering His will rather than doing it. But meanwhile, before that kingdom come, founded on His suffering unto death, there is the remembrance of a totally different thing; not of a kingdom, power, and glory, but of crucifixion in weakness; His body broken (as He says, "This is my body"), and His blood, the blood of the new covenant, shed for many. It was not for the Jew only, but shed for many.

Nothing can be simpler than the terms in which He institutes the supper, as given in Mark. It was, I do not doubt, intended both to refer to the passover as accomplished now, and also to bring in the power of the new covenant for the soul before it comes in for the people of Israel.

Rectitude of heart and the truth always go together. This is seen in Christ, who was Himself the Truth—it was in Him, and He was it; but we must always know in part. In Christ alone was there perfect reality, sincerity; and we have sincerity in so far as we have Him. Where Christ is not there is no sincerity—that is reality. There may be what men call sincerity, where the heart is dark, and has been badly taught; but in this case there cannot be reality, for the truth only is real.

Remarks on Mark 14:26-73

The Lord now warns the disciples not only of what was about to befall Him, but how it would affect them. “All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” The cross has its side of shame and pain and danger for us, as well as of salvation through Him who bore our sins there. But here it is the way in which it would prove, not deliver them, of which the Savior speaks. Does that mighty work of suffering for our sins, does the atonement “scatter” the sheep? Is it not on the contrary the only righteous foundation on which they are gathered? In virtue of Christ's death for our sins, the sheep, instead of being dispersed are gathered together into one, even other sheep beyond those which Christ had in the Jewish fold; so that there might be one flock and one Shepherd. (John 10; 11) But the smiting of the Shepherd expresses His utter humiliation as Messiah, cut off and having nothing. “I will smite,” &c., refers to God's giving the Lord up to feel the reality of His rejection and death. No doubt atonement was therein wrought out. Smiting is a more general term; and though Christ takes it from God, it was literally His enemies who did the deed, and so became objects of divine vengeance, as in Psa. 69 Smiting was the loss, so to speak; atonement was the gain of all. Now that which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death. Of course death was necessary for this as for other objects in the counsels of God; but it is what Jesus went through from and with God, when made sin, it is what He suffered for our sins not only in body but in soul under divine wrath, that the atonement depends on. Many beside Jesus have been crucified; but atonement was in no way wrought there. Many have suffered horrors of torment for the truth's sake in life and up to death; but they would have been the first to abhor the falsehood that their sufferings atoned for themselves any more than for others. Many saints have known what it was to be “smitten,” and wounded of God, as the same Psalm testifies. In fact, this was more or less the place of God's servants, the prophets, and of righteous men from time to time in Israel, who accepted their affliction and persecution, whatever it was, from God and not man. This place the Lord Himself tested to the full; for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. He only wrought atonement; but He knew every sorrow which it was possible for man perfect, the Son of God, to take. The smiting of Him who was the shepherd, chief not only of the sheep but of the very prophets whom the Lord had raised up for Israel, refers to that utter cutting off which befell Him on the cross, but the sense of this not only He felt anticipatively, but it was that which was called forth before the cross. There was far more than atonement there. He realized in His soul all the condition in which God's people were, and His own total rejection, through man's sin and folly and Satan's maliciousness. The effect, then, of all this humiliation of the Savior, even before it was complete on the cross, was the scattering of the disciples; “the sheep shall be scattered.” They stumbled and fled the night before the blow actually fell on their Master. They did not understand the thing, any more than some do now the scriptures which speak of it, though the ground of the difficulty be wholly different. They could not make out why the Messiah should be thus treated, and how God should allow it. For it is plain that Christ took all from God (not man), and imputed all to Him. Faith never considers that afflictions spring out of the dust, but owns our Father's hand in everything, however in itself shameful and cruel if one looks at

the secondary agents.

“But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.” The Lord assumes in resurrection His place of lowly service with the disciples. Peter, however, confident in his own strength and love to Christ, assures the Lord that although all should be stumbled, not so with him.

Alas! in divine things there is no more certain forerunner of a fall than self-reliance. And our Lord tells him, “Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” So careful and minute is the record of the Lord's warning given in Mark—much more so than anywhere else. “But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in anywise.” However, it was not Peter alone who pledged his faithfulness thus vainly; for it is added, “Likewise also said they all.” They knew not their weakness; they knew not what it was to have the power of death pressing upon them. They had not faced the sense of total rejection by the world. Whatever there is of nature yet alive in our hearts is brought out by this. Man as such winces and refuses the trial. It is ever so till by the power of the Holy Ghost we realize our total separation from the world by and in the death of Christ. But to be dead with Him was not yet the known portion of the disciples; consequently, not one of them was able to stand. Afterward it was their privilege; but they had not gone that way heretofore. Jesus must go first. The sheep might follow after His cross in the Spirit. But Jesus must needs be the first. In due time, strengthened of His grace through His death, they too might glorify God by their death—death really for the sake of Christ.

The Lord, having all the closing scene before His soul, gives Himself to prayer. Now the effect of prayer is, in the face of deep trial, to make the trial more acutely felt. The presence of God does not make us feel less the wickedness of man; and certainly it does not make us feel less the failures, dangers, and ruin of His people. There could be no question of the smallest short-coming, no grief on any such score as this in the case of the Lord Jesus; but He realized the more the condition in which those were who belonged to God. Did He not feel the treachery of Judas, the denials of Peter, the flight of all? Even with, the apostates in Israel there was no hard indifference: how much more for the saints, the disciples, so shrinking at sue!) a time? He realized the awful crisis that awaited the people of God; He felt too what it was for Him the Messiah to be utterly refused by the people to their own hurt and destruction. What it was not only for Him who was life to go through death, and such a death, as could be known adequately only by Him! When the One that loved Him best hid His face from Him, when He was the object of divine judgment, when all that was in God of indignation and horror against evil concentrated itself against Christ! Then, again, what feelings of pity for the people who were forsaking their own mercies and the light of God for thick darkness and sorrow, through which they must pass retributively for that which they were about to perpetrate against Himself! All this, yea, infinitely more, was before the Lord, felt and weighed by Him as One whose grace associated Him with the condition of God's people, not substitutionally alone but in association of heart and in all affliction with them. In atonement He is absolutely alone. He asks no one to pray then, looks then for no comfort from them; nor does an angel come to strengthen Him then. He says, “My God” then, because it was what God felt against sin that He was enduring. “He might and did say “Father” too, because He did not cease to be the Son, any more than He ceased to be the blessed and perfect and obedient man. Thus He said “Father” both before and after that upon the cross. But He cried, “My God, my God” alone that time, as far as New Testament scripture speaks of His addressing Him: because then for the first

time all that God was in hatred of evil, burst upon Him without the slightest mitigation or consideration of weakness. Nothing blunted its force. He was competent to bear, and He alone bore, the whole unbroken and unsparing judgment of God, and that without looking for the sympathy of the creature, whether of man or angel.

It was a question between God and Him alone when, on the cross made sin and retrieving the glory of God that had been compromised by all the world, He alone endured all in His own person. This is the difference between the cross and Gethsemane. At Gethsemane our Lord was, as it is written, sore amazed and very heavy. He had taken with Him three chosen witnesses, and He “saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here and watch.” So even these chosen ones He leaves behind; “he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.” It would not have been perfection if He had not thus felt it. It was impossible that He who was life could desire such a death from His Father—from God in wrath against Him. It would have been hardness, not love; but although He felt it perfectly according to God His Father, yet He entirely submits His human will to the Father's. “Abba, Father,” He says, “All things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.” He had a real soul, what is dogmatically called a reasonable soul, not a mere principle of vitality. He could not have said this, had it been true, as some have asserted, that the divine nature in our Lord took the place of a soul. He would not have been perfect man, had He not taken a soul as well as a body. Therefore could He say, “Not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

There was the most entire subjection to the Father even in the bitterest possible trial that could be conceived. This cup was the cup of wrath on account of sin; not to say, “let this cup pass from me,” would have shown insensibility to its character. But our Lord was perfect in everything. He therefore said, “Take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” He comes and finds the disciples sleeping instead of watching. It grieved Him; and it was right that it should. He warned them however for their own sake: “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” They did enter into it and they fell, Peter especially, to whom indeed it was that our Lord uttered it. He called them all to watch and pray; but Peter was the one to whom He said, “Sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?” He had particularly warned Peter before. He adds, “The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak; and again he went away and prayed and spake the same words, and when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, it is enough. The hour is come; behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” He was as one given up to be cut off from the last passover. From that the hour WAS come. “Rise up, let us go; lo he that betrayeth me is at hand.” It was not atonement only, but the Shepherd was about to be smitten, and the sheep felt it and shrank away before the actual blow fell.

“And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.” The traitor had given the sign of a kiss, and told them to apprehend Him whom he kissed. And he went straight up to Jesus, and saith, “Master, master, and kissed him; and they laid their hands on him and took him.” Peter, ready enough to fight though not to pray, draws his sword and smites the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The healing is not mentioned in this Gospel; for here the

Lord is simply the suffering or of man, the rejected prophet of Israel, the smitten Shepherd. What proves His unabated power is not the point here; but His bowing to all shame, and the key is, “the Scripture must be fulfilled.” He had never been one to call for such treatment from their hands, coming out against Him as against a thief, but the Scripture must be fulfilled.

“And they all forsook him and fled.” Power would have kept them, but to yield to suffering began to take effect upon them. “The sheep were scattered.” “And there followed him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and be left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.” Vigor fails: so does shame. The first assault was enough to drive him away. Man is powerless to face death. The only reason why believers are able to face it, nay, even to welcome it and rejoice in it, is because of Christ Himself and His death. He has taken out the sting; but it was not yet done. Consequently the disciples forsook Him and fled, young man and all. In Christ alone who suffered for us we stand.

“And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.” There we find a fresh trial. Peter follows, afar off it is true, into the palace of the high priest and seats himself with the servants. “And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.” They found the will, but not the power; readiness to testify, but even in that they could not succeed. Man fails in everything, except in malice against Jesus. Even with all the suborned testimony on the part of the witnesses, and all the readiness to condemn on the part of the judges, everything failed. The testimony did not agree. As required by law, there must be two or three witnesses agreed; but these agreed not. The consequence was that Jesus was rejected not for the false testimony of man, but on the true testimony of God. It was for His own testimony that they condemned Him. He came witnessing to the truth, and He witnessed to it unto death. The high priest astonished, perplexed, and failing to condemn Him on the witness of others, demands, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” We are told elsewhere that he puts the oath to Him or adjures Him; but here it is simply the question without the oath Mark names. The Lord answers “I am.” He witnesses a good confession, not only before Pontius Pilate, but before the high priest. “And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” He could not, would not deny the truth about Himself. He might refrain from noticing the false charges of others; but He would not when challenged, shut up in His own breast the truth of His personal glory. He was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. But He was the Son of man also, and was going to take His place above, as well as to come in the clouds of heaven, according to the sure oracles of God. “Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy.” To him the truth was no better; so completely sealed in darkness was the head of religion among the Jews. “What think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face and to buffet him and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.”

The Shepherd thus must be smitten every way. “I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” And so we find that Peter, having ventured thus far into the palace of the high priest, yet more feels the effect immediately. “As Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest.” Still he could not remain in presence of his own falsehood, he

goes out into the porch: “and the cock crew,” this was the Lord's warning to him. A maid sees him again. It must be so. There was nothing apparently to cause terror; but so utterly powerless was even this most devoted of the disciples, at least most ardent in his love and most energetic in his demonstrations, so powerless was he to face even the nearness of death, that it suffices for a servant maid's word to bring out his denial of the Lord! “A little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.” But the more they pressed the truth upon him, the more he retreated and, in his abject fear, began to curse and to swear.

Such was Peter and such was the process through which he was soon to come out the chief of the apostles. He had to be broken down to learn the good-for-nothingness of flesh. How entirely thenceforth it must be Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost! “I know not this man of whom ye speak.” Yet “this man” was his Savior; and he knew it—too well—too ill. “Thou art the Christ” he had said before. What a contrast now! “Whom say ye that I am?” Jesus had said to him long before: and his answer was “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” “We believe and are sure.” Now he says, “I know not this man.” Jesus to him now was a mere man, unknown of Peter. Yet flesh and blood had not revealed the truth about Christ to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Peter, therefore, was near enough, when the rest were scattered, to add a sharper blow to the many which fell upon Jesus. One of the little number of disciples was a traitor—another, and be the chief of the apostles, a denier of his Lord.

“And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept.” I do not say that his repentance was complete: you will find that the Lord touched him to the quick some time after. Nevertheless there was genuine feeling of his sin, shame, and anguish of spirit, though he had not yet been probed to the bottom. He wept as he thought thereon. It is always the word of the Lord that produces real repentance whether in a saint or a sinner. It is not human feeling, nor shame, nor the fear of being found out; the word wrought within that Jesus spike. It is the washing of water by the word. The word of the Lord does two things; it convicts and it heals; it cleanses as well as detects our evil after a divine sort. Had Peter believed Christ's word as to his own entire weakness, he would have been kept. But he believed it not. “Though all,” he said, “shall be offended, yet will not I.” He was ready to die with Him. Whereas in truth the mere surface of the scene of Christ's death frightened him so that, the more urgently the truth of his relation to Jesus was brought before him, the more he swore that he knew Him not. Such is flesh even in the saint of God—good for nothing everywhere.

Remarks on Mark 15:1-26

Nagy follows the consultation in the morning, after the Lord had been already condemned “to be guilty of death.” The result is that the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, the whole council, and indeed the whole people consenting, agreed to deliver Jesus to Pilate, the representative of the civil power. Jesus must be condemned by man in every capacity—the religious and civil, the Jews under the name of religion having the chief guilt and being the instigators of the civil authorities, morally compelling them to yield contrary to conscience, as we find in the mock trial before Pilate. Thus we see He was “despised and rejected of men.” It was not only by one, but by every class of men. We shall find that as the priests, so the people, and as the governor, so the governed, down to the basest of them, all joined in vilifying the Son of God.

“And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.” It was His good confession. It was the truth; and He came to bear witness of the truth, which is particularly mentioned in the Gospel of John, where we have not merely what Christ was according to prophecy, nor even what he was as the Servant and Great Prophet, doing the will of God and ministering to the need of man, but what He was in His own personal glory. Christ alone is the truth in the fullest sense, save that the Holy Ghost is also called “truth” (1 John 6), as being the inward power in him that believes for laying hold of the revelation of God and realizing it. But God as such is never called the truth. Jesus is the truth. The truth is the expression of what God is and what man is. He who is the truth objectively must be both God and man to make known the truth about them. Neither is the Father ever said to be the truth, but Christ, the Son, the Word. He is not only God, but the special One who makes known God; and, being man, He could make known man; yea, being both, He could make known everything. Thus we never know what life is fully, save in Christ, and we never know what death is, save in Christ. Again, who ever knows the meaning of judgment aright save in Christ? Who can estimate what the wrath of God is, save in Christ? Who can tell what communion with God is, save in Christ? It is Christ who shows us what the world is; it is Christ who shows us what heaven is and by contrast what hell must be. He is the Deliverer from perdition; and He it is who casts away from His own presence into it. Thus He brings out everything as it is—even that which is most opposed to Himself—Satan's power and character, even up to its last form—Antichrist. He is the measure of what Jews and Gentiles are in every respect. This is what some ancient philosophers used to think of man. They said, though falsely, that man is the measure of all things. It is exactly true of Christ, the God-man.

He is the measure of all things, though most immeasurably above them, as being supremely God, even as the Father and the Holy Ghost also.

Here, however, before Pilate, our Lord simply owns the truth of what He was according to Jewish expectation.” Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.” This was all; He had no more to say here. The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. He was not there to defend Himself, but to confess who and what He was. “And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness

against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled." His silence produced a far graver effect than anything that could be uttered. There is a time to be silent as there is to speak; and silence now was the more convincing to the conscience. He was manifestly superior, morally, to His judge. He was manifesting them all, whatever they might say or judge of Him. But in truth they judged nothing but what was utterly false, and they condemned Him for the truth. Whether it was before the high priest or before Pontius Pilate, it was the truth He confessed, and for the truth He was condemned by man. All their lies availed nothing. Hence it was not on the ground of what they brought forth, but of what He said, that Jesus was condemned. Only in John's Gospel the Lord states the terrible fact that it was not Pilate himself, but what he was put up to by the Jews. We learn further in John, that what frightened Pilate specially, was that the Jews told him that they had a law, and that by this law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Sun of God. His Sonship is affirmed, and Pilate feared it was true. His wife too had a dream which added to his alarm, so that God took care there should be a double testimony—the great moral testimony of Christ Himself, and also a sign and token, which suited the Gospel of Matthew, an outward mark given to Pilate's wife in a dream. Our gospel is much more succinct, and keeps to the order of facts without detail.

The iniquity of the Jews, however, appears everywhere. "Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they pleased. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them." So it was the multitude that wished to mark still more their complete subjection to the wicked priests by preferring Barabbas and sealing the death of Jesus. He might still have been delivered, but the infatuated multitude would not hear of it. "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them," or, as John's Gospel puts it, "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." He was a robber and a murderer—yet such was man's preference to Jesus. "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him." Pilate, cruel and hardened as he was, still remonstrates: "Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him." They could find no evil, they only imagined it out of the murderous evil of their own hearts. Pilate, utterly without the fear of God, but "willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." So true it was that, even in this last scene, Jesus delivers others at His own cost and in every sense. He had just before delivered the disciples from being taken; He is now the means of delivering Barabbas himself, wicked as he was; He never saved Himself; He could have done it, of course, but it was the very perfection of the moral glory of Christ to deliver, bless, save, and in all at the expense of Himself.

But further, every indignity upon the way was heaped upon Him. "The soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium, and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns and put it about his head. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!" There was no contempt too gross for Him. "They smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him." And

now, in the spirit of the wickedness of the whole scene, “they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus (cf. Rom. 16), to bear his cross.” It would appear that these two sons were afterward well-known converts brought into the Church. Hence the interest of the fact mentioned. God's goodness, I suppose, used this very circumstance, wicked as it was on man's part. He would not allow that even His Son's indignity should not turn to the blessing of man. Simon, the father of these two, then, was compelled to bear His cross by those who held the truth, if at an, in unrighteousness.

“And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink, wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.” The object of giving this was to deaden anguish, the excessive lingering pain of the cross, but He refused. “And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.” This, we know from elsewhere, was the distinct accomplishment of divine prediction, as it was the human sign of one given up to capital punishment. “It was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King of the Jews.” The terms are exceedingly brief in Mark's Gospel. He only mentions the charge or accusation, not (as I conceive) all the formula. The other gospels give different forms, and it is possible they were written in various languages—one in one language and one in another. If this be the case, Mark only gives the substance. Matthew would naturally give the Hebrew form, Luke the Greek (his Gospel being for Gentiles, as Matthew's was for Jews), while John would give the Latin, the form of that empire under which he himself suffered later on. As that kingdom smote the servant, he records what it had done to the Master, and this in the language of the empire. There is a slight difference in each, which may thus arise from the different languages in Which the accusation was written. At any rate, we know that we have the full divine truth in the compared matter; and of all ways of accounting for their shades of distinction, none more unworthy of God, nor less reasonable for man, than the notion that they are to be imputed to ignorance or negligence. Each wrote, but under the power of the Spirit; and the result of all is the perfect truth of God.

Remarks on Mark 15:27-47

Mark, like Matthew, mentions the thieves (indeed all do) as a testimony to the complete humiliation of God's servant and Son on the cross. Men would not even give Him that place singularly. He was indeed alone in the grace and moral glory of the cross; but to increase the shame of it these two thieves were crucified with Him, one on His right hand and the other on His left. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, “And he was numbered with the transgressors." Such was its outward appearance; but next, also, His words were turned against Him, not merely on His trial but in His dying moments. “And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross.” How little did they know that His very words were now on the point of being completely accomplished!

But the chief priests carried it out farther, as usual. Mocking, they “said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.” A great truth, though not in the sense in which they meant it. Both its parts, rightly applied, are most true; of course not that He could not, but that He did not save Himself—yea, could not, if grace were to triumph in redemption. “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” It is the history of Christ upon earth; it is the history above all of His cross, where the whole truth of Christ comes out more fully though under the absolute infliction of divine wrath for our sins as well as the greatest strain of outward circumstances, but all borne in perfection. The holiness of Christ that at all cost would put away sin to the glory of God, the love of Christ that at all cost to Himself would bring eternal deliverance to others, the grace of God, was fully seen in Him; the righteous judgment, the truth, and the majesty of God. There was nothing that did not stand vindicated on the cross as nowhere else. It was the resurrection, however, that displayed all, publishing what God felt. He was raised from the dead, as it is said, by the glory of the Father. What was done upon the cross was for others; but what was towards Himself, as well as towards others, appeared in the resurrection and setting of Jesus at God's right hand. But in the mouth of unbelief, the very same expressions bear a totally different character from what they have in the lips of faith. So it is that a worldly man may show that appearance of calm in the presence of death which faith really gives him whose eye is on Jesus: in this one it is peace, in that no better than insensibility. But with ordinary believers, who do not understand the fullness of grace, there are mental anxieties beyond what the unbeliever knows, because the latter does not feel what sin is and what becomes the glory of God. When a soul believes and yet is not established in grace, it is in trial and trepidation of spirit as to the result; and it ought to be so till the heart is at rest through Christ Jesus.

How little these chief priests knew the secret of grace! He saved others, said they, and they could not but know it. Himself He would not—did not—save. Nay, in the sense of love and divine counsel, Himself He could not save. He laid down His life for us: no other wise could we be saved; and more than this, obedient to the Father at all cost, determined to carry out His will, even our sanctification. In that sense only He could not save Himself. There was no necessity of death in the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. All other men had the necessity of death through Adam; Christ

had not, though He, the last Adam, Christ, sprang from him through His mother; He did not in Himself underlie the consequences of the first Adam at all, though He in grace bore all the consequences on the cross, but not as one under them; He only bore them for others by God's will and in His own sovereign love. Therefore very expressly, as to His death, He says, “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.” He alone of all men could. say so since the world began. Adam in Paradise could not speak thus; Christ alone had the title according to the rights of His person. His becoming man did not compromise His divine glory. His being God did not enfeeble His suffering as man. There was no lowering of deity; but, in result, a very real exalting of humanity. Nevertheless the Scriptures must be fulfilled: the Anointed One must die—God's glory must be vindicated—death must be encountered by dying, and its power broken not by victory but by righteousness. For this is the wonderful fruit of the death of Christ: the power of death is exhausted by righteousness, He having taken upon Himself the curse, the judgment of sin, so that God might be glorified even herein. Hence the fullness of blessing and peace to the believer. This gives the atonement its wonderful place in all the truth of God. Nothing can be substituted for it. He in atonement is the substitute for all others, and everything else as claiming to do with offering for sin is vanished away.

But as to these chief priests, they mockingly cried, “Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Yea, so complete was the spirit of unbelief that they who were crucified, even in the midst of their dying agonies, had time to turn round and add to His sufferings. Mark does not mention the conversion of one of these thieves. Luke does, and we know that afterward the one who was converted, instead of asking Him to come down from the cross, owned Him to be the King before the kingdom comes, believing thus without seeing. The poor soul therefore shone through the grace of God, the more because of his own previous darkness: and the darkness of the chief priests who mocked formed the somber background which made this thief so conspicuous. In the very circumstances, over which the chief priests gloried as the defeat of Jesus, the thief gloried as deliverance for his own soul. But this falls to the province of Luke, who shows us the mercy of God that visits a sinner in his lowest estate—the Son of man coming to seek and to save that which was lost. This runs through Luke more than through any other Gospel. Consequently also he shows us the blessedness of the soul in its separate state. This dying thief, when his soul left the cross, would be at once with Jesus in Paradise.

Mark, however, mentions the indignity heaped upon Jesus by the thieves, along with their companions, the chief priests, and others.

“And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” It was more than human—God caused a witness of that hour that stood out from all before and after. There was darkness; the very world felt it. As the Lord told the Jews, the stones would cry out unless there were a voice from babes and sucklings. As John the Baptist told them, of these stones God could raise up children to Abraham. So here, the insensibility of men, the revilings and scoffings from chief priests down to thieves, against the Son of God, were answered on God's part by the veiling of all nature in presence of the death of Him who created all; there was darkness over the whole land. Above, below, what a scene!

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It was no exhaustion of nature.

Jesus did not die because He could not live, as all others do. He had still the full energy of life. He died not only in atonement, but to take His life again. How else could He have proved the superiority of His life to death, if He had not died? Still less could He have delivered us, “We were reconciled to God by the death of His death.”

But more than that. His living again, His raising Himself from the grave, His taking life again, proved that He had conquered death, to which He had so entirely submitted for God's glory. He was put to death. By wicked hands He was crucified and slain; yet it was also entirely voluntary. In every other person death is involuntary. So absolutely is Jesus above mere nature whether in birth or in death, or all through. Besides the cry was most peculiar, such as had never been heard from a blessed holy man as He was. That which drew it forth was God's forsaking Him there. It was not a mere manifestation of love, though there never was a time when the Father saw more to love in His Son than at that moment; yea, never did He see before then such moral beauty, even in Him. But if He was bearing sin, He must really endure its judgment. The consequence was to be forsaken of God. God must abandon Him who had taken sin upon Him. And He did take our sins and endured that forsaking which is the inevitable consequence of sin imputed. He who knew no sin knew the cost to the uttermost when made sin for us.

“And some of them that stood by when they heard it said, Behold he calleth for Elias.” This seems to be mere scoffing again. There is no reason to suppose they did not know that He said, “My God, my God,” not Elias. “And one ran and filled a spurge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.” Now that death was consummated, the only righteous ground of life and redemption, the “veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” The Jewish system was doomed, and sentence executed upon its characteristic and central feature. The veil was that which separated the holy place from the holy of holies; there was no single point in the Jewish system more emphatic than the veil. For what the veil indicated as a figure was God present, but man standing outside; God dealing with the people, but the people unable to draw near to God, having Him with them in the world, but nevertheless not brought to Himself, not able to look upon His glory, kept at a distance from Him under the law. (Compare Heb. 9:8; 10:19, 20.) The rending of the veil, on the contrary, at once pronounced that all was over with Judaism. As the darkness supernatural was one testimony before His death, so this at His death declared the power of Christ's blood. It was not only God come down to man, but man now by the blood of Christ entitled to draw near to God, yea, all who know the value of that blood into the holiest of all. But as far as the Jewish economy was concerned, here was the abolition of it come in principle. The tearing down this chief sign and token was the virtual profaning of the sanctuary; so that now any one could look into the holiest. It was no longer the high priest alone venturing within once a year, and that not without blood; but now, because of His blood which they had spilled, little knowing its infinite value, the veil was rent from top to bottom. This was in the first month of the year. The feast in which the high priest entered was in the seventh month. Thus the destruction of the veil was the more marked now. The truth is that the real application of the day of atonement and the following feast of tabernacles, will be when God begins to take up the Jewish people. We are said to have Christ as our passover; but the day of atonement, viewed as a prophetic type, awaits Israel by and by.

Nor was this all. There was a testimony not only in nature as opposed to the scorn of men and the revilings of the crucified ones that were with Him—not only was there this darkness of nature and rending of the veil for Judaism, but a Gentile was brought forward, compelled of God to acknowledge the wonder that was there and then being enacted. “Truly this man was the Son of God.” In all likelihood he was a heathen and did not mean more than to own that Christ was not a mere man, that He was somehow or other what the Chaldean monarch heard and spoke of in Dan. 2; 4 Now the centurion went farther than they of Babylon. He felt that, though His dwelling was in flesh, yet He was a divine being, and not the Son of man merely. I do not think that when Nebuchadnezzar says that he saw one like the Son of God, he meant the full truth that we know; for the doctrine of the eternal Sonship was not then revealed, and it could not be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar entered into it, for he was an idolater at that very time. But it was a testimony of his full confidence that it was a supernatural being of some kind, “the Son of God.” At the same time the Spirit of God could well give the centurion's, or the king's, words a shape beyond what either knew. “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

The disciples were not there. They alas! forsook Him and fled; at any rate, they are not mentioned. They were so out of their true place that God could say nothing about them. Yet one who up to this time had shrunk back from the due confession of Jesus was now brought forward. “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” The very circumstances that might have been supposed naturally to have filled him with fear of and shrinking from the consequences, were, on the contrary, used of God to bring out a boldness that never had visited Joseph's heart before. He identified himself with Jesus. He had not the precious place of following Him while He was alive, but the death of Jesus brought him to a point, commanded his affections, and made him, therefore, to enter courageously and demand the body of his master. Pilate, astonished, asks if Jesus was already dead. Naturally crucifixion is a slow death: people linger sometimes even for days when a person is in ordinary health. But in the case of Jesus it was but for a few hours. There was nothing farther to do. It was not, therefore, a question of mere lingering. Besides, it was the accomplishment of prophecy that not a bone should be broken, which John tells us, who is always occupied with the person of the Lord. It was according to the scriptures that He should be pierced, but not a bone should be broken, and this most remarkable circumstance John witnessed and tells us of. Mark does not notice it. Pilate “marveled if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him if he had been any while dead.” It was the rapid death of Jesus, accompanied by the loud voice, that filled the centurion with amazement. This showed that it was not the death of a mere man. He had power to lay down His life. So when he was certified by the centurion Pilate gives leave.

And Joseph “bought fine linen and took him down and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.” And two of the Marys beheld where He was laid. Here at least then we have genuine affection. If there was not the intelligence of faith, there was the love that lingered over the Lord they adored with true feeling—the fruit of faith which thus honored Jesus even in His death.

Chapter 122

Remarks on Mark 16

The resurrection not only witnesses the power of death overcome and the perfect condition of man before God, suitable to heaven, but, as regards things here below, it is for him that believes the true solvent of all difficulties. Jesus never was vindicated thoroughly till the resurrection. There was, of course, a rich and mighty testimony before; but it was one which might be gainsaid even by those who saw the miracles—not rightly, but through the power of Satan. Even the practical infidel, the sensual man could say that his brethren would believe if one came to them from the dead. But we shall find that the unbelief of men is beyond even resurrection unless there be the grace of God giving it effect.

In this chapter we have the women coming to the grave of Jesus with love but no intelligence of resurrection, and consequently in grievous perplexity. They had “bought sweet spices” that they might come and anoint Him. The Lord had told the disciples distinctly that He was about to rise from the dead. So small was the faith even of these saints of God that on the very day He had prepared them to expect His rising, they were occupied with that which was only suitable to a dead Christ, not the risen and living One. “Very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?” But it was done already. “When they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.” Such is the virtue of resurrection, such the power which accompanies it. The hindrance was beyond their capacity to remove; the atone that blocked up the grave was very great. But this made no difference to God; and it was now rolled away. “And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; he is risen; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him.” Thus their terror vanishes: such is the use the angels make of the resurrection of Christ. Fear is natural to man in a ruined world where sin reigns. Adam had no reason for fear till the fall: what just ground has a believer now for fear, since Christ who died for him is risen? He has ample grounds to judge self and its ways, but none to doubt the triumphant results of Christ's work. The whole substance of a believer's blessing consists of and depends on Christ, and in proportion as you mix up self in any way with Him, it is unbelief. If I allow the sense God gives me of my own badness to hinder my peace in Him, it is almost as wrong as the vain dream of my own goodness. It is all a mistake to think Christ can ever mix with the first Adam. It must be either Christ or self, both can never be an object of trust. When we have found Christ, there are certain effects produced by Him through the Holy Ghost; but they are effects, not a cause. Unbelief makes things done by us a cause, but this is invariably false. (Ver. 1-6.)

Now the resurrection proclaims the victory. Although these women were there in presence of angels, they were really in presence of a greater than angels whom they saw not—of Jesus risen from the dead. Even the saints are called to blessing greater than angels. Why should they be affrighted? The saints are brought into nearness to God that angels never did or can possess. The saints will reign with Christ: angels never do. Thus Satan has been totally defeated in all his

thoughts and plans. If his pride was wounded at the divine purpose of raising man above the angels, God nevertheless has raised man (already in Christ, soon in His body the Church), not only above angels, but so high as to unite him who believes now with Christ, the Head of all principalities and powers. Even the world will shortly see the saints glorified with Christ and sharing the same glory with Him. “The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.” The millennium will be the display of all this, which makes the idea of such an era brought in by the gospel so monstrously false as well as defective. It makes the glory of the bride to consist in what she is and does in the absence of the Bridegroom, instead of holding out God's glory displayed in Christ, and the Church glorified and reigning with Him. If it was, therefore, a sight painful and unsuitable that these women, heirs of such glory, should be affrighted in presence of an angel, let us bear in mind that, though converted then, they had not yet received the spirit of adoption; and what power can there be without that? There may be the instincts of a new life; but no peace nor spiritual energy. “Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth.” He knew that their heart was right.

It is beautiful to see that, as in Mark where we have the fall of Peter more fully than elsewhere, so we have the Lord's special consideration of Peter. “Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.” They little knew the power of resurrection yet: they knew the fact but not the power. (Ver. 7, 8.)

But now we have the scene looked at from another point of view, that is, of service: all is ruled by this great truth. “Now when Jesus was risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.” (Ver. 9.) It is not only the angelic message and the proofs of His being risen; but now it is Himself seen as risen first by Mary Magdalene. There is a remarkable putting of circumstances together here. Mary Magdalene had been mentioned before; but here only it is added to her name, “Out of whom he had cast seven devils.” These two things are mentioned together. The Son of God comes, as we know, to destroy the works of the devil: He was manifested for that purpose. The defeat of Satan's power, even before this in the case of Mary Magdalene, was yet more confirmed by this, that the risen conqueror of Satan appeared first to her. The great fact is all that is given us here. In John's Gospel there is the beautiful unfolding of the way in which He takes her out of Judaism. “Touch me not,” He says to her, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” Thus henceforth the disciples were going to know Him—no more after the flesh. “But go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.” Do not be looking at Me now as a visible Messiah, destined King over all the earth. I am going to take another place in heaven and to put you in My relationship on earth, as sons of My Father and your Father, as redeemed to My God and your God. He declares His name unto His brethren; and on that as the basis and form of relationship, He next gathers them together and praises in the midst of His brethren. He comes there and fills them with joy. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” For Christ is not only the Object, but the Leader of praise. He communicates both the material and the strain of praise to the disciples. Christian worship is in truth His worship transferred to us, and so carried on as we worship His and our Father and God in spirit and in truth. But this theme belongs rather to John.

Here it is simply said (Ver. 10, 11), “She went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.” It is very remarkable the simplicity with which the Evangelists relate the proofs of the incredulity of the disciples. there is no attempt to gloss it over. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, all tell it out plainly. They knew not the Scriptures, says John, that He must rise from the dead. They saw the fact, but did not take in its connection with the revealed counsels of God.

It was believed on in the intelligence of evidence before their eyes, not yet entered into in faith as it was soon about to be.

“After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.” (Ver. 12, 13.) This is the journey to Emmaus, which is given fully and characteristically in Luke.

“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.” (Ver. 14.) In their case it is evident that hardness of heart is laid to their door, as the root of their rejecting the testimony concerning Jesus. Yet it is to them that the Lord shortly after (the evangelist omitting other matters which might distract) says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” What a wonderful process for fitting those men to preach to others! It must be by being made nothing of in their own eyes. Repentance always goes with faith and humiliation; the finding out what we are, specially towards God and His word, is God's way of making us useful to others. The sense of our own past unbelief is used of God when He sends us out to call others to believe; we can understand their unbelief and feel for them in it, having been so unbelieving ourselves. This is not man's way in what he calls ministry, but it is God's. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” After what you have proved of yourselves, be confident in God, not in man, but in the God who was so patient with you, and sent you testimony after testimony, till you were compelled to come in. That same God deigns to use you in His work on behalf of others, and as you have proved how persistent God has been in His goodness to you in your unbelief, so do you go on patiently in His service. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Ver, 16, 17.) It is not enough for you and for Christ's glory that you believe: “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Baptism has this importance (not, of course, saving the man before God, for the essential point as to this is believing that which is unseen of men), but baptism is an open sign and witness of this before men. Thus a man stands to what he believes and confesses it publicly. He does not say, My heart believes in Christ, but there is no need that I should say anything about it. Baptism is the initiatory testimony that one believes in Christ. It is founded upon His death and resurrection. “So many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized unto his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Not according to the first Adam, who mistrusted God and sinned and became a dead man; but as Christ was obedient unto death and has brought us life everlasting righteously through His own death. Baptism acknowledges this, and is as good as saying, I renounce all I am, and every hope from man; I know the first Adam, and myself as a child of his, to be dead: all my hope is in the last Adam. When a man is really brought to this, he is a true believer, and baptism outwardly sets forth the truth of Christ. Thus baptism has a decided

value as a testimony before God and men. No wonder therefore it is said by Peter, that “Baptism [while he carefully eschews any 'ex opere operato' efficacy in the same sentence] also doth now save us.” If a man refused to be baptized through shrinking from the shame of it, he could not be owned as a Christian at all. Paul, in writing to the Gentiles, shows that the great thing is what has taken place in Christ. Peter insists upon baptism, though he expressly guards them from thinking too much about the outward act: but the grand point is the demand of a good conscience towards God by Christ's resurrection.

Hence it is said here, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Unbelief was the fatal evil above all to be dreaded. Whether a man was baptized or not, if he did not believe, he must be condemned. There could be no promise of salvation, spite of baptism, if he did not believe. This makes baptism simply consequent on believing: but when we hear of condemnation, it is on the ground of not believing. Alas! millions will be condemned who have been baptized, yet so much the worse because they do not believe.

“And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” (Ver. 17, 18.) There is not a word here as to time. It is not all who believe, but “them that believe:” and, further, it is not said of them that believe even to the end of the age. Nothing of the kind is intimated. When, on the contrary, the Lord in Matthew commands them to disciple all nations, baptizing and teaching them, He vouchsafes the assurance of His presence with them to the end of the age. The Lord abides with the disciples till the age is completed—all implied in “Lo, I am with you all the days.” But it is not so with these signs of Mark. Our Lord's word was fully accomplished to the letter in the particular epoch when these signs were given: but there was no bond of perpetuity. In this way the contrast with Matthew is striking, and the mouth of the objector or deceiver is stopped.

“In my name shall they cast out devils.” He begins with power over Satan. They were to go forth in the power of His resurrection. Although He was going away, so far from thereby losing power, they would rather gain in this respect. “Greater works than these shall be do, because I go to my Father.” The notion of the Jews was that all the great works were to be done when Messiah was on the earth. Not so. In His name, during His absence, His servants should cast out devils, &c. “They shall speak with new tongues.” What a wonderful testimony of God's grace towards all men! They were to speak now of His wonderful works (Acts 2) in the tongues wherewith God had confounded men at the tower of Babel. This was fulfilled, first on the day of Pentecost to the Jews, then to the Gentiles in due time. “They shall take up serpents” —the outward symbol of the power of Satan in this world—that which man instinctively hates since the fall, unless be so besotted as to worship it. “And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.” The power of nature, of things inanimate as well as animate, could not avail against them; but, contrariwise, “they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” The beneficial power of good in His name overcomes evil and banishes it.

“So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.” (Ver. 19.) The work was done: He sat down. With His great earthly work over, He was the great Servant who could say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” So He sat down at the right hand of God, the place of power. “And they went forth and preached

everywhere.” (Ver. 20.) Is the Lord then inactive? Nay, “the Lord working with them.” So true is it from the first verse of Mark to the last. Jesus is the One that doeth all things well, working for men in His life, or rather working for sinners; suffering for sins in death; even now working with His servants when He is gone up to heaven. He is the servant of God throughout our Gospel. Even seated at God's right hand, He is the Servant, but “the Lord, working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

Chapter 123

Fragment: Matthew 11

In Matt. 11 we have this character of grace that Christ invites to Himself, not only when sin was there and the law broken, but when the warning testimony had been given and, as far as man's heart went, rejected. They must now come and find goodness in Him, as there was none in them.

Chapter 124

Fragment: Matthew 27:51-52

In Matt. 27:51, 52, we have the double power and effect of Christ's death, the rent veil or access to God, and the resurrection.

Chapter 125

On Mysticism: Letter 1

Letter I.

Dear Brother, I read your “Life of Mdme. de Krüdener” during my journey, and I can say it did me good. Occupation and incessant work, unless one keeps very near to the Lord, tend to allow the closest affections to grow rusty; and if they are for the greater part absorbed by the details of the work, these details tend to narrow the heart. If one keeps near to the Lord, it cannot be so. On the contrary, in that case the details stir up the best affections and raise them up, and one thus gets renewed strength in Him.

Such was the life of the Lord Jesus, because His life, in its details, flowed from His being in perfect communion with His Father, and He lived by His Father. The life of Jesus was but the perfect manifestation in man of the life of the Father. It was the produce of a heart filled with perfect love, the expression of infinite love.

The life of Mdme. de Krüdener, which was passed outside the narrowness of secondary questions, recalled to me that love. There certainly was in her a heart which spiritually loved the Lord; and the things which must be condemned in her walk are judged on my part without effort, so that I have not to dwell thereon. He who is constantly a working bee in the hive is free to gather the honey only when he lights upon the flowers of the field, whichsoever they may be. However, I wish to say a word on that which strikes me in mysticism, such as we find it in Mdme. de Krüdener and in other Christians of that day.

Desire and love are two very distinct things. Desire supposes the capacity of enjoying the thing which one desires, namely, the spiritual affections which, as to the root of their nature, have God for their object. It implies in the case of Mdme. de Krüdener that one is born of God, although Satan misstates this feeling, and often does so in a wonderful way; but this is also the proof that one does not possess the thing which one desires.

Love, on the contrary, is in full possession of the object of the desire. It is no longer a want, but the enjoyment, the appreciation of the object itself, which is our delight.

Now mysticism, while it greatly exalts its feelings, yet never goes beyond desire; whereas simple Christianity, at the same time that it gives the knowledge of salvation, puts us in full possession of the love of God. I know that God loves me, even as He loves Christ. That love has saved me. It is He who desired me. His love had need of me, and that love has shone forth in Christ in all its perfection. I contemplate that love in peace; I adore it in Christ. I abide in Him and He in me.

I never met with a mystic whose idea of love was not erroneous, altogether erroneous in its very nature.

It was always something of man which craved satisfaction, instead of being something in God which satisfies the heart perfectly, deeply, infinitely. Hence those extraordinary efforts to abase and blacken oneself, and that habit of speaking ill of oneself, as if a saved soul could be

something before a Savior, instead of being overpowered and forgetting oneself in presence of such great love, and of enjoying it. Is it when we are truly transported in the presence of God, and when we contemplate His glorious beauty in His temple, that we can be occupied with the hideous images which hide themselves in the heart of man? I think not. We think of Him. He has given us the right to do so by that grace which has really abolished and destroyed all that we were, when we were living out of Christ, when we were in the flesh.

You will perhaps tell me, The experience one acquires of oneself is none the less humiliating. I do not deny it. Yes, there are moments when the Lord reveals to us the fearful secrets of that heart where no good dwells; but one does not boast of it, and one does not speak much about it, if one has really seen God. It is only when we imagine we may find in man and in his love for God something approaching to the love of God for us, that we speak of it, and think we are getting higher. This is only the effect of the vanity of a heart which knows neither God nor itself. Such is the true character of mysticism.

But does not this view of God, therefore, produce a humbling knowledge of ourselves? Yes, when we have not known what we are, nor the gospel which gives us the right to say, “I live, yet not I.” It was the case with Job and with many others. Job had looked within himself, and not into the grace which was in God. It was then needful for him to become acquainted with himself in the presence of God. But the gospel is God's answer to all these convulsions of the soul, by the revelation of what God is and of what God bas done for the one that He thoroughly knew, such as he was, and who has learned in the cross of Jesus what the love of God is, when there was in man nothing but sin; and sin seen of God in a way we can never see it, but which may be the occasion of a perfect work of love.

God has satisfied the claims of His holiness, His majesty, His righteousness, His love, in the work and in the person of Christ. He has found His rest there, and I have also found mine there. The mystic never has it, because he vainly seeks for in man that which he ought only to seek for in God, who had accomplished all, before he ever thought of it. Therefore the mystic seeks for a disinterested love; but where does he seek for it? In man.

Poor worshippers of man—of man deified in the imagination, but who will never be so any where else! On earth, sin is in him. In heaven, he will think of God alone. Hence it is that the imagination plays such a great part in mysticism, and hence it is also that Satan so often makes the mystic fall into his snares, because the imagination and heart of man are so thoroughly brought into play. I do not say that there are no spiritual affections in mysticism. Far from me be such a thought! I do not even say that God never reveals Himself to mystics. I have no doubt He does, and thus renders the person happy; but you will find him more occupied with those affections themselves than with God. Such is the evil which lies at the very root of mysticism. In a word, I see in it an effort of the human heart to produce in oneself something strong enough in the way of affection to satisfy a heart awakened by the excellence of the object and aim of our affections.

And now I am supposing the true awakening of the heart. I see, in Christ, a divine heart, which reflects the perfect certainty of a love, the perfection of which is in no wise called in question. This is peace. Now He tells us “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” And what peace is that which expresses itself in these words: “I knew that thou nearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it!” That peace is our portion, just as much as these words: “I

know whom I have believed," and many other passages.

Does this mean that these toils, these desires, of the soul before God cannot exist in a child of God?

Yes, they may exist there, but this again brings out clearly for us a difference between the work wrought in grace, and that which is wrought in the imagination only. The soul, before understanding redemption by the cross and our righteousness in Christ which is the consequence thereof, the awakened soul, I say, is exercised, and often seeks for peace in some spiritual progress; it attaches the idea of its rest to a love for God which it pursues without ever attaining it, and the effect of all this toil is to set the conscience on fire, and to produce, in us, the conviction that all toil is useless—that, in the flesh, good does not dwell. Or else, again, the conscience takes full cognizance of that which is taking place in the heart, and of what we are, so that one is led to give up seeking after peace in one's soul; one needs to be saved; one places oneself at the foot of the cross—but not in order to get immutable affections, because one acknowledges they are not possessed. It is not only the heart which is afflicted by this, although this also takes place, but the conscience knows and testifies that there is perdition, condemnation for our soul. One brings things, just as they are, into the presence of God: one needs to be saved. One no longer seeks for good in oneself in the shape of divine affections; but one finds it in God, in His goodness towards us; one has peace through Jesus Christ.

Is it that the deep affections, which the cross awakened in one, have ceased, because it is no longer a need that overwhelms me? No; conscience interfered, and put me in my right place; that which God has done, what He has given me, peace, is now established in my soul, and can no longer be disturbed. I have divine leisure, because nothing is uncertain in my relationship with God; nothing hinders me from contemplating all that is perfect in the object of my affections, without being occupied with myself.

The mystic humbles himself, because he still hopes to find good in himself; he is occupied with this, as if there could be any, and he finds nothing but evil. The Christian is humble, which is a very different thing, because he has given up the thought of any discovery of good in himself, in order to adore the One in whom there is only that which is good. Now it is not that he is mistaken, but that the enlightening of the conscience by the light of the Spirit and of the truth has put him in the right place. I think that Mdme. de Krüdener did not fully find this portion till her last illness. This is what often happens. Moravians, while quietly enjoying Christ, often go no farther. Mdme. de Krüdener was under the obligation of love—a very true thing; but she did not know it. She knew that God was love; but she wanted to be love also, and this is near akin to pride of heart, until we have taken our right place, as dead in our trespasses and sins, and understood love towards us, namely, that Christ has died, and that we have died and are risen in Him.

That is what is true.

The conflicts still exist, because the flesh is in us; and the Holy Ghost needs to occupy us sometimes with ourselves, in order to humble us. God being infinite, and His work perfect, there is always in Him, even when our peace is perfect, something to awaken all our energy of affection, an affection which cannot be satisfied, although it be perfectly assured of the love of Him whom it contemplates. This suits the relations of the creature with God, and it is a blessing for us, which

cannot lessen our peace. This is something quite different from the mystical need of loving, which has indeed its reality, but which, nevertheless, has reference to the individual soul that knows neither God nor itself. Yet I often find my heart so cold that I derive some good from feeling it, because I know sufficiently well that I was lost and that I am saved, to hinder this from troubling my knowledge of a free salvation, accomplished without me, which glorifies God perfectly, and God alone. But often this view of our coldness does harm to souls that have not been emptied before God, the work having been transferred from the heart into the conscience in the presence of God.

It is astonishing from how many errors souls are delivered by this view of the love of God. Our human affections may attach themselves to the virgin, but conscience...? Do we find there any shedding of blood? She is nothing as to that, like the most miserable of sinners, she is a creature before God. In the same way, purgatory, the pretended repetition of the one sacrifice, absolution, extreme unction, and many other things disappear like shadows, without any controversy, just as the fears caused by darkness vanish away before the light of day, in face of a conscience which has found itself just as it was in the presence of God, and which has been perfectly purified there by the knowledge of His work in Christ.

The need of the conscience may drive a sincere soul to seek after those practices and superstitions; but to a purified conscience that knows God they are nullities. This it is that gives me a right feeling of horror for a system in which the fears of the conscience are made use of to hide the love of God. It is a manifest work of the enemy.

Finally consider, that we may not have to return to this, in the First Epistle of John, which touches the borders of mysticism, but with the finger of God, how the apostle, side by side with the greatest height of communion with God, ever again places the soul on the simple ground of salvation by effective faith. It is this that corrects the heart of man. (1 John 7, 10, and even the whole of the chapter.)

I now come to your work. You are conscious it is written for the world, so that it is under this aspect that it must be considered. A life of Mdme. de Krüdener places you in the midst of threats and ruin, and the misery which precedes: I make up my mind to it. One likes to see grace everywhere, that grace which despises neither great nor small. The ways of God, however, are different, when He acts in His own proper power. Then the world is left in its own true place, and the Son of God and His apostles and servants are brought before its great men sitting as a tribunal, and all this is turned into a testimony. It is thus that God causes His voice to penetrate into those places which are the farthest from Him—for this is what happens—while He preserves in its perfectness the character of His own and of all that belongs to Him. I admire His grace which deigns to act otherwise: but I admire His perfection, such as He has Himself presented it to me.

I said that I took for granted the worldly form of the book, and that thus you have left to every one the care of forming his own judgment on the worldly life of Mdme. de Krüdener. You have considered that the grace which pardoned everything establishes the true contact with evil, and you have passed over, without dwelling upon it and even without pointing it out, much of that in which she went astray. It seems to me, however, that while admitting the principle that it is a life you are writing and not a sermon, the fact of having left her husband a second time, after his great indulgence towards her—the fact of having again formed painful connections, at Paris, and thus fallen into a repetition of her former faults—showed a want of conscience and of a moral spring in

Mdme. de Krüdener, and such as the world could and ought to have felt. Her husband, it is true, was no husband, as to the inward ties of her moral existence; but that kindness, which had replaced her in a moral position ought to have awakened a feeling of thankfulness at least, if there had been in her the possibility of it. I think the weakness of her moral state was reproduced and is found again in her spiritual errings, for the ways of God are righteous.

I have still another remark to make to you. It seems to me that your desire to win the world, has led you to the mistake of introducing the letter from Monsieur de Frégeville. I do not admit that even the world calls such things a pure homage. After these remarks which I make with perfect freedom, I come to her life after her conversion.

Her devotedness awakened my deepest interest. It is very refreshing in a selfish world, the slave of appearances and forms which one makes use of in order to hide oneself, because one is too enlightened to allow oneself to be seen, as well as in order to preserve one's selfishness as intact as possible without acknowledging it—in the midst of this world, which has no independence because it has no heart, it is refreshing to meet with something which passes over its barriers, and acts from motives which come from the heart, and proceed from love—that love which is the only true-liberty.

Thus the devotedness of Mdme. de Krüdener interested me much, and also humbled me. The little that I have had during my life makes me enjoy hers; and so insignificant has been mine, that it makes me admire what I see in her; but, here also, I again find the ways of God.

When devotedness proceeded directly from Himself, and manifested itself in His ways, the energy which was found in it was realized in a result which was entirely of Himself, and that devotedness was kept from the misleadings and snares which are of the enemy. Now God can never abandon His ways. Whenever man abandons them, even while devoting himself, the enemy fills up the gaps under one form or another. One often feels surprised that a great part of the life of a devoted and spiritual person has been passed in errors and going astray. One asks oneself, how it is possible that the Spirit of God, whose presence produces that life, should comport with those errors. I say, on the contrary, that as regards the government of God, it is a natural consequence. Can God put His imprimatur on that which is contrary to His own thoughts? Will He refuse blessing in answer to real devotedness, because there is error? He cannot sanction what is contrary to His thoughts, but neither can He refuse His blessing to real devotedness.

What is the consequence of this, as regards Mdme. de Krüdener? The blessing and the tender care of the Father are again found in her work; God keeps His child in spite of her errings; but He allows the evil and the false confidence which accompanies it to bear their natural consequences; if it were not so, He would be justifying evil.

If the work of Mdme. de Krüdener had been of the same character as that of Paul, and had received the same seal, this seal would have been put upon that which was contrary to the will of God. The mercy of God does not permit this, and does not act thus.

An ardent, sensitive woman, ready to receive impressions, full of imagination, yielding to impressions and influences from without, and to the excitement produced by circumstances—such is Mdme. de Krüdener. The principle of her activity being divine, at bottom, this is also found in the work. Satan meddles with it, and always uses the flesh, which has been allowed to have a part in

the work to spoil it. Such is the history of all such cases.

If the world judged itself aright, and if it were in that which is true before God, there would be no difficulty in discovering the part allowed to human and fleshly elements in Christian work. God does not explain things to those who are not in His Spirit: it would be to sanction evil, although He may bring us out of this state by grace, and is faithful, so that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. If one relies upon Him, there can be no danger. If there be precipitation, He must make one undergo the consequences of it. If there exists a spiritual groundwork, it will also be found in eternal blessedness; for, in the government of God, everything has its necessary consequences, perfectly ordered. God may, in grace, make use of what He pleases, as an instrument of His purposes. He could honor, as such, a woman who was repentant and devoted. He did so in His grace; but that over-excited woman, who had not a sufficiently deep sense of what she had been, was not an instrument of the ways of God, perfect enough for Him to use her in all His work, or to bless all her work. But these defects in the instrument produce consequences, which, closely viewed, serve in themselves to manifest the wisdom of the ways of God. I believe, moreover, that a certain state of things in Christians and in the kingdom of God does not comport with perfect instruments and a perfect action in the thoughts of God. They would be out of place there and could not even accomplish His work.

This may appear extraordinary; but let us imagine Paul returning into this Christianized world: I hardly know what he could do there. God always knows what to do, because He is above everything. He will judge at last, and will show forth His grace by removing into glory those who have been faithful in the midst of confusion; but the sent ones, who are the creation of a perfect order, are not fit to mix with that confusion and to take their share of the moral guilt of those who have marred that order. Their interfering in the midst of such elements might bring dishonor on that bright light of new affections of which Christ is the center and object. Christ Himself begins His discourses by “Blessed,” “Blessed.” It was natural that the heart of Him who came from heaven should be thus poured out; but He closed by “Woe unto you,” “Woe unto you.”

Is it that His grace is lessened No: I cannot think so! It is, on the contrary, more tested, more brought into evidence, more glorious, and His immutable faithfulness more secured than, ever to our hearts. But He could not be at the close what He was at the beginning. It is the same with the work. But the love and blessedness of him who understands this grace are as great as before. In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul has ripened, and one can see him more deeply in Christ than at the time of all that power by which he confounded his adversaries. His experience of Christ is more complete and his heart also more perfect in its feelings.

In another dispensation, Elijah could compare himself to Moses, with whom he was present at the transfiguration of the Lord on the mount; but Elijah, in the presence of the golden calf, could not set up a tabernacle as Moses did. He was, by that very reason, a more striking witness of the grace of God.

I have one remark more to make on Mdme. de Krüdener, less important indeed, but I think it true. She was lacking in spiritual originality and in sincerity. This is a defect which betrays itself also in her work, and it is one of the things which gave it its character. Her impressions came from Zung-Stilling, Oberlin, Terstegen, Maria.

This may not surprise one perhaps in a woman; but let us conclude withal that a woman cannot be in a chief place in the work of God. This is foreign to the ways of God. A woman may help much in the work, but she cannot occupy a principal place. She may do things which a man cannot do; but she cannot do what a man does. This is true in a more important point of view. She could not receive directly from Christ her impulsions for a work which He did not give her to do. The love of Christ was there, but the impulsion came from elsewhere. Now, when it is Christ Himself who sets the heart in motion, He acts upon the new man, just as He produces in us that new man, which the wicked one touches not. His presence acts upon the conscience, puts the flesh to silence; it puts man all to naught, and all his vanity, his self-love, and his good opinion of himself. The whole man is judged in His presence, and the work produced is of Christ Himself, whatever be the vessel which contains it. If there is the danger of its being otherwise, a thorn in the flesh is sent, as with Paul.

When we receive our impressions or impulsions from without, second-hand, the flesh and the heart are not judged at all, although the love of Christ be in us. They show themselves outwardly in the work, and the agent is exposed, by the very fact of his activity, to all kinds of snares of the enemy, snares the consequences of which are also found in the work. Such was the case with Mdme. de Krüdener; but she will assuredly not lose the reward of her devotedness, the sincerity of which I do not in any way question.

There was too much of man in her, and in her work, and man is always false. This has the more to be remarked, because, while feeling the love of Christ, she never truly knew the gospel till her last illness, as being herself in the presence of God. It was then that she owned that she had often taken her imagination for the voice of God; for it is there only that man dies, and that God skews Himself as He is. Now until man dies, Satan can always make use of him, and there is a lack of spiritual discernment. The fact of the accomplishment of her predictions and visions proves nothing at all in these things. All this accompanies also the power of Satan; but the spiritual man, being humble, easily weighs these things, when God places him in His presence, and when he takes the word of God for the absolute guide of his judgment.

These are, you may tell me, remarks on Mdme. de Krüdener and not on her work; save a few words of blame, you have told me nothing at all about it. You mistake. Few compliments do I make, it is true; but the best and the truest praise of a book is that it produces thoughts in him who reads it, and such, you see, has been the result of the reading of it.

I have pointed out to you the defect, which, to my mind, rather spoils it. Moreover, taking the same view as the book itself, I think it cannot be corrected, save the letters of M. de Frégeville; for I do not think that at this moment you could place yourself in the presence of Christ, and present them under the aspect under which you have presented them in this book.

Every moral position has its time. In our state of imperfection, where instead of reflecting something of the perfection and riches of Christ, one generally acts in separating the rays, this imperfection shows itself alas! in the soul of the Christian who thinks himself judge of everything and a workman in everything.

It would be important to know what was read habitually by Mdme. de Krüdener. Sometimes one can suspect it. Oberlin himself, who is known for his devotedness, had an unbridled imagination

and was a famous heretic, whose errors still bear their fruits—now that man and the Church itself have forgotten and lost sight of that which was the object of their admiration—for God's judgment is not that of man. Terstegen also had certain well-known errors. I do not know if one could find him out; but it would give one element more of the character of Mdme. de Krüdener, if we knew something more of his visions. Nevertheless it is good not to feed the vain curiosity of the public, and I approve there not being more of it in your volumes. Yet as these visions acted powerfully on her life, in order to form a sound judgment, one ought to know more of them.

Chapter 126

On Mysticism: Letter 2

You are beginning in a measure, I suppose, that life of activity which makes a life of reflection to become more hidden than before. It is a very real advance in Christian life. I liked divine philosophy; it is always to my taste. As long as it shows itself, and the outward life is conformed to this, one has the appearance of being much more spiritual, and deeper, as the steam which escapes from the boiler appears to have much more force than that which draws onward the heavy train, which only opposes its resistance to the movement which one desires to give unto it. But it is when it is for the most part hidden, that the force really acts. Hence the reality is put to the test. And why do I say that this is real progress? Because it is less apparent before men; it is more thoroughly before God, with whose approbation we must be content; we must be content to possess the thing with Him, nay, I say more, to find it in Him. But it is to possess it really. It is the principle of moral perfection to enjoy things, instead of gaining credit to oneself in the eyes of others.

Active Christian life is a common life of service, in contact with human passions, faults, weaknesses, in a word in contact with the flesh, but in order to act in the midst of it, to introduce God there.

And this is what Christ was. There must be power. We must be really in communion with Him (by partaking thus of that nature which nothing can injure, and which shines with its own perfection in the midst of all), above everything we meet with.

Divine philosophy, if you suppose it heavenly, meeting with no opposition when it is displayed before others, is an easy enjoyment, and as I said, one clothes oneself outwardly with it in the eyes of those who admire it.

In order to walk in Christian life, we must be what is admired; this is another matter. One must be divine in the sense of communion with His nature. Jesus was the most isolated of men, and at the same time, the most accessible, the most affable; the most isolated, because He was living in absolute communion with His Father, and there was neither echo nor sympathy with the perfect love which was found there; the most accessible and the most affable, because He was that love for others. And, in speaking of that ineffable work which opened a way to that love, through all men's sin, He says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” —that baptism of bitterness and death which, by making an end of sin (even in its last stronghold, and its last claims of ruin, by the righteousness of God, against us)—left that love free to act, in its infinite purposes of grace. For love is infinitely inventive for the blessedness of that which is loved, and the love of God purposes that which goes infinitely beyond all our thoughts. It is the spring of the thoughts of God, who is infinite. And again, towards the end of His career, when the opportunity presented itself—and when the unbelief of His own led Him to say “How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” (for not even in His own was there faith, the capacity necessary for using the resources of grace and power which were in Him—for that is what He expects from us in this poor world), then, without a moment's interval, He adds, “Bring thy

son hither." The consciousness of standing alone in His love (so that others did not even understand how they could and ought to avail themselves of it) does not for a moment hinder His energy and activity; the same phrase which contains the words "How long?" adds this also, "Bring thy son hither."

And what was the life of that Jesus, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" A life of activity in obscurity, but which caused the love of God to penetrate into the most remote corners of society, even where there was the most need—in the midst of persons who were repelled by the pride of man, that it might maintain its ground, but which the love of God sought after. Because He had no need to make Himself a character and to keep it, He was always the same, and the more, apparently, He committed Himself, the more He displayed Himself in a perfection that never belied itself. The love of God had no need of protecting itself, as human society must, from that which might lay it too bare. He was always the same. The toiling life of Jesus was passed in seeking souls in all circumstances, and went through that which could put it to the test. But we see therein, on one hand a divine reality which never failed, and from time to time (in face of self-righteousness, pride, and tyrannical boldness, and the contradiction of sinners, or in favor of some poor broken-down souls, or to justify the ways of God in their favor), a divine ground-work, the most exquisite and touching thoughts, a depth of truth which betrayed its perfection by its simplicity—all this manifesting a soul whose food was in the most intimate communion with infinite love and perfect holiness, a soul which could say "We speak what we know, and testify that we have seen" —which weighed evil by the perfection of good which was in Him, and found, in the, awful discoveries of evil (if one can speak of discoveries where everything was laid bare) which the holiness of His soul made the opportunities of the manifestation of infinite love. It was the love of a holy Being, rather, which made this discovery, a love which took the form of that grace, which, by its own humiliation, placed itself within the reach of all the wants of the heart, and, at the same time, in presence of the pride of man, showed itself at the height of the dignity and majesty of God. How beautiful to see this divine Person (these divine qualities piercing through the humiliation) place Himself within the reach of those whom the world despised, and find ("being wearied with His journey," and becoming a debtor for a cup of cold water to a woman who hardly dared to show herself with others) meat to eat, of which neither His disciples nor the world knew anything, and that in the deliverance of a poor heart for which He had set free the spirit of life and joy, and had restored it, or rather given it to a heart crushed under the weight of a bad conscience and by the contempt of her fellow-creatures.

What a perspective of blessing for poor sinners this opened to His heart! For He did not despise such consolation in the midst of a world which rejected Him from its bosom. Love comforts itself thus. The heart that loves sinners needs such consolation in such a world. And whore is it to be found? In obscurity; in the labors of a life which had to do with the ordinary need of souls, but which, thus, ripens in the truth—a life which did not shelter itself from the misery of the world, to walk "in a vain show," but introduced there the love of God—precious grace! He was what others could write about. (Matt. 26:24; Luke 24:44; John 1:45; Heb. 8:7, &c.)

How many hidden wants, even in the most degraded souls, would be confessed, and would manifest themselves, if such love and such goodness, which could win their confidence, were presented to them! But, that it may be so, we must be content to find ourselves oftentimes in the midst of the degradation, sheltered from it only by that which is inward. Now such was the life of

the Lord.

How many souls drown their thoughts in pleasure, to stifle the moral sorrows which torment them! Divine love not only meets the wants, but brings them to express themselves. How delicious to see a soul open itself, and at the same time to see spiritual intelligence entering it! One does not exactly seek for such degradation; but one finds the world, knowing that is the truth as to what is found there; and its outward forms do not redeem the soul. But this is a life of pain, patience, and blessedness, which has no equal. Christ could say, “That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” No doubt there is a difference of gifts; but, even if God, in His grace, opens this way to us, how slow we are to walk in the steps of Him who draws us! But take courage, dear brother, His grace is there, on the road He has opened to us. We find it day by day as we go onward; and what grace it is, when all the principles which have been formed in the heart through faith, come to blow fully in heaven, and show themselves in all the fullness of their results according to the heart of God. We must wait—walking by faith.

But I must stop here. I am at—, where I am pursuing a very humble work, a work of detail, but a work in which I am very happy, feeling I am at my post, and even with little desire to leave it. God. in His great goodness, refreshes me a little, when I see souls refreshed and happy in the thought of His precious and perfect grace. It is a little work, but I see in it the good hand of God who, in spite of our weakness, makes us feel a little how good it is to be with Him

Chapter 127

Fragment: Philippians 3:9-10

Phil. 3:9, 10 are different in this: verse 9 looks to having Christ in glory, to be found in Him before God, accepted and glorified; verse 10 is what was wanted of Christ for down here. This is what answers in the path to the place of verse 9 in the presence of God.

Chapter 128

Fragment: Pool of Bethesda

Ordinances and ministry witnessed mercy, but the Son dispenses it in His own way: no delay, no rivalry, no fear, or doubt, but “wilt thou be made whole?” It was Galatianism to pray about Bethesda after Christ had been in Jerusalem. Such is plentiful still. It is always a question thus between Christ and the sinner in John. Christ settles all in grace alone and effectually.

Chapter 129

Fragment: Blessing and Giving Thanks

1 Cor. 14:16 is a positive proof of what is indeed very clear in other passages—that “blessing” means giving thanks. The two words are used for the same act elsewhere. (comp. Matt. 14; 15, Luke 9, John 6) Here they are positively identified.

Chapter 130

Thoughts on 2 Cor. 12

We need to be taught of God what this “man in Christ” means. If we speak of a person being in the flesh—a man in grace, or a man in the Spirit, we mean his state, or position, which characterizes him before God. A man “in Christ” does not mean what he is in himself. It is the condition of every child of God “in Christ.” This chapter in what follows shows us much of what flesh is, but in his state “in Christ” flesh had nothing to do with it. The body had nothing to do with it. Paul could not understand it of himself; he says, “I know a man in Christ; whether in the body I cannot tell,” &c.—not what he was as a man down here.

It is the position of a believer contrasted with that of an unbeliever. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” This characterizes him, and the value and import of it are unfolded in that passage. And again, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” It is quite evident it has nothing to do with anything he has out of Christ. Whatever; he was before, he was in flesh; now be is in Christ, and all is measured by Christ; he has got his place in the Second Adam, and not in the first. It will show itself in its practical ways, but this refers to his standing.

I desire to show, first, the force and bearing of this—a man being “in Christ.” So long as Christ was in the world, nobody could say a “man in Christ.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” God's grace was working from Adam downwards; but to know what it is to be in Christ, we must know what the Christ is. Why should God have peace and blessing for a man in Christ? Because there was nothing for him anywhere else. There would be judgment for his sin, but no life or righteousness, or power, not one thing that he needs before God, could he have without being in Christ. There is plenty of wickedness, pride, &c., creature work of our own, but nothing that can go up to God. We may clothe ourselves in our own eyes, but Adam was naked before God when he clothed himself. There may be bright qualities, intellect, &c., but who is clothed in them? The man, he prides himself in it. But there may be good qualities in any animal. There is a difference between these and those; some vicious, &c., or the reverse. The intellect of man and his wonderful faculties are not the question; but what do they turn to? Pride, title to be something; man clothing himself in his pride. Is this the way to heaven? God says “there is none righteous, no, not one.” Does the man believe it who thinks to go to heaven that way? No; he has nothing else but filthy rags. When the voice of God is not there, the fig leaves may do very well for him; but when God comes in, they will not do before Him. God afterward clothed Adam, but then death had come in. When man clothes himself, it only brings out his shame; when God clothes him, he is fit for God—he has “put on Christ.” There is no desire in the natural man to be with God; man has no desire to go to God. Conscience drives a man away from God, and his heart keeps him away. Any honest unconverted man would own he has no pleasure in Christ. It is thoroughly brought out that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The man out of Christ is either a gross outward sinner, such as the publican, or the respectable hardhearted man who has no sympathy in the reception of a sinner. Christ comes, and God occupies Himself with these sinners. See how

they treat Him! Knowing all the sin, all the hatred of their hearts, breaking of the law, and a thousand other sins, He came for this very reason; He came to seek sinners. The grace of God who is love has risen above all that man is. If man feels what he is before God, he gets into despair.

You do not trust every one who comes to you, because you know you are sinners. God knows all about you: Christ came because you are, wicked. If this suits you, this is the God you have in Christ. If it does not suit you, there is judgment for you.

But in Christ God is above all the sin, and because it is what it is He sends Christ. What man means by God's goodness is indifference to sin. God never in grace alters His holiness. Before a man could be in Christ, the whole work was needed to be done. He made Him to be “sin for us.” The first thing is Christ made sin, and then grace reigns through righteousness. Christ was entirely alone to drink that bitter cup, and then God could not only save the sinner but glorify Himself about the sin. God would glorify Christ in Himself. When Christ was made sin, God was perfectly glorified. There was perfect righteousness against the sin, but love in bearing it. He is gone up to the throne of God as a man. Now there is a Christ to be in, righteousness accomplished, &c. The whole thing is done, and perfect; the Holy Ghost is sent down to bear witness that God has accepted this Man and His work. Righteousness is glorified in the presence of God. As a Christian, I am a man not in the flesh but in Christ. The whole work is done that fits Him to sit on the right hand of God. He has glorified God, and God has glorified Him in Himself. But before I can have a man in Christ, I must have a Christ to be in there on the throne of God; and this after redemption is effected.

Directly I take knowledge of what Christ has done for me, applied by the Spirit, I am a man in Christ. It is not given to every one to have special manifestations as Paul had. Paul saw more of what it was to be there by what he saw here.

Now we see what the flesh is in connection with this. In the beginning of the chapter we see what the highest was to which a man could be taken. The thief might go into paradise the same as Paul, but it was a wonderful thing for a man down here to have these revelations; but in the end of the chapter we see what the flesh is capable of. Nature cannot go into heaven. If God is pleased to take him up there, there is no consciousness of being in the body at all. “A man in Christ,” “of such an one will I glory.” There is the glorying of a Christian. How many an one would say, You must not glory thus; but Paul says, I will glory in it. There is a man dead! No, he is not dead, he is alive in Christ, as a man out of himself in Christ. He will glory in this. You could not help glorying if you really believed it. It is not thankful not to glory in it. You may not apprehend all about it; but it you believe it, you will glory in it. If Paul had gone up to a fourth heaven, there would have been all the more need for the thorn, or be would have gloried in that. The danger was not when he had the apprehension of the presence of God; it was when out of His presence he began to be thinking of it.

The revelation was not a source of strength. He needed something else. Whenever he preached he had something to make him humble—something to keep the flesh down (the thorn, not sin, but something to make nothing of him, breaking down the pride of man). He was humbled because in danger of not being humble. There was strength for him. If he preached in a despicable manner, but souls were converted, as they were, how was this? If this is the way of getting blessing, it was

not Paul's power, but Christ's power: then let me have the thorn, he says, Thus, we have the danger of the flesh dealt with in humbling him in the presence of man, breaking down in the very thing that would puff itself up; and Satan who would puff up is obliged to be an instrument to break it down. Now I have the power of Christ in the man, not only a “man in Christ.” While in this world I want something to carry me through and to protect me from being cheated—something for the conflict I am in, that is, the power of Christ, as well as being in the Christ. There was something there to keep the nature down that would have gloried, and besides this, it was the occasion of bringing in Christ. In Christ there is always something to glory in. Do not believe that the saint is not entitled to enjoy all the advantages he has in Christ. All the hindrance, all the wretchedness, made him glory more in Christ. He says, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities,” &c.

At the end of the chapter we see what the flesh left to itself, even in a Christian, is. See what it is—flesh in its fairest forms, its capacities, &c., all a hindrance. We may only glory as to the old man in its being dead— “reckon yourselves to be dead,” &c. We may rejoice in finding the flesh good for nothing. What man is in flesh, and flesh in a man, is all bad. God says, I will visit you by My word and Spirit, and then bring you to where I am. The sins are forgiven. But the sin is not gone, you say. But “sin in the flesh” has been condemned. Christ has died for it and I am clear, justified from it. I have got out of this condition thus condemned. If you have got into the third heaven, you may know that all the flesh could do would be to make you proud of it. A man in the flesh cannot please God, and the flesh in man cannot please God. If you were in a fourth heaven, it would be just the same. Sinful flesh has been condemned. Then I, a Christian, can say, I am dead and I am in Christ, the man at the right hand of God. Whether an apostle or the simplest saint that ever was, I need the power of Christ in the man.

The Lord give us to judge flesh, and all the scene around that ministers to it.

We are apt to make a mistake in speaking of our weakness and unprofitableness, forgetting that it is, when we have done our duty, we are unprofitable servants. When we speak of it, we mean our failure; and so, when we speak of our weakness of spirituality or conduct, we mean failure. But when Paul speaks of weakness, it is that which makes room for power (“when I am weak, then am I strong”); and the result fully produced is with the consciousness of there being no strength in us. This is a very different thing from our failure. Our failure ought to lead us to humble ourselves before God for that which led to the failure. If we have not done what we ought, why have not we? We cannot glory in not having done it. There is a strength that the babe in Christ may have and needs—power guided by wisdom, and this does not fail. When we have not been emptied of self and are full of self-confidence, we must be broken down. Pretension to strength is always in the way for failure. The first step towards failure is for getting our entire and absolute dependence. As Christians we know we have no strength, but we forget we have none.

This chapter brings out in a remarkable way the dealings of God in giving strength. There is a wonderful scene going on in the heart of man. God does not let us always see it—it would not be good for us: we could not bear it. Sometimes the veil is drawn aside, and as in the case of Job, the heart is exposed to itself—God and Satan there. It is a serious thing when God thus lifts the veil and shows what is going on for good and evil in a poor little heart like ours!

“God hath set the world in their hearts;” and if it ends there, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Another question, as a moral question, is the will of man. When will is not at work and sorrow comes in, it is the happiest portion.

The first who begins that question is God. It is a question of Satan's power, man's will, and God's goodness in the midst of all that.

You have the conscience of evil in your hearts, and the evil is too much for you. You do not know what to do with it. The conscience of good and evil has come in by the fall. Adam had the conscience of good and evil with sin and by sin. He had it by disobedience. Conscience therefore cannot guide a mar right. The converted man has the light of God to bear upon it. This shows man what he is. The son has to own its badness and say, God is right. I go with Him morally in condemning myself. God show man to be vile as to nature, rebellious as to will, anal hateful towards God as to his affections; and it is blessing when He shows it to us, but it is not deliveracte. This is another thing. The glory of God's ways is that He puts us down completely as to ourselves, by the fact that our salvation is wrought on by Another, when I had done nothing but sin. I find God has condemned sin in the flesh. Where? In Christ. I see my sin all measured and dealt with on the cross.

As the beginning of the chapter showed us what a man in Christ gets—revelations, &c. (if we do not have them now, we shall by and by); so afterward we see what flesh in a man is, what it may come to—debates, envyings, wraths, &c. These are the extremes of both—revelations in the third heaven, and flesh in its worst character. Most Christians are in neither one nor the other state practically.

Paul says, “I know a man in Christ. . . Of such an one will I glory.” That is what all Christians should have got hold of. If you are not a man in Christ before God, you are lost; it is presumption to think of being anything else. Can I know that I am going to be like Christ in glory and not glory in it? We must glory. Paul was not glorying in the revelations when he was in them—he had no time then to glory; but he gloried in what was his portion—Christ his life, righteousness, glory, &c. Paul speaks of those revelations as fourteen years ago. It is not intended that we should be always living in the wonderful enjoyments connected with the glory of Christ. If we were it would be sight not faith. There was no danger of being puffed up when in the third heaven, it was when he came down to Paul again there was the danger; not while in the presence of God.

By and in Christ I learn now another thing—that it is not God's thought at all to alter my flesh, my old nature; the tree is bad. The flesh can be puffed up in Paul by the consciousness of having been in the third heaven.

There is no good in me. I am a sinner—more than being under the curse of a broken law. Where I am, where my flesh is, I should pervert even the third heavens. (Ver. 7.) God turns that by which Satan would have tempted one into a rod to keep down his pride. We are not told what the thorn was, but it was something that made Paul despicable in preaching (alluded to in Galatians) to meet the pride that would come from the revelation. Numbers were converted, not by Paul's eloquence, but by the Lord's power. Their faith was not to stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. There was Christ for the man upon earth. You must be brought down to nothing, having no strength in yourselves. The flesh was not allowed to act in Paul, a thorn was sent lest, &c. Such is the normal condition of a soul—power given not to sin. If the heart is exercised in

dependence, we judge the root of the evil, and it does not come out. Our business is to learn the evil in my character by judging it and not by its coming out. If I have a proud character and am humbled before God about my pride, I go out, and am more humble than a very bumble man by nature. There is not a bad conscience by the flesh being in me, but I have if I allow it to act. The thorn is sent to prevent it.

Before we come to power, the question of righteousness has been settled by Christ being at the right hand of God; it is a settled thing. It is practically learned when I am saved; then I have a title to the third heaven; and strength is made perfect in weakness. The Lord never gives us intrinsic strength, He makes us feel our dependence. I am made to feel my weakness when I see how my flesh would even pervert the blessings that are mine in Christ Therefore will I rather glory in infirmities (not sin, but infirmities—e.g., distresses, persecutions, &c.) The Spirit kept him from that which would have given him a bad conscience.

Rev. 6 is complete in itself, the state of the sphere of which it speaks being gone through (with the question of full judgment, which was not yet come, raised) till the whole scene is broken up, so that people thought the full judgment was come. It is a preliminary scene. We could not have the beast, for this is definitely formed in its day and final judgment comes on it: it was for its time. The saints under the altar had to wait.

Chapter 131

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q. Matt. 16:19; 18:18 - What is the true force of the future with the perfect part in these texts? Does it teach, what has been drawn from it and apparently by more than one Christian recently, not a ratification in heaven consequent on the binding on earth, but that what was bound on earth had been previously bound in heaven?

W.

A. I am of opinion that there is no ground grammatically, any more than in the scope of our Lord's doctrine, to suppose that the participle δεδεμ■νον expresses time past relatively to that which is signified by the future ■σωαι. The idea is that of a certain condition viewed abstractedly from consideration of actual time. “Whatever thou mayest bind on the earth shall be a thing bound in the heavens,” &e. It is well known that, according to the grammarians, the futurum III or exactum in many verbs (as δ■ω κ■πτω, πα■ω, πιπρ■σκω) supplies the place of the simple future passive, as may be seen in Jelf's Gr. Gr. second ed. Vol. II. p. 71. The difference, I would add, is that the complex form before us views the result as permanent (δεδμ■νον) but, beyond doubt, of a future act (■σται τ■ δεδεμ■νον). Had the meaning contended for been meant, care would have been taken to express it distinctly, as ■■η ■ε■εμ■νον ■σται ■ν, or ■σται τ■ δεδεμ■νον or in some other way quite different from the actual construction, which appears to me to admit of no other translation than that which is given in the Authorized Version.

2 Timothy, just as the apostle is going to be offered up, turns to associations which are not in connection with the glory of Christ and the gospel as a workman.... Nature, and grace in nature, is fully owned of God. Man and wife are heirs together of the grace of life. But the power of the work is a newly introduced thing in the Second Adam, and Him risen, and by the Holy Ghost. The other was sweetly owned in its place; but then, with this, the thoughts of God are owned as before the existence of the world. There is the creation, and it is owned in its place, though man be fallen; there is power above it, and acting in it. But that which power brings in and reveals was in the counsels of God and given us in Christ, subsisting in Him, before there was a creation, fallen or unfallen. Power had abolished death, the present result of the first creation, and brought life and incorruptibility to light—what was before the first creation, and is the result in the new creation. Chapters ii. and iii. give the path of conduct as to the Church, and the ground of confidence and warrant of conduct when it is corrupt and fallen—a weighty instruction. It takes death, life, and reign; and Christ, not the Church, as the test of conduct; evil and good judged in individual conduct; judgment of the whole; association with what is good; and then (in the form of piety, or godliness, but reality of wickedness) the Scriptures for the individual the sure guide. What mail would call presumption becomes an imperious duty; and nothing is so humble as duty.

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Notes on Isaiah. (Chap. 42, 43.)

Distinguished as the place of Cyrus might be as the righteous man from the east, whom God employed to break the pride of Babylon and set the captives free to return to the land of Israel, a greater is here. “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: be shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” (Ver. 1-4.) We know that Christ is intended (the typical, as I suppose, giving occasion to the introduction of the Antitype). It is the more remarkable as being lost after this brief moment, when the prophetic strain resumes its previous course, and the servant of Jehovah elsewhere in this chapter and to the end of chapter 48 is unequivocally not Christ, but Israel.

Here, however, it is the Lord, the object of Jehovah's delight as of His choice, the vessel of the power of the Spirit, and the manifester of judgment to the nations, compared with whom the Gentile avenger of God's honor on the source and patron of all idols was little indeed. Yet He whose glory was thus beyond all competition displayed it first in perfect, unobtrusive lowliness. Might of far-reaching testimony even was not what characterized Him thus, meek retirement rather, not only in presence of murderous hatred, but away from the multitude that followed Him and the admiration of the healed who would have spread His fame. He “charged them that they should not make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant,” &c. (Matt. 12:14-21.) This state of things is seen here terminated by the victory of His second advent, when He shall set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for His law. The intervening action of the Holy Ghost here below, while He is exalted on high, does not enter into account.

This leads the Lord in magnificent terms to speak of what He will accomplish through His own name and glory, in contrast with graven images. (Ver. 5-16.) Then, in verses 17 et seq., the utter shame of such as trust in these lying vanities is insisted on, so as to touch the consciences of the guilty Jew. “Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind but my servant? or deaf as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.” (Ver. 18-20.) It is Israel who are in view. Such were their privileges, such their responsibility, and such their woeful failure. Jehovah, contrariwise, is right in all His ways. “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned

him, yet he laid it not to heart.” (Ver. 22-25.)

After of judgment to the nations to His name, which entailed on Israel the fury of Jehovah (yet misunderstood and unfelt through the blinding influence of idolatry), in chapter 43. He proclaims His faithfulness who had called Israel by their name and made them His own. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou vast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory. I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this and show us former things let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified: or let them hear and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” (Ver. 2-10.) This renders the subject (namely Israel as God's servant) as plain as His own mercy in the last days. The Jews by their idol-loving were the blind people that had eyes and the deaf that had ears. Yet were they alone of all nations Jehovah's witness and His servant. They will yet know, believe, and understand. It was because of Him whom they rebelled against that they have been so spoiled; it is because of Him that they will be delivered, pardoned, and blessed; for as He, Jehovah, is the only God, so is He equally the sole Savior. It was for Israel's sake that He had sent to Babylon and brought down their pride; and new things should cause the old wonders to be forgotten when God gives water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert for His chosen people, formed for Himself to show forth His praise. It was God who once, for their sins, profaned the princes and people of Israel; it is He who for His own sake will blot out their transgressions and justify themselves. Before that day dawn, we know (what is to them still a secret) the great salvation by His grace, whereby alone He can thus deal with the guilty, and yet most righteously withal: Christ, the cross of Christ, is the only key.

Chapter 133

Notes on Isaiah. (Chaps. 61, 62)

This forms the beginning of a section (chaps. 61 - 63:1-6) which embraces Jehovah-Messiah in His first as well as second advents for the blessing and glory of Israel and the destruction of their enemies. We have the Lord's own warrant in Luke 4 for declaring that the early portion He read applies to His then presence in grace here below. It has been often and justly observed how He stopped after the first clause of verse 2, closing the book, and in due time saying, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. He cites what portrays His character as it was (or about to be) displayed on earth at that time in ways of divine mercy, but forbears even to close the sentence where the part following alludes to His exercise of judicial wrath. Such was in no way the object of His first coming; and so, if strange in appearance, with divine wisdom, He read no more. “The day of vengeance of our God” awaits the epoch of His appearing in power and glory.

It is not that mercy will not then be the spring of God's way with Israel. For the Lord, while He executes earthly judgment, will comfort those that mourn, especially mourners in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, “that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” (Ver. 3.) Restoration of past decayed places shall go forward (ver. 4); strangers shall serve Israel (ver. 5), who shall themselves be named the priests of Jehovah. (Ver. 6.) For their shame they should have not merely re-instatement of what had lapsed but double, like Job; and the Lord who loves judgment will make an everlasting covenant with them; so that all who see acknowledge that they are indeed the blessed of Jehovah. (Ver. 7-9.) Nay more, Jehovah Himself becomes the center of all joy and the giver of all beauty, causing righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (Ver. 10, 11.)

The Spirit of Christ is importunate in intercession for Zion, as we see in the beginning of chapter 62. “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” (Ver. 1 -.4.) Land and people are bound up in the plans and affections of Jehovah. And this will prove a divine ground of patriotism for Israel. “For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” (Ver. 5.) And as the Spirit of Christ working in the prophet bears witness of the unceasing cry to the Lord to effect His glorious counsels as to Jerusalem (ver. 6, 7); so the Lord on His part “hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast labored: but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.” (Ver. 8, 9.)

Hence the animation of verse 10: “Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.” The day of the Lord is there; He the Messiah is there, the salvation of Zion's daughter—His reward with Him, and His work before Him. So the Lord proclaims to the end of the world as His message to her. (Ver. 11.) On the other hand, “they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.” (Ver. 12.)

“Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

Chapter 134

Practical Reflections on Proverbs 1-2

The Proverbs refer us directly to the government of God on the earth, more entirely, because they are less prophetic, than even the psalms. Prophecy, referring to Christ and the remnant, necessarily looked to His rejection and that of some of them from the earth, and hence, though dimly, brought in light from beyond; telling us at least of the resurrection and ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God, to go no further. The proverbs do not enter on such topics. They show us what the practical path of a man is here below, as guided by the moral intelligence which the fear of God and the divine word will give him, what true wisdom will teach him. Only it does show that this wisdom is of God and cannot be really without Him and thus leads us on to Him, though obscurely, who is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

The body of the book consists of details of practice, the first nine chapters more of general principles, and the formal characters of evil to be avoided. What is in contrast with wisdom is self-will. Hence the beginning or principle of wisdom in us is the fear of God—here especially of Jehovah, because that was the name of God in covenant with the people, by whom that fear was to be guided, and which is another element in it. But the repression of our will leads us necessarily to the will of another, and the only true right source of conduct, is God, for it is evident He is sovereign and has a right to will. But He has formed relationships and created duties, and man has acquired the knowledge of right and wrong; but reference to God can alone keep this steady and clear. For first of all, the first of all duties is to Him and looking to Him alone keeps the eye single and clear from self, and as to its other duties. For besides will and lawlessness in itself, the existence of the spirit of independence, and our separation thereby from God has given us necessarily the lusts of other things. We must have something; we have left God, we do not suffice for ourselves; and lusts of other things come in, of the flesh and of the mind. But an immense complicated system has grown up through this, and Satan's power—the world. Hence we need guidance and instruction through this, to know God's will in the midst of it, the application of wisdom to details. For the Christian, following Christ, being an imitator of God is the grand point, but he also has to be “not as fools but as wise, understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Christianity goes higher than Proverbs, for it deals with motives and gives divine ones, Proverbs experience, though of one judging according to the fear of God. Still, such an experience is of great use. This wisdom, as we know, Solomon sought and obtained, and gives us his resulting experience in this book. We have several words used in connection with this: wisdom, a common word, 'hochmah,' practiced, experienced, skilful. The wise men of Babylon are so called and it is constantly used for wisdom which God gives in Daniel. We have again ‘musar,’ instruction, warning, advice used for chastisement too. We have also 'beena,' discernment; we have, as regards the simple one liable to be led by everybody, 'orma' or prudence, used for cunning also; but cunning had by no means originally a bad sense, it meant knowing, as regards the young, knowledge; and ‘mezimma,' discretion, being what we call up to things; and lastly, ‘tachbooloth,' wise plans or counsels. The instruction is said to be in good conduct, righteousness, judgment, and uprightness. We have besides this 'lakach,' the wise will increase or add doctrine, λογος. But

this is a matter of attainment: the wise will attain this, and counsels, and to interpret dark sayings and proverbs in which wisdom is shut up. Such are the objects proposed in Proverbs, but not by man's cunning but by beginning with the fear of the Lord and so growing up in discernment. It is always needed to be not as fools but as wise. A true Christian may do something from want of discretion which may put him in difficulties all his life. No doubt there is carelessness in it; still he may be very sincere. But still Christianity seems to me to have a somewhat different character of wisdom— “simple concerning evil, wise concerning that which is good.” The Christian follows obediently Christ; and that is the path of wisdom where he has the light of life. He is so governed by motives, Christ being all to him, that his path is simple, his whole body is full of light having no part dark. This is somewhat a different kind of wisdom, though it make us wise in conduct. There is wisdom, but more simplicity, because governed more by motives, and following Christ.

I now turn to the unfolding of this wisdom in the early chapters of this book. The first object is to know wisdom and instruction. Such is the full and general object of the book; that is, the experience of a wise man, and a man corrected and disciplined, where he needs it, from will in any form: wisdom more as to what is without, instruction as to what is within, and, he adds, to discern things that differ, words of understanding—perceive and understanding have the same force—to get a discerning mind as to what passes before us specially what is said. But the next passage enlarges the thought—gives the object and character of the teaching which this wisdom involves where it has to be taught. Wisdom, instruction, and discernment were the aim of Solomon's proverbs; but what was its character when a person had to receive it? It was good or wise conduct, righteousness, judgment, and uprightness. You then have the simple and the young specially brought forward; and it was to make them intelligent and up to what was passing, what they had to do with, so as not to be misled. There was the giving the sum of wisdom and instruction, the means of receiving instruction, in conduct righteousness, judgment, and uprightness—not merely a complete system, but learning the things that ought to be ourselves, when needed; and lastly, the simple and young made intelligent and to know what they were about, capable of going through the world, undeceived by it.

The last point noticed here (which is an accessory to the rest, and more of intellectual enjoyment, though of a moral character, than the obligations of wisdom) is the capacity to enter into riddles and dark sayings, which clothe moral truth in a form that gives pungency and power to it, and hides it in forms which, when penetrated, give peculiar point to the relationship in which wisdom stands, give deeper and more interior apprehension of the truth, on the one hand, and more vividness on the other. I take a very easy and familiar instance. The bramble said to the cedar in Lebanon, Give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there came by a wild beast in Lebanon and trod down the bramble. How much more that comes home than a precise statement that the king of Judah was feeble! Proverbs and dark sayings, riddles, parables, all come under this class. Spiritual apprehension is often needed to see their application.

This closes the preface: Solomon now enters on his subject. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” —not of wisdom, but of knowledge. A weighty sentence. All true knowledge, all moral knowledge begins by putting God in His own place. Nothing is right or true without that. For to leave Him out falsifies the position and relationship of all. I may know physical facts and what are called laws (that is, abstractions from uniform facts), but that is all, without it. Not that there are no instituted relationships, for there are, as parents, husband and wife, and others now man is

fallen. But right and wrong refer to each in its place. But not only is the fear of God a motive, which maintains their authority in the heart, but if I leave God out, what has instituted them and given them their authority is wanting. Each stone has its own place in the arch, but if the keystone be wanting, none can keep theirs. Besides, the fear of God is the setting aside of will. How much that works in reference to constituted natural authority, or even mutual obligation, is evident. I cannot even know physical things fully without the fear of God; because causation necessarily comes in. How the fear of God, He being the Creator, effects that is too evident to dwell upon. The chief theory of antiquity, almost universal, (practically, we may say, universal), was, that there was and could be no creation. The only modification, as far as I know, was the production by an unknown monad of a good and an evil cause—the Bactrian and Persian faith, Zoroastrianism. Others got out of the difficulty by emanations. It was impossible for the supreme God, the monad, to have to say to matter: aeons with some, the logos, demons, something like Zoroastrian Feroers; and the logos, with Platonists, were resorted to by others to solve the difficulty for millions. The monad was alone, and while asleep nothing else was; if he woke, creatures appeared, but it was all maya, illusion; when he went to sleep, they disappeared again. The true philosophy was to find it out, have done with creation, and be absorbed into universal spirit or into the one divine spirit. Modifications there might be; for hundreds of millions thought and think matter eternal, and that true philosophy, or true knowledge, is getting delivered from matter and gaining nirvana, that is, being extinguished as a lamp goes out. Is this knowledge? Spirit is far more real than matter. But God was not known nor feared—gods were, perhaps, consequently, but not God; and gods were temporary creatures, like men, and more so, and knowledge there was none. Deliverance was in knowledge—that all things were nothing. Some would make a Buddha above God, some absorb a man into God; all the rest perished or disappeared, for there was nothing really to perish. Is there nothing like this now, when there is not the fear of God? Nothing in the modern doctrine of development of species, which would tell us that all comes from a scarcely traceable worm which has left its mark upon some lower Siberian or Cambrian rock, or its analogous fellow in some more recent system, or a polypus, or a graptolithe; the apparent ancestor of man being a penguin or an ape, for that is seriously the infidel system of some—opposed, indeed, by others equally infidel, by some other speculation, in which definite and permanent species are recognized?

Is this knowledge? No. The reasoning on facts, even without God, even in that which is the legitimate sphere of experimental science, is only the leaving man to the wandering of his own mind, who never will, and never can, know creation without knowing a Creator; that is, without that faith which believes that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and that the things which are seen were not made of the things which do appear. When we turn to moral things and intellectual philosophy, it is evident there can be no knowledge without the fear of God; for then I enter on the sphere of relationships and obligations; and how can I be right, when I leave out the first and principal one? I cannot think of mind and find it sufficient for itself within itself. In point of fact, it has aspirations, and longings, and thoughts of a being above us, power out of our reach, goodness, good and evil—of an end of our being, which is not apparent. If mind cannot suffice for itself, is it to turn to what is below it and exercise merely its powers? If above, what is God what are my relationships with Him? where do they end, how begin? Will they end? I must know God to be at rest. God must have His place. Now, putting God in His true place—that is the fear of God—is the true beginning of all knowledge.

There is here a modification of this. It is the fear of the Lord; that is, it was a known relationship which man had with God, and it is living in that relationship as so known, e.g., putting Him in mind and conscience in His true place as in that revealed relationship. Inconsiderate persons, running wildly after their own will, despise wisdom and instruction, the experience and judgment of mature, experienced mind, or the warning and discipline which may apply to what is not such. But there is a subordinate principle to the fear of the Lord—subjection in these relationships in which He has established authority in the first instance, and immediately over the movements of man's nature: that is, the father and the mother. God has established this as the first and original bond of authority; will is in subjection and honor, obligation, respect, come in. The parent is the source of the path of the child in contrast with his own will. It is not a law to meet and break his will (if he be not willful), but to instruct, form, guide, but with authority; yet as honored by the child and respected, as holding God's place, and with affections which produce willingness instead of will; still it is authority. Here we have, therefore, instruction, guidance by warning, discipline, and even by chastisement (παιδεια). So he is not to forsake the precepts and admonitions of his mother, those early influences which first bend the mind to good. This is a deeply important principle. It is not like marriage first instituted of all. It begins with authority, but authority in relationship of love, the source that forms and fashions as well as controls the character, the name that God takes in highest grace towards us; not a lawgiver, but an authority, but whose word is law, where it is a question between that and our own will.

This closes the positive side or development of good by which the proverbs are introduced. The evil side is next considered. “My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not.” Evil is in the world, deceit, and motives for sin. That which is first put forward here is the desire of wealth, and wrong and violence to obtain it. Corruption and violence are the two characters of sin and fruits of will in a fallen world. Here man is not treated as lost and sinful in his nature; he is under influences, he is of and in this world; he is in the world, but there is a way of wisdom in it. The first influences are supposed to be the true healthy ones of father and mother, and the fear of Jehovah. “Train up a child in the way that it should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” is its language; and as we may every day see the young growing up and getting out of the influences and shelter of the home of their youth—as of the corrupt woman it is said, the guide of her youth—so they are looked at here. It is not the light of the gospel on man's nature and state, but the path of man as brought up in this world—what is the way of wisdom in it. Hence, after the influence of father and mother, we read of sinners enticing. We are reading of influences for good and evil in the world in which we are; the way of wisdom and folly in it. And he begins with the son as under the healthful and divinely ordered influence of the father. Violence is first treated of, induced by the lust of prosperity in this world; but laying wait for blood thus, is laying wait for one's own soul. With this warning and knowing this, the net is laid in the sight of the bird. That is the effect of true instruction. This leads to the warning itself, the display of the net, for all to hear.

Wisdom speaks with the authority of God and aloud, “she uttereth her voice in the streets.” This is an important principle as regards the results of sin. We have seen the parental care of the young to preserve from evil, but in the ways of God there is another testimony—the public warning and call to sinners which wisdom sends forth amongst them. “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the street” —in the concourse of men, to the simple and to the scorner, the guilty yet misled ones, and the open and insulting adversary, and calls them to turn at her reproof, and

proposes to bring forth to them, and lead them into, the full outpouring of the Spirit's teaching and the words of God. It is not here pouring out the Holy Ghost on them: that is quite another thing; but the Spirit of wisdom was there for them, and the words of wisdom to teach and build them up. The expression is remarkable. You have the Spirit and the word, though the former in the sense of its utterances of truth for blessing, poured forth to them. You have the Lord's complaints in Luke 7, where yet wisdom in all her ways is justified of all her children. But it is in vain. Hence, when in the day of desolation and judgment, they will call, but there is no answer. They may fear the judgment, but there was no love to, no submission to, the truth; they will eat the fruit of their own ways. The ease and prosperity and carelessness they have been in will be their ruin. The passage does not go beyond judgment (but God's final judgment) in this world, and that their peace would be the portion of those who hearkened to wisdom. Nor, be it further remarked, is there any reference to grace or its power in renewing or quickening. It is man in this world dealt with in his responsibility.

The next chapter takes us farther. It takes the ground of the son, the subject and obedient soul receiving the words of counsel, and hiding, keeping up within himself the commandments ministered to him, so that he inclines his ear to wisdom, and the heart applies itself to understanding. If more, if she is sought for as invaluable, and searched out as hid treasure, and avowedly and professedly sought after, the result is the apprehending the fear of Jehovah, and arriving at the knowledge of God. Here, therefore, it is not a call to men which we have, but the heart itself seeking for true wisdom as its portion and treasure, and thus the intelligence of relationship with Jehovah and the knowledge of God are obtained. “For Jehovah gives wisdom.” It is not merely that I by man's understanding get wiser, but Jehovah gives true wisdom. It is what He has said, His word, which gives true knowledge and understanding, and he who seeks it will get it. But there is more. He has laid up treasures of wisdom, His own counsels, for the righteous. And surely there are in His word treasures of wisdom and knowledge laid up for those who walk uprightly. Besides, He is their shield, and protects them in their walk. He watches over His own way, it is a divinely-protected way: the paths of judgment, when men walk in God's fear, are kept and protected by Him; and He preserves the way of His saints, for God's way and their way are the same, as Moses said: “Show me now thy way,” and Jehovah was to go with him. This is a great blessing. It may be a wilderness, in which there is no way, but we have God's way in it, and marked by His own presence. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” His word is, Follow me. “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” And then as Moses saw that thus he would practically find grace in God's sight; so here, “then thou shalt understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity,” or rather, uprightness, every good path. Walking uprightly (ver. 7) is consistently with, and in faith of what we know of God (Tohm). What is said of Abraham and of Israel? “Be thou perfect.” Here it is uprightness properly speaking. Walking in God's path before Him, there is the spiritual and growing discernment of what is good and what is upright. This is the positive side, but there is besides this the way in which it guards from evil.

When wisdom enters into the heart, when it forms thus the spirit and mind, and the desires are formed after it, so that it lives in what is good, and it finds this divine knowledge pleasant to the soul, it becomes a discretion which preserves from the evil which is around, and the snares laid for us, keeps watch over us, and discernment shall watch thee, keep thee, as one who watches and keeps, as was said before, the path. That from which they are kept is twofold here: the wickedness of men and corruption.

There is no question of going to join in violence to gain wealth, nor is that, from which we should be kept, the wrong done to us by evil men, but the wisdom and sense of what is right, which the fear of God leads to, keeps us from being led into the path of the wicked man. Wickedness is deceitful; we are apt to get hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We have need to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise—wise concerning that which is good. Restraint of heart which walks in the fear of God, lowliness, for it is the opposite of pride, is guided in judgment and sees God's way in the seemingly bewildered concourse of men and circumstances. It has its own way, and has only to follow it; only it depends on God for it. It is the way of the evil man from which the soul is kept here. The servants of Jehovah are supposed to have a path of uprightness, to a certain degree; so has natural conscience. The evil man has left it.

The other character of evil, from which the discretion of wisdom preserves us, is “the strange woman,” the snares and attractions of corruption. These are the two forms of evil, wickedness, and even violence and wrong, that is, leaving the law and seeking to satisfy one's lusts by violence and corruption. So even before the flood; so on to the last days, when the beast and the false prophet represent these two principles. “The strange woman” departed from both the principles we have seen: the fear of God according to the revelation He had given of Himself, and the ministration of care which gave authority over the early thoughts and a place thereby in holy affections and subjection, “Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.” All are supposed here to have had to say to God, in known relationship, and to be brought up in His ways—to be in the covenant of God's people. Nature and grace, as I have said, are not contemplated, but the ways of a people under covenant and law. The ways of “the strange woman” are death. The language is stronger here than with robbers before, or wicked men just above; they are bad enough, but the way to “the strange woman” is the way of death. It is corrupting, destructive of heart as well as conscience. True affections disappear and are turned into lusts; self-will seeks full gratification where there is not affection at all, instead of another being an object whom we love and esteem, whatever the relationship. It is self in its lowest and most absolute form. All through into Babylon, its last form, “the strange woman” has the judgment of God against her, and the ruin of man written on her forehead for those who can read it.

Chapter 135

Practical Reflections on Proverbs 3-4

The first two chapters of Proverbs complete, as a kind of preface, the exposition of the subject—the true wisdom which keeps from the different forms of evil in this world, from what sin has brought in. The last verses of the second chapter show that it relates to God's government in this world, and supposes relationship with God as Jehovah in Israel—it does not touch on a new nature. In the next two, though there are warnings, we learn more what wisdom is, its judgment on all around. We may first remark, that subjection and obedience first characterize the path of wisdom, and it is in a known relationship in which he is thus guided. “My son, forget not my law; and let thy heart keep my commandments.” (Ver. 1.) But, further, it is when the young man, once led as a child, goes out so as to have his own principles tried, and what governs himself inwardly brought to light. He still is obedient to what he has learned, and so far is in subjection; but it is now his own moral character, and he has to trust God inwardly, not be in the shelter of a paternal home and authority. Oh! how often we see departure here, and fair hopes and lovely blossoming of recipient youth turn to bitter fruits. It is a sad thought to see so many young, in whom the Lord could delight, turn to the way of their own will, and the ways of this corrupt world, fallen and degraded. It is against this these exhortations seek to guard the mind opening to its own responsibilities. Both what is right and deference for those divinely established influences are to be maintained in the soul. And I may remark, however wrong example and the direction given to life may be, yet the wickedest of parents would desire his son to be virtuous; and deference to a parent will be a bright spot in the wildest of sons, and a hopeful influence.

But there is another point of deep interest here before we enter on details—the perfect analogy of the language here with what is historically related of the Lord. Let not grace and truth forsake thee, it is said to the young man. Now “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” He was that, its perfection, which the young man was to seek to keep. It is added, “Thou shalt find favor and acceptance with God and man.” So Christ “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man;” and He was subject to Joseph and His mother. It is deeply interesting to find thus in Christ that which wisdom is sketching out as the divine path of man on the earth. It is thus we shall find, whatever elements of good are scattered up and down in the world, all concentrated in Christ as a man in this world. It is not merely a theoretical doctrine, but to be traced by spiritual insight into the positive unfoldings of good and life in the word. But this is deeply interesting: so in Psa. 89:1, “I will sing of the mercies ‘Chasdim' of Jehovah.” Then in verse 19, “Thou speakest in vision of thy Chesed.” He summed up this mercy or grace (the same as grace in our chapter) in His person. Luke gives us more the man agreeable to God; John that which came amongst men from God. So all through these gospels, though united in His person. These four verses, therefore, comprise the character in which the divine influences of instructive care are to form the incipient path of responsible man. It is not law but character. And this is to be noted.

He now enters into details. (Ver. 5, et seq.) Two paths are before man—to trust God, or himself and his own wisdom for his happiness. This is just what Eve failed in; she did not confide in God, trust in Him and what He had said, for her happiness, but leaned to her own understanding,

thought she should better secure it by doing what she thought would be advantageous. So every sinner: he thinks he can better secure his own happiness in doing his own will than in listening to God. Trust in God is the first positive active principle of life and wisdom; the next is owning Him in our ways, taking His will, authority, as that which is to form them, not our will and wisdom, and that openly. (Ver. 6.) He will surely direct our steps. No human wisdom can guide like that. It way be very cunning—know human nature. But God has a way which He has laid down morally for us—a path of obedience, of righteousness, and of God; and He who has done so orders all things. In the end His judgment will prevail. We may not see it prevail here—thus faith may be exercised; where His direct government is exercised, it will, but always in result. The end of the Lord is sure; heaviness may endure for a night, for a season if needs be; but, for the faithful soul, joy cometh in the morning, a morning near to come. But self-confidence is ruin. Be not wise in thine own eyes. (Ver. 7.) They do not see far if they only see self, and that is what always is in our own eyes. The fear of God, as we have seen, the moral path of His fear, is that on which He waits in goodness, however things may seem, this and departing from all evil. This is something more than walking in His fear—there is an abhorrence of evil, partly in itself, partly as contrary to His will. I may walk in God's fear, do no evil myself, without, I think, being characterized by departing from evil. No doubt, walking rightly is not doing evil. But evil is in the world, and there is, so to speak, a positive character of relationship to it, that is, departing from it, abhorrence of it. Adam, innocent, would have walked uprightly, done nothing wrong; he would not have departed from evil, he had nothing to say to it. I have or may have. I depart from it, leave and break with it. This has to do with holiness. We have seen Jehovah owned by confidence, and in His servant's ways. It requires confidence in Him to guide one's ways by His will. Now we come to another way of owning devotedness of heart, owning all positive good and blessing to come from Him, and manifested in the ready but due offering of a willing heart. Thus blessing is found, temporal blessing. (Ver. 8-10.) It must be remembered that we are always here on the ground of present government in the earth. Higher objects may bring sorrow as regards this world, as it has ever been. Now we can only apply the principle. Peter's Epistles give the degree in which this government applies to Christian standing.

We are ever directed thus to another form of this government—Jehovah chastens those He loves. (Ver. 11.) There is not only a government of the world for external blessing, but a direct personal government which occupies itself with the individual, a most gracious and precious truth. He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous. God deals with us personally for our good— “that we may be partakers of His holiness,” for our profit. It is wonderful grace that He, the High and Holy One, should thus perpetually occupy Himself with us, leading us to the enjoyment of Himself. For He deals according to His own nature and in respect of all that is inconsistent in us with it. The word draws two conclusions from this truth that it is God's love. It will not be without a cause in me; it will never be without love in God. Hence I am not to despise, for there is a cause in me which makes the Holy God of love act so; I am not to faint, for it is His love which does it. It is correcting a son in whom his Father delights. Anything that leads us to wisdom is indeed blessed; we may now say to what Christ is. He is the wisdom of God, as He is the power of God. His word should dwell in us richly in all wisdom. This is really wisdom. The inspired writer here speaks of it as known in detail by the Old-Testament saints. He could not, of course, say they have the mind of Christ, but rays from it flowed down through inspiration, besides the law. That was binding surely. This is the Lord's mind. Happy is the man who finds it, and his thoughts ordered according to understanding,

that is, the communication of God's mind, and not man's will. In verses 14, 15 He compares her to earthly treasures, yet blessing even in this world accompanies it; but more than outward blessing; it is a path of quietness and peace of spirit, cheerfulness of heart, because there is nothing on the conscience, and the heart is able to enjoy, no unsatisfied desires, but free affections; no restless will, but the sense of divine favor. Through this communion with God, she is a tree of life to those who lay hold on her. The two words here used go farther than verse 13; there she was even as a sought treasure, here held fast as what the soul kept, valued, and was kept in. It is the abiding and purposed mind of the soul, as Barnabas exhorted them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. It is not only, “I have suffered the loss of all things,” with the apostle, but “I do count them.” The knowledge of this wisdom (there fully, for it was Christ, and Christ in glory) had possessed him, the rest so as nothing. He held fast and retained it. Note this applies to an abiding character, as well as keeping it so as not finally to lose it. But that which is known in subjection in the creature is displayed in power in the ways of God. By wisdom He founded the earth; it was the thoughtful plan of ordered wisdom: in its place, the expression of His mind and will of His thoughts, not the fruit, as our efforts may be, of a careless will, or, at any rate, one that does not know the end from the beginning, but the perfect ordering of One who did, and who ordered it for the purpose of His wisdom. And here it is Christ comes so fully in. For even this visible world was created for Him to be the heir of it, to be heir of it moreover in the nature of one of His creatures (not the first and highest as a creature, but one for whom the earth was created, as its head, and he set as God's image in it, yet proving himself a mere creature in the fall), to be heir of it moreover by redemption, in which all that God is should be displayed, though He went down to the lower parts of the earth in perfect subjection. All things were created by Him and for Him. The wisdom of God and the power of God are displayed in Christ. He is the firstborn of every creature, for by Him were all things created. All centers in Him, as by Him all things were. Now when we obey and walk in the mind and word of God, we are put in the path which this infinite and all-comprehending wisdom has arranged. No creature without a will gets out of it: will only departs from it. God does not reveal as in the scope of our minds, because we should not be in our place in it. It is the simple reception of His word which gives our place and duty according to the perfect wisdom which has ordered and comprehends it all. Yet by the Holy Ghost there is in the gospel a communication of the mind and purpose of God. He has made known to us the mystery of His will: hence it is said, “Who hath been his counselor; or, who hath known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” “He of God is made unto us wisdom,” wisdom as to where we are, wisdom in making us know God, wisdom in making us fear Him and showing the perfect path of subject wisdom in Christ, the purpose of wisdom in His glory, gathering all things into one, the image of the invisible God. And, more than all this, it is a wonderful thing to say “we have the mind of Christ,” when Christ is the wisdom of God.

But this wisdom was shown in the structure of natural creation: only it is impossible to separate one part from His whole purpose. The highest part of it was in purpose before the world, is now out of it, and will be most completely fulfilled when this world is over: only this is the scene where it has been displayed—what the angels desire to look into. The Church is the great sphere of its display, the central sphere where God dwells. But in creation the mightiest and the smallest things are alike the fruit of it. The earth itself, the mighty deep and the breaking up of its fountains, and the small dew that refreshes the tender grass, all come from His hand, all are the fruit of His wisdom.

We have in the Lord here—wisdom, discernment, and knowledge. (Ver. 19, 20.) Then the young man (the son of wisdom) is to keep counsel, a new word, and prudence: the last we have had at the end of chapter 1:4. It shall be comeliness even in the eyes of others, as well as life inwardly, that is, the power and enjoyment of life in the soul. It shall make us walk safely and not stumble in the way; it is the daylight of which the Lord speaks, the path of God where God is (compare John 11:9, 1.0; Phil. 4:8, 9); and when we lie down, it shall be in felt safety and peace. This leads to another point—the way in which, so walking, confidence in the Lord is maintained in the heart. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.” A stranger from God in this world, the power of evil is in the world; and fear accompanies, for the spirit of man, its unknown course and the secret power that guides it. Walking in holy subjection before God, which is our wisdom, we can confide in Him, who is over all, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground. It is not that we know what is coming, but that we know that the Lord is there, who rules and orders all. Nothing happens for us: God's hand is in everything; and we confide in Him. Indeed everything will work together for good. At any rate, we confide in Him. But wisdom is generous and considerate, for selfishness is destroyed, and it acts in simplicity and unaffectedness, for this is always the effect of the presence of God on the soul. It is ready to give, and does not pretend willingness when it can and does not. Simplicity is a great trait of walking in the presence of God. There is no seeking, moreover, to exercise a power which gives or shows superiority; no spirit of mischief or wrong, nor jealousy of others are in that position; the spirit of peace and quietness is in the heart of him who walks with God. He is happy in himself, and is not restlessly striving for it in this world. A wrong way may exalt a man in a world of evil. It is not the way of peace. It cannot be approved of the Lord. I may not see the issue of it (God has revealed it to us in Christ; the day of the Lord of hosts is on everything that is high and lifted up), but I do know it is not the path of a soul subject to God, where peace is; and the desires that awaken it are checked by His presence and true wisdom of heart which looks to Him. Scorn from Him shall be the portion of those that scorn; they shall be ashamed of their portion and of their pretensions, of that folly which did not make its account of God. But grace, present favor from His hand, is the portion of the lowly; and the wise, when He exerciseth strength, shall inherit glory.

Chapter 4. We have now especially the source of instruction, and while kept as knowing from whom it has been learned. Though here it is natural care, but according to divine order as to Abraham, seeing he will command his children and his household after him, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him. The Proverbs are on this ground adding the responsibility of the hearer and the resulting judgment of God. The affections of the parental teacher were fully known and response looked for in the obedience of the child. It is not law, but wisdom and wisdom's commandments, good doctrine, understanding. There is responsibility, commandment, and counsel; divine wisdom as to our path, followed in obedience, but not law. It is divine knowledge in the midst of evil, which the law is not, but forbids all evil. It is Abrahamic, not Mosaic, though a child of Abraham would keep the law if under it. This is important to remark. The law is, in every sense, by the bye, though a perfect rule for man in flesh. God founded the earth by wisdom, not by law. It is a far larger thing—the whole mind of God—for us learned in subjection in the subjective relationship of nature, which God uses as a means. It was as so taught to be retained in the heart; it was to be discovered, attained; this could not be said of law. There was nothing to discover. They were then neither to forget nor decline from it. (Ver. 5.)

Chapter 136

Practical Reflections on Proverbs 4

We have something more than the affection of the heart for that which is come from God, and in this way of affectionate instruction, that is, keeping the words of this instruction, retaining the commandments of parental wisdom, and living. There is something very striking in the likeness of the language here to the language of Christ in the New Testament. The Sermon on the Mount is just the sayings of wisdom that are to be kept. So the Lord says, “He that keepeth my sayings shall never see death.” “If my words abide in you,” says Christ. “He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” There is more than that in Christ; but He takes the place of wisdom in all He says. There was a person and source of grace, One in whom in subjection these words were filled, and whose words when He spake were the absolute expression of what He was. Still the analogy between the language of Proverbs and Christ's words is striking. He walked in the daylight of God's will—in the day and did not stumble. So here he who follows wisdom will not stumble. Hence “wisdom is the principal thing.” It is really “life,” the path of life. Power as displayed in bringing in night in the world is not come yet, it will. Our path now is wisdom, the mind of God good, in the midst of evil—not that which puts evil away (that, as to the state of things, is Christ when He shall appear), the will of God good, in the midst of a world departed from Him—subjection and the consciousness that it is riot by the coming in of displayed power, but the walking, in spite of evil, in His paths.

Then, as I have remarked, it is not the child kept authoritatively in the paths of good, but the pressing in the love that, in his own heart as a responsible person, he should cleave to the good he had learned—take this wisdom as an object of his own heart and delight, exalt it, cleave to it. It is the way of life, grace, and glory. Two things flow from it—no straitening of the ways, no stumbling of the feet. Some seen in haste to go forward necessarily, because wisdom is light and guidance. We shall not be straitened and in perplexity in our path, not knowing which way to go, because wisdom, God's discerned will and mind, tells us. There is a voice behind us saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” And our goings are held up in God's ways. For in the path of divine wisdom there is nothing to stumble over. This is a great mercy. The heart is at large in walking, and the feet safe in the way. We must bear in mind that the rejection of Christ has in an external sense modified this, though the fire was indeed before already kindled. It is, as regards the flesh, for man's natural heart, a strait gate and a narrow way. The spirit is at large and free in it, truly and wholly so; but when the will and human passions are at work, it is strait and narrow. Hence for man's heart, as such. it is represented. We should need no way, were evil not here. Adam had no need of a way. In heaven we shall have no need of one, but through the world and wilderness we have one. And there is but one—the way of wisdom, Christ, the heart-guided of God Himself in the conduct that flows from Him and suits Him in a world of evil, of which path of wisdom Christ is the perfect expression in His own person; and with this is God's government (not yet outwardly displayed), so that it leads only to the cross, yet has His blessing, He making everything work together for good to those that love Him, and, if it do bring the cross, giving a heavenly crown as the blessed result. All this is clearer for us now, of course, still in substance the way of wisdom was

ever the same. It was always the path of life, a divinely marked way since evil came into the world.

From verse 14 we have the contrast. There is a positive part of wickedness, of self-will, that seeks this world. Into that he that fears God is not to enter at all. It too is a marked way. The way depicted in its full fruits, but it is the way of man's will. It is the way of hatred. They love to make others fall. It is a dreadful thing. But it is the sign of power, and malice is in the heart. The mischief inflicted on others is a sign of their comparative powerlessness. But the path of the just has fruit, leads on to something beyond, of which it is the way. There is no fruit in the ways of the wicked, but present gratification in wickedness. It is a departure from the place of peace and blessing, from God, and then self-will gratifying itself. It ends in death, but it is the way, not the end, which is judged here.

But there is a way which comes from God, a spirit and mind from Him, in which the just walks in the midst of evil, though here viewed practically and as from without. And though we have it here as guidance in the midst of darkness, and it is simple obedience of heart to God's directions, in the abnegation of will, yet it is of God and leads on to Him, to the perfect day. It is His path, though for a man (hence perfect in Christ all the way), and clothed as to circumstances in the path of this world, yet His way in it; and it issues in what it is in itself, and in its source, the perfect day. It is a beautiful image, for the dawn is from and in itself perfect light; but it is, so to speak, making its way through the darkness, but it issues in perfect day. So this path, coming from God and in which man owns his relationship to God and all to whom God has placed him in relationship, according to His will and in subjection—it issues in the full light of the relationship itself. In Christ we have the perfect expression of it—come from God, walking as man perfectly according to God in the midst of evil. He ends in glory as man, Himself indeed light all along the way, and forming the path of wisdom in the world. He that follows Him does not walk in darkness, but has the light of life. Christ Himself contrasts the way of the wicked with that of wisdom in the language almost of this passage. Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." (John 12:35.) This as regards others believing in Himself: as regards His own path doing the will of His Father, see chapter 11:9, 10. And note in this last passage, He looks for light in Him: it is not in the wicked, and the world is always in darkness; so is it not with him that has Christ—God in man as light, as wisdom of man in this world, the light of life.

The rest of the chapter (ver. 20-27) is urgent exhortation. The ear must be attentive, the eye fixed on them, in the midst of the heart, the center and spring of walk, they must ever be kept. And this is indeed what is needed, as indeed it is urged; "keep thy heart with diligence for out of it are the issues of life." All goes well if that source of thought and object is filled with the word of God. Christ's words must abide in us, the heart's affections be formed in and by them, and we shall find the truth in good as in evil of the saying, mine eye affecteth my heart. There is power in the word and revealed wisdom of God for the renewed man (not to speak of its being the instrument by which we are begotten of God) to lay hold on heart and conscience, and to fix the mind of the inner man with formative power. It produces good in us: we live by it, we are changed into the image of what we contemplate. "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." It is the way of life, and health, and freeness of heart to the whole man.

But we have to deal with evil (here the ways of evil for the Old Testament does not deal with old and new man, that supposes knowledge of Christ) in ourselves. “A froward mouth and perverse lips” are to be put away. He that governs his tongue, the same is a perfect man, able also to govern his whole body. It is the first index of the will and passion of man unsubdued, or of his having perfect rule over himself. This we must put away, not only following evil. (Comp. Col. 3)

Next, singleness of eye as to the object we pursue. If the path is strait, it is also straight, and, looking right on, there is energy in following. “This one thing I do” —consequent purity of affection; we are morally what we love and think of as an object. It is our φρ■νημα, our mind. There is not a distraction nor a setting of the mind on vanity, and so a shutting out of what is holy and good, and a coming in of what is beside Christ but God is obscured, His love and light hidden, if not doubted of, communion gone, the free peace of a holy heart—the power of evil is felt. It lies at the heart—not so easy to get it out, though grace does it. It is not faith which is at work—the new man in the things which belong to it, but the conscience making us feel we have wronged the love and favor we enjoy.

But further, we have to ponder the path of our feet. A careless imprudent walk is not the fear of God. It is carelessness about God who has given us a path of wisdom in which our steps can go. “And let all thy ways be established.” (Comp. Psa. 19:5, the same word.) It is exhortation, but I think exhortation to secure the fruit of the first part of the verse. We are not driven about by influences or distractions. There is firmness in our path, because it is a known one. It is not blown about by winds of doctrine, or counsels taken not as wisdom but because we do not know what to do—the influence of the world. There is firmness of purpose. God's mind and God's will command the judgment, the heart, and the ways. There is not counsel with flesh and blood. It is the simple settled intention of doing God's will as a delight and obligation both. It is then pondered before God to find His will in the particular case, and the feet guided. But it is a settled thing with the heart to walk in God's way. It may have to ponder and seek from Him what it is, but as it only seeks that, it waits till that is discovered, and then all is clear. There is no uncertainty of purpose, nor distraction of will or motive, where God's will is discovered. There is one straight path, nor is there then any turning to the right or the left. It is sufficient that God's will has been found.

Chapter 137

Practical Reflections on Proverbs 5

The fifth chapter takes up the question of purity in our ways, as that of violence had been already spoken of. We have divinely ordered relationships and affections, instead of lusts and self-gratification in sin. How great the difference! Nothing degrades the heart and understanding like corrupt lusts. No doubt violence is bad enough, but it does not degrade within, does not pollute and destroy the spring of affections, but corrupt lusts do. That which would have been affection for another becomes corrupt heartlessness.

Two things are looked for from the heart of the young man, attention and subjection. Wisdom and discernment are in him who teaches, the father, who has a divinely given place of authority and intelligence in his claim, clothed in affection, over the heart and ears of the child. It is not commandment, as of an infant, but, as we saw at the beginning, the divinely ordered but acquired influence of the parent over the moral affections of the son. It is authority, but authority in counsel. “Attend unto my wisdom,” and be subject to my discernment, i.e., of what is right. The effect is preserving moral acuteness, being of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord (not “regard” but keep)—this quickness of moral perception. The lips are the expression of the heart, its index. The heart would be in such order, and the will so subdued, that what came from the mouth would be the expression of knowledge. It is saying much.

The character of the woman is here (ver. 3) “a strange woman.” “Strange” is a word a good deal used and important. All gods not Jehovah are strange gods; fire not from the altar was strange fire. It is that which does not belong to us, not in the divinely given relationship in which we are or the thing spoken of stands. Any but Jehovah was a stranger; any but the consecrated fire was strange; any but the shepherd even was a stranger. God made them male and female, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,” the utmost intimacy of relationship as belonging to him: the expression of that was right. This was mere corrupt lust; the woman, a stranger to this divinely formed relationship. It spent the nature and heart and ended in death. The heart, allured by evil, is turned into another channel, from pondering “the path of life,” following the path of lust to death. What is right is not weighed in the soul. The special warning (ver. 8) is withdrawal, not coming near the door of her house; living away in another scene of thought and being where will does not go in the path of lust, nor lust have occasion to seize bold of the will. Disaster and ruin follow in that path; but on that I need not insist. It is a giving up of self and self-government to fruitless sin. Hence what he recalls when ruined is not that he had not followed in a right way, but that will had been at work and warning despised. He had hated being set right, the exercise of moral discipline and just chastening, what arrested His will morally or even externally. There was the will which did not like to be checked, and the pride of heart which slighted corrective warnings. There was no obedience; he did not listen; no inclining the ear to that influence morally above us, which we have seen spoken of. It is to be noticed how this letting loose of the will and refusal to listen led or let loose to all iniquity and evil. The evil too, as it was reckless, was shameful. He was all but in every evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly. (Ver. 14.) He was almost as bad as Zimri, the son of Salu. But what takes away the heart takes away shame, and puts the effrontery of evil into

the will.

The verses which follow (ver. 15, &c.) look at corruption in another character—the breach of the relationship divinely formed. What preceded has judged the will, let loose in corruption, and shown its debasing influence, and now cast out all good in the heart and made selfishness the rule of life. Here it is another aspect of good and evil. The father insists on the close maintenance of the relationship itself as contrasted with the breach of it. God has formed it on a bond and center of affections. And even in human affections it is a great thing to have a center, so that the heart is united in itself there; and it is affection in righteousness according to God's mind, so as that conscience does not war against the heart and make it evil and will, but God's authority and creative will put its sanction on it, so that His blessing can be enjoyed in it. Every way due and right affection is thus in the heart. We may go out in expansive kindness to objects of it—all right; but here affections are centered; and there is a bond; and duty puts its seal on it. But if the heart thus has its center in a help-meet for it, where it was not good according to creation to be alone, man was formed to be a center; and this was through his children. He multiplies himself. With illegitimate love this evidently cannot be; but living in his family (the first circle of divine order, formed by God Himself in paradise), drinking waters out of his own cistern—the concentration of affection by which it is his own, his fountains are dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. That is, he is fully represented by his children, and has his importance everywhere through them. He is dispersed abroad in them. But there is unity in the whole family thus. His fountain is his own; that is, the whole family circle in its source. Fountain is so used in the Hebrew scriptures, as the fountain of Jacob.

But there is more than lust, and due affections, and the healthfulness of divine order in man as formed by God. Man walks in God's sight: He is the avenger of all breaches and wrong in that order. But we may remark here that the reference is to the government of God. God observes it; and he reaps the consequence. It is something of Elihu's statement in Job. His own sins bring him into sorrow and misery; he eats the fruit of his ways. God is not mocked. What man sows he reaps; and this remains. It is not doubtless directly applied, as in God's government in Israel. Still God orders all things; and though the world, as Job justly reasoned, was not an adequate witness of His judgment of good and evil, yet He has so ordered things that sin bears its fruits—man sows to the flesh and reaps corruption. But, further, he is deprived of all intelligence of the ways of God, and, following this, dies in darkness. And his life is a life of error. He shall go on from one folly to another, repeating and multiplying his departure from the one way of divine wisdom. There is one thing, I think, very striking—how much more, when wisdom is occupied with the government of this world, or governing a man's ways in it, it has to dwell on evil than on good. It is a sad thought, but so it is.

Chapter 138

Practical Reflections on Proverbs 6

Two great principles of life are stated in the beginning of this chapter: not to engage oneself for the future, and not to be lazy and indolent for the present. God has set us in this place, bumble diligence as a duty now—His ordinance since the fall. “In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread.” “If a man will not work, neither let him eat.” On the other hand, engaging for the future is that, the result of which no man can command. The contrary of peaceful labor for one's need is the violence and rapine already spoken of and condemned as one of the two great characters of sin, at least as towards men. The other is, besides wrong, defrauding a brother in the tenderest point, sinning against oneself in corruption and lust— “one's own body,” as Paul speaks: all surely evil withal in God's sight. If a man has engaged himself, he is not to slight of course his engagement, but to take it as a present obligation; but if he would be free, go and get the person he is pledged for to discharge it at once. Otherwise we are in a way we cannot control in the hands of others, so as not to be free to serve God's will, and perhaps to meet an unknown result though under obligation to do so. Christians will find this rule of immense importance for the quiet and peacefulness of their lives, and the violation of it sorrow and trouble of heart. Indolence and laziness carry their own judgment with them, as every one has seen, poverty will come as one that travelleth.

It is remarkable to see the Spirit of God so graciously descend to their details, in the way of practical wisdom, and the results that flow from conduct in this world, but on which so much depends of the peacefulness of the spirit in our path. There are warnings as to oneself.

What follows describes the perverseness of the wicked man, the man of Belial, the man who is void of God in his mind and follows vanity consequently. In every moment he is at mischief: His eyes, his feet, his fingers, all seem to carry on mischief. Perverseness is in his heart: so it works, through all that he can signify anything with; he devises mischief continually, causing discord amongst others—a sad picture. But we cannot but feel how we are occupied with evil here, for we are in an evil world, and our path is through it. Only I have to learn it thus in the word by faith, and not in the practice of it, or by familiarity with the practice of it in the world. But judgment comes on such. He is unexpectedly destroyed without remedy. He has been occupied with evil; there remains but judgment. ‘Judgment' here is the instruction of Proverbs; and surely, though there is not a direct government by it, so it is continually in the world even now. The character of the man of Belial and vanity is then described in the traits which the Lord hates.

Psalm 102

A wonderful psalm is this which has for its subject the intercourse held between the Messiah, our Lord, and God. It tells us what occupied His heart in view of being cut off and having nothing, according to the prediction of Dan. 9:26, even the visitation of Zion by Jehovah in mercy; just as John 17 admits us, through His intercourse with the Father there recorded, to an understanding of His desire for His disciples then present, and for all who should believe on Him through their word. And though probably no human ear heard the outpourings of His heart to Jehovah in the words of this psalm, yet as the cry of Psa. 22:1 was really uttered by Him, we may rest assured that the Spirit has here revealed what He felt, and what He made known to Jehovah, together with the wonderful answer vouchsafed Him. Very different is the character of the communication in John 17 from this in the psalm. There it is the Son about to leave the world, and to return to the Father, caring for His own who were in it, who had received Him, and through Him the Father here it is Messiah, about to be cut off, thinking o Jerusalem so soon to be rightly described as the city where their Lord was crucified. As Son of God H speaks of the future before Him—the glory; as man Messiah, rejected by the people, about to be crucified He speaks of the future before Him—death. But another feature is introduced in the psalm which we have not in John—the answer of God to the afflicted One, declaring who He is.

It is a wonderful psalm also, if we take into account the period of time it embraces. Commencing from before the time when the foundations of the heavens and the earth were laid, it reaches on to the establishment of Zion, when the Lord shall reign, and yet it does not travel beyond the limits of the life of the One who here as man asks God to hear Him. Of whom then could it speak but of One? For which of the sons of Adam had a past existence before time began, although all will have a future existence when time shall end, except the woman's Seed? Living between the time of His humiliation, when He passed through what is here described (ver. 3-11), and the day of His glory we may read it, and, by the light which Heb. 1:10 sheds upon it, find subjects for wonder and praise. But we must admit that the circumstances in view of which it was written, and inserted in the Book of Psalms, are still future. “The time to favor Zion, yea the set time,” has not yet arrived; nor can any past event in connection with Jerusalem satisfy the terms employed, however men may try to explain them of the restoration under Cyrus. The set time contemplated in the psalm is yet future. So this prayer of the afflicted has its place in book iv., which, commencing with Psa. 90, and ending with Psa. 106, is chiefly occupied with the reign of Jehovah over the earth in power, when His throne will be established in Zion (99:2), and the earthly people of God with creation will welcome with acclamation the king. (95 - 98) And as other psalms which speak of His humiliation - e.g., 22, 69—follow those which tell of the glory that comes after (21 - 68), so it is here; the celebration of the kingdom set up in power, with the king's method of government (101), precedes the one which tells of His having just been cut off and having nothing. (See 93 - 101)

Let us now examine it a little more closely. It has a title— “A prayer of the afflicted one when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.” We have prayers of David, 17, 86, 142; and a prayer of Moses, &c. Here is a prayer of the afflicted One, greater than Moses, yet the

Son of David, of whom Moses and David prophesied, the Mediator and King of Israel. What comfort will it be to godly souls among the remnant to find One who has been in trouble likewise, and whose expression of it describes their condition and circumstances, though they may not exhaust the meaning of His words! Are they well nigh overwhelmed and think some strange thing has happened to them? This One has been quite overwhelmed. Does death stare them in the face? He has known what this is, yet never once failed to look to God, nor gave up cherishing God's thoughts about that center on earth so dear to them and to Him. And this prayer tells of a time when it will be made apparent that the Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death. Surely in this they will find consolation that the groan of the prisoner, the cry of the afflicted, can pierce the very heavens, and reach His ears even in the height of His sanctuary.

Beginning with a request to be heard by Jehovah because in trouble, desiring that His face should not be turned aside from Him, and asking for a speedy answer, the afflicted One proceeds to describe His condition which called out His prayer: “For my days have been consumed as smoke, and my bones have been burned as an hearth. My heart has been smitten and withered like grass, for I have forgotten to eat my bread. Because of the voice of my groaning my bone has cleaved to my flesh. I have resembled a pelican of the wilderness, I have been as an owl of desert places. I have watched and have been as a sparrow alone on the roof. All the day mine enemies have reproached me, and they that are mad against me have sworn by me [i.e., made me the formula of imprecation]; for I have eaten ashes like bread, and I have mingled my drink with my weeping; because of thine indignation and thy wrath, for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.” Such was the condition in life He had been and was still in; now the hour for His departure draws nigh. Hence there is a marked change in the language, which the Authorized.

Version fails to show. “My days are like a shadow stretched out,” near their end. What then can He look forward to? “And I shall be withered like grass.” Cut off as man, this is what as man He looks forward to. But what of Jerusalem? Is Zion never to be restored? Are the promises never to be made good? Messiah may die, wither as grass; but Jehovah remains the same. He lives forever. His very name implies that. So He contrasts what is before Him with the eternal existence of Jehovah. “I shall be cut off as grass. But thou Jehovah shalt abide forever.” (Is there not an intentional paronomasia, or play on words, here in the use of ■■■■■ in verse 11, and ■■■■■■ in verse 12?) “And thy memorial,” as God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, “to all generations.” (Ex. 3:15.) Hence the future of Zion is secured. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will make good His word, for He, the self-existing One, can never pass away.

This leads to the other subject of the psalm—the showing mercy to Zion which, as placed in the book, is looked on as close at hand; the present interval during which Zion is disowned being passed over, so that the time of Messiah's humiliation, and the day of Jerusalem's joy are closely connected. “Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.” Had He not made atonement, the time to favor her could never have come. Having accomplished that, when He died on the cross, the ground has been prepared for God's favor to be shown her. And here we are transported by the language of the Psalm to the coming days of Israel's blessedness. The time has come. What makes known that it has arrived? “Thy servants have taken pleasure in her stones, and they favor her dust.” The watchman, the Lord Jesus, according to Isaiah, will sit on her walls to cry for this (Isa. 62:6) has appeared, and will give

Jehovah no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Then, looking forward to the consequences that must ensue from Zion being favored, the psalmist proceeds: “And Gentiles shall fear the name of Jehovah, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. For Jehovah hath builded Zion, he has been seen in his glory. He has turned to the prayer of the desolate, and has not despised their prayer.” Such is the simple statement of the Hebrew, which gives a more consistent interpretation of the idea intended to be conveyed than the Authorized Version presents. It is true what is there said: “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the desolate, and not despise their prayer;” but this is not the truth intended to be conveyed in this place. Verses 16, 17 are the direct cause of what is stated in verse 15. The Gentiles will fear His name, for they will see He has built up that city they wished to destroy, and that He is the friend of the destitute whom they have desired to cut off. And all kings shall fear His glory, because it has been displayed. It is as king the Lord will destroy His enemies as David did before He reigns Solomon-like as Prince of Peace. But when He first comes to oppose the nations at Jerusalem, His glory will be displayed. Hence the heathen will fear Him when they see He has interposed in behalf of Zion.

But not alone shall the Gentiles fear the Lord; for the people created in the day of His power shall know what He has done, and praise Jab. (Ver. 18.) These doings which call forth their praise of the victorious One, who has interposed on behalf of Zion, His people, are next recounted in verses 19-22. “For he has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, Jehovah from heaven has looked to the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare in Zion the name of the Lord and praise in Jerusalem; when peoples are gathered together, and kingdoms, to serve Jehovah.”

Such being the events which will take place because Jehovah abides forever, and His promises cannot fail to be made good, though Messiah as man be cut off, who is this One who thus speaks as being like the grass which withers away? To this the remainder of the psalm is devoted. “He has weakened my strength in the way, He has shortened my days,” He could say: and He adds, “I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days. Thy years are throughout all generations.” Then comes the answer. He who has cried to God as man is Himself Jehovah the Creator. “Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.” Can He then perish? He may, and surely must, die as man according to the counsels of God; but time can make no change to Him. His works may perish, and grow old. “They shall perish, but thou shalt stand; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall pass away. But thou art the same [lit. thyself] and thy years shall not be finished.” Cut off in the midst of His days as man, when only half the allotted period to man on earth has been passed through by Him, He, is found to be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, the first and the last. He is the Ancient of days. Before time was counted, He was. When it shall end, His years shall not be finished.

And just one more revelation completes the subject of the psalm. Shall He abide forever alone? The answer is given: “The children of thy servants shall abide, and their seed shall be established before thee.” What a bright ending to such a dark beginning! I shall be withered like grass, He had said. His years shall never end, is the answer to Him. And more, Jerusalem shall be built, and the heathen fear God, and the children of Messiah's servants shall abide. Appointed to death they might have thought themselves; but they shall abide, and, as an earthly people, inheriting earthly

promises, the provision is annexed of a permanence for their offspring, and that before Him in whose presence alone can true blessing be found, for “their seed shall be established before thee.” C. E. S.

Chapter 140

Psalm 17

This and Psa. 16 give us two great principles of divine life—trust and conscious righteousness. We find them running all through the psalms, and any godly person's life, as well as that of the Jew. But it is worthy of remark that it does not give the foundation fully on which we stand; according to the New Testament our position is different. You do not find in it the foundation of God's righteousness at this time. Souls in the condition of having divine life, but not knowing their standing in divine righteousness, find the suitability of the psalms to their experience. Psa. 16 is the first that brings in Christ's own experience: for the first time here He takes His place in humiliation amongst them. Psa. 2 and 8 are prophetic of Him as King and as Son of man. In Psa. 16 He is taking His own place amongst these excellent of the earth. The first characteristic of the divine life is Christ putting His trust in Jehovah; as a man He does it. Hence in Luke, where we see Him more as a man, we see Him praying, the true expression of dependence. “Preserve me O God,” &c.; there is the principle of trust.

Then another principle of divine life is the consciousness of integrity. In Peter there was the same when he said, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” There may be both these things—trust in God and consciousness of integrity—without peace with God. Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him;” and he pleaded his own righteousness against God—“Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me.” He had the consciousness of sin and the sense of righteousness, integrity in himself, at the same time. The soul cannot be at peace in this state. Job was entirely wrong in making a righteousness of his integrity; his friends thought him a hypocrite, but he had the distinct consciousness of not being one. This second principle you have in Psa. 17 God stays up the souls that are trusting in Him until they see Christ. Having got a promise they trust, but cannot say, I have the righteousness of God. Christ having taken up their condition and borne it, they have the consciousness of integrity through Him, and it is the stay of their souls, but not peace. What a stay it is to find one's feelings expressed in Scripture! Should not I cry out of the depths? You say, I find it in Scripture, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee.” The word of God gives expression to certain thoughts and feelings; they are in the word. A person taking up Psa. 88, expressing entire darkness under the curse of the law, may say, If one saint has been in that state, another may be, and so I may be a saint after all, and get comfort in that way, by the sanction of the word. There is not peace in this, but it is a prop and stay to the soul.

This applies to the remnant surrounded by their enemies, as we see here. (Psa. 17) We have spiritual enemies. Here is the reality of enemies pressing round Christ. Thousands of hearts will be found trusting in God, come what will, and have the consciousness of integrity, Christ having put Himself in the very place, and they will find every imperfectly formed feeling has been perfectly expressed by Him. In the perfect unconsciousness of sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He has come into all the trial, and given expression to it. (He has borne the sin, too.) There is another thing in the Psalms—mercy always going before righteousness; and they never meet till Christ appears at the end to the remnant. I cannot say righteousness and peace have kissed each other until I know the perfectness of redemption. I may get hope, but I cannot have peace until I get righteousness. It

may be said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed,” &c., when Christ comes again (this for the Jew). A Jew under law would put righteousness before mercy; this is the law, and Israel never stood on that ground. They had made the golden calf before the law was given to them. Then God retires into His own sovereignty, and, to spare any, mercy comes in. It was the resource of God when wickedness came in. They were going about to establish their own righteousness—would not have Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness; and when they come back, it will be on the ground of mercy and hope. How many Christians are on this ground, instead of in the certainty of possessing righteousness! It is mercy and hope, instead of righteousness, the ground of hope. They think of the throne of mercy, and promises coming out to help them, not being founded on righteousness. Of course, they could not be saved without it; but the state of their souls is that they have not got into it.

We are not like them who refuse to believe till they have seen Him: we have the end of our faith now, even the salvation of our souls. We know that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Christ is gone into the holy place, and the Holy Ghost has come out, to us the proof of it, and we are certain of the reception of Christ within, and of the accomplishment of divine righteousness. “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified ill his sight,” &c. (Rom. 3:20.) “But,” it is said, “in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.” It is not `shall' to us, but “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” God had been forbearing in mercy with the Old-Testament saints, because He knew what He was going to bring in. Now it is declared—it was not declared then. “Not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by the Holy Ghost sent. down from heaven,” — “to declare at this time his righteousness,” — “being fully persuaded that what he had spoken he was able to perform.” I do not simply believe that God is able, but that He has raised up His Son from the dead. One may trust He will help, but not be conscious of being helped yet; this was the patriarch's portion. But I do not expect Him to do it, but know that he has done it. It is “the ministration of righteousness.” I am not merely hoping in His mercy to do something for me to stay me up; but, besides this trust and consciousness of integrity in the heart, there is the knowledge of accomplished righteousness: righteousness is declared. They could not judge sin in the same way when they had not righteousness as a settled question, which it now is forever. The Spirit of God now demonstrates righteousness to the world by setting Christ at God's right hand. Christ said, “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;” and God says to Him, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” And as regards the believer, righteousness is on the right hand of God for him. The affections ought to be more lively, now there is the certainty of accomplished righteousness, than when there was only the hope. The Spirit of adoption is given us: we can cry “Abba, Father.”

But, note, there is another sense connected with righteousness here—mercy going before righteousness, but righteousness appealed to on the ground of promises: the soul in the lowest depth of feeling. (Psa. 42) “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts;” “Out of the depths have I cried,” &c.; “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps,” is in quite a natural kind of experience. There is either the sense of hope in His mercy, or consciousness of sins: when thinking of the mercy, trusting in God; when under the sense of sin, down in the depths. This is not having the sense of everlasting righteousness brought in. All these exercises of soul being expressed, giving warrant, as it were, to these experiences of heart. It will give comfort,

when down in the depths, to know that One has none down into the depths for him; the soul will find Christ has traced all the way for him. The Spirit of God in Him, going through all these things for us, shows that not one place, from the dust of death to the highest place in glory, but He has been in for us, sins and all having been gone under. The feeblest Christian now knows more than the apostles could when Christ was on earth. Should we be surprised at His speaking of the cross and His rising again? The Holy Ghost has shown it to us. We feed upon that which frightened them— “Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood,” &c. What frightened them was a dead Christ; they fled from it when they saw it in the distance. When once founded on righteousness, it is different. How sad to see a saint crouching on the other side of divine righteousness, instead of having on the “helmet of salvation,” having communion with Him in the efficacy of His death!

There is another thing to mark in these two Psalms: the character of hope flowing through them, now we tread in this path of life. What was the trust Christ had? He trusted in the goodness, in the infallible love of God. He delighted in communion with His Father; it was the spring of His joy. With us it is the same thing, though mixed up with all sorts of things. What did He delight in? In God Himself. Then as to righteousness, what was that? (See end of Psa. 17) In Psa. 16, where we see Him trusting in God's love, what is the consequence? reward in glory? Not a bit; but, “In thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand,” &c. In Psa. 17, glory is looked for as the crown for a faithful walk. “I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness.” Christ looked to return to the glory He had left from the path of humiliation down here: the reward for it would be glory as a crown. This applies to us: when we see Him, we shall be like Him. The highest and most blessed thing is to be with Him in the Father's house; this will be infinite, unspeakable joy; but there will also be the crowning with glory and honor. Paul speaks of this: “The crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day, and not to me only, but also to all them that love his appearing.” But his brightest hope was to win Christ. As the reward of walking with Him in communion, there will be joy in His presence; as the reward for faithful walk, it will be the place in glory.

He will come to set everything to rights in power; “judgment will return to righteousness, and all the meek of the earth shall,” &c. That has never been known yet. When Christ comes in power, judgment and righteousness will go together. Power will be given to the Judge, who will act in righteousness. Is that all I am looking for? No; I am going up to meet the Lord in the air; the hope is founded on righteousness, of course, but I am not looking to be justified. What the Church gets in the rapture is, (as Christ was raised up by the “glory of the Father,” and so taken up into His presence,) we shall have the blessed joy of being with Him forever. (1 Thess. 4.) No getting righteousness is there; the best thing is looking out for Himself—to see Him as He is—to be ever with the Lord. When responsibility is spoken of, it is always connected with the appearing; there is the crown, the principle of integrity and faithfulness owned (Psa. 17), connected with the life down here. When speaking of going to be with Christ—the rapture, all go together to enjoy the grace and presence of Him who has done it all. It is very important to lay bold by faith of the truth of the rapture to Christ of the Church of God.

Receiving crowns differing each from each, is one thing; but all going together is another thing; all alike being associated in His own blessedness, as He said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” &c.

The exercise of soul after divine righteousness is very different from these things before one stands in the divine righteousness. One who has this does not speak of crying out of the “depths.” There is an immense change. We have the Spirit of adoption. If I am going through all the difficulties and trials of the world, it is as a child I am going through them. My feelings and affections flow from the certainty of relationship. “I have declared thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” What was Christ's place on earth? Was He uncertain as to His Father's love? Never; but, on the cross, bearing our sin under the hidings of God's face. There was in Him perfect obedience, but as a Son. If we are led by the Spirit we have liberty, not “bondage again to fear.” Have you liberty? If I have the consciousness of Christ having been in the depths for me, I am out of them, and am no more to be in them; consequently I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The cross behind me, having come by that to God—I look by the Holy Ghost at the cross, and see my sins put away there.

Faith is my thinking God's thoughts instead of my own. God says, “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” I think so too. God says, “children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” I think so too. God says, we stand in favor. I think so too. I do not know how God could prove His favor more than by sending His Son. He says, an “heir of glory,” “joint-heir with Christ.” I have everything Christ has, as a child with my Father. Now comes conflict; but I have the experience of a free man with God. One dead, quickened, and raised up together with Christ, is the experience of a Christian, into all which he enters by virtue of divine righteousness in Christ. In the “fullness of time” He came. They were servants before He came, but now we are sons, and the Spirit of God is in us the Spirit of adoption. This is my place. I do not always act rightly in it: the Holy Ghost reproves and humbles me; but that is my place.

Chapter 141

Psalm 40

There are some special Psalms connected with Christ, round which others seem clustered. This is one of them.

Here is Christ's actual association with His people on earth, not only in their sorrows, but at length bearing their sins, so that all who looked to Him might be blessed with, Him. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” Christ did not take one step to save Himself. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He was waiting on the Lord.

He appeals to God as Jehovah, not Father, because this was not then brought out, as it is now. The Jew did not know the Father as He is now revealed; and Christ was taking the place of a godly man made under the law amongst them. Therefore He is spoken of in terms suiting the relationship known to the Jews.

One or two verses often bring out the subject of the psalm, the rest being the development of it. What He did in the position He took up is the great thing here—what He went through, what He felt. The grand principle is, that He “waited patiently for Jehovah” —the relationship in which Christ as a man was standing on the earth as connected with the remnant of Israel.

It is clear that the different names of God have a most important meaning, because they are the revelation of what He is to all. If I call Him Father, I own what He is to me as His child. If “Jehovah” be employed, it is what He is in caring for and keeping His earthly people, whom He had called out in order to show His ways in government. If “God Almighty” be used, it is as protector of His pilgrims as Abram, Isaac, and Jacob in going from one country to another, or abiding in presence of hostile races in Canaan. For us it is Father. “Holy Father, keep through thine own name,” &c. It is important for us to know our position, as well as to see what position Christ was in when expressing these Psalms. In Matt. 5 He says, “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” He teaches us that we are to show forth grace and not law, as the Father was doing in Himself. Therefore we have to act after the same character: and nothing else suits those who belong to the kingdom of heaven and have the revelation of the Father's name.

Here, in Psa. 40, His heart is with the poor remnant. He undertakes their cause, going through all their sorrow and bearing their sin. In the last it is for them, not with them; but He gives them the comfort of being taken up to the same place with Himself, putting a new song into their mouths, as Jehovah had into His. “Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” But, moreover, He says, in verse 6, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.” These are all put aside. “He takes away the first to establish the second.” Christ came to do God's will. Everything centers in the Son. All blessing is connected with relationship to Him, whether for outcast reprobates (Gentiles), or for God's people, the Jews, w he had broken the covenant. The Levitical system vanishes away as not meeting God's desires any more than man's need. Christ, who says “Lo, I come to do thy will,” is everything. Then He “preached righteousness in the great congregation.” This cost Him His life.

He made perfectly good God's character in the world—went out to all the people—declared God's faithfulness—did not hide His righteousness within His heart, and got into miry clay in consequence, i.e., all that can press a man down. “I have glorified thee on the earth.” “I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” “Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me,” for I have been declaring what thou art in faithfulness; withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me. Then He goes farther (ver. 12), for He came not only to suffer with but for us. “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.” Not merely our there, but “mine.” If speaking amongst the remnant he might have said our; but when taking them on Himself, standing alone for their deliverance, He says “mine.”

Next, there is judgment on the Gentiles alluded to in verses 14, 15, in contrast with verse 16: “Let all those that seek thee rejoice,” &c. It is no more clouds and darkness, fearing the Lord and walking in darkness, not knowing such a thing longer, but rejoicing as well as seeking; for He has met all against us. When we are not rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord, we have not found it; we may be seeking it, but have not found it.

In the Psalms we have the thoughts and feelings of Christ expressed, when the facts are going on. We have the privilege thus of knowing how He felt when under them. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” His feelings are here. The fact was atonement. When suffering from God He was absolutely alone—none to look on. When He appeals to God for deliverance, He is not heard (on the cross). “He tasted death for every man.” If He had had the least comfort from God, He would not have drank the cup. Never was He so precious to God. Never was obedience so perfect as at that moment. Divine love was mightier than all the sufferings—mightier than sin—mightier than death, Satan, or wrath of God. It was not so with Peter, who was full of joy when going out of the world; and Stephen says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” without any suspending of the favor of God. There was no wrath on them: Jesus bore it all for them—for us.

The effect of the cross, is a throne of unmingled grace, and it will be open to all in the Millennium.

In Psa. 23 Jehovah is the Shepherd: we cannot say Christ was a sheep. He is Jehovah, but still He emptied Himself—went before them—passed through every difficulty and trial.

In Psa. 24 He is Jehovah received on high.

In Psa. 25 sin is confessed. This is what makes the difference for any soul in the present time. The remnant, before they trust in Christ, cry to Jehovah. How can I go to Jehovah when I have been sinning? How can a man trust Jehovah with a bad conscience? Here is combined the expression of confession and of trust together. They can look for mercy. God never allows absolute despair in His people, though it is often very like it. In Judas it was absolute, and he went out and hung himself. Then all is brought out to meet this state in the cross. If there were only love, where would be the righteousness? If righteousness only, where love? Both are combined in the cross. When the cross comes in, all is perfectly clear. The righteousness is proved to be as great as the love, and the love as great as the righteousness. This is often not known all at once; but by little and little the blessed picture seen in Christ makes its way into the soul. Then it is all light; but then the man finds darkness comes in perhaps. At first there is only reckoning on the blessedness of Christ, and when that reaches the conscience, it brings bitterness. What at first only attracted the heart did not reach the elements of good and evil—it was all joy; but when light reaches these, he

finds it does not minister peace, because he has not learned the thing to which it applies in his own soul. The state of the Jews all through these psalms is this—not having the application in the conscience of what the cross teaches.

It is a wonderful thing to see Christ coming to the cross and saying, “mine iniquities.” Christ made Himself one with me, taking all my debts upon Him; my Surety, He has gone down into the depths. “Mine iniquities!” —any one of the remnant might say that. There is the remnant's voice in it; but there is Christ's first. He has taken them. They suffer FROM them, never FOR them. If they suffered for them, it would be eternal condemnation. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, be was bruised for our iniquities.” “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

God brings in the principle of living righteousness, and therefore gives the consciousness of sins. “For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.” (Psa. 25) This is strange reasoning according to man's thought—— “for it is great.” Men plead that it is a little sin; but when taught of God, we see how great sin is. Another thing is, truth is in the man, because he feels the sin great, he has given up any thought of justifying himself. My iniquity is great. If Thou dost not forgive me for Thine own glory's sake, thou mist not do it at all. And not one spot of sin will He leave, for the comfort of my own heart or the glory of His name. In Isa. 43:22, &c., Israel are made to rest in absolute sovereign mercy. Grace is perfect in the getting rid of our sin in Christ.

Thus Psa. 40, “I waited patiently,” &c., gives the reason why the remnant should trust Jehovah. MESSIAH has been delivered from the horrible pit and the miry clay by the path of resurrection. Then offering thou didst not desire,” &c. The Levitical system vanishes as efficacious. Mine ears hast thou digged.” It is not here the same as Isa. 1, where “he awakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear,” &c. This has a peculiar character. It is His offering Himself before He came. So in Phil. 2 we read He becomes a man, taking the form of a servant, having ears, doing nothing but what He was told, listening to every word that came out of God's mouth. “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” He had ears to receive it. Christ had no desire to do anything different from God's will: this was His motive. Never to stir but as another—God—will guide you, is perfectness as a man. Do you say, What! am I never to do what I like? Oh! I answer, you want to have your own will, which is sin. Christ waited for the expression of His Father's will before doing anything. Christ on earth was in the form of a servant. How did He get there? By putting off all the glory of having a will of His own—offering Himself before He came to do God's will. His delight was to come: His love brought Him. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” If that was His will, it was the Father's will. He “learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” he told His disciples, in going forth, to say, “Peace.. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.” So it was with Him. He was obedient. He offered Himself to obey, and there was pure, constant obedience all through. There was power, of course, in Him, but He came into the place of perfect obedience. The first word is not from God, Do you go, but “Lo, I come:” it was from Christ, “in the volume of the book it is written of me.” This gives us a knowledge of Christ and His intercourse with God before He came. Here is Christ, the Son of God, a divine Person, and the means of all blessing, taking the place of obedience on earth. Nay, He is the servant now, too: what is He doing for us? Bringing out God to us, to our eye; yea, He has brought God right down to our hearts. “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation,” not concealed Thy faithfulness, &c. Christ has not failed

to bring all that God is to us. How we want it in a world that has got as far away as it can from God, with its artificers, like Cain and his seed! Others might talk about the thing, but Christ was it. In every word and act they might have seen the Father, if they had had eyes to see. Christ can say, I know the world—what it is; I have gone through it all, high and low; I have traced it all through, and, like Noah's dove, never found an echo. Now you come to Me: I will give you rest, There is never any rest for a human heart but in Him. One then learns of Him in the meekness and submission of His soul.

“Let all those that seek thee rejoice,” &c. “But I am poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon me.” I and the others—I have taken the sorrow for them; be magnified?” He says, I have taken it all on myself, I have done it all. “By the obedience of one many shall be justified.” If you have not been broken down to feel your iniquity is great, you cannot have peace; you are mixing up something of your own. If you get Christ instead of yourself, because you yourself are so bad, then you can say, The Lord has put away my sin; I am accepted in the Beloved. Are you emptied of yourself, so as to say, Christ is everything for me? He has been made sin: is righteousness between you and God now instead of your sins? Whence did it come? By the love of God flowing in through the Spirit. By Him He says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” All the emphasis is on “no more.” They are not to be brought up another day. Only believe in Christ and rest in grace so truly divine.

Chapter 142

Psalm 42-43

No one who reads these two Psalms with any attention can fail to see the close connection between them. The expression of Psa. 42:6, 11; 43:5 shows that. The soul is cast down, but the godly one would encourage himself with the assurance that he shall yet praise God.

In the Authorized Version, however, the sense is obscure in some degree by the translation of verse 5 which in the original, as the LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate agree, is not the language of regret at the remembrance of privileges once enjoyed, but the language of hope as he looks forward to what he will enjoy. The words are, “I shall go with the multitude, I shall go with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a feast.” Though outside Jerusalem, he will one day be inside; though it is for him now the time of sorrow and reproach, the festive day will come. So, when reproached by his enemies, he pours out his soul in prayer for this. The special subject of the prayer we get in Psa. 43 Thus these two Psalms are divided into three parts. Psa. 42:1-5 gives the desire of his heart, panting for God, as the hart pants because of the waterbrooks, and the confidence that he will yet enjoy what he so much desires. Then verses 6-11 give the special circumstances which call out this confidence of hope. He is afflicted, beyond Jordan, unable to reach God's house, through the oppression of the enemy. Psa. 43 gives the subject of his prayer, to be judged and avenged, and states the way by which his desire will be accomplished. “Send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me.” It is beautiful to see that the soul cannot rest till it gets to that place on earth where God dwells. It is strengthening, nevertheless, to see how God graciously ministers comfort under the circumstances. (Psa. 42:8.) It is instructive to see what the godly one will do when he reaches the holy habitation. “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.”

I would add that help in verse 5 and health in verse 11 are the same word in Hebrew, and the three versions mentioned above, 70, Syriac, and Vulgate, connect “O my God” of verse 6 with the end of verse 5, by which verse 5 is made to tally exactly with Psa. 42:11 and Psa. 43:5. S.

Chapter 143

A Note on Psalm 68

This Psalm celebrates the intervention of God. Jehovah-Adonai, on behalf of His earthly people, “God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered, and they that hate him shall flee before him.” Moses could ask God to do this when the ark of the Lord was lifted up for each journey in the wilderness. The psalmist here uses similar language, with this difference: Moses asks God to arise that the desired result may be obtained; the psalmist awaits in confidence its accomplishment, describing in the two following verses what the issue will be to the wicked and to the righteous. After this to verse 9 we have God's character set forth, as manifested in His actions, for which He is to be praised, and His majesty as displayed when marching before His people through the wilderness.

But the remembrance of His ways of old strengthens the hope in the hearts of His faithful people of yet further displays of power and goodness on behalf of the nation. The prophetic description of this forms the chief subject of the psalm, grounded on what is stated in verse 18, the ascension of Adonai leading captive captivity, and receiving gifts in the man, that Jehovah-God might dwell among them, The Church now enjoys gifts secured by His ascension. Israel also has gifts secured to her, but not yet to be enjoyed; so the psalmist from verse 9 to 24 speaks almost always in the future. This the Authorized Version in part fails to point out. So, I submit, we should read: “Thou, O God, wilt send a plentiful rain on thine inheritance.” On what is this hope based? His past dealings with them. “When weary, thou Last refreshed it;” moreover, it has been in former times the dwelling-place of His congregation. “Thy congregation hath dwelt therein.” Hence they draw the conclusion, and rightly, “Thou, O God, wilt prepare of thy goodness for the afflicted. Adonai will give a word, the armies who publish it shall be a great host. Kings with their armies shall flee, shall flee; she that tarrieth at home shall divide the spoil. If ye shall lie among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. When the Almighty scatters kings in her, she shall be as white as snow in Salmon.” Again, “God has desired to dwell in.” (Ver. 16.)

I would add that we have in this psalm nearly all the different names of God: El, Elohim (God); Shaddai (Almighty); Jehovah, Adonai, Jah (Lord). Elohim is the name of God in creation (Gen. 1); Shaddai and Jehovah, the names under which God revealed Himself respectively to Abraham and Israel. Adonai, as here described, is the One who has ascended up on high; but if ascended, He descended first into the lower parts of the earth. Yet He is Jehovah. (Ver. 20.) “To Jehovah Adonai belong the goings out to death.” Jab is first met with in Ex. 15:2, after the deliverance of the people from Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Often met with in the Psalms in the well-known compound, Hallelu-jah; it occurs also in Ex. 17:16; twice in this Psa. 4; 18 also in Psa. 77:11; 89:8; 94:7, 12; 102:18; 115:17, 18; 118:5, 14, 17, 18, 19; 122:4; 130:3; 135:4; 150:6; and in Isa. 12:2; 26:4; 38:11. If we examine the context of most of the places where it occurs, I think we shall be persuaded it is not a mere abbreviation of Jehovah, but has a significance of its own, reminding His people that He has, and will, interpose in power on their behalf. So Jehovah characterizes God as the one true and self-existing Being (in opposition to the false gods of the heathen) who has made a covenant

with Israel. Jah characterizes Him specially as the Deliverer of His people from Egypt in time past, who will deliver them from all their enemies again.

Psalm 72

The second book, of which our Psalm is the last, closes with the blessing of the whole earth: “The prayers of David are ended.” It supposes and treats of the relationship of God with Judah just at the end of the age when forced to flee. The third book is not so much connected with the personal history of Christ as either the first or the second. It is occupied with Israel, and the circumstances of Israel are entirely different from Judah's because they were not in the land when Christ was there, and so they had no actual part in His crucifixion. The second book is more historically prophetic than the first, and not so much the sufferings of Christ.

In Psa. 72 we have the Solomon reign, not the Davidical state. The true Son of David is, no doubt, much greater than Solomon. Here Christ is King. This takes us back to the second psalm. Jehovah’s determination is to set His kingdom in Zion. The kingdom is not confined to this setting up of the King. In Matt. 13:43, we have the “kingdom of the Father.” There we get its heavenly character, not setting aside the kingdom on earth, which is to be established; but it goes farther and higher. “Every scribe instructed brings out of his treasure things new and old.” The scribes had the old things concerning the kingdom, but they stumbled at the Christ having to suffer. If they had received Christ, man would not have been proved to be such a sinner. But they hated both Him and His Father, and so proved there is no good in flesh. There would have been something good in flesh if they could have received Him. The kingdom was not set up then through their not receiving Him. Two things came out after that: the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, and the Church. What is the kingdom? It is very simple, if we take the word as it is. It is the sphere of the reign, or where the King reigns. If I take the word church as “assembly,” which it really means, I can never confound “church” and “kingdom.” Compare the word” reign” with “assembly,” and the difference is easily seen.

Another thing, often not understood, is the difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. If the kingdom of God had been accepted on earth, it would not have been the same as now, not the actual form of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew takes up the change in consequence of the King's rejection, and speaks also of “the Father's kingdom” for the heirs who follow Christ in His rejection; because He takes it from His Father when rejected. He is set down, not on His own throne (and so the judgment in this Psalm brought in), but for the present on His Father's throne. Divine righteousness is shown in God's setting Him there and justifying us according to all He had accomplished. There was righteousness due to set Him on the throne of God. That is what we have. “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me,” &c. Christ then sits down there; and there is no judicial kingdom at all now—it is postponed, and known only to faith. The kingdom of the world is not become that of our God and of His Christ. The kingdom of heaven is likened to a sower, &c. He has altered the ground on which He deals with the people—He sows; He brings something with Him, instead of seeking something from man. The King is obliged to take this mysterious character of sowing in the world. Then, mark, He does not sow only on Jewish ground; as to outward nearness to God, that was gone. God does not look for fruit. He is going on ground that is settled

by judgment. Therefore He is not seeking fruit from man. This goes against man's good opinion of himself. Man is cut down as the good-for-nothing tree, spite of all culture from God. The trial has been made of all men in the Jew. All flesh is grass; and the grass is withered. He sows; He is not exercising His royal title in sowing. It is a new work, different in kind. All are given up (Matt. 12) and He sows (Matt. 13) The field is not the Jewish people, but “the world.” God goes outside guilty Judah to begin a fresh work everywhere. The time of the harvest is the judicial time of the kingdom—not the sowing time. Christ lets all go on as if at the beginning, as if He saw nothing of the corruption; but then He begins a judicial character. Personally He deals with it on earth. That is the kingdom in the mysteries of it or hidden. Its outward character is a great tree; the sowing is in the world. Pharaoh was a great tree, and the Assyrian was another. Christendom is now a great tree—an influential power in the earth. It is ruled from heaven, if it be the kingdom of heaven, but the sphere is this earth. The sowing—the harvest—the field—the net—the search for the pearl—are not in heaven, but on earth.

When the joy of the kingdom is spoken of, it is the kingdom of God. “The kingdom of God (not of heaven) is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The kingdom of heaven is dispensational; the kingdom of God is sometimes a moral thing. Another thing connected with the kingdom is power and not merely law. There will be “the law written in their hearts,” but the kingdom brings in power. It is the setting up of a person in the character of king. The kingdom spoken of in the gospel is in “mystery” during this time; but the thing predicted by the prophets, is “a king shall rule in righteousness.” It is the kingdom in manifestation. Power and righteousness were entirely in contrast when Christ was here. He said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” There was Satan's power, but righteousness in and as to Christ. Judgment had not then returned to righteousness at all. It was the close of all hope of it for the time, when Christ was rejected. Up to that moment it might have been looked for; but this was the setting aside of God's kingdom from the earth. The Son came and they said, “This is the heir: come let us kill him,” &c. Christ is not taking possession of the kingdom on the earth now. He is not sitting on His own throne at all yet. It is the Father's throne where He is. He is perfectly accepted in divine righteousness, which is now being ministered by the Holy Ghost to faith, and which is better than any other portion, but there is no execution of judgment. If He had executed judgment when He went away, there would have been no dealings in grace. He must have extinguished the wicked from the earth at once.

The word is, “Sit on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” There He is sitting down and doing nothing as to the kingdom, but sowing, &c., in this mysterious way. Meanwhile the mustard-tree, in which the birds of the air (the emissaries of Satan) may lodge, is being produced. The leaven spreading in the three measures of meal (i.e., formal doctrine extends itself through Christendom). At the close Christ brings in the execution of His power. This has nothing to do with the Church. Instead of His having immediate power on earth, He is “expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.” During this time of waiting the Church is being gathered; and when He comes in judgment His glorified come with Him. He has accomplished righteousness before this gathering began, and sent down the Holy Ghost, by whom we have the revelation of that righteousness. “We are made the righteousness of God in him.” This divine righteousness is established on the throne and revealed to us in the gospel and therefore by faith.

As High Priest, Christ has gone up within the veil (which indeed is rent), having finished the work for His friends, and waiting for the due moment to put down His enemies. Until He comes out, the Jews do not know that the offering is accepted. Here are the king and priest, represented by Moses and Aaron (Lev. 9:23), but they stand without till His coming out; and while He is within, to them, as a nation, He is unknown (to the Jews). The Holy Ghost is sent down to make us know it is accepted. Such is the place the Church has—pretrusters in Christ while unseen in heaven. Righteousness is gone as to earth, but is in the person of Christ exalted on the throne in heaven; and there we know it and are made it in Christ by the grace of God. Compare 2 Cor. 5, with John 16. While the kingdom is in abeyance, the Holy Ghost has come down to make us know the righteousness of God in Christ, which is fit for the throne of God. We share that righteousness; we do not sit on the throne of the Father, where He now is. This seat He has by virtue of His personal title as the Son of God, and God Himself indeed.

The kingdom of heaven in mystery takes in all Christendom, professors as well as true Christians. Now there are no signs of the kingdom. What sign is it for a king to suffer? But if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Suffering is no sign of a kingdom at all, but it is likeness to the King. The same thing that made Him suffer on earth made Him glorified in heaven, So is it with us. But instead of His reigning over the Church the Church will reign with Him.

He is the Bridegroom of the Church, not the King of the Church. His right and power will be put forth for the earth. Adam could give names to everything brought before him (a proof of his dominion, such as is often shown in the giving of a name; e.g., Nebuchadnezzar giving new names to Daniel, that of Belteshazzar, &c.); but when Eve came, he called her Isha, from himself, Ish, because she was part of himself. He gives her the same name, even as God called their name Adam. We have the same place as Christ Himself, and when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We could not now see Him as He is, and live; but then we shall be like Him, and therefore can see Him. “We shall appear with him” — “be glorified together with him.” The heavenly saints are to be like Christ and be with Him forever. We shall take the heavenly places, which spiritual wickedness has now. (Eph. 6) We shall be “caught up to meet the Lord in the air.” In the parable of the talents, in Matt. 25, there is no allusion to the rule of the kingdom; while sin Luke, the use of the pounds is rewarded with cities to reign over. In Matthew, all the servants' reward centers in “the joy of their Lord.”

Jude speaks of the Lord coming with ten thousands of His saints. So in Rev. 19:14, “The armies in heaven followed him on white horses.” The saints come with Him when He comes to execute judgment. (So chap. 17:14.) They are associated with Him in the glory He brings, as also in what is much better, in the Father's house. While He is on the father's throne, the Church has no throne, but suffers with Him. When He takes His own throne, we shall be with Him, and share His glory when He appears. It is wonderful to be associated with Him in His glory, but better to be associated with Himself It is better to be thinking about Himself than about Him as a King or a Lord, important as this too may be. When Christ comes to reign, there will be human righteousness perfect, because Christ will execute it; but now it is divine righteousness, ministered by the Spirit in grace (2 Cor. 3)—grace which associates us in the effect of divine righteousness. When He comes back as King, at first it will be the David character of reign. So Psa. 101, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment” (always mercy comes first). This Psalm states prophetically the character of Christ's kingdom. When He takes the kingdom, all will be judicially set up in

righteousness. It will be seen by all, that God has laid bold upon this mighty One for His people's salvation and the world's blessings. There will be real righteousness here below, but human as to its measure, and divinely ministered. It will be Messiah and the new covenant. The law will be written on their hearts. The law never required the death of Christ; that is entirely outside and above all that the law could righteously demand. By the grace of God He tasted death. Did the law require an agony from the blessed and holy One. What did that prove? Man's righteousness? Divine love was in it; God (not law) “made him to be sin for us.” It was the unspeakable, unfathomable love of God who was glorified in it about sin. For God to be glorified, everything in God was to be made good in spite of sin, yea, and in respect of sin. No doubt, the elect angels have been kept by divine power; but what a scene for angels to witness—the way they treated Christ in this world! When Daniel prayed, there was an order given to answer him, and the angel could not for three weeks, because opposed by the prince of Persia! What a scene is this world! Is wickedness God's glory? Is misery His glory? No wonder one of old said, “This was too hard for me until I went into the sanctuary of God.” When I see the end of these men, that will set it right, of course. God will justify righteousness by judgment, which, long severed, will then return to righteousness. Where, how would love be manifested, if all His enemies were destroyed now? The cross glorifies God above all law. The announcement of the Man who was God, dying for sinners, is that Righteousness? No, it is beyond right; it is love—infinite, divine, and sovereign love.

Psa. 94 God does not strike until there is conscience awake in the hearts of those stricken. With the remnant there will be tabrets and harps, wherever the grounded staff shall pass. Then the Solomon reign begins, “He judgeth among the gods, i.e., those to whom He has given power. “in his days shall the righteous flourish.” Then the kingdom is set up in power. Psa. 72 “Prayer shall be made for him continually,” i.e., the desire of all the people is expressed, that the king should prosper.

Psa. 67:7. “All the ends of the earth shall fear him;” and 72:19, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” Verse 20. The close of all the prayers of him that had the promises as to the blessing on earth.

The execution of judgment of those found to be His enemies when He appears, is different to the time when God will judge the secrets of men's hearts—that will be for the heathen as well, who have not had special testimony about Christ, but are judged by the law written on their hearts.

While things are not set right on earth, we are getting the full fruit of divine righteousness. While to be oppressed in the world, as He was, is the portion; those who are gathered have the full heavenly blessing.

When Christ was suffering for sin, it was not to bring in government on earth, but to work out divine righteousness, by which we might have association with Him. His suffering from God for sin was to make infinite grace flow out.

Chapter 145

The Psalms and Christ

In the Psalms we get the Christ we are associated with, but not our association with Him.

Chapter 146

Suggestions on the Revelation

I do not believe that we are, at this time, competent to speak particularly of these chapters, and it is rather, therefore, as suggestion than interpretation that I offer these thoughts.

Chap. 6. Here the Lord begins His action as the Redeemer of the inheritance. On His going forth to it, He receives a bow and a crown, emblems of His work and its fruit. He then sends out one harbinger of His coming after another, such as we see in Matt. 24—sword, famine, pestilence—and we get notice here, as there, of the martyrdom of the Jewish saints (given, however, in a different manner; there, historically (see ver. 9), but here, in the symbol of a cry heard from under the altar). These are the beginning of sorrows. Then under the sixth seal, the immediate precursors of the coming are given to us, as in Matt. 24:29.

The scene under the sixth seal is like Isa. 2, and thus it may occupy a larger space of time than we might at first be disposed to judge.

I have already observed in a paper on the Book of Revelation, that as Matt. 24 does not address itself to the Church, but to the Jewish remnant, so does this chapter, which is like it, and consequently so does the whole subsequent action of this book, till the kingdom is set up in chapter 20, for all that action is under the sixth seal, as I think we shall see. (?) The sun, moon, and stars are ordinances of goodness (Gen. 1) to the earth. In this day of the earth's judgment they are changed. (See also Matt. 24)

Chap. vii. This is another vision. The sealing of the 144,000 has taken place during the progress of the preceding scenes, but exactly when I say not. The 144.000 are the elect of Matt. 24:22, or the righteous of that prophecy in Isaiah already referred to (chap. 3:10, 4:3.) It is the Lord securing a remnant out of Israel, who are to be preserved when the judgment comes. It is like Noah finding grace in the eyes of the Lord. (See also Ezek. 9)

Upon this we see and hear the heavenly family rejoicing as though their gladness had been freshly awakened by this revelation of grace to the remnant.

This heavenly family, I judge, taken from all nations and peoples and tongues, and having come out of great tribulation and received white robes, are the martyred remnant of the fifth seal, Jews bated of all nations and slain among them. (Matt. 24) (?) For the description of the joy of this multitude is taken from Jewish ordinances and prophecies.

Chaps. 8, 9. The cry of the suffering saints goes up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and then there is a solemn pause in heaven. A censer full of burning coals empties itself on the earth as an answer to this cry, and the meaning of that answer is then disclosed by seven trumpets, which contain or exhaust all the judgments, and end in the doom of the last enemy, and in the Lord and His saints taking the kingdom.

These two chapters, however, give us but six of these trumpets, the seventh being withheld till a certain incidental action is accomplished, as the seventh seal had not been opened till another

incidental action (as we saw in chap. 7) was finished.

Chap. 10. Here the Lord appears, not with a sealed book as before, but with an open one, and not as a Lamb slain as before, but as a mighty angel setting one foot on the earth and the other on the sea (expressive of power and judgment), and as having taken the rainbow, the pledge of ownership of the earth, from around the throne (chap. 4.), to put it round His own head, and then roaring like a lion over his prey, in the joy that the inheritance was His. Seven thunders then echo the cry or roar, which John is not allowed to record, being rather instructed to wait for the seventh trumpet which is to finish the mystery of God, and in the meantime to become a prophet again by eating the little open book which was to enable him to tell out the contents of a certain brief space of time that was to precede the sounding of the seventh trumpet: “There should be time no longer” (chap. 10:6), the same, I suppose, as “the time of the end.” (Dan. 12:4, 9.) The voice of the seventh trumpet is synchronous with that of the seventh thunder, I should judge, or with the seventh vial. (See chapter 16:17.) This seems to give us these seven thunders in the seven vials afterward. (?)

Chap. 11. John having digested the book is here at once set into action. He is told to measure the temple, or that part of it where the altar was, leaving the courts unmeasured. By which we learn, I judge, the division that is between the sealed remnant (or it may be, I take not on me to determine, the heavenly remnant known to God, and to be martyred by and by) thus measured or preserved, and the nation given over to the feet of the Gentiles 1260 days.

Then we hear of two other personages, called the two witnesses, or the olive trees, or candlesticks, who for another (and a preceding) 1260 days bear witness to the Lord in the midst of the nation at Jerusalem. (?) The two periods thus form the whole week, or seven years, or twice 1260 days, which are reserved by Daniel for the Jewish action in the last days. (See Dan. 9:27.) The death and ascension of these witnesses at the close of the first 1260 days are then given to us, with the immediate power of that ascension on the earth and the people. The seventh trumpet then sounds, and then the Church or heavenly family anticipate the kingdom, just as the Lord Himself had done before. (Chap. 10:1.)

It is always allowed that in the ministry of these two witnesses there is allusion to the ministries of Moses and Elias. And from this I gather, that as Moses and Elias were ministers to Israel, so will these witnesses; and as the enmity of Israel was drawn out by them, so as to cast each of them first among the Gentiles and then into heaven, so will the enmity of Israel again cast these witnesses into heaven, as we here see. (See Ex. 2; 33:1 Kings 17 Kings 2) And I would add here, that the first woe being so like Joel 2, and the second so like Isa. 5, that this is also evidence that those woes are on the land and people of Israel.

Chap. 12. The woman in this scene, I judge, is the Sarah or freewoman, “the mother of us,” whether the heavenly or earthly seed—the Jerusalem that is from above, or the covenant of promise, the olive. Her man-child is the heavenly family, the heavenly Seed destined for the throne of the kingdom, the Lord Himself being its head.

The dragon's enmity in the first place is directed against the heavenly branch of the woman's seed, but that enmity is disappointed by their rapture, and then the woman has to bring forth her other seed.

To this end she flies into the wilderness for one half-week, there to suffer the persecution of the dragon the second time, now cast down to the earth by the war in heaven, which takes place, I judge, when the earthly remnant begin to cry out in their affliction, the type of which cry and war we have in Dan. 10.

The prayer of Daniel at once raises the war, but the answer to it does not come for twenty-one days. So will the first dawning of repentance in the Jews in the latter day, raise the war again, and Satan will be cast down, for Michael shall stand again for Daniel's people. Surely, I may here say the Church must be in heaven before this, for the voice from heaven now says, “the accuser of our brethren is cast down.” And some of the heavenly family must have been there before others.

The woman's seed are persecuted for the first half-week, but during the last half week (some allowed time, times and a half) they are preserved. For this rage of Satan will be disappointed by the earth helping the woman, as his former had been disappointed by the rapture into heaven. The remnant of her heavenly seed are, however, still to be slain.

Chap. 13. We have here the action of two famous beasts. The first, I judge, is the last king of Babylon, or the one who throws the woman of his back. (Chap. 17.) The second is the infidel religious teacher, who sustains the first beast in his place and persecution of the righteous by the energy of Satan in all lying wonders. The confederacy between them is like that of Pharaoh and his magicians, or that of Balak and Salaam, or that of Saul and the witch of Ender, and they fall together under the hand of the Lord, just before the kingdom opens. (Chap. 19.)

The first beast is the power in the earth during the forty-two months, or last half week. He receives all the strength of Satan or the dragon, then confined to the earth. He appears as in resurrection power, so marvelous an one will he be. He will be in universal monarchy as it were, having all the heads and horns of Daniel beasts (Dan. 7), and be in a different form from what he was when he carried the woman, for then she carried “mystery” on her forehead, but he will carry “blasphemy” (chap. 17.); and the crowns have now got upon the ten horns instead of upon the seven heads; the crowned heads being more the Roman state of the beast, and the crowned horns his Infidel or antichristian state. (Chap. 17:16.)

The second beast comes out of the earth, or corrupted Christendom, as the first had come out of the sea, or political agitation. The two beasts in Job, leviathan and behemoth, are [prefiguratively] these beasts of the sea and of the earth.

Let me here notice that the dragon has the seven heads and ten horns as well as the beast, which teaches us, I judge, that Rome is owned by the devil, as well as by the beast; the one, as it were, presides over it in the heavenlies, the other uses it on the earth. I judge that chapter xiii. 6 implies that the saints have ascended ere this; for the blasphemy is against God, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Chap. 14. The company on Mount Sion is the preserved or earthly remnant, the sealed 144,000. They are here in their city of refuge, fled to the mountains. (See Matt. 24:16.) And then they learn “salvation,” the song of the heavenly harpers, like Jonah in his city of refuge. (Jonah 3:9.) As their sealing was like Noah finding grace, this being on Mount Sion was like Noah getting into the ark.

The seer then sees three angels in different ministries.

1st. Going forth with the gospel to test all nations with the tidings of the Lord's speedy coming.

2dly. Enforcing, as it were, this gospel of the kingdom, or publication of the Lord's coming, by announcing the doom of Babylon. But I do not judge this “everlasting gospel” to be the gospel of the “glory of Christ,” which is now preached. Mark the character given to this gospel or preaching in verse 7.

3dly. Warning all against the pretensions of the beast by solemn sanctions.

These two considerations assure me that the 144,000 is the earthly people:

1st. They are called firstfruits, and as the harvest afterward is a harvest or gathering of the whole earthly family, so I judge this must be a firstfruits of the same. The firstfruits and harvest must correspond.

2dly. They get no reward, but are owned as virgins: but the martyred remnant are afterward pronounced “blessed,” and it is said “their works do follow them.”

By these ministries some are drawn out of doomed Christendom to enter the kingdom with the remnant, as a mixed multitude leave Egypt with Israel.

He then sees the process of the harvest and the vintage, which together, perhaps, present the discernment or separation prophesied in Mal. 4:1, and which takes place just at the setting up of the kingdom. A similar discernment or separation will be afterward made between the nations, when the throne of glory or the kingdom is actually set up, as between sheep and goats. (Matt. 25) Both are included in the harvest and vintage, I judge.

Chap. 15, 16. All mere conflict with the power of the enemy is now over, and the scene is unmixedly judgment. In other words, the trials of the remnant are now over, and it is simple judgment on the wicked.

The ascension of the last army of martyrs who had suffered under the beast is here assumed, as I judge that of the general saints had been at chapter 4; and that of the martyrs under the fifth seal at the time of chapter 7. The sea of glass, before unoccupied (chap. 4:6), now receives these martyrs as though it had been prepared for them. There they get harps like the heavenly family (chap. 5:8), and sing their song which has something of Jewish minstrelsy in it, for it contains certain notes which had been surely learned in Israel. And as the remnant martyred under the fifth seal had their joy in chapter 7 recorded, so has this remnant theirs here.

This song is like that of Moses and Israel on the banks of the Red Sea, and this tells us that this company of conquerors is Jewish.

Cloud, the symbol of glory, of old hindered the priests from entering the sanctuary. (Ex. 40 Chron. 5) So now, smoke, the symbol of judgment, hinders the heavenly inhabitants in like manner for awhile. But all this is introductory to a rapid pouring out of the last seven plagues or vials of wrath. These, however do not work repentance, but only again and again call forth blasphemy of the God of heaven, like the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from the plagues of Egypt, which these morally resemble. I judge that these are poured out at the close of the last half-week. They constitute the third woe, and are the contents of the seventh trumpet (and the same I believe as the seven

thunders), for like it they finish the mystery of God. (See x. 7; xvi. 17.)

On the discharging of the last of them, the mightiest earthquake of all takes place. The beast and his confederate kings and prophet together and great Babylon, the seat of his power; all fall and crumble to dust. As the king of Shishak, she drinks the cup of the Lord's indignation. (Jer. 25:26; Rev. 16:19; 19:19.)

The seven-sealed book thus contains the whole direct action of the book, as I noticed before, which describes the redemption of the inheritance. For the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet announces the seven vials the last of which destroys the usurper, and makes way for the rightful Heir.

Chapter 17, 18. The last plague had announced the fall of Babylon, and this leads to a view of Babylon in detail, her sin, her greatness and her judgment.

Babylon, I judge, is Rome, or the seven-hilled city in her ecclesiastical tyranny and defilement, sustained by the political strength of Europe. But in the last days the beast, assuming the headship at Rome, will allow this Babylon, this whore, to use him for a while, but finally will, together with the horns or civil powers, conceive enmity against her, and, receiving power from the dragon, throw his rider to the ground; and taking the ten horns or civil powers into confederacy with himself, Babylon in her ecclesiastical character falls. The beast then rising out of the sea, and becoming the king of Babylon, fully enters into its last form and action. (See chap. 13.) Babylon or Rome becomes an infidel rather than an ecclesiastical thing. The political power of Rome, hid for a time under the ecclesiastical, revives in the person of this beast, the king of Babylon, and this gives the beast the resurrection character. Other angels and voices then come as other witnesses to the doom of Babylon. The prophet thus sets this fact as it were legally confirmed.

We have still the angel-interpreter here with John, but John sees and hears other angels, and voices from heaven, and the lamentations of the kings and merchants. The kings of the earth (chap. 18:9) are not the ten horns. (Chap. 17:16.)

Some lament Babylon's fall, some rejoice at it. Great moral distance is between these two; the one having nothing less than the mind of “the god of this world,” the other having “the mind of Christ” or of heaven. Saul spared Agag, and Ahab spared Benhadad, as the kings would spare Babylon.

The beast “was, and is not, and yet is:” “his deadly wound was healed” (chap. 13, 14); so that there may be some lying strange mockery of resurrection in his own person, as well as in his political power at Rome. But all this will be such a reviving or resurrection as hell alone must account for, and therefore it is called an “ascending out of the bottomless pit” (chap. 11:7; 17:8), and only prepares him for further doom in “perdition” (of which he is the son, the heir, 2 Thess. 2), or the lake of fire. (Chap. 17:8; 19:20.)

At this the heavens rejoice, not indeed because all the corrupters of the earth are removed; for the confederacy of the beast and his kings is still to be broken up, but the union of the adulterous pair, the beast and the woman, being dissolved, the time has come for the union of the heavenly pair, the Lamb and the Church, as previous to their taking possession of their glorious inheritance.

The marriage being perfected in heaven, the earth is to receive the united pair, but it is first to be prepared for them, and this is now done by the destruction of the last corrupters of it. To this end

the Lord comes out in the full style of the conqueror, for all the signs of His coming have now passed, and He comes forth. He is the David with the sword before He becomes the Solomon on His throne, as Psa. 45 shows Him. His hand is first to do its work with the bow, and then His head is to receive the crown. (Chap. 6:2.) And the saints, in like manner, are here at first the train of the Conqueror, and then coheirs of the throne with the King, as seen in chapter 20 afterward.

And I might observe that all the acts of Christ are the joy of the saints in their season. As our kinsman, He redeems us, and this redemption is our joy, and accordingly the saints had a song over it. (Chap. 5) But as our kinsman He also avenges us, and this vengeance in due season will be our joy, and accordingly the saints have a song over it. (Chap. 19)

I observe that after the supper of the great God in Ezekiel (chap. 39) the scene of blessing becomes earthly. It is the restoration and joy of Israel which the prophet there anticipates and reveals to us. But here, after the same supper, it is heavenly glory that is revealed, and the children of resurrection on their thrones in the kingdom. (Chap. 20) These distinctions are quite characteristic, and as might be expected from the different hands of Ezekiel and John.

Chapter 147

Thoughts on Revelation 10-11

This chapter, with the next, forms a break in the book. We see in it the claims of Christ, the First-begotten, to take the inheritance of all things in the earth and sea. His standing with one foot upon the earth, and the other on the sea, is descriptive of His universal right to the whole world.

The moral instruction to us is most valuable, for whatever brings out Christ to us ministers strength to the soul. To know our fellowship with the Lord Jesus, our portion with Him, our place with Him, will practically deliver us from this present evil world, which is to be judged; and, in proportion as fellowship with Jesus is known, the saint will be enabled to be unmoved amidst the turmoil all around. The waves may rise higher and higher, heaving to and fro, as it was when Christ was here, breaking up the old dispensation. He was unmoved in His spirit amidst it all; and He took the hearts of those to whom He revealed the truth out of present things, and connected them with the new creation. When the heart is filled with that which is true, it is empty for that which is of the world.

The things the Lord Jesus taught were heavenly things, but these led to the cross, and so to follow Christ will always involve the cross as a matter of course. The cross goes very far too, for it spares nothing for the world, and nothing for the flesh; while whatever is crowned with glory and honor above is untouched. The glory above spares nothing below.

In Rev. 8:3, &c, we see that the effect of intercession here is to bring out judgment. This stamps the throne in the Apocalypse as a throne of judgment. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. When thy hand is lifted up they will not see: but they shall be ashamed for their envy at the people,” (or, “toward thy people,” see margin), &e. That is just a description of an effect akin to what this book describes. “Though favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” The world does not learn righteousness through grace, but the believer does.

In the seals of chapter 6 we had the unfolding of God's providential judgments. In chapter 8 (after the parenthetic sealed thousands of Israel, and palm-bearing multitude of Gentiles out of the great tribulation) we saw the direct infliction of judgment upon the Western Roman Empire. Then we came to the woe-trumpets. Smiting was sent forth on “the third part everywhere.” This seems to allude to the Roman Empire. There is the judgment of death on all classes, from the least to the greatest. The West thus comes under the infliction of judgment; but this is less than what is yet to come.

In the first four trumpets we see rather the circumstances judged and visited. In the “woes,” it is the people, the inhabitants of the earth. There is great importance to be attached to the descriptions connected with dwellers upon earth in them. They are plainly those who are not inhabiters of heaven, that are in union with Christ and have their hopes above. The natural moral position of man now is a dweller upon earth, as Cain was when driven out from the presence of the Lord, and went into the land of Nod, a vagabond in the earth (not like Adam, whose right was to be a

possessor of earth when he was in Paradise, where God could walk with him). Cain went and established himself away from God; and this is what we all in spirit do now, until we have heaven for our home by living union with Christ in heaven. The world is trying to establish itself far from the presence of God. We, as Christians, are to be and seek nothing in it, while at the same time God has “given us all things richly to enjoy.”

The natural tendency of all is to settle here: even the saint finds it so. A stone lying on the ground will sink in a little, for the earth attracts downwards; but we have the Holy Ghost to reveal Christ on high and lift us up when sinking, and thus we are not dwellers upon earth (though, whenever we sink down, we partake of this character practically).

The Lord is coming out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. It is a terrible thing to belong to that which is to be judged. Now He is exercising patience, and He is perfect in patience as in everything. He would not put His people of old in possession of Canaan until the cup of the Amorites was full. But His eye is not dimmed to all that is going on, nor is His hand weakened. We cannot settle in a world which has rejected Christ without being at war with God. Although the Church will be taken from the earth before all the final sifting takes place, the Lord would have us lay to heart the lesson He would teach us by this detail of the execution of judgments. We may derive the instruction just as much, though we shall not be in the scenes; for God by them shows us what we should judge and eschew now by the power of His Spirit. It includes everything that springs from that principle of evil against which, when developed and intolerable, He will display Himself with His great and strong arm. We have to judge its roots and fruits now spiritually and morally, though we shall not be actually in its last stage. We must go through the wilderness, being here as to our bodies; but the mischief is, if we settle in the wilderness, while on our way to the better country, that is, a heavenly.

When the fifth angel sounds, in the beginning of chapter 9, the third part of men are not specified as coming under judgment: but all is in a general way. It is not that specified part of the earth here, but the unsealed remnant. The king with the Greek and Hebrew significative name will rise in the Grecian Empire; and exercise his power chiefly among the Jews, first in the east and then in the west.

There are special judgments for those who are settling on the earth when God is going to judge. When the sixth angel sounds, we see these judgments coming (through the Euphratean horsemen) on those who are thus settled down here below. It appears, then, there are three series of judgments: first, a course inflicted generally on corrupt Christendom: secondly, judgment connected with the Jewish people in the east; and, thirdly, judgment on the western Roman Empire.

Then in chapter 10 we see Christ in angelic glory, with the left foot upon the earth and the right on the sea, signifying that He is about to take possession of that which is His by right and title. The angel (as in chap. 8), it is evident, is Christ Himself, the trumpets being uniformly angelic. He is declaring His right to the dominion preparatorily to taking possession. To him who will receive the testimony, it is as though God said He is not going to leave the world any longer to belong to man in sin. It is to be put into the hand of the righteous man, the second Adam. It is not here the Roman or the prophetic earth, but the whole world, including the land and sea. God has set man over all the works of His hands, and we here see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, asserting His

dominion before all things are openly put under Him. It has nothing to do with result to the Church, He is dealing with the earth. The Lord God has been trying man in two points very especially Israel as to obedience through the law, and the Gentiles as to power, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar. These had been God's two tests with men, but they failed in both. Israel thought that they could keep the law, and they were put upon obedience to it; but they made and worshipped the golden calf. Nebuchadnezzar had the dominion over man, nations, and tongues given him; and what did he do with it? He first makes a golden image for them all to worship, under penalty of death; then, when lifted up, a beast's heart was given to him: he was insensible to God above him, and ravaged all beneath him.

Now the Lord Jesus is brought forth as the one in whom is fully perfected all that man has failed to be under the test to which God has put him, bringing in first perfect obedience, and next full power. Christ has come, and been proved to be the obedient man: soon He will come to take the power as the glorified man. Satan's great object, when Christ was here, was to take Him out of the path of obedience, as the servant, and to induce Him to do some act by power. He would have made Christ change stones into bread to supply His need in hunger. But He was the faithful, obedient servant, who would not take His place as God on the earth thus. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” So in Psa. 16 He says, “My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the excellent in the earth, in whom is all my delight.” He did not come to assert His title as God, but to care for the weary and heavy-laden sinner.

So in like manner Jesus could say to the young lawyer, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” He would not be as God while He was taking the place of humbling Himself in taking the form of a servant. His path of lowly obedience being accomplished, the malice of Satan overcome, the last terrible cup (“if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”) being drunk, eternal redemption being gained through His blood for us, He is now set at God's own right hand in the heavenlies. Meanwhile the Church is the companion of His afflictions, taking the path of obedience in separation from all that is contrary to Him, until the mystery of God is finished. The Church is gathered to reign with Him, and is hid with Him, until “his enemies are made his footstool.” The connection of the Church with Christ is in the heavenly places, the cross down here stamping it as identified with Himself, a heavenly Christ. Therefore before He executes judgment on the earth, He takes it out of the way to Himself. The Church is with Him in rejection, and will be with Him in power, and the glory is enjoyed here just in proportion as the cross is practically known.

The little book in chapter 10 is prophetical. The immediate utterance of God's power follow s His asserting His title to “earth and sea.” “Seven thunders uttered their voices” but their utterance was not to be written, for other things were yet to be brought out before God's power was fully made good here below, when all the glory of God would make manifest His right to the claim. What instruction we get from the silence of Scripture!

Our place is above prophets: “We have the mind of Christ.” It is better to have our names written in heaven than to have devils subject to us. (See Luke 10) John had revealed to him what was beyond prophets. (See ver. 9.) No wonder it was bitter in the eating. What will it be to live in a time when the elect could scarcely be saved, but that the time was shortened! This would be earth's sorrow—but John would not have it. Those who have the tribulation of the Church will not have the

tribulation of the world. It is better to have Christ's sorrow about that which should come to pass, than to have tribulation in its midst.

The great thing brought out in chapter 11 is the full manifested power of rebellion against the authority of Him who is coming to judge. Jew and Gentile combine, as did Pilate and the Jews in the crucifixion, rebel now openly against His power. Jews and Gentiles together are either associated with Christ in heaven, or against Him on earth. In the character of this rebellion we just get the same as that of Adam's sin. He listened to the delusions of Satan, who told him he should be as God, and he acted in direct, deliberate disobedience. Heb. 6 shows the same principle. The conclusion of evil will consist not only in man rejecting Christ upon earth, but the heavenly Christ, apostatizing from Him they profess to believe is in heaven. Alas! we have the same principles in our hearts too.

The witnesses stand before the God of the earth. This was the title by which He is to be acknowledged then: and if the remnant give glory to Him as the God of heaven, then it is too late. God would not be owned only in that way then, for that was not the thing He was bringing in, true though it was. In the different revelations of God to man, there is always that which puts the heart, which puts faith, to the test. To the Jews God had committed the testimony of the unity of the Godhead; but when He was bringing in a new thing, they rejected it, sheltering themselves under the old, which was no longer such a test. They were orthodox in that which accredited their nation, and they took up the old thing to resist the new, using God's law as a plea for the rejection of Christ, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. God's glory it is puts men to the proof, not man's. Now the object proposed to faith is the glorified Christ in heaven. At the time of these judgments, the test of faith will be owning Him as God of the earth. The test comes to those who are dwellers upon earth, as Pharaoh, who said, “The river is my own.” “Who is Lord over us?” The earth does not rightfully belong to the first Adam, who was turned out of Paradise, but to the last Adam, the first-begotten whom God will bring into the world.

Some points of deep practical importance may be learned in all this. There is a tendency, as was said before, in us all, as saints, to be dwelling upon earth. The flesh is always a dweller upon earth; it bears the stamp of that which will be judged. All that is of the flesh is therefore to be judged now, mortified, and brought into subjection. The Christian has to keep separate in spirit from that which is under judgment from the course of this world—this wonderful, busy, active, principle and system of man's intelligence and power. All this last development of human civilization is doomed. We may say that England and France, and the surrounding countries are, as it were, the center of man's activity. At home we have a measure of light shining towards souls; abroad there is Popery, the powers of darkness in western Christendom; resistance of authority is everywhere. The grand scene of judgment will be where the grand scene of pretension is. If light is despised, it is here. If man's will is in exercise, it is here. If authority is resisted, it is here. All these principles will be finally judged when headed up in open evil and revolt against God—the Beast and the false Prophet. It is in this great scene that we have now to judge the good and evil, what is of Christ and what is of Satan.

How our hearts ought to be out of it all! What heavenly witnesses we should be in a world that despises and rejects Christ! The character in which He sets Himself before the Christian is as the heavenly One, the Morning Star, “that where I am, there shall ye be also.” He did not remain with

us down here, because He meant to have us, as the result of the travail of His soul, united as His body by the Holy Ghost to Himself as a heavenly Head. He cannot leave us here. Throughout all ages we shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace. He will display us as the fruit of His travail to His eternal glory. Thus we see the double character of Christ. To us He is the man glorified in heaven, with whom grace has made us one; but also in this book we see Him as the one who is to take possession of the inheritance, and we shall share it with Him.

The Lord keep our hearts out of the whole spirit and course of this present evil age. We want to have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and before our eyes, to get through its entanglements and snares. Do you see a poor suffering Christian on a sick bed full of Christ? How simple it all is! But it is not so simple to wind one's way through a seductive world, with its thousand besetments and temptations, vanities which beset the heart and allure it away on the one hand, the sorrows and wretchedness of a sin-stricken world that would break the heart on the other. None can rise above them without the affections being set on Christ—hearts intelligently knit to Him, and mixed up with the interests of a loving, crucified, and glorified Savior.

Chapter 148

Fragment: Revelation 8

In Rev. 8 all parts of orderly existence typified by nature are smitten—trees, grass, sea, rivers, fountains, sun, moon, and stars: all symbols, but the course of nature in the prophetic world.

Chapter 149

Fragment: Revelation 9

Is not Rev. 9 correlative with chapter 7? The locusts hurt those not sealed (in the east rather), the horsemen those not faithful among Gentiles (only the latter is more limited; it is the third part of men, or prophetic Roman earth).

Chapter 150

Notes on Romans 1:1-7

It was ordered in the wisdom of God that no apostle should plant the gospel in the imperial city. Rome cannot boast truthfully of a church apostolic in its origin, like Jerusalem, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and many more less considerable. We know that on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was first given, there were Roman Jews, sojourning in Jerusalem, who heard the gospel there. (Acts 2; compare also Rom. 16:7.) These may have carried the glad tidings westward, if not before at least when the persecution that arose on the case of Stephen scattered all save the apostles. We are sure that some who then dispersed went to Phenice and Cyprus as well as to Antioch, and that at this last place they preached to Greeks and not to Jews only.

But whatever the particular means used to make known Christ there, it is certain that till Paul wrote and afterward came to Rome, no apostle had visited that city. Yet an evidently considerable number of saints were there; and in my judgment, the epistle itself affords clear and full indications that they consisted of persons from among Jews as well as Gentiles.

These were among the circumstances which drew out an epistle from the great apostle which yields to no other in importance. Hence have we here so comprehensive a treatise, and withal so fundamental; not on Church relationship, but man's state as a sinner, and then his justification by the work, and death and resurrection of Christ; that is, the privileges of individual saints through redemption, as well as the total ruin of man and his need of this mighty intervention of God in the gospel. Had the apostle laid the foundation of the work at Rome, had he gone there, as he had ardently wished, to impart some spiritual gift, we could scarcely have had such a development as we now possess. For in either case he would naturally have taught them face to face what is now embodied forever in the epistle. Before he could pay them a visit and establish them orally, their state called out this remarkable fullness of truth from the rudiments of truth upwards. Their mingled composition of Jews and Gentiles required the question of the law to be solved as to both justification and walk, as well as the reconciliation of the actual display of indiscriminate grace in the gospel with the special promises to Israel. It demanded a full explanation of human responsibility, whether in Jew or in Greek. For the same reason too it was needed, here especially, to set forth chiefly in exhortation the general walk of the Christians in relation to each other and to the powers that be (at that time heathen), with the peremptory claims of holiness on the one hand, and on the other the true nature and limits of brotherly forbearance in things indifferent.

The salutation or address of the apostle is unusually full. “Paul, a bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto God's gospel, which he promised before by his prophets in holy scripture, concerning his Son, that came of David's seed as to flesh, that was marked out God's Son in power as to spirit of holiness by resurrection of [the] dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations, in behalf of his name; among whom are ye also, called of Jesus Christ: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 1-7.)

“Bondman of Jesus Christ” is the boast of one who knew the true holy liberty of grace as perhaps no other heart was taught and enjoyed so well. This was a general designation and should be true, is true, of each Christian. But Paul next speaks of himself as a “called apostle.” Apostleship was not successional like a Jewish priest, nor elect of the assembly like the seven who cared for tables at Jerusalem: still less was it a question of self-assumption He was an apostle by calling as the saints were called. (Ver. 7.) No doubt, from his mother's womb Saul of Tarsus had been separated, as he was afterward called by God's grace. But here it appears to me that the separation was more distinctly “for God's gospel,” and therefore may refer rather to Acts 13:2. God's glad tidings is a precious truth, the direct and explicit contradiction of man's natural thought of Him who gives to all liberally and upbraids not. Doubtless this can only be in and through Christ; still it is God who loves, gives, sends: it is His gospel. What a blessed starting-point for the apostle! What an exhaustless fountain-head! But if this fullness of spontaneous and active love in God toward man be a truth ever new by reason of the constant prevalence of human thoughts even in the saints, it was no new thing to God. (Ver. 2.) It was late in the world's history when this gospel went forth; but He had promised it before through His prophets in holy writ—through the prophets who ever appear of old when all on man's part was hopeless. So one of the earliest that wrote prophecies said, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help. I will be thy king; where is any other that may save thee?” So another, the last of them, wrote, “I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Had the Jews, had the priests even, despised His name? “From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles.” Such is a sample of what He proclaimed beforehand through His prophets. Space would fail even to cite a small portion. What went before as far as this verse notices was God's promise (for the law is not yet touched on); His gospel is not promise but accomplishment. Before Christ and His work, it could not be more than promised. Now, whatever be the promises, in Him is the Yea and in Him the Amen.

How can these things be? What can account either for such precious promises, or for the still more precious accomplishment on which God's gospel is founded and goes forth to man? The answer is clear, worthy, and amply sufficient. All turns on the Son of God: His glad tidings are concerning Him. (Ver. 3.) His person comes before us here in two ways: first, as born of the seed of David according to the flesh which He had condescended to; secondly, as defined or declared Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection. These two views of our Lord are respectively in relation to what we have just seen—the promises and the gospel. The true Beloved, the Son of David, came, object and fulfiller and fulfillment of every promise of God; but man, and especially the people who had the promises, received Him not, but cast Him out even to death, the death of the cross. God, infinitely glorified therein, raised Him up who had already raised dead persons, and will raise all. “For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” Thus in every way resurrection marks Him out as Son of God in power, pre-eminently so when He rose in His own person after being crucified in weakness, and this according to the Spirit of holiness which characterized Him all the days of His flesh. Thus, as the coming of Christ was the presentation of the promise, God's gospel supposes not only the divine glory of His person but the mighty power of His resurrection which demonstrates the value and efficacy of His death. (Ver. 4.) In life sin and Satan touched Him not, who ever walked in the Spirit and according to the word of God; on the cross, made sin for us, He annulled him who had the power of death, though resurrection alone adequately determines His

power and glorious person.

Jesus consequently, risen from the dead in power, acts as Lord and Christ, “our Lord,” “by whom we have received grace and apostleship.” (Ver. 5.) It is He who sends from on high. As once on earth, Lord of the harvest, He sent forth first the twelve and afterward other seventy also; so ascended He gave gifts to men. Nor was it only that the apostolic call was itself a mark of grace. In Paul's case the grace that arrested and quickened him to God was at one and the same time with the choice of him as a witness to all men of what be had seen and heard. Such a call could not, so to speak, but be of deeper character and larger sphere than that of others who had been appointed of the Lord while here below. Hence it was “for obedience of faith” (not exactly that which faith leads and strengthens to, but faith-obedience, the heart bowing to the divine message of His grace) “in all the nations” as the scene of testimony. Taken out from among the people and the nations, to these last the Lord sent him, as we are told in Acts 26 Again, we are here told, it was for or “on behalf of the name of Christ.”

Such was his passport: what was theirs? “Among whom ye also, called of Jesus Christ.” They were among the nations, and his commission was toward all the nations. Was he an apostle? So were they saints, not by birth nor by ordinance, but by the call of Jesus Christ who had called him as apostle. (Ver. 6.)

This entitled Paul then to address “all that are in Rome beloved of God; called saints;” this made it his heart's joy, as it was the Holy Ghost's inspiring him, to wish them “grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 7.) These privileges they had tasted already through the faith of Christ; but the apostle owns himself their debtor and proceeds to put to their account that which would enrich them exceedingly. May we too enjoy increasingly Him who is their source through the One who alone can make Him known!

Notes on Romans 1:8-16

Take any part of the Old Testament and compare it with these opening words. How evident and immense the difference, aim, character, and scope! One may well wonder this never occurred to those who would assimilate the testimony of God and state of man before and after the coming of Christ. What is there, for instance, like it in the five books of Moses, or the historical books that follow? In vain do you search the Psalms and other poetical books for a parallel. Not even the prophets describe or predict such a state of things. Glorious things are spoken for Israel; mercy from God which will not fail to reach and bless the poor Gentiles; deliverance and joy for the long travailing earth and lower creation in general—all this and more we have abundantly from the prophets and even in the Psalms. But there is nothing resembling the tone even of the Apostle's salutation and preface to the Roman saints, any more than what meets us in the rest of the epistles of the New Testament. A new thing was before God here below, answering to a new thing, the greatest of all, in heaven—His own Son, as man who was risen and gone on high after having expiated our sins on the cross. From this, as the central object, the Holy Ghost works, sent down to make God known in Christ come and gone, and to give believers a part in the infinite work Christ has effected for them. This revealed object conforms the hearts that know it, though not all equally, yet all in measure after its own nature. Such is Christianity.

Here, as everywhere in the epistles, illustrations, examples, and proofs abound; not that there was not faith before, not that the Spirit did not at all times work suitably to God's character and dealings. Hence there never was a day of difficulty or darkness of old which did not give occasion for some worthy display of God's wisdom and goodness, and this through, as well as to, those that knew Him in His grace. But these displays were of course according to the task He had then in hand, whether before the flood or after it, whether in the time of simple promise or after the law was given, whether amidst the sorrows of the captivity or when the Messiah was presented to the responsibility of the returned remnant in the land. Certainly for saints now as of old there are objective truths, there are traits of inward experience and of outward practice, which always abide in substance. But this identity in much that is of no small moment only makes the fact the more striking that there are differences of incalculable importance, not merely for us but as connected with God's glory. Who could conceive before redemption such feelings, thoughts, language as we have here before us? Who that has the smallest spiritual perception could think of Enoch or Noah, Isaac or Jacob, Moses or Joshua, David or Solomon, Isaiah or Jeremiah, yea even Peter or John in the days of our Lord's ministry, uttering such words as these to saints at Rome, many of them Gentiles? “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always at the time of my prayers entreating, if by any means now at length I shall be prospered by the will of God to come to you: for I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift in order to your being established; that is, to be comforted mutually in you by the faith in each other, both yours and mine.” (Ver. 8-12.)

Entirely independent of fleshly tie or national connection or a school of opinion or any other relationship of time, it was a bond which, resting on the unseen and eternal, knit the heart of him who wrote to souls for the most part never seen before. An affection ardent and sustained continually bore them on his heart before God and delighted in the good report of their faith announced in the whole world, as it then might easily be from that seat of central authority which made its will and mind felt to and beyond the extremities of its vast empire. Hence his longing to see them for no selfish interest but for their spiritual blessing through the faith which produces and reproduces joy now in the midst of rejection, and blessing that will never fade or be forgotten. Such were among the effects of God's gospel now realized in and expressed by him who, without that blessed knowledge of Christ, had been the fiercest zealot of the straitest sect of the Pharisees, persecuting to prison and death all that dared even of his own nation to call on the name of Jesus of Nazareth; now the untiring herald of divine grace, in that same Jesus dead and risen, as unlimited as the sin and misery of man; the warm sympathizer with God-given faith in all who bore that despised name. He himself was emphatically a man of faith—faith working by love which sought not theirs but them, not this world's ease or honor but God's will and glory in the good of souls, everlastingly indeed but now also, not as if it were a doubtful essay but a willing blessing from the God whose grace he knew for himself and could count on for all His children.

Fervor of affection too was natural, so to speak, to one thus living with God, “my God,” while in this world, joy (not in iniquity, as wretched flesh delights in what is of and like itself, but) in what was of God “through Jesus Christ,” though only known by report everywhere. “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world.” He could appeal to God for the best of all evidences of his thankfulness to Him for it, and love to them. “For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son.” His mention of them was incessant, always beseeching on occasion of his prayers, that, if God so pleased, he might somehow be permitted now at least to visit them. What evident and godly sincerity! What motives wrought of the Spirit in one who owned himself the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints Mark the change of expression here in passing. It is the gospel of God's Son now, not simply of God, however beautiful this was in its place. (Ver. 1.) But now the apostle is not thinking of the source which characterized the glad tidings, but of the manner and means in which His grace wrought to deliver the lost. It was therefore the gospel of His Son as well as His own. Here, too, the apostle names his own serving God “in my Spirit;” i.e., not with mere outward works or a bare sense of imperious duty, but with inwardly active and intelligent devotedness in the glad tidings of God's Son.

One of this world's sages has dared to impute to the holy apostle pious craft and holy flattery; but this was, no doubt, a judgment founded on his own spirit and his incapacity of appreciating the delicate feelings which grace renders easy and habitual. Not so: though the apostle had his commission from the Lord to the Gentiles as such, he would exercise it according to Christ. It is the tact of tender love toward those who were saints of God in such a place, not the maneuvering of a skillful party-leader, which we see here, when he tells them of his strong desire to see them—that he might impart some spiritual gift in order to their establishment: that is, as he explains, to be mutually comforted among them by each other's faith, both theirs and his. Yet the will of God governed his steps, whatever might be his affectionate longing after their good.

Nor was it a new thing, this desire to see them. “Now I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that I often proposed to come to you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the other Gentiles. Both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to wise and to unintelligent, I am debtor; so, as far as me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that [are] in Rome.” (Ver. 13-15.) Whatever might be the special pre-occupation which hindered the apostle's execution of what was in his heart, God manifestly did not mean the great western city, the capital of the world, to have an early visit of one in Paul's position. If he owned the debt of love to all nations and conditions, certainly Rome could not but have attractions, and especially those already called out from the world there. On his part, then, there was no reluctance but all readiness to go to Rome.

Let none imagine that the grandeur of that great city kept him back through awe of it or shame of Christ. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, both to Jew first and to Greek.” (Ver. 16.) All else was but man, or appealed to man. The gospel was God's power for saving, not a mere rule to condemn. Consequently it went out to every one that believes, Jew or Greek, though to Jew first who had the law and the promises too. Such was the order even for the great apostle of the uncircumcision, at least while the first tabernacle subsisted.

Chapter 152

Notes on Romans 1:17

THIS verse is so important in itself, of so large a bearing on the epistle as well as the doctrine of the gospel elsewhere, and withal so perplexed by the conflicting thoughts even of true believers, not to speak of theologians of all schools, that it demands and will surely repay our careful consideration in dependence on our God.

The first thing to be remarked is that δικαιοσ■νη does not mean justification, but here at least, as in most passages where this phrase occurs, righteousness, and this justifying. It is therefore kept distinct by the apostle from δικα■ωσις (chap. 4:25; 5:18), which expresses the act of justifying, or the effect—justification; as δικα■ωμα sets forth accomplished righteousness in justification or in judgment, righteous requirement whether morally or as an ordinance or decree. (Luke 1:6; Rom. 1:32; 2:26; 5:16, 18; 8:4; Heb. 9:1, 10; Rev. 15:4; 19:8.) Thus δικαιοσ■νη retains its regular signification of habit or quality of righteousness.

Next, observe that it is θεο■, God's righteousness, not man's—divine righteousness revealed in the gospel, not human righteousness required in the law. There is no question here either of infusion or of imputation. As for infusion, it is wholly wrong; as to imputation, it is a precious truth insisted on in chapter 4, where the apostle draws from the case of Abraham that the believer's faith is reckoned for (or as) righteousness. For God in His grace can afford to justify the ungodly soul who believes on Him—can and does reckon righteousness to him apart from works, according to Psa. 32

Here, however, the apostle does not enter on an exposition of the ground on which God could consistently with His character justify a sinful man. But as he had declared he was not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to every believer Jew; or Greek; so he now explains that it has this saving character because God's righteousness is revealed in it “by faith,” and consequently “to faith.”

In Titus 2 the apostle looks at the source of the gospel. It is the grace of God. Lost man needs that saving grace which is only in God and has now appeared free and full in Christ Jesus and His redemption. But here in Rom. 1 the stress is on His righteousness, not on His mercy, though indeed it is the richest mercy, but it is much more. In the gospel is His righteousness revealed. The awakened sinner does repent, does detest his sins, judges himself as wholly and nothing but evil in God's sight, and so humbly, thankfully casts himself on Christ. But in the gospel is revealed not the victory of the soul striving against sin, but God's righteous consistency with Himself in revealing to the believer a salvation entirely outside himself and therefore ■κ π■στεως, by or of faith, out of that principle and no other. Sovereign grace alone could have thought of it, or given it thus freely to him who deserved nothing less; but the conscience of the sinner touched of the Spirit could not have peace whilst a charge of guilt remained. The righteousness of God, without the gospel, would and must have made a short work of the guilty—must have judged them at once and forever. But the gospel is God's power for salvation because in it is His righteousness revealed in the way of faith. Were it by works of law man must win and merit life, but it is wholly in

contrast with such a scheme, and man, being guilty and so lost on any such ground, disappears, save as the object of God's salvation which now triumphs in the blessed fact that it is His righteousness also. Hence it is of faith that it might be according to grace, and so open to any and every believer; for, as we are told elsewhere (Galatians “the law is not of faith;” and it works wrath. (Rom. 4) Clearly, then, there is great precision, as ever in the language of Scripture. Human righteousness is expressly excluded, as it Would be indeed inconsistent with the entire context, which supposes man to be lost, if it were only because the gospel is God's power for salvation: and which immediately after (ver. 18 et seq.) proceeds to demonstrate the universality and completeness of man's ruin. The gospel is the revelation of divine righteousness. It is God who justifies, and He is just in justifying, him who believes.

It is of immense moment to see this great truth. It is not merely a righteousness which God provides and gives, or which avails with Him, though both be quite true. The meaning is, what the words say— “God's righteousness” —without for the present going farther. Who doubts the force of God's power just before, or God's wrath just after? Why should men stumble at the similar phrase between? Rom. 3:21-26 is explicit enough to help to a definite judgment.

One reason of the difficulty is that some never seem to think of righteousness apart from imputation; and as we cannot speak of imputing God's righteousness, so they, in their own mind, change the expression of Scripture and prefer to express their thought as the “imputed righteousness of Christ,” which again leaves room for other consequences. Now as a principle we must hold to the superiority of Scripture and the forms which the inspiring wisdom of God has given to His own truth. That Christ was absolutely and perfectly righteous every Christian believes; that imputation has a most weighty place in the matter of our justification is to my mind both undeniably certain and essential to the gospel. Nevertheless, the truth remains that, where God's righteousness occurs in Scripture, imputation is not employed. Nor do I believe it could be; because as God's righteousness could not be inherent, so on the other hand imputing God's righteousness has no meaning.

Here it is His righteousness revealed in the gospel. Chapter 3 shows how this can be righteously. Being not merely deficient but guilty sinners, we cannot be justified without the blood of Christ dying in atonement for our sins. Hence, therefore, entirely apart from law, divine righteousness is by faith of Him who thus wrought redemption, and God is just and justifies him who is of faith in Jesus. But God was so glorified in the cross of Christ, that He raised Him up and seated Him in glory at His own right hand—not only forgave us, but seated us in Christ in heavenly places. This is God's righteousness, which is revealed to faith. Nothing less is righteously due to Christ because of His redemption work. It is the contrast of law-work in all respects. God is righteous in treating not Christ only but the believer in Him according to the worth of redemption in His own eyes. By virtue of His work God accounts us righteous who believe; we are made the righteousness of God in Him.

At Sinai, in the law, man's righteousness was claimed but found wanting, In the gospel God's righteousuess is revealed, complete and perfect. Promised before, it was only revealed when all was accomplished which is its ground. Being revealed, it is a question of faith, not of desert nor victory, nor power within, but contrariwise of looking out of self to God's righteousness in Christ.

As divine righteousness is revealed by faith (■κ π■στεως), so is it unto or for faith (ε■ς π■στιν) the one excluding works of law as the way or principle on Which it is revealed; the other including faith wherever it may be, and whatever the measure. It is singular that the Authorized Version should give “from faith” here and “by faith” for the same phrase in the same verse. The former appears to me objectionable in this connection; because it insinuates the idea of growth from one degree of faith to another, as some ancients and moderns have avowed. On the other hand, to take ■κ π. (by faith) with δ θ (God's righteousness) is due perhaps to the difficulty some have found in assigning to each phrase its own definite value.

Again, the reader must beware of the notion which some found on the present tense of the verb ■ποκαλ■πτεται, as if it warrants the idea of a gradually more complete realization of the state of justification. I do not doubt that faith grows and so apprehension and enjoyment of our blessing in Christ, but the thing revealed in the gospel to faith is complete: divine righteousness repudiates any other thought, whatever may be the measure in which the heart apprehends it.

Not even a Jew could deny that the prophet Habakkuk (2:4) affirms the same principle; and the slight difference from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint bears witness, it seems to me, that these words are cited for so much and no more: “even as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

Notes on Romans 1:18

The apostle next proceeds to show what it was that made the gospel so necessary to man and so suitable to God. The gospel is God's power to salvation, and so a revelation of His righteousness, ■κ π■στεως ε■ς π■στιν.

When man evidently had, or was convicted of having, no righteousness for God, He revealed His own in the gospel, which was consequently open for faith wherever it existed, being by faith, and not by works of law, to which the Jew laid claim. To this truth also the prophet Habakkuk gave his emphatic testimony.

That God should thus deal with man was absolutely needful if man was to find salvation. “For God's wrath is revealed from heaven upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

The fathers and the children of Israel were not without experience of divine wrath on earth. They had seen it consume the cities of the plain of Sodom. They had known His wondrous chastisements in the field of Zoan till the waters of the Red Sea, rebuked for their sakes, covered their proud enemies, so that not one was left. They had felt its edge when the Lord created a new thing, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up quickly Korah, Dathan, and Abiram with their company. Man, the race, had already proved it indeed in the flood which took them all away, save those secured in the ark. But these and other kindred acts of judgment of old were providential and earthly.

There was as yet no revelation of God's wrath from heaven. These divine actings were visible in their effects if not arresting men before the eyes of their fellows on earth.

Now, concurrently with the glad tidings, not exactly therein, there is revealed divine wrath from heaven. This is in no way executed yet, but it is being revealed; and man, being sinful, is seen to be utterly, manifestly, unfit for God's presence. God Himself is no longer hidden. He has been manifested in flesh: “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.” His nature thus disclosed is absolutely intolerant of sin, as it must be also of sinners, but for His righteousness revealed in the gospel, which justifies the believer by the faith of Christ. Still the same Christ, whose atonement is the groundwork of the gospel, makes known God as He is, and nowhere more proved to be at war forever with evil than in the cross, where Jesus who knew no sin, yet made sin for us, tasted not death only but the divine abandonment, that our sins might be dealt with according to the unsparing judgment of God. Hence acting with the gospel, there is revealed His wrath from heaven, which goes far beyond any conceivable temporal strokes of His hand on earth; for these (though of course a testimony to, and as far as they went in harmony with, this nature) were but a part of His governmental dealings, not the full expression of His nature as when we come to the expiation of Christ.

Hence this divine wrath revealed from heaven has for its object every kind of godlessness (π■σαν ■σ■βειαν) and, especially, men's unrighteousness that hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is no

longer a particular nation under a law which judged acts of transgression, though it gave the knowledge of a sinful root underneath, while the rest of the nations were comparatively overlooked. “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.” (Amos 3:1, 2.) The veil is rent; and God shining out, as it were, discerns and judges all everywhere inconsistent with Himself. At the same time He sends in the gospel a free and full remission of sins to every believer. Thus, while every form of Gentile evil is morally judged as contrary to God's nature, the Jew, if unrighteous, is implied from the outset to be in a yet more awful condition. “Salvation is of the Jews.” They had the promises, and the law, and in part at least the truth. But the language is so comprehensive as to be quite as applicable, if not more so, to the professing Christian now with his enlarged light, grace, and the truth more fully revealed in Christ. Increase of privileges, if abused, is but increase of condemnation. And what more just, the enemies of God themselves being judges and the cause their own? Thus it seems to me that π■σαν (“all”) extends to the second part of the description as well as to the first, and embraces every sort of unrighteousness where men hold the truth in unrighteousness, no less than every kind of impiety. Such men might not be strictly impious, they possess the truth; but along with this, being unrighteous, they cause the truth and name of God to be thereby blasphemed.

Some find a difficulty in the last clause and, assuming that κατεχ■ντων, if here taken in the sense of “holding,” must have it only in the lowest degree, they contend for the meaning of “holding back” or restraint as in 2 Thess. 2:6, 7, which they persuade themselves is suitable to our context. My conviction is that κατ■χω retains here its usual emphasis of possession or holding fast, where moral things are in question, and that this is necessary to the solemn lesson here conveyed. For the apostle is speaking of God's wrath as against not merely all impiety in general but specifically men's unrighteousness who ever so stubbornly keep the truth in unrighteousness. God is not mocked. His Spirit is the holy Spirit as well as the Spirit of truth. He must have the truth held in righteousness; for otherwise it is not Christ, the Second Man, but only the first man in another shape, and in a shape pre-eminently hateful to Himself. How many feel keenly, dispute hotly, and in other clays have contended in deadly warfare for the truth they held, whose works denied God, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate! The Jews were a standing witness of this perilous religion then: Christendom, Popery, Protestantism, the truest dogmatic teaching you please, is not a whit safer now, where the professor does not pursue holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Nothing can be simpler and more certain than this truth, once it is stated and understood. But the value of it is apparent from the fact that the Fathers so-called, almost, if not quite unanimously, overlooked and denied it. Their system, even that of pious and able men like Augustine, was that the wicked, though lost, would derive some considerable assuagement during their everlasting punishment because of their baptism. Most fatal and offensive error! The very reverse is true. “That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

Again, this verse is not, as some suppose, limited as a preface to the proof of Gentile depravity; it is rather the thesis in brief, which is opened out in the rest of chapters 1, 2, 3, down to verse 21, which resumes the treatment of God's righteousness, and begins the details of that which we had in chapter 1:16. I understand, therefore, that verse 18 gives first the general description of human ungodliness in every phase, and then the unrighteousness which was at that time most conspicuous in the Jews who combined with practical injustice a tenacious hold or possession of the truth: the former demonstrated to the end of Rom. 1, the latter (after the transition of chap. 2:1-16) pursued from chapter 2:17 to chapter 3:20. Had this twofold aspect been apprehended in the verse before us, the rendering of the Authorized Version would not have been deserted for “restraining the truth by unrighteousness,” which is a sense framed to meet the condition of the heathen who were supposed here to be alone in the apostle's view. The same misconception wrought mischief in lowering the character both of the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, and of the truth in order to meet paganism. Admit the universal scope of the moral description with a specific reference to those who held the truth in unrighteousness, and the sense which results is as easy as it is all-important, the fitting introduction to the entire episode that follows till the apostle takes up his proper theme in God's righteousness revealed in the gospel.

Chapter 154

Notes on Romans 1:19-23

The apostle next proceeds to set forth the proofs of the guilt of men because of which the wrath of God awaits them. And first he takes up impiety, or the evil which characterized the vast majority of the world, as later on he addresses himself to that subtler iniquity which consisted in holding the truth along with practical unrighteousness, then found among Jews as now in Christendom. This division of the subject, it will be seen, is not only closer to the language of the context but it preserves us from the mistake of such as attribute a knowledge of “the truth” to the heathen as such. In fact, verse 19 begins with the earlier of the two classes of evil we have seen distinguished in verse 18, and the subject is pursued to the end of the chapter. It is distinctively the Gentile portion, and presents the moral ground which necessitated and justified the unsparing judgment of God.

Two reasons are assigned why His wrath is thus revealed upon all impiety. The first (ver. 19, 20) is their inexcusable neglect of the testimony of creation to His eternal power and divinity; the second (ver. 21) their abandonment of the traditional knowledge of God they had as late as the day of (not Adam, but even) Noah. Thus man was unfaithful to knowledge he possessed and to evidence around him.

“Because what is to be known of God is manifest among them, for God hath manifested it to them. For the invisible things of him from the world's creation are perceived, being understood by his work, both his eternal power and divinity, so that they should be inexcusable.” The general force is plain. A few expressions may call for more detailed explanation. Τ■ γνωστ■ν means here, I think, not the knowledge γνςστ■ν or what was known of God, but as the English Version, “that which may be known” of Him. It is the knowable, rather than the known. The evidence was ample and distinct, but their eyes were dull. Next, I see no sufficient ground to take the phrase ■ν α■τ■ς in an emphatic sense, but in one more general. Had self-knowledge been appealed to, as many conceive, it appears to me that the proper word for subjective knowledge must have been employed, and, further, the reflexive pronoun. It is expressly an objective character of knowledge which lay open in the midst; and this is confirmed by the added intimation” for God manifested it to them,” not the action of conscience, which finds its more appropriate place in chapter 2 where moral perception and conduct is discussed.

But how did God manifest to men what may be known of Him? This is answered in verse 20. For His invisible things, not all of course, but His eternal power and divinity, since the creation of the world, are perceived, being mentally apprehended by His works. The things He made were before all eyes, and, as we know, did not fail to produce convictions far above the ordinary strain of human thought prostrated by superstition and bewildered by philosophy: so much so that even the famous positivist of ancient times could not write his treatise on the world without affirming that “God, though He is invisible to every mortal being, is seen from the works themselves.”

The phrase, ■π■ κτ■σεως κοσμου, “from the world's creation,” can signify the foundation or source of the suggestion as easily and surely as the earliest starting point of time; but the latter

seems to me preferable here, because the things made by God are immediately afterward named as furnishing the groundwork for the mind to infer their Maker by.

Again, it is notorious that θει■της (from θε■ος), here translated “Godhead” in the Authorized Version has a wholly different force from θε■της (from beds God) in Col. 2:9. In the latter case it would quite fall short of the Apostle's object to predicate divinity of the person of Christ: all the fullness of the Deity, or Godhead in the strictest sense, he says, dwells in Him bodily. In the former case, there is no such distinct personality spoken of, but the more general sense that man may gather of a nature not creature but creatorial as evidenced in His works, the fruit of His power. It is a real, though the lowest, kind of testimony.

The next ground is not the knowable but the positively known. “Because, having known God, they glorified him not as God, nor were thankful, but became vain in their reasonings, and their unintelligent heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into a likeness of an image of corruptible man and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.” (Ver. 21-23.) A traditional knowledge of God is in question; and as the former regarded man with evidence from the beginning calculated and adequate to indicate a divine first Cause, so the objective knowledge of God here spoken of was the portion of man even after the flood: indeed not till after that mighty event do we hear of idolatry. But man was unequal to the task of preserving the holy deposit; and this, because of his moral state. When they did know God, they neither glorified Him as such, nor were they thankful. This left room for vain reasonings, which again darkened the heart instead of leading it into light. It was the self-sufficiency, and so the folly, of the creature. For light is only seen in God's light, and man must sink into darkness when not morally elevated by looking up to One above him. The humbling proof appeared too soon; and philosophy but sealed the evil to which superstitious fear led the way. An unacknowledged Supreme was rapidly forgotten, and the glory of the incorruptible God exchanged for a likeness of an image of corruptible man, yea, into objects ever lowering till creation's lords, now the victim of this debasing delusion, worship the most loathsome reptile which eats the dust.

How admirably these few words refute the theory of progress in which the would-be wise have indulged in ancient and in modern times: a theory as contrary to their own vaunted reason as to fact. For what a Being could He be who would leave His intelligent and morally responsible creature, man, to grope his cheerless miserable way from the horrors of nature worship, and the darkness of polytheism to juster notions of Himself and His attributes? Where is the wisdom, where the love, where the justice of such a scheme? The error consists in reasoning from progress in material things, or even from the intellectual domain, to moral condition: progress in those Scripture admits since the fall which means the very reverse in this. No: man departed more and more from God till the flood; after it he gave up the knowledge of God for the worship of the creature. The race fell into ever increasing error and evil, till a partial revelation by Moses and the complete manifestation of God in Christ judged morally the heathen world, proving its declension, not progress, its insensibility to right reason, and its departure from true tradition into the degradation of idolatry.

Chapter 155

Notes on Romans 1:24-32

The consequence of idolatry is invariably under the moral judgment of God utter uncleanness among its votaries; and this in all its varieties but perhaps most conspicuously, as a divine retribution, among those who set up the human form— “corruptible man,” —though it was certainly not wanting where they worshipped that which was beneath man, birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles, alone or combined.

“Wherefore also God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness to dishonor their bodies among them [-selves], who changed the truth of God for falsehood and venerated and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever, Amen.” (Ver. 24, 25.) If the soul abandons the truth of God, all is wrong, whatever appearances may say for the present. This was the great falsehood. Not to be in dependence and obedience is to be false to the relationship of a creature. Yet is there a step still farther down in evil—the giving to the creature the honor that belongs to God only. It is exactly, and in this order, what Satan did, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, for there was no truth in him. Fallen man does his own will and is simply thus the slave of Satan. It may be in lusts, or in a religion of his own imagination, the one evidently degrading him, the other promising to elevate. But in truth it is Satan's, not God's promise, and is the full absolute lie which seals him up in all moral degradation not only for mind but for the body also. Such was heathenism, from which Judaism was powerless to deliver man, though a witness against his state. For God as yet dwelt behind a veil, and if at times He disclosed His way without a veil, it was but angelically, which is only a healing testimony to the sin-sick and not the quickening power needed by man, by all dead in trespasses and sin. (Comp. John 5) God revealed in Christ, and this in eternal life as well as redemption, alone meets the case. Such is Christianity as now brought home and enjoyed in the power of the Holy Ghost, who accordingly puts more abundant honor on our uncomely parts and for the first time developer the vast importance of the body in God's service. See Rom. 6; 12; 1 Cor. 6; 15 Cor. 5, &c.

“On this account God gave them up unto passions of dishonor; for both their females changed the natural use into the contrary of nature, and likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female, burned in their desire toward one another; males with males working out unseemliness, and fully receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was due.” (Ver. 26, 27.) In this graphic but most grave sketch of the humiliating picture which the classics fill up in so different a tone (for “the unjust knoweth no shame”), the weaker vessel comes first, as indeed the shamelessness was there most apparent and human depravity proved most complete and hopeless. The apostle does not deign to characterize them (though the greatest and highest, sages of earth, monarchs, conquerors, poets, philosophers, and what not) as men and women, but as “females” and “males,” characterized by ways below the brute, given up of God, and even now enduring the meet reward of their deeds.

“And even as they approved not to have God in knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do things unbecoming; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness,

malice; full of envy, murder, strife, guile, ill-disposition; whisperers, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boasters, inventors of mischiefs, disobedient to parents, without understanding, perfidious, without natural affection, unmerciful; who, well knowing the righteous decree of God that those who do such things are worthy of death, not only do them but also take complacency in those who do them." (Ver. 28-32) What pit of immorality can be lower than this last?

The word ■δ■κιμος is here as elsewhere translated '; reprobate," as this well suits the phrase and contrasts their not approving to retain God in their knowledge with His giving them over to a "disapproved" mind. But it may rightly bear an active sense, and would then mean an "undiscerning" mind, as the sentence on their presumption in rejecting God after pretending to test and try the matter. It will be observed that in verse 29 I have omitted on good external authority πορνε■■ ("fornication"), as the internal appears to me to turn the scale against it. As for the resemblance to πονηρ■■ it might act either in giving room to its insertion by mistake, or to its omission. But I think that the first class consists of personal evil; the second of that which is relative; as the third brings out, not roots of moral pravity, abstractedly viewed, whether personal or relative, but developed wicked characters, and this in an order neither unsystematic nor difficult to discern. 'Ασπονδους is deficient in authority, being omitted in the best and most ancient manuscripts. "Implacable" is therefore left out of verse 31. It was probably introduced here because of its connection with ■στοργοι in 2 Tim. 3:3.

Notes on Romans 2:1-8

The proof of human depravity and need is not yet complete. There is another character of evil contrasted yet connected with the description in the last verse of chapter 1 and most offensive in the sight of God. Men judge others and yet do the same things, and thus condemn themselves. How can this in any way arrest or even mitigate the sentence of God? It was and is common among speculative men, moralists, and the like. In truth it is no small aggravation. To say “we see” exposes us, who none the less practice iniquity, to hear from the just Judge of all, that “our sin remaineth.” For the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, and the judging in others what they themselves live in justifies their own righteous doom. Say what they please, God's sentence is according to truth upon those that do such things. He will, He must, have reality, and conscience knows it. Instead of open sympathy with others who sin, they may judge it as wrong; but if they do the same, how can such moral trifling, or those guilty of it, stand before God?

“Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, every one that judgest; for wherein thou judgest the other, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those that do such things. And dost thou reckon this, O man, that judgest those that do such things, and doest them, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Ver. 1-4.) The truth is that philosophy knows not God, and so easily forgets His judgment, as it never can conceive His love. It is self-satisfied and has man for its object, not God. Hence His lavish goodness and His patience are despised, and His end in all is a lesson never learned.

Repentance is the work of God in the soul on the moral side. It is inseparable from the new nature, and flows from the energy of the Spirit as faith in Jesus does; in no way the preparation for faith, but its accompaniment and fruit. Nevertheless, by this I do not mean faith exercised as to the infinite work of Christ. There may be as yet but a looking to Him longingly and hopefully; and, along with this expectation of good from Him according to God's word, that word turns the eye of conscience inwardly, and the man now converted judges himself as well as his ways before God. This deepens also, instead of diminishing, as the soul grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There was always repentance as truly as faith wrought in souls; and though this may have assumed a legal shape under law, repentance is not in anywise done with now, but is wrought all the more profoundly under the gospel. Different schools of doctrine have drawn a wrong inference, one from Rom. 2:4, the other from 2 Cor. 7:10.

On the one side it is thought that the perception of God's goodness is repentance; on the other side that it is godly sorrow for sin. Scripture says nothing of the sort in either case, and intimates that, while repentance always supposes a change of mind, it goes much farther, and is a matter of conscience in the light of God, and not a purely intellectual process. As the goodness of God leads to repentance, so sorrow according to Him works repentance. There is such a thing as sorrowing unto repentance, as there is repentance unto salvation. It is thus a far deeper dealing with the soul

than many suppose. Self is judged without reserve, and the will goes wholly with the new man. Sorrow according to God may still have a struggle: when one repents truly, the evil is disliked inwardly, and one has got free from it. “Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” (Jer. 31:19.)

Moralizing without conscience has a peculiarly hardening effect, and the long-suffering goodness of God is then misused to slight His leading. God is not mocked; it is only thou, O man, who thus deceivest thyself. “But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest to thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment.” (Ver. 5.) Such is the solemn sanction which accompanies the gospel: not national, earthly, and providential judgments, but divine wrath, wrath already revealed from heaven, to take its awful course in its day when the day of grace is over. The law inflicted its temporal chastisements; with the gospel goes the revelation of “how much sorer punishment,” even eternal; and this most of all when the gospel is refused or abused. For there is a righteous judgment of God, “who shall render to each according to his work: to those that in patience of good work seek for glory, honor, and incorruptibility, eternal life; but to those that are contentious and disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.” (Ver. 6-8.) The appraisal and the rendering are individual; and, as we shall see farther on, the secrets of the heart appear.

It is important to note that eternal life is viewe3 not only as a present possession for the believer in Christ, but as the future issue of a devoted pathway for His name. The Gospel of John developer the former; the other three show us the latter; as our apostle elsewhere in this epistle (chap. 6:22, 23) gives us both brought together in the same context. But now, says he of Christians, “being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” On the other hand, the wages of sin, though death, are not death only, but after it the judgment, as Heb. 9 states in accordance with what we have here.

Notes on Romans 2:9-16

In the next verse the apostle for the first time points directly at the Jew, no less than the Gentile, as obnoxious to divine judgment. We have seen with what consideration he approaches this subject, which, once cleared, is to hold so prominent a place in the epistle. In chapter 1 he had begun with the bright side, and affirmed the gospel to be God's power unto salvation to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek. Now, in chapter 2, when handling, not the gospel that saves the lost, but the immutable principles of God's righteous government, he brings out the alternative— “tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that worketh evil, both of Jew first and of Greek; but glory, and honor, and peace to every one that worketh good, both to Jew first and to Greek; for there is no regard of person with God.” (Ver. 9-11.) Such are His ways. Time, place, people can make no radical difference with Him, save that possession of privileges brings with it a prior responsibility, and this with evident justice. If the man who enjoys religious light works out evil notwithstanding, is he less guilty than his less favored fellow-sinner? If he heeds the warning and testimony of God, working out that which is good, God will not withhold “glory, honor, and peace;” and neither last nor least stands the Jew thus found in His sight, though, as Peter truly declared on a great occasion, God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. How this is made good in souls every believer knows. It is the fruit of His own grace; for it is not in man to direct his steps, nor is good in him or to be got from him, save when faith enables him to do His good pleasure: without faith it is impossible to please Him. Nor is it for a moment to be allowed that Rom. 2 can clash either with Rom. 1 or with Rom. 3. Without such grace of God and faith of man there is no good about him: on the contrary, he needs God's power to save him. But God is here laying down His own inflexibly just ways as dealing morally with man. The believer, no doubt, is the only one who works good, the only possessor therefore of glory, honor, and peace; and while the Jew (as long as he had a place of relationship with God, and even till judgment manifestly closed it) had the precedence, the Gentile is not overlooked, but comes up in gracious remembrance before God, as we see in Cornelius and his house.

But, next, the apostle goes farther, and formally lays down that, while in every instance God will judge righteously, superiority of privilege entails deeper obligations and corresponding strictness in judgment: “for as many as without law have sinned, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law (for not the hearers of law are just with God, but the doers of law shall be justified. For whenever Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law are a law to themselves; who evince the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also joining its testimony, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel by Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 12-16.) Thus there can be no prescriptive title of exemption to the Jew in the day of judgment, as he fondly hoped. The very standing as God's witness in the earth, which that people had enjoyed in contrast with the Gentiles, bears with it their liability to a closer scrutiny when God deals, not in external inflictions on the nations, but with the heart and its ways

in His sight, however hidden from man. Could even the Jew question the equity of this procedure? He must assuredly abandon his own fatal presumption—that the righteous God would close His eyes to the wickedness of His own ancient people: if he still maintained, as he ought, the special advantage of Israel, he could not deny their augmented responsibility compared with the Gentile.

In other ways also these passages are of great weight and value. Men are apt to reason on this as on other subjects after an abstract sort. From one true God who gave His law, as He had made and shall judge all men, many assume that all alike are under that law, and shall be judged by it, and that no other method is possible without sullying God's truth, righteousness, authority, and honor. But he who is subject to the word of God, and stands intelligently by faith in His favor, knows that the dogmatism of a Pharisee is no better than the skepticism of a Sadducee, that neither knows the scripture, and that„ as the latter denies the power, so the former sets aside His grace and also His righteousness. For the apostle elaborately shows as an incontestable truth here and elsewhere that there were men without law, as certainly as others under law. Who they were is equally clear and sure: Gentiles had not law, Jews had; and this was a main element of the different ground on which they should be tried. In vain would they weaken what the apostle says in verse 12 by that which he adds in verses 14, 15, that Gentiles, having no law, whenever they do the duties of the law, are a law to themselves, spite of having no law. It would be better to seek to understand the latter verses which need a little attention and reflection, rather than to overthrow what is so plain and positive in both; for in both passages, as everywhere, the doctrine is that Gentiles were without law, in contradistinction from Jews who were under law. (Compare Rom. 3:19, 1 Cor. 9:20, 21.) In Rom. 1, where Gentile responsibility and guilt are treated, it is not a question of law, but of the testimony of creation and of the traditional knowledge of God they at first possessed. Here, in chapter ii., the Jewish boast of the law is turned to a serious purpose, as it is the basis of the apostle's proof that they cannot escape from being judged of God by the higher and fuller standard of His law.

It is argued by some who would neutralize these differences, that Gentiles are said to have the law written in their hearts. Why not look into what the apostle actually says and means, instead of twisting a few words into a contradiction of his express doctrine? It would be strange indeed, and say but little for Christianity, if heathens possessed as such that which the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 10:15, 16) affirms to be one of the grand and distinctive blessings of the New Covenant. This kind of theology teaches that the heathen have already the law written in their hearts. But the apostle does not stultify himself, as this would imply—does not predicate of the heathen that immense mercy of God which the New Covenant holds out to faith based on redemption in Christ. What he really teaches is that whenever (for indeed it was scanty and rare) Gentiles do by nature the things of the law, they evince the law's work written in their hearts. He says not that the law, as these uninstructed men assume, but that its work, was written therein. For instance, let a heathen gather somehow the duty of honoring his parents: this, though he may have never heard of the law, is a law to him. So far the work of the law (not the law itself) is said to be written in his heart. His conscience thenceforth accuses or excuses him according to his conduct; and God in judgment will take all fully into account by and by. But this in no way interferes with the opening principle that some sin without being under law and so perish, as others more guiltily sin under law, and so shall be judged; for the question in judgment is not privilege but fidelity according to what we know or may know. Not the law-hearers are just with God but the law-doers shall be

justified. This is invariably true; as scripture declares, faith accepts and judgment will display.

Accordingly we have the character of judgment declared in verse 16 conformably to what the apostle calls his gospel. Providential scourges, earthly chastening, or destruction, are true dealings of God and so revealed, not only in the Jewish scriptures, but in the prophecies of the New Testament also. But the judgment of the secrets of men is a different and far deeper truth: and this finds its suited revelation in the gospel as Paul presented it, where man is judged fully, both outwardly and inwardly, in presence of the saving grace of God and the heavenly glory of Christ the risen man, who is the life and the righteousness of the believer. This is Paul's gospel, and God's judgment of man (yea, of his heart's secrets by Jesus Christ in the great day that hastens) is according to that gospel. (Comp. Rom. 1:17, 18.)

Notes on Romans 2:17-29

The apostle now advances another step in his appeal to conscience. He addresses himself next to the Jew, not classing him with the Gentile alone. Did the Jew value himself on his singular place among men, on his possession of a divine revelation, on the true God as his God, on the knowledge of His will, on his own consequent ability to try the things that differ and hence decide for the more excellent? did he assume a conscious superiority to his Gentile neighbors, through confidence in himself as thus standing on a vantage ground which gave him to look down on the wisest of other nations as but blind, and in the dark, and foolish, and babes, being destitute of that embodiment of knowledge and truth which the law afforded himself? Be it so, but if all this were so, how was it with the Jew in fact? The greater the privilege, the less excusable if he was faithless to the light he had and as bad as the heathen he despised.

“But if thou art named a Jew, and restest on law, and boastest in God, and knowest his will, and provest the things that differ, being instructed out of the law, and hast confidence that thou thyself art a guide of blind, a light of those in darkness, an instructor, of fools, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of truth in the law: thou then that teachest another dost thou not teach thyself? thou that preachest not to steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest not to commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou who boastest in the law, through transgression of the law dost thou dishonor God? For the name of God on your account is blasphemed among the Gentiles even as it is written.” (Ver. 17-24.)

Thus severely, but severely because it was with the irresistible force of truth, does the apostle turn to the utter shame of the Jew the very ground on which he had entrenched himself in pride and vain glory. If there was conscience, he must own himself more guilty than the Gentile; if there was none, his insensibility would not make his sin and folly less manifest to all who fear God and estimate man aright. On his own skewing his boasted knowledge of the law brought no saving power along with it for himself, whatever fuel it might supply for his arrogant abuse of it in contempt of others. Who, then, more signally dishonored God? Was it not written even more strongly still in their own prophets? What said Isaiah (chap. 52:5)? and what Ezekiel (chap. 36:20-23)? No doubt their foreign lords made them to howl; but was it not true that Israel profaned Jehovah's holy name among the heathen whither they went?

The issue of the reasoning is given in the concluding verses. A religious form cannot cover the contradiction morally of its own spirit? and on the other hand, where the spirit is truly found, God will approve of this spite of the absence (it may be unavoidably) of the form. He will and must have reality in that which concerns men in relation to Himself. “For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a transgressor of law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. If then the uncircumcision keeps the requirements of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision; and the natural uncircumcision, fulfilling the law, judge thee that in the way of letter and circumcision transgressest law? For he that is outwardly a Jew is not [one], nor is that which is outward in flesh circumcision, but he that is hiddenly a Jew, and circumcision of heart

in spirit, not in letter, the praise of whom [is] not of men but of God." As the principle is clear, so are the persons who alone are acceptable with God. External circumstances cannot over-ride His character and ways and judgment. The apostle does not here enunciate the fundamental truth of either Christianity or the Church in which dispensational differences vanish away in the light of a Christ dead and risen in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek. But it is of deep interest to observe how the profoundly just dealing of God which he is asserting, and which could not but commend itself to the conscience even of him whom it most condemns, fits in with that mighty development of truth, the revelation of the mystery, which it was Paul's province above all others to make known to us. As on the one hand the mere outward Jew is nothing nor the rite abstracted from its meaning; so on the other hand that only has praise with God which is hidden and heart work, not in letter but in spirit. Such an one, he strikingly adds (in allusion it would seem to the name of Judah and of a Jew) even if his brethren curse, or men hate, shall have his praise of God.

Notes on Romans 3:1-20

The apostle's statement at the end of chapter 2: had laid down. With irresistible force for the conscience that God. will have reality rather than forth. Let the Jew then beware. This gives occasion to objections which are met in the earlier part of chapter iii. 1-8.

“What therefore [is] the superiority of the Jew, or what the profit of circumcision?” To this or at least the former of these questions the apostle replies, “Much in every way; for, first, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.” In its proper place he enumerates the various high distinctions of Israel; but here he singles out; as foremost, that which had been their constant, and most precious privilege, the possession of God's written word; and the rather too as this was Most suited to demonstrate their moral delinquency. For what use had they made of it? Where was the fruit of so great a favor?

Here again there is an anticipation of any argument founded, however unreasonably, on Jewish refractoriness which knew that the glory of God can never fail. “For what if some believed not? shall their unbelief make void the faith of God? Let it not be, but let God be true and every man false, even as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, and overcome when thou art judged.” God holds fast infallibly to His truth, and men fail in faithfulness because of want of faith, which is insensible to sin, trusts self and has no confidence in God. That there is any, the smallest, failure on God's part he indignantly repudiates, find insists that He at least be vindicated to man's shame and Confession of his own evil; even as David found his only resource in acknowledging his sin to God, clearing Him at all cost to himself. Indeed this is the secret of blessing for the sinner; and the willingness to own his ruined estate God operates in the heart by the revelation of His own grace. Our sins justify His words.

Of this the objector would again take advantage by contending that God could not then consistently punish us. Hence the apostle cuts off such misuse of the truth by what follows. “But if our unrighteousness commend God's righteousness, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous? Who inflicteth wrath? I speak according to man. Let it not be: since how shall God judge the world?” This last was an axiom with the Jew, who was willing enough to allow justice in dealing with the earth at large (as, e.g., Abraham had entrenched himself on it in favor of exempting Lot from the destruction then impending over the cities of the plain). Impossible that there can be unrighteousness in God. But this very consideration was fatal to the fond delusion of self-security to which an unrighteous Jew yielded. God brings Himself glory even in face of man's iniquity; but iniquity is none the less, nor the less surely to be judged of God for all that. Hence he allows the objection to betray its own heinousness and leaves it when thus self-exposed without an answer, as necessarily condemned even by the most ordinary natural conscience. “For if the truth of God abounded in My lie to his glory, why any longer am I too judged as a sinner and not, even as we are slanderously reported, and even as some give out that we say, Let us do evil that good may come?’—whose judgment is just.” Such reasoning resembled what was falsely put into the mouth of the Christian, and proved too truly of the Jewish adversary that, in seeking to escape the

conviction of his own hopeless exposure to God's judgment, he was obliged, as with the stiffest legalist is so often the ease, to slip into principles of very gross antinomianism. It must always be thus, where men, cloaking their sins, hope for Mercy from God; and the more inconsistently, as they ignore His grace and confess that He is the judge of all.

Next, from Verse 9 the general argument is resumed, all the stronger for the interruption which rebuked the vain struggles and detailed cavils of the Jew. “What therefore? are we better? Not at all; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin, even as it is Written, There is none righteous, not one; there is not the [man] that understandeth; there is not the [nation] that seeketh God. All went out of the way, thus then they became unprofitable; there is none that doeth kindness, there is not so much as one. Their throat [is] an open grave; with their tongues they used deceit; venom of asps [is] under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; swift [are] their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery [are] in their ways, and no way of peace they knew. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it speaketh to those that are in the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world come under judgment with God; because by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him, for by law is knowledge of sin.” (Ver. 920.) The Jew then is no better. The Gentiles were utterly degraded and guilty, as we saw in chapter 1.; the Jews had brought shame on the Lord in proportion to their exceeding privileges. To clench this last point the apostle cites from the Psalms and prophets, especially Psa. 53 and Isa. 59 Righteousness, intelligence, and even desire after God were not to be found, but all gone aside, and useless morally. Nay, every whit of them was corrupt or violent—throats, tongues, lips, feet, eyes. And this, as is remarked, was God's estimate, not of men merely but of the Jew, and addresses itself to those under itself as no Jew would deny.

The overwhelming conclusion, then, is that every mouth is closed and the whole world comes in guilty before God. The Jew never doubted the wickedness of the idolatrous Greeks, Romans, or other Gentiles. This to him was patent and unquestionable. But the flattering and most mistaken inference of immunity he drew from his own position, as having God's law and ordinances. No, reasons the apostle, this demonstrates your guilt to be even greater than the heathen's, if you are no less immoral than they; and that such is the fact certainly flows from” the revealed sentence of the law on the people who have that law. Thus all stand inexcusable, speechless in their guilt; and before God; and this, because law-works cannot justify—still less of course the works that man's mind suggests—or that the will of others may extort. If any works could justify anybody, those of God’s law must be the surest benefit to the Jew. But the truth is that no flesh shall be justified from any such Source in His sight; for contrariwise law never produces holiness, but is only the means of arriving at a full knowledge of sin.

There is another point I would notice to the two chief portions which the apostle quotes from the Old Testament., The Psalm and the prophecy already referred to terminate respectively—the former, with an earnest wish that the turning-point for Israel were come out of Zion, their captivity giving place to the long-looked-for joy and deliverance—the latter, with the declaration that the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and the covenant of blessing be theirs forever. That is, both texts in their original connection close their sad account of Israel's sin, with the yearning after, and the distinct prediction of, the kingdom of God restored to Israel with all accompanying blessedness and glory. But in the New Testament they are followed by the indiscriminate grade Of God to every sinner that believes in Christ. In the former it is redemption by power; in the latter it is redemption

by blood, which is come in Meanwhile, before the Redeemer appears in power and glory, as He will soon.

Notes on Romans 3:21-31

Hitherto it has been for the most part negative statement or argument. The proof is complete that the Jew has righteousness for God no more than the Gentile, whom no Jew could doubt to be hopelessly ruined in sin, as indeed the state of the heathen, before the gospel testimony went forth, was to the last degree deplorable. But it had been shown from their own Psalms and Prophets that Israel was wholly evil in the sight of God; and to demonstrate this the Apostle needs nothing but the admitted postulate that, whatever things the law says, it speaks to those that are under the law; i.e., the Jews. Thus, both being demonstrated to be mere sinners (the Jews who had most pretension by the most sweeping and express testimonies of their own boasted divine oracles), every mouth was stopped, and all the world obnoxious to God's judgment. Law made its possessors no better, could not justify, but only give full knowledge of sin—sorrowful result for the sinner!

Then, what law could not do, God does by His good news. “But now without law God's righteousness is manifested, being testified by the law and the prophets, even God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe.” What fullness of truth, and what a compressed and precise expression of it! Man's righteousness was nowhere among the Gentiles. It had been asked for by the law among the Jews; but the law received no answer save of guilt. Those among them whose conscience was upright acknowledged that all their righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that their iniquities, like the wind, had taken them away—that for their sins and for the iniquities of their fathers, the Jews had become a reproach to all that were about them. In the very writings which confessed their ruin the prophets spoke of Jehovah bringing near His righteousness. “My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth.” “My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.” “My righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” “salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” (Isa. 46; 56; Dan. 9:16, 24.) So, in the types of the law, the entire sacrificial system sets forth a righteousness of God outside man, yet most truly for him, which meets its only adequate significance in the mighty work and death of Jesus. But the law and the prophets were only witnesses, testifying that this divine righteousness was not come but coming; the shadows of a substance not yet present, the prediction of what was to be, and then near to come. Now it is come and manifested. It is quite independent of law, on the wholly different principle of grace, though the law as well as the prophets bore an anticipative witness to it. Law (not in its types, but in its proper character) appeals to the individual's own obedience, knows nothing of a substitute. Grace always supposes the intervention of God Himself in His Son, who in the cross establishes the right of God to bless him that believes in Jesus. It is not simply His prerogative of mercy; it is His righteousness. For the blood of the only acceptable victim is shed, the sacrifice is offered, the judgment of the sins has fallen on Him, He has accepted it all. This then is the new sort of righteousness; not man's, which, if it existed, must be according to the law; not the sinner's, of course (for he has none, being a sinner, which can avail), but God's, according to the types of the law and the declarations of the prophets, now no longer hidden or even promised,

but manifested. He who believes God's testimony to Jesus Christ His Son in the gospel confesses his sins and trusts God, not himself; he sees and owns what God can righteously do for him through the cross, and thus shares in His righteousness.

The manuscripts differ as to the text here. Some of the most ancient (the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, beside some juniors, versions, and fathers) omit κα■ ■π■ π■ντας (“and upon all”). But I agree with the judgment of those who retain the received text in this, and I have little doubt that the words were omitted through the eye or ear resting on one π■ντας so as to overlook the other. Possibly indeed one scribe or more may have designedly left out the clause, fancying it to be a mistake from not apprehending the scope, and conceiving, like some commentators (e.g., Dean Alford), that there is no real difference of meaning in the prepositions. But this is incorrect. There is no difference of words in scripture without a different sense, though sometimes the shade is so fine as to be more easily felt than expressed. Here the distinct force of the clause is plain and important. The former (ε■ς π■ντας) marks the direction of God's righteousness. It is not, like the law, restricted to a single nation; it addresses itself “unto all” men without exception; but the benefit depends on faith in Jesus Christ, and hence it only reaches and takes effect “upon all that believe.” This distinction is of great practical value; but it turns mainly on the difference of the prepositions. Divine righteousness was in principle applicable to all, but in fact applied only to all believers.

It was no question of right in man but in God, and this through Christ's redemption. “For there is no difference; for all sinned, and do come short of the glory of God.” When man was innocent, he simply enjoyed the creature gifts around in thankfulness to Him who had set him in the midst of all and over all which God had pronounced “very good.” But when he sinned, God appeared and could have no test to try him by short of His glory, which drives out sinful man from before His face. Hence the necessity for divine grace if he is to be justified. This accordingly is the immediate topic of discourse: “being justified [i.e. all who are being justified] gratuitously by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiatory through faith in his blood, for a declaration of his righteousness on account of the praeter-mission of the sins that had been before in the forbearance of God, with a view to the declaration of his righteousness in the present time, in order to his being just and justifying him that is of faith in Jesus.”

Thus the utter sin of man makes it an absolute necessity that, if he is to be justified at all, he must be justified gratuitously by God's grace. The question of desert or previous fitness is excluded. This suits the grace and majesty of God quite as much as the abject need of man. His grace moreover does no dishonor to His holy and righteous character, but the very reverse; and all through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What is the ransom He purposed and has found? Christ a propitiatory through faith in His blood whom He set forth for a declaration of His righteousness. For God passed over the sins of believers in Old Testament times, looking forward to Christ's blood to vindicate Him, and forbearing all the while. But now it is not a matter of forbearance. The debt is canceled, the blood is shed, His righteousness is no longer in prospect, but brought in and manifested, and God proved to be just in justifying him that believes in Jesus. (Ver. 26.)

This therefore exalts God and His Son, but leaves no room for the boasting of those who trust in themselves that they are righteous. “Where then [is] boasting? It was excluded. By what law? Of

works? No, but by [the] law of faith. For we reckon that a man is justified by faith without works of law. Is he the God of Jews only? [Is he] not also of Gentiles? Yea of Gentiles also; since God is one who shall justify [the] circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through their faith? Do we then make void law through faith? Far be it: but we establish law." (Ver. 27-31.) A principle of faith shuts the door against glorying in one's own works. because it means justification by faith apart from works of law. But the moment it is allowed that this is God's sanctioned way, He is certainly not God of Jews more than of Gentiles, but is one and the same to both, who will justify circumcised persons not by law as they expect, but by faith, and if uncircumcised have faith, through it He will justify them also. Is this destruction of law as a principle? The very opposite. Law never had such a sanction as in the gospel proposed to faith, whether one looks at the sinner totally condemned under it or at Christ made a curse on the cross. On the other hand, those who would treat Christians as under the law as their rule, do enfeeble its authority, because they are taught to hope for salvation at the same time that they fail to meet its requirements. This is not to establish law but to make it void.

Chapter 161

Scripture Query and Answer: All of One

Q. Heb. 2:11-18.-(1.) What is the force of “all of one?” (2.) The connection of the three passages of the Old Testament that follow? (3.) What is the difference between being “partakers of flesh and blood,” and taking “part of the same?”

What is the exact meaning and aim of “likewise” here?

What is the place given to death in the next words? (6.) How does verse 16 connect itself with what precedes and follows? (7.) “To make reconciliation for the sins of the people” sounds strange as compared with the reconciliation of the believers and the universe elsewhere revealed: is it correct? (8.) Temptation—what? Z.

A. (1.) “All of one” is purposely abstract (■ξ ■ν■ς π■ντες). The phrase is fairly rendered in the Authorized Version. The reference to God the Father is set aside by what follows; for if the point were a common Fatherhood in the higher sense, where would be the propriety of adding, “on which account he is not ashamed to call them brethren?” It would then be a necessity of relationship. On the other hand, there is the most careful guard throughout against such an undue enlargement of the sphere as would associate Christ with all the human race in its actual state. It is a question of real humanity in both the Sanctifier and the sanctified, not of the state in which He took it or they had it. They were “all one-wise,” but not all in a condition absolutely identical. I would add that it is incorrect to say that the present (ο■ ■γιαζ■μενοι) means necessarily a process going on, the perfect God's purpose respecting them. The present participle is often used with the article for a person or persons in any given way designated, apart from the question of time. But when the perfect is employed, as ■γιασμ■νοι in Heb. 10:10, it is expressly not future purpose or potentiality, but present application and character founded on a past fact—in this case the actual result of the finished work of Christ to the believer. Dean Alford is in every respect mistaken here.

The first citation (from Psa. 22:22) shows that the relationship of brethren is properly declared in resurrection, as we see plainly in John 20:17. The next citations (from Isa. 8:17, 18) connect the godly in Israel with Christ, the great prophet, in His path of reliance on God, apart from all the unbelieving confederacies of men—not as His brethren, for they were not yet so marked out, nor as His children exactly, but as the children whom God gave Him. It is the righteous remnant associated with the Messiah morally separate from the mass. This is kept up in “the children” of the following verse (14).

To bring about this relationship to Himself incarnation was requisite with a view to redemption. Since then the children partake, or are partakers of (κεκοιν■νηκεν) blood and flesh, He Himself also similarly participated in (μετ■σχεν) the same. The former verb supposes a common share in what belonged to the children, as indeed to all men. For there is no difference in the human nature of godly and of ungodly. The latter verb means to take or get a share in anything (in this case, humanity).

(4.) “Likewise,” “in like manner,” “similarly” (as I have rendered it), is the true force of παραπλησ■ως. It is not correct to say that the rendering in our common Bible is not sufficiently strong. Bengel gives similiter and remarks, not that it is equivalent to but “idem feer atqne mox κατα π■ντα per omina v. 17, c. iv. 15.” The Docete may have perverted the word to their own wicked folly; but no scholar who examines the matter can deny that Fr. does not go as far as (Sudan or rows; but as Alford justly remarks, it expresses “a general similitude, a likeness in the main: and so not to be pressed here, to extend to entire identity, nor on the other hand to imply, of purpose, partial diversity; but to be taken in its wide and open sense—that He Himself also partook, in the main, in like manner with us, of our nature.” The Docete did not believe that Christ really μετ■■χεν τ■ν α■τ■ν, which words do predicate sameness in essence. It is ignorance to found this on παραπλησζως, which simply asserts similarity of manner: while on the other hand, even this could not have been truthfully said, had not the Word been made flesh ο■ δοκητ■ς ■λλ ■ληθιν■■ς, ο■ φανταστικ■ς ■λλ’ ■ντως. (Comp. Phil. 2:27.)

Christ took human nature most really, though not in a state identical with ours (as is more fully explained—strange that it should be needed by the believer!—in chap. iv. 15); but He took it to die, that through death He might destroy (annul, render void) him that has the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver, &c. To avail for God's glory or even for us, it was into death that grace led the Savior. There only could Satan's might be brought to naught; thus only could redemption be wrought, a ruined creation be reconciled to God, guilty souls be atoned for effectually and forever. All this and more was done by the death of Christ, though its power be displayed in resurrection alone. All else fails to vindicate God, annul Satan, or deliver man.

The English version of verse 16 is false in itself and destroys the connection. For of course Mum) it is not angels He takes up (i.e., helps), but He takes up Abraham's seed. It is not a question here of assuming a nature, but of the reason why He did so; and this is His undertaking the cause of the seed of Abraham—not of Adam, as such. The ancient expositors (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Ambrose, &c) and “great divines” (as Luther. Calvin, Beza, &c.) misled the authorized translators and the error in sense led to the further error in form; for they could not adhere thus to the present tense of ■πιλαμβ■νεται and hence were forced into the monstrous blunder of rendering it, “He took,” &c. Next, the thread of sense is cut, and a mere and feeble reiteration of the truth of verse 14 is imported into verse 16—a needless denial that angelic nature was assumed. Whereas, the affirmation of His special interest in Abraham's seed links on with the previous statement of His incarnation and His death for redemption purposes, and most fitly leads into the inference that follows.

To make expiation or propitiation is the true rendering of ■λ■σκεσθαι. The sinner needs to be reconciled, his sins to be expiated. See the opposite error in the Authorized Version of Rom. 5:11, where the margin gives the true sense—reconciliation.

Temptation generally in Scripture (always of course in the case of Christ) means trial—trial from without. James 1:13, 14 speaks of that which is within, which He who knew no sin never experienced.

Chapter 162

Scripture Query and Answer: Day Star and Morning Star

Q. Eph. 4:13. Why is “the knowledge of the on of God” added to “the unity of the faith,” and what is meant by each? and by “the perfect man?” and “the measure of the stature of Christ?” and why not ■νδρα rather than ■νθρωπον (as in Col. 1) ?.

A.-The Epistle to the Ephesians contemplates the Church all through in its perfectness and privileges, and does not touch the question of its decay as entrusted to man's responsibility, which is in 1 Corinthians. God has provided for the accomplishment of the object here spoken of in “spite of failure, but it is here looked at without reference to it. The adding of the knowledge of the Son of God was necessary, because it is up to His stature thus known that we are to grow. The arriving at common unity of faith is the general basis, solidity as freed from the vacillations' of wind of doctrine; but besides that, we are to grow up to Him who is the Head in all things (as in Col. 1:28), that we May present every roan perfect in Christ Jesus. The perfect man means simply the state—a full-grown man; but the measure of the stature of a full-grown man in Christ, is Christ Himself, all the fullness that is in Him wrought into the soul, so that it should be formed by it, and like to and filled with Christ in all its thoughts; its subjective state measured and formed by the objective fullness of Christ, so that there should be no discrepancy and no separation from Him; the saint grown up to Him in everything. How wondrous such a thought is, I need not say; but this is what is before us. A perfect than as to the expression is simply a full-grown man. So Heb. 5:14 and 6:41. ■νθρωπος is the race including man and woman, and would not be appropriate here. Speaking merely of men, I say π■ντα ■νθρωπον, as Col. 1 Αν■ρ is the word of dignity in the race, and so he is looking at it there. You would not think of a woman in saying one was growing up to full manhood.

Chapter 163

Scripture Query and Answer: “dying”

Q. 2 Cor. 4:10. What is meant by ν■κρωσιν (translated in the English Bible “dying”) here? Is it “deadness” or the state of death, or what else? W.

A. Ν■κρωσις is stated to have a passive or rather neutral sense as well as active, it is not simply deadness. It is not the state of Heath, but, where not killing, the act of dying. So putting to death even is used in English: only agency is supposed there. I may say 'his putting to death' was inexcusable, i.e., his being put to death. In Rom. 4 it is not simply death, as if Sarah were dead, but the losing the power of life which had taken place. He did not think of Sarah's womb losing its vital powers. In 2 Cor. 4:10 it is not losing, as in Rom. 4, but he realized in the body the applying death to it, as death was Christ's portion. It is not, as to Christ, the Jews' act of crucifying and slaying, which is in mind. Hence killing does not snit, but the fact of the setting aside of life. No English word exactly answers. Dying is looked at as the fruit of something at work; but it is not the working of the instrument which is looked at, but the effect on the person. He held his body down as dead because, as regards Christ in this world, he knew Him as one Who had died to it, for whom putting to death was His portion and the source of all blessing. It is the cross applied to the flesh's life. Ν■κπωσις is making a corpse of, depriving of life; this ended with his body because it had so been with Christ. So Peter says, Christ having 'Suffered in the flesh, we are to arm ourselves with the same mind.

Scripture Query and Answer: 2 Corinthians 13:4

Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:2; 10:11 Gal. 2:19.

Q. Is there sufficient ground for the assertion that, in these passages, the dative case is mistranslated, that being often used (as every Greek scholar knows), for the instrument or means whereby a thing is done or comes to pass? Should it not be (Eph. 2:1) “by trespasses and sins” (or in consequence of “having no life” in us)? There seems some incongruity in speaking of walking in the sins wherein they were dead. Moreover it is worthy of note, that the same apostle speaking of spiritual corruption (Col. 3:5, 7), says, “in the which ye also walked sometime when ye lived in them;” and it is difficult to suppose, that he used life in sin, and death in sin, to express precisely the same thing. Turning to Rom. 6:2, should it not be, “dead by sin? If sin is such a dreadful thing as to have exposed us all to the punishment of death—from which Christ's death alone frees us—how can we think of continuing in it any longer? In chapter 5:12, we have “death by sin;” and in verse 17, “By one man's offense.” Why then in Rom. 6:2 is “to” to be employed in rendering the same dative case? The apostle has shown what we have incurred by sin, and then immediately he is made to say, “How shall we who are dead to sin?” which has no force in connection with his previous reasoning. In regard to Rom. 6:10, 11, how can Christ be said to be dead unto sin? but if it should be “dead by sin” —by reason of man's sin, the sense is plain, “in that he liveth, he liveth by God,” “by the power of God.” (2 Cor. 13:4.)

The received version of Gal. 2:19 is “to the law;” but it is argued, it should he by the law; the law denounces death.

The value of these queries may not at first be very obvious; but these passages have an importance in a controversy not needful to mention here; and we cannot be too anxious to endeavor to ascertain the correct text of the word of God.

1 Cor. 15:1-4.

Wherein does the apostle's assertion, “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,” which he emphatically calls “the gospel which, he preached,” or Father part of it for he goes on to insist on the deep importance of Christ's resurrection) differ substantially from the statement in 1 Peter 2:24? though all must admit that the latter passage is specifically addressed to believers—to those who have returned “to the Shepherd of their souls.” Taking 1 Cor. 15 in all simplicity, it appears to me to warrant my telling any man, that Christ died for his sins and not merely that be is the Lamb of God “that taketh away sin.” “Our” cannot mean in this connection the sins of Paul and other believers; for what possible “gospel” or good news, could that be to unconverted sinners? And such the Corinthians were when Paul first preached unto them. T. D.

A. As regards Rom. 6, the wished-for translation is the result of a misconception of the whole passage. It makes it a motive drawn from a previous evil result and no more; whereas it is perfectly certain that the passage contemplates our dying in becoming Christians, not by our sins. Those who have been baptized unto Christ have been baptized unto His death. We have been

made one plant with Him in the likeness of His death; and this in order that we might walk in newness of life. Hence it is perfectly certain that the doctrine of the chapter is dying out of our old man, and living in newness of life—not our dying by our sins so as to be afraid of living in it now. And such is the whole tenor of the chapter; “our old man had been crucified with him;” and the use too of the dative at the close. How the writer can take νμψ in Gal. 2:19, as “by the law,” is hard to conceive; because it is preceded by διὰ νμου, meaning by the law, which makes it simply impossible.

2 Cor. 13:4, is κ δυνμεως, I suppose he only quotes this for the sense. Living in sin, and being dead in it, is not the same thing. One is the continuity of the old man in sin, the other is his state in respect of God; but both are true. Alienated from the life of God. A reference to Colossians shows, in the analogous passage, νεκρος... ν τοις παραπτμασι καὶ τ κροβυστα. Now ν can be used as an instrument or power too. But I think no intelligent Christian could doubt what it means here; and I do not see how it is possible with κροβυστα to take it in any other sense than in.' Besides, νεκρος would not be the word. It signifies properly 'a corpse.' It is not dying as a punishment for them, but a state in which they were. Then God creates again. They are viewed not as dying by or for their sins. It is not πεθνετε, but being νεκρος He has quickened. The first work in the corpse is quickening with Christ, God's act. In Romans and Colossians, being alive in sin, ye have died (πεθνετε) in Christ. In Ephesians, being νεκρο, we have been quickened with Him. It is a new creation. It does not seem to me there can be the smallest doubt of what is the right translation.

As to 1 Cor. 15, again, I know of no objection, if used in a general way of saying, Christ died for any man's sins. In the passage, however, Paul is addressing believers as such, but still speaks vaguely, so that “he that hath ears to hear” may apply it. “He is a propitiation for the whole world.” But this is never said of bearing sins. That is carefully avoided in Scripture. It will not be found other than dying for our sins. But “bearing” in all parts of Scripture is thus specifically confined. So we read, ‘We beseech in Christ's stead, Be reconciled... for he hath made him to be sin for us.' Scripture is accurate here—a propitiation set out before all, and sure remission of all, if we come; but bearing sins never extended to those who are lost, or His doing it might be in vain for believers. “Our” to saints or sinners is the scriptural way of putting it.

Chapter 165

Scripture Queries and Answers: Law vs. Religion

Q. What is the duty of a surviving Christian parent, guardian, or child, if the law of the country decide that the child is to be brought up after a religious sort opposed to the faith of both parent and child?

A. B. C.

A. In my judgment, no Christian, whether child or parent, can relinquish that which they are assured is the word of God. A court may rule otherwise, and may punish the infraction of its decrees; but the Christian is bound, at all cost, to cleave to the Lord's will. It is likely that, under such circumstances, the court would deprive a refractory parent or guardian of the charge of the child, giving it over to the co-guardian (if any) who would conform, or appointing a compliant guardian. In such a case the parent and child must be prepared, if so God permit. to endure the deep distress of severance. But if the child have a conscience clear and firm before God, what has the court gained toward the end in view? The Christian child, though separated from its parent, insists on being faithful to the Lord and the truth, and utterly refuses the religious services which it believes to be unscriptural: is the child to be forced against its conscience? Is it to be reduced to the desired submission by brute force? If so compelled to go, is it to be locked in or chained down during the religious rites which it eschews as sinful? It seems evident, that, without appealing to courts of law, which in these things will surely be on the side of the world, the path of faith is clear and simple; and that a child guided in the way of Christ will be proved to have a power superior to all the resources of the mightiest empire on earth. They may inflict pain or loss; they may insult and condemn or in prison, as they have hanged or burnt in times gone by; but “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Chapter 166

Scripture Queries and Answers: Caught up Before the Lord Comes

Q. Will the saints be caught up before the Lord comes in glory and the tribes of the earth mourn because of Him?

Matt. 24 Here there is no hint of the Church's escaping the great tribulation, except by sudden flight; nor of any other παρουσια except that which we are to expect after that tribulation. (See ver. 23, 27, 29.) Nor of any gathering of His elect unto Him except in verse 31, after the great tribulation. In verses 32, 33 we are directed to “know that it is near, even at the doors, when we shall see all these things,” i.e., those which are described in verses 7-29.

1 Thess. 4 The living will not be changed before the dead in Christ are raised (ver. 15); then (1 Cor. 15:51) we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (literally, for the trumpet shall sound)—all, not some only, of those who believe. And the trumpet mentioned in Matt. 24

31, when all the elect are to be gathered together, cannot be subsequent, or the other would not be the last trump.

(3.) The caution of 2 Thess. 2:1.-12 seems to imply that the Church must witness the full revelation and ενεργεια of the wicked one, and then expect the immediate coming of our Lord.

It is true, we are to be continually looking for the coming of our Lord; but is this inconsistent with the expectation of a previous tribulation? Q.Q.

A. The Old Testament saints and the Church, which is being now formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, will be caught up to meet the Lord before His coming as Son of man in power and great glory, when all the tribes of the earth (or the land) lament. This necessarily follows from the doctrine laid down in Col. 3:4 compared with 1 Cor. 15:23, 1 Thess. 4, 2 Thess. 2, and other scriptures, and from the prophetic intimation of Rev. 4:5 compared with Rev. 17:14; 19:14. For if Christ and the glorified saints appear together at the selfsame time in glory, it is evident that the saints must have been caught up, changed into His likeness, before that common manifestation of Him and them. Besides, the Revelation indicates their presence above, after their translation there, and before their appearing along with Him, under the symbol of the crowned and enthroned elders, who are seen in heaven when the seven churches disappear (Rev. 2; 3), and before the pre-millennial judgment of chapter 19, and the millennium of chapter 20. This interval is occupied here below by God's preparation of Jews and Gentiles (separate from the glorified) who will be to His praise on earth, as the Old Testament saints and the Church will be in heaven when the administration of the fullness of times is put under Christ, the Head of all things heavenly and earthly.

(1.) This helps to render Matt. 24:15-41 perfectly plain. Certainly there is no hint of the Church's escaping the tribulation by sudden flight here; for those spoken of are a remnant of converted Jews who will be found in Jerusalem, in connection with the temple and the sabbath in the latter

day. What possible ground is there to predicate this of the Church of God, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, and which, save at its first origin, is found everywhere under heaven? What reason to take it away from the last days of this age, when God will again be savingly at work among the Jews in their land, protecting a remnant from the last fiery tribulation which the Antichrist will occasion, and fitting them as a people for the Lord, when He comes for their deliverance in the clouds of heaven, and the mass being apostate will be filled with terror and mourning and shame at His sudden glory which flashes on the world? That the elect of verse 31 cannot possibly mean the Church is evident, if it were only from the passage itself; for the sight of the Son of man appalls all the tribes before He sends His angels to gather these elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now if you apply this to the same scene and persons as Col. 3:4, you set, one scripture against another—the unerring proof of error. Distinguish between the saints already caught up, to be glorified with Him on high, and these elect gathered from all places of their dispersion here below, to be blessed under His reign here below, and the balance of truth is preserved. No doubt, the gathering of the elect here, then, is after the great tribulation, but it is also after His appearing. It is therefore not the Church which appears with Him when He appears in glory, and which is promised (in Rev. 3:10) exemption not only from the place and circumstances of the great coming temptation, but also from its hour. The signs are, as usual, for the Jewish saints, who were wont to ask such things as evidence of the approaching accomplishment of their hopes.

1 Thess. 4 No one contends that the living will be changed before the dead in Christ are raised. It is clear that, the latter being raised, and we who are then alive being changed as they, all together will be caught up to the Lord. The “last trump” of 1 Cor. 15 is an allusion to the final signal of the break up of a Roman camp for its march. It has nothing whatever to do with the loud sound of trumpet in Matt. 24 (with which compare Isa. 27:13), any more than with the seven trumpets of Rev. 8-11.

Undoubtedly when the Lord at His coming or presence (ηαρουσ■α) gathers the changed saints to Himself in the air, it is all, not some only, of those who up to that time have believed (compare π■σιν το■ς πιστε■σασιν in 2 Thess. 1:10) But how does this present a difficulty to such as see from Scripture that others subsequently are to be converted, kept through the tribulation and blessed in the millennial kingdom of the Lord? It is the querist's system which is at fault, not leaving sufficient room for all the elements, and of course therefore both leading to confusion in the various parts, and presenting a defective result. 1 Cor. 15 presents (and so I may add 1 Thess. 4) our last trump, because the question is of the risen saints; Matt. 24:31, presents, if you will, the last trump of the Jewish saints then scattered over the earth. How does this identify the two, even if the trumpet in Matt. 24 had been styled the last trump, or “his elect,” were called “all the elect,” neither of which is the fact? Is it a contradiction if the historian speaks of the last trump sounding for the tenth legion in Gaul, and of the trumpet gathering the twelfth legion in Syria?

2 Thess. 2:1-12 cautions us against the error of those who confounded the coming of the Lord to gather His saints on high with His day upon the lawless one. The misleaders of the Thessalonian believers sought to alarm them by the false cry that the day of the Lord was already present (■ς ■τι ■ν■στηκεν ■ ■μ■ρα το■ κυρ■ου).

This the apostle dispels, first, by a motive of consolation for the heart, as well as, secondly, by an express prophecy. First, he beseeches them, by the coming of the Lord and their gathering

together to Him, not to be shaken or troubled by this pretense (for which they feigned a revelation and even a letter of the apostle). The first act of the Lord, bound up with His very presence, is the translation of His own beloved ones to Himself. But, secondly, that day (mark, he does not say the Lord's παρουσ■α, but His day) should not come till the full development of the evil which His day is to judge. The mystery of lawlessness is now restrained: when he who hinders its outburst is withdrawn, then shall be revealed the lawless one whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by the breath of His mouth and annul by the appearance of His coming. Observe the striking difference between the terms in verses 1, 8. When it is a question of gathering the saints, the phrase is simply His coming or presence; when it is a question of His day or dealing in judgment with the lawless one, it is the shining forth of His coming—not παρουσ■α only, but ■πιφ■νεια τ■ς παρουσ■ας α■το■. The real caution of the chapter would have preserved the querist from an error kindred in principle, though not in form, to that which wrought among the Thessalonians.

We are then to be continually expecting the Lord, apart from either external signs or the final great tribulation, which Scripture connects with others, not with us, after we have been translated to heaven.

Chapter 167

Scripture Queries and Answers: Rev. 5:9-10; 2 Thess. 1:7; Matt. 16:18

Q. 1. Do not the best readings give an entirely different meaning to Rev. 5:9, 10, from that represented by the Authorized Version? and how then can it be proved that the Church is in heaven when the judgments are poured upon the earth? By 'judgments' is to be understood not that ON the Antichrist, but the judgments during his rule.

2. Does not 2 Thess. 1:7 appear to teach that the saints do not enter into rest until the Lord is revealed from heaven taking vengeance on them that know not. God, and 1 John 18, that they will be here with the Antichrist?

3. It is urged from Matt. 16:18 that the Church was future. If so, is it not equally true from Matt. 1:21 that no one who died previous to the cross was or could be saved? A SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.

A. 1. The only question as to readings of importance in verse 9 is the insertion or omission of ■μ■ς. The Sinaitic and Vatican (2066, not 1209), with the great majority of minuscules insert; the Parisian Rescript is defective; the Alexandrian and a minuscule in the Propag. at Rome (44) omit. To this last, though the evidence be small, recent editors (Afford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, &c.) incline. It seems to me confirmed by the true text of verse 10, which exhibits, without question, the third and not the first person (“they,” not “we”). The proof that the Church is then in heaven is quite independent of these verses, and mainly depends on the fact revealed in chapter 4.—the presence of the enthroned and crowned elders around the throne of God. Who are meant by this symbol but the glorified saints? Spirits as such are nowhere said to be glorified, but the saints in their changed bodies. These are so represented from Rev. 4 onwards. If ■μ■ς be, as I suppose, rightly omitted (the insertion being due to an early corrector who could not account for the absence of an object after the verb, from ignorance of such an ellipse, which is not uncommon with John), there is no necessity for taking the ξ■α as the redeemed; for the song would then simply celebrate the Lamb's worthiness and His efficacious death in purchasing a people to God, priests and kings to reign over the earth, without here defining who they are.

2 Thess. 1 speaks solely of publicly awarded rest and tribulation when Jesus is revealed. Nobody thinks either can be till Jesus appears. A previous translation is no more a difficulty for the saints caught up to heaven than a previous tribulation for Jews and Gentiles on earth. Nor does 1 John 18 hint that those addressed would be on earth when Antichrist comes, but affirms many antichrists now as an evidence of that coming man of sin, and no more.

Matt. 1:21 confirms, instead of weakening, the plainly future bearing of Matt. 16:18. For just as the one text shows us that no one, before Jesus came and died, could be said to be saved from his sins, so was no Church of Christ begun to be built before. Previously to that believers rested on a revelation or a promise; afterward, on the work accomplished. Then, not before, it could be said, “By grace are ye saved through faith.” Redemption becomes the basis not only of His own present salvation in Christ, but also of gathering in one (i.e., in the Church) God's children who were before

this scattered. For this, too, the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven was requisite to baptize into one body.

Chapter 168

Scripture Queries and Answers: 1 Peter 3:18-20

Q. What is the true force of 1 Peter 3:18-20, which some apply to Christ's descent after death and personal preaching to the souls in hades? J. T.

A. The first expression important to seize is that Christ is said to have been quickened in the Spirit in which also He went and preached. That is, the words, strictly, do not attribute a bodily going to preach, but that He went and preached in the Spirit. Now this was true, if it was the Spirit of Christ testifying in and by Noah the preacher of righteousness as he is called in 2 Peter 2. It is also confirmed by what is said in this First Epistle of the Spirit of Christ working in the Old Testament prophets; and very directly by the well-known passage in Gen. 6:3. Next, it is not said that He went to their prison and preached there to the spirits; but that in the Spirit He went and preached to the imprisoned spirits (or to the spirits which are in Prison). Not a word intimates that the preaching was in prison or that they were in prison when preached to. Again, the absence of the article before ■πειθ■σασιν denotes that it is not a mere descriptive circumstance assumed to be known; but the cause is predicated why the spirits were imprisoned, namely, their having been once disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, when, as I believe, the testimony of God was rendered to them but rebelliously refused. Therefore not only the flood took them away from the earth, but their spirits in prison are reserved for judgment. Few were saved then. The godly must not wonder if they are few now; nor would temporal judgments cover the doom of those who reject the gospel, for they too, like the antediluvians, will not escape the dealing of God who will judge the wicked and unbelieving. The men of the world, and even the Jews most of all, turned a deaf ear to the voice of Christ's Spirit preaching by Peter and the rest. They only looked for a visible Messiah, present and reigning over the earth and especially over Israel in the land. Hence the testimony of a rejected crucified Messiah, exalted in heaven (with a people indiscriminately called out from Jews or Gentiles, and exposed to oppression, shame, suffering, and death here below), was odious to them. Nothing could be more appropriate than the allusion to Noah's preaching of old and the safety of a few in the ark (who heeded the word, spite of appearances), while the mass who were incredulous remain in prison for the eternal judgment of God. There is the utmost force in adducing that remarkable witness of the value of faith in a divine testimony, and of the solemnity of rejecting it; whereas the supposed reference to a personal preaching to these particular souls in hades is not only without the smallest countenance from elsewhere, to say the least, but seems strangely lame and incongruous for the case in hand. Proclaiming to Old Testament saints there I can understand (though I see not the smallest warrant for the notion); but here it is expressly not the obedient and saints, but a limited class once disobedient to God's word, when His Spirit strove with them in Noah's day before the flood. Bad as the notion of purgatory and its temporary suffering may be, the idea of preaching to disobedient souls in hades in order to let them out, appears to me no better, and directly defeats the serious warning of judgment for unbelief which Peter had in view. For it allows of a hope for some unbelieving ones after death. Bishop Horsley and Dean Alford are quite wrong as to this.

Scripture Queries and Answers: 2 Peter 1:19

Q. 2 Peter 1:19. - What is the bearing of this difficult scripture? The distinction drawn in the recent “Lectures on Christ's Second Coming” (Broom), between the dimness of the λ■χνος and the brightness of the φωσφ■πος, is undeniable; also the one being clearly objective or external to us, the other internal or subjective— “in your hearts.” But I cannot see how ■ως ο■ can mean aught else than something future to the writer (at least readers) and the absence of which the προφητικ■ς λ■γος was to supply. And as the anointing of the Spirit (1 John 20-27) could hardly be regarded as future to either, I doubt of the interpretation. 1). D.

A. The following remarks may furnish help for determining the true scope. First, the apostle it writing to the same Christians who had received the first epistle, that is, Jews of the dispersion in Asia Minor. These of course were familiar with Old Testament prophecy, which the apostle shows was confirmed by the transfiguration, as it also gave a living tableau of the kingdom to the chosen witnesses. Next, he intimates that while the prophetic word was rightly heeded, it was comparatively no more than a λ■χνος, excellent in a dark place, but of course eclipsed in the superior brightness of day-light when it dawned, and the morning star, Christ Himself—not as the Savior only but the hope—arose in the heart. I think this is left purposely vague; and for the sufficient and wise reason that some of these saints, though truly converted, were so deficient in the discrimination and enjoyment of what is thus distinctively Christian, as compared with what of course always abode true of the Jewish testimony, that he could not assume this to be the fact with them, at least, not with them all. In my opinion the same lack exists now in real saints of God, and mainly from the same cause, the Fathers so-called being the mainspring, as far as the Gentile is concerned, in confounding Jewish things with Christian, and thus obliterating the distinctive lineaments of each to the great detriment of both.

Thus the παιδ■α of the family (the babes among the τεκν■α) have unquestionably the unction from the Holy One and know all things; but through exclusive heed to the προφ. λογ., and thus inattention to the proper New Testament teachings as to the coming of the Lord, there might not yet have been the dawn of that better light, ■μ■ρα, or the arising of Him who brings it in His own person, in their hearts. That is, though the principle was true, and the capacity or power there in virtue of the indwelling Holy Ghost, there might not yet be that developed practical hold of it which the apostle so greatly desired for them, while carefully owning the value of what they did attend to. This at least is my conviction of the passage. The great thing to seize is the contrast of a good light with a better, and even this last to be enjoyed here (not when the προφ. λογ. is accomplished). It is not the day, nor the day-star as a literal matter of fact, but that character of thing in the heart (and hence necessarily and properly without the Greek article) not the Lord's future appearing, but the apprehension of better light about the future now—Christian fullness of light as to this supervening on their previous Jewish measure.

Chapter 170

Scripture Queries and Answers: Apocalyptic Beasts

The Apocalyptic Beasts.

Q. In answer to “Scripture Query” of last month it is stated that “the Man of Sin” of 2 Thess. 2, the Antichrist of the epistles of John, “the Beast of the Earth and False Prophet” of the Apocalypse, and “the King” of Dan. 2 are identical personages.

In Kelly's Notes on Daniel, page 197, we find “the King” or Antichrist spoken of as a Jew (and it would appear that the Antichrist must of necessity be a Jew to be received as the Messiah—Dan. 11:37 suggests this), and pages 205, 206 of the same work bring out “the King” or Antichrist, and “the Beast,” the imperial power of the Roman Empire, as distinct personages.

Is there not a contradiction between these two statements? If the Antichrist, “the King” of Dan. 11 be a Jew and he be identical with “the Beast” of Revelation, can it any longer be said to be Gentile supremacy? Is it not necessarily Jewish?

A. The inquirer confounds the Beast from the sea with the Beast from the earth or land in Rev. 13 There is no contradiction nor even difficulty when this is seen. For the Antichrist may be the second Beast from the earth and a Jew (as he will pretend to be the Messiah and Jehovah of Israel), while the first Beast from the sea is the great Gentile chief, at least in the West.

Chapter 171

Scripture Queries and Answers: Difference Between Saints and Believers

Q. 2 Thess. 1:10. What is the difference of saints and believers? and why is the Lord to be glorified in the one and admired in the other? I have asked a good many, and all see the difficulty: if you could throw a little light on it, I should be very thankful. E. C.

A. The careful reader will note that two classes of enemies are brought before us in verse 8: those that know not God, Gentiles; and those who, if they could not in the same way be said to be ignorant of God, do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jews. They were both such as should pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His might, when He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all that have believed. It is not the moment of the translation of the saints to heaven, but of the appearing or day of the Lord, when He shall come, not to receive them to Himself, but “to be glorified in his saints.” This, however, being comparatively vague—for He might be glorified simply in their glorification, and this wholly outside the ken of the earth—we have greater precision in the next clause, “and to be wondered at in all that have believed.” Here display to others is more prominent. It is no question of those who shall be brought to know His glory on earth after He is thus come, but of all those that have believed previously; and as “the saints” in whom He is said to be glorified would fully apply to those of the Old Testament, so I think “all that have believed” more properly belongs to the present time, when faith has its largest exercise and fullest development. Those of old were separated to God, and though they had faith practically, yet the especial character in reference to God and Christ was hope or trust. Now that redemption is accomplished, it is in the strictest sense faith. And this seems to be confirmed by the appended parenthetic application to the Thessalonians: “for our testimony to you was believed.” “In that day” belongs, of course, to their manifestation with Christ in glory.

Chapter 172

Scripture Queries and Answers: Dispensational Teachings

Q. 1. What is the dispensational difference between the two disciples of John (John 1:37), Philip (ver. 43), Nathanael (ver. 45), and Nicodemus? (Chap. 3:1.)

2. What is the full dispensational teaching of John 2?

L. C. S.

A. 1. The two disciples of John, hearing their master's heart-utterance of delight in the Lamb of God, follow Jesus, come and see at His invitation where He abode and abide with Him that day. It was indeed well-nigh spent, for as the evangelist could not forget—a moment ever to be treasured in his heart—it was about the tenth hour. One of these two, Andrew, first finds his own brother Simon and brings him to Jesus, who at once confers the new name of Cephas. The day following Jesus Himself bids Philip follow Him; and Philip finds Nathanael of whom the Lord says, as He was coming, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile! If I mistake not, we have thus a remnant emerging from John's testimony to see and abide with Jesus, going forward through John, yet beyond John, to dwell with Jesus where He dwelt, unknown to the world because it knew Him not. Such is the Christian's place, abiding with Jesus and following Him. But again we have the remnant once more, owned as God's Israel, seen under the fig tree, though still strongly prejudiced against a Messiah in humiliation, but finally convinced by the proof of His omniscience, as well as His grace, and acknowledging the Nazarene to be the Son of God and King of Israel. Greater things should be seen, as the Lord told him; from that time even heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man—the head not of the Jews only but over all according to God's counsels, even now the object and center of all angelic service.

In the case of Nicodemus (chap. 1 see no dispensational difference, but rather the universal and indispensable necessity of the new birth for every man in every dispensation who shall see and enter the kingdom of God. This is introduced, as has been often remarked, by the refusal of Jesus in the closing scene of chapter 2 to trust man even when ready to believe in Him because of the miracles He had wrought. It was human faith, the fruit not of the Holy Ghost, but of man's mind, and good for nothing in God's eye. “Ye must be born anew” to have part in the kingdom—all alike, the Jew even as the Gentile.

2. John 2 shows us, mystically, the future earthly kingdom, when the true marriage-feast is celebrated, and forms for purifying yield to the wine of joy which the Lord will create and give freely; and when execution of judgment shall fall on the proud perverters of all things holy.

Chapter 173

Scripture Queries and Answers: How to Look for and Love His Appearing

Q. If the Church is with the Lord, caught up to Him at His coming, how can any Christian love or look for His subsequent appearing? 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13. So 1 Thess. 2:19; 5:23 seem to teach, not a secret previous coming for Christians, but the same as 1 John 28; Rev. 1:7; Mark 8:38. So that revelation, appearing, and coming seem to me synonymous and synchronies. A resurrection from out of the dead and a change of the living saints visibly going up to meet the Lord seems to me a more sober idea, if I may so speak, and to do less violence to ordinary scripture statement, than a secret rapture, which seems to be both unnecessary and based on a very few and not very distinct scriptures. They are all (as I think) the same event, though many acts are folded up therein. J. L.

A. The presence (παρουσla) of Christ is His coming, or rather state of being present, in contrast with His absence, and is in itself equally compatible with being visible or not at His pleasure (as we see after His resurrection). The solution of the question depends on other scriptures and cannot be decided by the bare word coming or presence. One of these scriptures is the comparison of 2 Thess. 2:1 with verse 8. On the face of it, verse 1 binds together His coming or παρουσ■α with the gathering together of the saints to Himself. This is the motive for comfort against the terror of the day of the Lord, which the false teachers were seeking to bring on the souls of the Thessalonians. The false rumor that His day was actually arrived, or present (■ν■στηκεν), was effectually dispelled by the sweet hope of being thus re-united to Himself, with the added information that that day of awful associations for the world should not be there before the full development and open display of that lawlessness, which was already at work in secret ways. For the day of the Lord is ever the predicted period of judgment on man's evil, which it is to put down and clear away, in order that the good of God's kingdom may be no longer hidden or hindered but shine out to His everlasting praise. Hence it is said that the lawless one (for so it will end) shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy, or annul, by the appearing of His coming or presence. Thus visibility is expressly connected, not with the Lord's presence to assemble His saints to Himself, but with His judicial action on the Antichrist.

Plainly, the coming or presence of the Lord is the great general truth. It embraces indeed His appearing as one of its acts or characters, but it includes much more. Hence, when precision is sought (as here to counteract a false impression, which the enemy sought to endorse with the apostle's name), we have the παρουσ■α distinguished from the epiphany, or shining forth of that παρουσ■α. Now it is evident that, if the coming of Christ necessarily implies visibility to all the world, there is no force in the distinction; if, on the contrary, He might come to gather His saints without appearing to any beyond themselves, and then subsequently cause His coming or presence to be manifest in the destruction of the lawless one, nothing can be more appropriate or exact than the phraseology here employed.

There is no difficulty, accordingly, in apprehending how Timothy or others could be exhorted in view of Christ's appearing, spite of the gathering of the saints on high previously. The act of translating the saints above is no open vindication before the world either of Christ or of themselves; the appearing, revelation, or day of the Lord is this precisely. Not till then will be seen the consequences of faithfulness or the lack of it in His service; not till then will the madness of the world's hostility against Jehovah and His anointed be proved. Hence, when it is a question of exhorting to earnest, devoted, holy labor and endurance, scripture habitually speaks not of the coming simply but of the appearing of Christ. Then will be the reward of toil and suffering; then must the haughty world be humbled, apostate Judaism and Christendom be judged, and righteousness be established over the earth, the glorified saints reigning with Christ over it, and the Jews restored to their promised supremacy and blessedness here below. This makes evident the reason why the hearts of the saints, in present sorrow and shame, feeling their own weakness and the temporary triumph of the enemy in the world, are always urged to look on to the appearing of Christ. Their own removal by His coming does not, could not, satisfy the desires of those who are bent on the making good of His glory universally, and the final total overthrow of Satan, and the blessing of all creation.

This, then, in my judgment, entirely and simply meets the scriptural statements which speak both of the Lord's coming and of His appearing, &c. Timothy is enjoined to keep the commandment, laid on him by the apostle, spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord, which in its own time the blessed and only Potentate shall show. (1 Tim. 6) It is a question of responsibility in service; and this attaches, not to the rapture of the saints at all, but to the manifestation of Christ. When the Lord appeared the first time, God's grace was made manifest, and life and incorruption were brought to light by our Savior. When He appears again, glory will be revealed; fidelity during His absence will be no longer a matter of denial, detraction, or debate, and evil will hide its head. A faithful royalist could not be satisfied till not merely the arrival of the exiled king, but his coronation and the public exercise of his prerogative. Still more evidently does this principle apply to 2 Tim. 4:8: “Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me in that day; and not only to me, but also to all that love (το■ς ■γαπηκ■σιν, characterized by their love for) His appearing.” That this demonstrates the justice of what has been already remarked, I need scarcely say. The coming of Christ to receive us to Himself and be with Him in the Father's house would not at all suit the requirements of the passage; because that is the pure fruit of His own grace, removing us into the scene of His Father's love and glory, but in no way vindicating His servants, by a Just requital of all faithful testimony, in the day when even a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth. Rapture to heaven previously would not meet this exigency, though, of course, perfectly consistent with it. We must believe all that is revealed, not a part only; and a main point of real progress is that we learn to distinguish things which differ.

Titus 2:13 quite falls in with the two texts we have examined, the only question being whether “that blessed hope” does not look rather to the point of personal joy when we are caught up to be with the Savior, and “the appearing of the glory” to the later and public display. If so, this scripture would connect the two things, as one combined object in the mind of the Spirit, leaving it to be decided by other testimonies whether the two things happen at the same time or with some interval.

In 1 Thess. 2:19 and 5:23, it is simply a question of Christ's presence or coming, entirely independent of manifestation. The first scripture is the expression of the apostle's affections for the objects of his devoted labors.

Circumstances might and do separate them now for a little in person, not in heart; but they should be together before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming, “our glory and joy.” This would not cease but, on the contrary, appear when Christ is manifested, but the fact is before the apostle; and this is true at the coming of Christ and even before His manifestation, of which nothing is said here. So in chapter 5:23, he prays that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, if verified then, this would be also true at His appearing; but the other sufficed and indeed was more comprehensive. On the contrary, where it is a question of the world being judged (as in the beginning of the same chapter), “the day of the Lord,” and not simply His coming or presence, is spoken of; for that necessarily supposes judicial action and display. So even in chapter 3, where we have the coming of our Lord with all His saints, not them caught up to Him, as in chapter iv., in order to God's bringing those who sleep with Him.

But 1 John 1:28, Rev. 1:7, and Mark 8:38 are wholly distinct in tone from the simple presence of the Lord and His saints. In the first of these texts, manifestation is express. It is a question of the workman not being ashamed before Him at His coming, through the souls they labored for abiding in Him now. The coming of the Lord alone would not decide this, and therefore manifestation is added. Again, Rev. 1:7 has nothing to do with the translation of saints to heaven but is the solemn threat of impending judgment for the world, especially for Israel (i.e., those who pierced Him). “Every eye shall see him,” defines the character and time most fully. So Mark 8:38 describes the Lord coming with His holy angels in His quality of Son of man which notoriously attaches to Him as executor of judgment. (See John 5)

I cannot doubt, therefore, that coming or presence is never in itself synonymous with appearing, revelation, or manifestation. This does not decide the question of their agreeing or differing in point of time. But it tends so far to maintain the definiteness of scripture language, which is indispensable to all real intelligence and progress in the truth.

That the removal of the saints from earth to meet the Lord does not synchronize with their appearing in glory along with Him, is, to my mind, certain from a variety of scriptures. First, Col. 3 declares that when Christ, our life, appears, “then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The context would convince any fair mind that rigorous precision is here intended. The basis is the identification of the Christian with Christ. Is He dead and risen? So are they. Is He now hid with God? So are they now with Him. But this will not be always. He is about to be manifested in glory when He is, then shall they too be manifested in the same glory with Him. This is decisive against the hypothesis of Christ first appearing, then translating the risen and changed saints, and bringing then and thus His day on the world. For in this case, Scripture must be broken, as Christ would have appeared in glory without His saints and before them. Their rapture (to use a word which used to be more familiar with divines than it seems to be of late) cannot then be when He is manifested; for they are all, Christ and the saints, manifested together.

Besides, the same result follows from the scriptures which speak of His coming with the saints. They must have been, then, caught up before in order to come with Him.

Further, the great book which puts together in an orderly way so many elements scattered over the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the final prophecy of the New Testament, has it no light for us on this vexed question? Much every way, but this chiefly—that thence we learn how the saints are seen glorified in heaven under the symbol of twenty-four elders, not to speak of the four living creatures from chapter iv.; that they are seen there kept out of the hour of temptation which comes on all the world to try them that dwell on the earth; that during this hour God works in Jews and Gentiles, who alone are spoken of as being on earth, without a hint of the Church or churches after Rev. 3 (save in the exhortation at the end when the prophetic part is concluded); and that when the Lord does come to judge, the saints are with Him, and come out of heaven, not from earth, for the closing scene, when, executing vengeance on them that know not God and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed in that day. Then, and not before, will be the public retributive dealing of the Lord, when His saints shall be vindicated and their enemies shall be troubled worse than any tribulation they inflicted on the faithful. The Lord's coming simply to receive the saints to be with Himself above is no doubt the joy of grace; but it is not all, and does not supersede the importance of the scene of manifestation (which is itself a part of His coming or παρουσ■α), when all questions of responsibility in good or ill will be solved and made apparent.

The best sobriety of the saint is to believe the scriptures—not some, but all; sacrificing the truth neither of our manifestation and reward when Christ comes in judgment, nor of our previous removal to heaven to be with Christ, away from the scenes of horror, when God will give the Jew and man in general to taste the result even in this world of rejecting the true Christ and receiving the false one; but when He will make ready once more, by an Elijah testimony, a people prepared for the Lord on earth, that when He does appear in glory, He may have not only a risen glorified Bride with Him, suited to the heavenly places and the Father's house, but also an earthly people, the nucleus for the blessing of all nations and the earth during that reign of blessedness which will follow the execution of judgment on all His enemies. It is the same παρουσ■α, but ■ π. as such, and ■πιφανε■α τ■ς π. are quite distinct in character and time.

The παρουσ■α of the Lord, then, is not a mere act of coming, but the state of being present in contrast with His absence. The epiphany or shining forth of His παρουσ■α most naturally intimates that this presence in itself is not necessarily visible.

Chapter 174

Scripture Queries and Answers: Kingdom of Heaven Vs. Kingdom of God

Q. Will you define “kingdom of heaven” in itself, and in contradistinction from “kingdom of God?" J. D.

A. “Kingdom of heaven,” occurring only in Matthew, means the rule of the heavens, consequent on the rejection of the Messiah, who is thereon ascended to heaven and thus introduces that rule, first, in mystery to faith (as now since the ascension); secondly, in manifestation (as by and by when He comes in power and glory). It differs from the larger expression in this, that, while “kingdom of God” might anywhere with truth he used substantially for “kingdom of heaven” (and so uniformly answers to it in the corresponding passages of Mark and Luke), in some places “kingdom of heaven” could not replace “kingdom of God.” Hence even the latter phrase occurs in Matthew, where of course the former would not have duly expressed the idea of the Holy Ghost; and the same remark applies to Rom. 14 Cor. 4, and other passages in the Epistles where “kingdom of heaven” would have been quite improper. “The kingdom of God” could be said to be there when Christ demonstrated the power of God on earth; “The kingdom of heaven” could not be till He went to heaven. Hence “the kingdom of heaven” is never in the Gospels said to be nearer than at hand; whereas to a certain extent “the kingdom of God” might be and is said to have then come and to have been among them. The power of God displayed in miracles such as Christ wrought proved His kingdom there (and so power not in word but in deed, the moral power of the Spirit in the Epistles); but the kingdom of heaven is a. dispensational state of things, either true and known to faith, or actually manifested as it will be to every eye.

Chapter 175

Scripture Queries and Answers: New Birth

Q. What is the bearing of the new birth in John 3:3-6, as compared with eternal life (ver. 15, 16, &c.)? What of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost in Titus 3? of the renewing in Eph. 4, Col. 3, and of similar expressions in 1 Peter 1, James 1, as well as Matt. 19:28? Has it to do with baptism, as many suppose in John 3? and what of John 6? And how do the Old Testament saints stand related to all this? How the future calling in the last days, and millennial saints?

A. It is to be remarked that in John 3, not eternal life but simply the kingdom of God is connected with being born again: this is necessary for it. We get a nature suited to have to say to God in whatever way. It is the Spirit's work—a nature capable of knowing Him. Eternal life is connected with heavenly things, and the lifting up of the Son of man, who is Son of God. This shows us what eternal life is. It is wholly in Christ (comp. 1 John), and to us through the incarnation and necessarily also the death of the Lord Jesus. (Comp. John 6:35-58.) It is in Him and promised to us before the world was, but brought into man by the incarnation (for He was in heaven), and we into its place and condition through His blessed death, resurrection, and ascension. (Compare John 6:62) The bread from heaven is Christ. Then we come into its own proper place by redemption and in resurrection; for redemption in the full sense brings us into heaven. No doubt every blessing wants it for sinful man; but as the proper fruit and result of redemption, heavenly things are connected. Eternal life knows no other place—in Christ thus, who was and is eternal life. Here He, the Son of man, was in heaven. There may be condemnation by rejection here, but entrance into that to which Christ belongs involves for us redemption, death, and resurrection. This in its great principle of application is reasoned out in Rom. 4-8.

Further, we have the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The ■νακα■νςσις of the Holy Ghost is not merely regeneration or a new life It is objective—bringing into the sphere we are introduced into by Christ and redemption, the καιν■ or new state of things (καιν■ κτ■σις). Regeneration is more subjective, essential but subjective, and in application does not, that I see, go beyond earthly things, but earthly things with God—the desert now (not Canaan), and the desert to blossom as a rose, but not Canaan. So in 1 Peter 1:22, 23, it is subjective:" Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.... being born again... by the word." No doubt, heaven is here full in hope; but the regeneration, the being horn again, is subjective condition. The strongest point of connection (for that is what it is) is in James 1

18. But it does not in fact reach out of the sphere down here, though the root of nature for that according to the purpose of God. In Peter it is ■ναγ■ννησις. In Matt. 19:28, the παλιγγενεσ■α is clearly earthly and a state of things. So that what I get in regeneration is a subjective state, born of God, of the Spirit, of water, of the word, and, as a sphere, merely so far on earth, only the foundation of relationship with God. But the Spirit as shed on us (Titus 3) goes farther. Here I have

an ■νακα■νωσις of the Holy Ghost. The whole sphere of relationship is changed, and the hope of eternal life comes in. So in Colossians and Ephesians. The παλαι■ς ■νθρωπος is put off. This is general—the former man now grown old and rejected; but then we have distinctly the ν■ον and the καιν■ν. Here ν■ον, is connected with regeneration and subjective; καιν■ν, new in nature and character and brought into a new sphere—its relationships are in question. N ■ος begins; κιω■ς is different, and so lives in a new sphere. Thus, in Colossians, we have put on the new; it is a new man now beginning, but it is ■νακαινο■μενον into knowledge according to the image of Him that created it. This is the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on us, ■νακα■νωσις. The nature is proper and capable, but it is in a wholly new scene, and there developer in power. In Eph. 4 we are ■νανεο■ζθαι in the spirit of our minds. This is subjective again in contrast with the corrupt old man (what it is), and we have put on the καιν■ν ■νθρωπον, one new in character, different, created according to God in righteousness and holiness; neither corrupt, nor innocent, but according to the character of God Himself. The sphere is not entered into. The apostle had largely done this, and his object here is character: still it is objective, κατ■. The washing of regeneration cleanses subjectively; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit, has its essential nature and characteristics; but the renewing of the Holy Ghost leads us into the whole sphere of that new state of things into which Christ has entered as risen and now gone up on high. It is shed on us through Jesus Christ. And though we must be born to have life and have life if born, yet eternal life is only known in redemption and the scene and state into which redemption brings us. Hence, though we have put on the new man (καιν■ν) in putting on the risen Christ, yet there is an ■νακα■νωσις through the Holy Ghost in bringing us into the apprehension of the καιν■ κτ■σις where π■να καν■.

In John 3 water is in no way baptism. Baptism is death, as is evident—my purifying, having done with the nature in which I lived. The water came out of Christ's pierced side; and life is in the Son, the second man, and that consequent on death as come amongst the first. Therefore, it is said there, God has given to us eternal life, and as the water and blood through death testify it to be in the second risen One, Son of God, so the Holy Ghost is a witness of it. Here again we have what eternal life is. But the water, though really purifying—the application of the word, yet is here only by birth, not death and resurrection, as in baptism, and goes only to the kingdom. “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you—a new nature and moral effect that was produced and must be by John 3; but the sphere did not thereby go out of the world: by death and resurrection it clearly does. But the Son of man coming in, in the power of that which was before the world, and then dying and rising, introduces into the καιν■ κτ■σις. He abode alone while here, but by redemption and being in Him we have our place there, and to this the Holy Ghost corresponds.

The Old Testament saints will clearly have been born again and have the kingdom. They, as everyone else blessed, are dependent on the work of Christ as propitiation (as in Rom. 3). But there is more in the cross. It is not the blood on the doorposts the blessed Lord referred to in John 3 There is the recognition of the world having no place, though God may be with us in it, not as in Egypt, but the world recognized as a place of Satan's power; and so Christ, proving it, lifted up out of it. While He was in it consequently, He was alone; men were of it. And though born again, they got the kingdom, here was more. He, Christ, was alone in His person that eternal life which was with the Father and was alone such in the world. Hence the only-begotten Son who is in the

bosom of the Father, the Son of man who is in heaven (who else was there, or even had ascended?) He was this alone. He came, eternal life into this world, but was alone in the out-of-the-world heavenly condition of relationship and being in which eternal life consists: which was before the world, not only in God, but in counsel for us, given us in Christ, manifested in Him alone in the world, and now, consequent on His being lifted up and gone out of it into the heavenly place of which He brought word, that into which we are introduced in Him.

Now in John 6 we have this brought out; not the blessed Lord's death as offered to God, the one ground of all blessing, but the reception of it or entering into it by man. He is the manna, the bread which came down from heaven—was not of this world, though in it and born of woman. This is expressly stated in John 17 and carried on to the disciples. It is life to the world, Jew and Gentile all merged in sin, in nature, and so children of wrath; and here Ephesians joins in chapter 2. We are then quickened together with Christ, and set in Him in the heavenly places. But in John 6 we have the process in the apprehension and reception of Christ, the digesting by faith into the life of our own being. He is first the bread which came down from heaven to give life. But so only, though really such in power, He remains alone. We have it only in resurrection, a new life and condition of man, because in nature he was away from God, in nature and wrath—a condition entirely away from God, yea, in enmity. Hence, in receiving this life, we enter into the expression of this (and that in our conscience) in Christ's death and resurrection. We are rejoiced to have a part in death, because it is death to the nature and system estranged from God, and have life only in the new condition in Christ. It was in Him in this world, not in the old condition of life, though entered into it—come down from heaven. But we have it who were of that condition by being delivered out of it, having wholly done with it by death, ceased to exist as to it and entered as receiving Him dead into the new place.

But John 6 takes up, not our entering, though we receive Christ for it, but the full reception by faith of His dying in grace. So that, divinely for faith, the life-giving One separates us by death and atoning redemption, but here in the power of separation absolute and judicial, from the old: not leaving it, which He could have done (and so no use for us), but dying to it. He is so in that which was needed for man as coming under that judicially, and man's ceasing to have to say to it in the only possible way; because we were alive in the nature which made it such: death only could end that (besides the putting away of sins). Hence we have eternal life through it, in due time the form of it in that we shall be raised again and conformed to Him where He is gone; but it is not our dying with Him here, though that he true, but our full entering into His doing it in grace—giving Himself in flesh for the life of the world. And this belongs to the character of life He had with the Father before the world was; for He ascends up where He was before. Nor is there any full truth as to what man is, or God (in respect of man), or the world, so as to be with God according to the power of Christ's work, but by this. He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world: that (though the truth) is its lowest expression; for He brings us to God according to all God's judgment of good and evil as glorified in Christ in His death (and so taking man to Him, and making him the vessel of the revelation of what He is). Whoever believes in Him has this life: but it is only by His death and bloodshedding he has it. The Word has been made flesh that it might be thus.

To guard against false conclusions from this as to the term “eternal life,” we must remember that the spared Gentiles of Matt. 25 go away into it. Still even there it is those who have received Christ

in His humiliation in His messengers, and will have had share in the sorrow of a Christ the world rejects. (So the hundred and forty-four thousand of Rev. 14, and the great multitude of chapter 7, though the matter be not there in hand.)

In John 6 we have One in whom is eternal life in nature and being, always in the bosom of the Father, living here, coming down and bringing this new heavenly thing, and dying, giving Himself even to death to close the old thing and set it aside, so as to make an end of that and introduce us into the pure glory into which He is entered according to the worth of that which He has wrought. He has taken flesh, eternal life being in Him, and given it for the life of the world. It is the death we enter and receive in our souls, so as to have a part in the eternal life in Him.

Hence, in the sacraments (so-called), figures of this, the first, baptism, has no connection with union with Christ in its signification; the second has. “We are all one bread, one body, being partakers of that one bread.” Yet it is not so, as that in itself we are thus one with Christ therein even in figure; but we arc all one out of the world as united to Him. This union with the Head is by the Holy Ghost—another truth founded on the ascension, yet supposing His death. Being so united we return to see how it all came in, and we own death, not union. In one sense death goes deeper than union, because all God's moral nature is made good and glorified in it, and the question of sin settled. Union is a special privilege of ours. In a word Christ is eternal life with the Father, becomes man, and dies, setting aside for us the whole condition of man with God in the world, and thus takes man up into the new glory purposed of which He was thus worthy.

Chapter 176

Scripture Queries and Answers: Question on Greek

Q. What is the difference between παλαι■ς and ■ρχα■ος? and how do they stand in relation to νε■ς and καιν■ς?

A. Παλαι■ς = more “the former,” ■ρχα■ος “ancient, antique.” You could not say ■ρχα■ος ■νθρωπος in the sense of παλαι■ς. 'Αρχα■ος is opposed to ν■ος but cannot be so absolutely to καιν■ς. But ■ρχα■ος can be neither ν■ος nor καιν■ς. It may be opposed to both: so may be παλαι■ς. It is contrasted with καιν■ς but it is not the ν■ος—what now begins. In 2 Cor. 5 ■ρχα■α are things which have been of old, a long time; we have a new system or creation. So in Matt. 13:52: they are things καιν■ κα■ παλαι■, the old scribe knowledge, and other new things.

Chapter 177

Scripture Queries and Answers: Revelation 4, 6 and 12

Rev. 4; 6:12

Q. The Achill Herald finds insuperable difficulties in reconciling these chapters of the Apocalypse with the supposed removal of the saints from the earth before they apply. The rainbow, the editor thinks, denotes emphatically grace, not judgment; and how could there be martyr-members, after the Church is translated? and how, again, could the woman (the Church?) be seen travailing and then fleeing into the wilderness, if actually glorified before this? ENQUIRER.

A. There is no difficulty whatever, when we bow to Scripture which shows that the Church of God means, not the aggregate of all the redeemed, but those believing Jews and Gentiles, who, on and since Pentecost, have been baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body. This corporate union did not exist in Old Testament times and will not be the state of things on earth during the millennium. What is to hinder the Lord translating the Old Testament believers as well as those who compose that one body to heaven, and then calling other souls to know Himself on earth, some of whom suffer for the truth's sake, as in Rev. 6, and others answer to the persecuted woman in the wilderness and her seed, as in Rev. 12? It is not ingenuity which is wanted to reconcile apparent discrepancies, but simple faith to receive the plain statements of the written word. Nobody denies there will be saints on earth, after we are translated to heaven, some of whom are to be slain and raised to join those already risen (as we see in Rev. 20:4), as others will be preserved to be the first nucleus of the righteous on earth during the millennial reign. The rainbow round the throne is the pledge of the creature's blessing on earth, and is needed just because of the lightnings and thunderings and voices which proceed out of the throne, the counterpoise to those judgments which subsequently come under the seals, trumpets, and vials. But the grace and mercy, which we now find in coming boldly to the throne, are to put or keep us in communion with Christ above. The rainbow is not the symbol of this, but of God's faithfulness to men on earth, whatever the changes and judgments which pass over it. Again, the woman here sets forth the Jews, of whom as to the flesh Christ was born. Her vicissitudes begin after the Church goes to heaven.

It is untrue that this view shuts out the Revelation from the commendation the Spirit gives to the Old Testament. God's dealings with others are of the deepest interest and blessing to my soul, if I believe them. It is a false principle that Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Israel, must mean the Church, in order for us to reap the blessing of those scriptures that speak of the Jews. All Scripture is for the Christian, whether it be about himself or others, because it reveals God, and His ways, His grace and His judgments to the soul. As the gospels are the transition out of Jewish expectations into Christianity properly so called, the Revelation is the link of transition out of the Christian state of things to the renewed dealings of God with His ancient people and the Gentiles when the new age dawns. Hence in the Apocalypse we do not hear of “churches” after the prefatory chapters 1, save in the message at the end of the book. The central and properly prophetic part shows us the Church glorified above, and Jews and Gentiles below once more the object of God's ways in mercy or judgment.

But really these brethren are so ignorant of the first principles of the prophetic word that it is useless to expect intelligence from them. When they can apply Psa. 2, Deut. 28, or Zech. 11, to show Great Britain's election to the covenant place vacated by Israel, one can hardly think any “offspring of Jesuit craft” more mischievous than such a piece of “genuine Protestant” dullness. No doubt, Jesus is the Christ and Son of God, whom Jews and Gentiles, Herod and Pontius Pilate, joined against and crucified; but has God yet set His king on His holy hill of Zion? Has Christ yet received of Jehovah as an actual thing the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession? In John 17, anticipating His place now, not on Zion but in heaven at God's right hand, He says, “I pray (or ask) not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.” This is Christianity, in contrast with the Jewish hope which remains to be accomplished by and by. In the Psalm accordingly He does ask for the world, and Jehovah gives it, whereon He breaks the nations with a rod of iron and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This, we presume, is not the gospel of grace, but the solemn warning of judgment which the Lord will execute on the living at His coming. To the poor the gospel is preached; but here it is an admonition to the kings and judges of the earth to submit to the Son lest His anger burn in their destruction. What entirely confirms this interpretation as the true one against those who would foist our country into the place of Israel and thus give it a present bearing nationally, is Rev. 2:26, 27, which proves that it is only when Christ comes that He will give the faithful, then glorified, power over the nations in association with Himself. If Protestantism were not so blind, these men would see that this perversion of the Psalms is only of importance to Popery and the Jesuits, who do seek by craft to gain power over the nations now. The believer, not of the world as Christ is not, waits to share this and all other glory when Christ appears; but this, let us grant it, is neither Popery nor Protestantism, but the Christian hope.

Chapter 178

Fragment: Self-Judgment

Christ suffered from God because of His faithfulness to man, as He suffered from man because of his faithfulness to God. But this leaves open scripture-proof of any transitional suffering, distinct from either and between the two.

Chapter 179

Fragment: Our Sorrows and Christ

Never a sorrow, a shame, or a difficulty, but we may connect all with Christ by the grace of God—through the cross, of course.

Chapter 180

Scripture Query and Answer: Spirit of Christ and of Him That Raised

Q. Rom. 8:9, 10. What is the special teaching of this part of the epistle? Could Old Testament saints be said to be not in the flesh but in the Spirit? If not, why not? What is the meaning of “the Spirit of Christ?” and why the different forms of describing the Spirit here? What is the force of “he is none of his?” Why is it ο■κ ■στιν α■το■; rather than α■τ■? Does it mean merely a sheep of Christ, or one born of God, or what more? Again, why is it body (σ■μα) here and not the flesh (σ■ρξ)? and what is the distinct connection of “because of sin,” and “because of righteousness?” X. Y.

A. As regards the first query, the intelligence of the passage supposes a clear apprehension of the Christian's individual position before God, and is the expression of that position in, if I may so speak, its dissected characters. It does not speak simply of full and perfect forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ and of a righteousness of God manifested therein (that is found in the end of chap. 3), but unfolds the elements of the position of the believer before God as reckoning himself dead to sin, baptized to Christ's death and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, as having discovered not that we had sinned, and come short of the glory of God (that again is found in chap. iii.), but that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing. He has learned not what he has done merely, but what he is. Hence the simple fullness of grace is more largely stated in chapter v., which closes that first part at verse 11—God's love to the sinner, so that we joy in Him, knowing His love. It is God towards the sinner and so known. Chapter 8 is the believer before God, his privileges fuller, but grace and divine love in itself not so absolutely stated, One is God Himself to the sinner, the other the believer's standing with God. In chapter 3 Christ has died for our sins when we were sinners; now is added, we have been baptized to His death and are to reckon ourselves dead, the bearing of which, moreover, on the law and our experience under it is reasoned out by the Spirit in chapter 7.

Having prefaced this, which will make the answers more intelligible, or at least lay the ground for them if apprehended, reply, Old Testament saints could not be described as not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The Spirit is the seal of our new position in Christ, promised in the prophets and by the Lord, and received by Him for us after His ascension (Acts 2:33), and given as the Spirit of adoption, and uniting us to Him ascended. The distinction of flesh and Spirit is founded on the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and the possession of the Spirit promised by Christ, and the present fruit of His redemption work. In His time on earth John could say, The Holy Ghost was not yet because Jesus was not glorified. And lust was working in the Old Testament saints, but now the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and freedom by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death is known only to those who have the Spirit given consequent on an accomplished redemption. It is clear they could not be in the Spirit if the Spirit was not given, and scripture is as clear on this as words can make it. The gift of the Spirit was such and so dependent on Christ's going away, that it was expedient for them He should do so. I have said above “if apprehended,” because it cannot be but by experience. Forgiveness I can understand in a certain way, if I have it not, for men are forgiven their faults by parents, &c., and the burden of debt being

removed is also intelligible. But being dead and reckoning myself dead when I feel myself alive is not so easy oven to understand, till divine grace, teaching me to submit to God's righteousness, has set me free in the consciousness of a new position in which alive in Christ I treat the flesh as dead. It is called “the Spirit of Christ,” because it is that which forms us in living likeness to Him. It is Christ in us in the power of life. This was perfectly displayed in His life in itself. In us it is realized in the measure in which we walk in the Spirit as we live in the Spirit.

Some further remarks will dear this point. The enquirer may remark that it is called “the Spirit of God,” “the Spirit of Christ,” and “the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus.” I need not say that it is the same Spirit. But in the first, it is in contrast with the flesh (see Gal. 5:17). In the second it is that form of life in which its own qualities are displayed as in Christ Himself. In the third; it is the pledge of final deliverance and glorifying of the body itself into the likeness of Christ glorified, here spoken of however not farther than the quickening of the body by reason of it; but it goes on to the quickening of the mortal body itself.

As regards ο■κ ■στ■ν α■το■ all here is spoken of the Christian as such, subjectively perfect as to 'his Christian state. He who has not Christ’s Spirit is not His. It is not a question of what he may be afterward or whether he is a sheep or, so to speak, α■τ■; but even if God be working in him to led him to, Christ, be is not yet His in fact until he has His Spirit. Redemption and assurance of faith have been so set aside in evangelical teaching (though not at the Reformation—assurance was insisted on then as alone justifying faith) that many persons who have the Spirit of Christ, which is that of liberty and adoption, are afraid to be free and to Say they are children, and yet they have the Spirit of adoption. Such are surely His; but none can be said to be His (α■το■) till they have His Spirit. All men are Christ's in a certain sense; all the sheep are His own in another: but none can be said to be His when they have not His Spirit.

The σ■ρξ is never dead; σ■ρξ would not do at all here; when the σ■μα is alive, active in will, it is σ■ρξ, and there is sin. Hence if Christ be in you (not simply, if I am bolt of God, which a man is in Rom. 7); but, if Christ be in me I reckon myself dead; I am, in the trite Christian estimate, dead. (Compare Col. 3) The body is dead because its only produce, if alive, is sin. It is for the Christian a mere lifeless instrument of the new man, of the Spirit that dwells in me. It is to be remarked here, that in this part of the chapter the Spirit is looked at as the source of life, though as dwelling in us. It is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus afterward. It is looked at personally as acting in us; hence it is said, the Spirit is life. I own and recognize only the Spirit that dwells in me as the source and spring of life in me, because righteousness is what I seek, and its fruit in contrast with flesh, a contrast fully made previously.

Πνε■μα act is surely the Spirit of God, but dwelling in us, and the source of and characterizing life. 'The Old Testament saints could not be said to be of Christ thus, as is apparent from what has been said. The saint really under law, in the Romans 7 state, could not either be said to be α■το■. But we must remember that many are practically under law by false teachers keeping them there, who are not really, but in secret look to God as their Father.

Chapter 181

Sufferings of Christ

Not only are the vicarious sufferings of Christ owned by every true Christian, but. that He suffered also as the righteous One on the earth. The reproaches of those that reproached Jehovah fell on Him. He suffered being tempted, having come in grace, the sinless One, into our position. His holy nature, sinless and untouched by Satan—still as a man, suffered being tempted; His soul entered in the fullest way into the condition of sorrow and distress in which sin had plunged man, and Israel too, especially. In all their affliction, in this sense also, He was afflicted. His heart, fully feeling, entered into the fullest depths of it, so that under the sense of it, He could groan deeply in spirit. Not only so: it is evident that He anticipated the trial and suffering of death to which He was to be subject. By the grace of God He tasted death, and we know that He felt it beforehand, not only from the Psalms and the solemn sufferings of Gethsemane, but from His own words, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And here note, Christ, because it was His soul entering into it, could go to the full depths of all this unspared, and unsparing Himself. It was sinless grace and perfectness of love, which, having brought Him into this condition, made Him enter into it in all its fullness, and shrink from none of it. It became the divine Majesty, seeing He had placed Himself there to lead Him through the sufferings suited to this position: that is, it was fitting He should suffer. Hence our souls, though unable to estimate it, can understand its perfectness, and in spirit pass adoringly with Jesus into the midst of His sorrow. Nay, it is our privilege to enter into that part of His sorrow—His holy sorrow—which flowed from sinlessness and love, from service in spirit and knowledge of the mind of God in the midst of sin—to have the fellowship of His sufferings. His death itself can and is to be viewed in this light also, looked at as coming from man, and even Satan, however far this may be from being all that is found there, as, indeed, it is.

But the writer takes entirely different ground—ground which bases the sufferings of Christ on an entirely different principle. He speaks of sufferings, not into the depths of which He entered as the Holy One, but of wrath, to which He was obnoxious by reason of the position He was in, from which God interfered to deliver Him, from which He extricated Himself by perfect obedience, so that He never felt the whole of it. It was the curse of a broken law He was under by position, not vicariously, without conflict with wicked men, not by the contradiction of sinners endured in grief by a holy soul, which it is our privilege to endure too for His and righteousness' sake: but what it was no privilege to endure, and no profit neither; for if it was to be endured for the profit of others, how could He extricate Himself from it, and be preserved from suffering it all by the interference of God in comforting Him? It lay upon Him, and not vicariously, as that which it was well for Him to get out of as a curse not vicarious. Is it not sufficient to present this to the soul of a saint, for him to see that it subverts the faith of God's elect? It is not the true Christ of God, the Holy Thing born of Mary, that we have here, but one who participates, not by grace but by birth, in the curse, the fruitless curse which is fallen on man by reason of sin—not one who has taken the place in grace, for He extricates Himself from it, but one who is in it under the curse of the law by dire necessity of position. The substance of the truth of Christ's holy person is set aside, and His taking the curse

on Himself is set aside—the two cardinal truths of the gospel of grace; and hence we shall find that all is confusion on these subjects (as it must be where the substance of the truth is lost), and the use of the Psalms as untrue and unfounded as possible. Under pretense of presenting the sufferings of Christ in a new and important point of view, the whole grace of them is lost; and, instead of in grace entering into the depths of the sorrow and suffering, whether of man or of Israel in their position before God—His soul entering into all the full depth of it in full purpose of soul without the least sparing, that, His soul knowing all, our souls might know His love had entered into all, and find its power there—it is a condition He is in necessarily by position as under a curse which He prays against, extricates Himself from, and is saved from enduring the full extent of, God interfering to deliver Him. I have already given the quotations which expressly teach this.

It is in vain to present other truths to make good the writer's orthodoxy. It is a mere blind. They are not the truths in question. On the point which the tracts teach, the truth of God is subverted. It is not a true Christ which is taught there. Nor does Christ enter fully into our sorrow, for He is spared it, and extricates Himself from it.

For thus it was. The Lord ordered that certain persons should be in trial and oppressed, that they might be fit vessels of Christ's Spirit, who alone could enter into all sorrow. The expression of what was true, perhaps, of them as to sin, because suited to Christ as entering in spirit, in grace, into the condition of Israel in the remnant—fully and entirely entering into it, not escaping or extricating Himself from it as naturally under it by position—and thus providing most blessed instruction as to Him for us, and what shall instruct and sustain the remnant of Israel as of His spirit prophetically, when really in the circumstances and state and guilt which He entered into in spirit. And here remark, that if it be not Christ entering into it in spirit, or vicariously, these psalms go a great deal too far; for they do not merely speak of relationship to God, but of actual guilt and sin.

Either Christ is speaking as charging Himself with the iniquities, or His soul is entering into their condition, both of which the writer says it is not, or in some way Christ, must be responsible for iniquities otherwise than vicariously. According to the writer, Christ was not in this condition after His baptism, but often before, referring to this very psalm. And mark, it is not what is earned in the way of punishment which is spoken of here (that may be understood); nor merely of the anger and hot displeasure (the same terms as in the sixth), but He speaks of Himself as involved in what earned it. That He can thus take it on Himself for the remnant, the full consequence of which was the cross, is readily accepted and understood; but that it was a position out of which He extricated Himself, and God interfered to spare and relieve Him, is nonsense indeed, but nonsense which destroys the whole truth as to Christ.

It is another gospel, which is not another; for death under the wrath of God is not here itself vicarious—not the bearing of the sins of His redeemed—but finding His way, by reason of the position He was in Himself, to that point where God could meet Him as having finished the work which death on the cross, due to the position He was Himself in, closed. It is not (as Irvingism) that He partook of sinful nature, so that He was obnoxious to wrath as such; but it is, that He was from His birth, by the position which He took as man, Himself at a distance from God. Not that He bore sins and took wrath on the cross: it was His own position, out of which He had to find His way to that point where God could meet Him, which point was death under wrath, which is what is indeed due to man in the flesh at a distance from God—the place where Christ always was.

But I beg the reader's attention to this point: that the writer, instead of increasing our apprehensions of the entering of Christ into our sorrow, or Israel's sorrow, does exactly the contrary. The truth teaches that His soul entered into the full depth of them, avoiding nothing—that, as captain of our salvation, and as the good shepherd, He led the way in sorrow. The writer teaches that He was obnoxious to wrath in virtue of His position as man and amongst Israel, and was preserved from much of what He would have suffered, as in that position, by prayer, faith, and obedience; so that the sympathies of Christ are largely curtailed. It would be hard to say, why He was not spared all, or why He had to bear some. He was there by reason of others, as in the position they had brought themselves into; but not for others, for He extricated himself out of it as far as possible. Moreover, it was God's appointment to Him of a certain quantity. I am not here returning to the inconsistency of this statement, but skewing that it was a limited suffering, arising from the position He was in relation to God—a position we have seen to be positive wrath, for that was man's—not His soul entering into that of others.

Now, I say that the Psalms, whether taken as to man or Israel, teach us that He entered into the full depths of suffering, which made Him the vessel of sympathizing grace with those who had to pass through them; and that, as seeing and pleading with God in respect of them. They were sinners, could claim no exemption, count on no favor which could deliver and restore. They must have taken the actual sufferings in connection with the guilt which left them in them without favor. But this was not God's thought—He was minded to deliver them; and Christ steps in grace. He takes the guilt of those that should be delivered—that was vicarious suffering as a substitute—and, in the path of perfect obedience, puts Himself in the sorrow through which they had to pass; enters into it so as to draw down the efficacy of God's delivering favor on those who should be in it, and be the pledge, in virtue of all this, of their deliverance out of it as standing thus for them, the sustainer of their hope in it, so that they should not fail. Not that they should not pass through it: it was because they were so to pass through it according to the righteous ways of God in respect of their folly and wickedness and to purify them inwardly from it all, that Christ entered into it to be a spring of life, and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy from without, the sense of guilt terrible from within, and hence no hope of favor, but that One, who had assured and could convey this favor, had taken up their cause with God, and passed through it for them. And hence Christ did not escape where they would, because he must suffer the full penalty of the guilt and evil, or He could not deliver them. Thus Christ must pass personally fully through the sorrow, as He did in spirit; and, besides that, have no deliverance, but, on the contrary, make atonement for the guilt.

But it was as being near to God, save as in atonement, that He passed through it all. And though, in entering into it in spirit, He might see all the terrors of death and judgment before Him, and feel it anticipatively, yet He, as perfectly near to God and in favor, could at once turn to Him in perfectness, and hence make available all the grace and favor of God towards Him, as regarded that case, in behalf of those who should come to be in it (this we see continually in the Psalms, and in the Gospels, too), and have all the mind of God for them in that case, which they could use when they found themselves in it, even though in darkness. And how many in darkness, even in these Christian times, have so availed themselves of them! And this, because He was in the perfect favor, and could count on the perfect favor of God, while passing through these depths, and thus, through the atonement, make it available as to all the circumstances for others in its

suitable application, for others ruined else in their guilt. It was favor, and sustaining, and blessing, during the whole course of and in the circumstances, not the deliverance of One who was at a distance, as in the position of those who were so, Himself obnoxious to wrath.

And hence we and that, while all the most exquisite sympathies of the Lord's sufferings are precious in Him and for us, inasmuch as in general the saint is always a sufferer among sinners, and the circumstances are analogous, and we have to walk as He walked, and the grace precious in His walk by which He lived is precious for us; yet the prophetic application is, properly speaking, to Israel, not to the church, save in a particular way in some very peculiar passages, where the remnant of Israel is considered after His resurrection, which formed the first nucleus of the church, and where the heavens are vaguely alluded to—where we now know the church will be, when the judgments come on the earth. There is one point which particularly refers to this—The constant claim for vengeance and deliverance by destruction of the psalmist's enemies. This is not the church's cry, because her deliverance is by being taken out of the scene. That is the certain character of the deliverance. But, in the Psalms, it is destruction of enemies. The resurrection is clearly put forward as the confidence of those whom the enemy may slay—a principle ever true, and, in fact, accomplished in Christ. How fully this applies to the remnant of Jews, in the latter day oppressed by the enemy, every one will see. But this by the bye.

Let us examine the Psalms in their connection with Christ Himself, who was, as in Israel, the faithful One in the midst of a rebellious and apostate race, but yet put to the test by this last visit in goodness. But, as regards His path and trials, Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He called all as such, doubtless; but it was a separative mission. His sheep were to hear His voice. His fan was in His hand—the ax at the root of the trees. The meek were to inherit the land—the poor in spirit to have the kingdom. His preaching righteousness and truth was in the great congregation, but the effect was to gather a little flock, with whom all His associations were, and to whom it was His Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. This was His position in Israel. From such, and the thoughts of One perfect before God in such a position, the testimony of the spirit of prophecy in the Psalms flowed, and flowed for those who shall be in such a position in the latter day; while, as the revelation of the perfection of Christ, they are the blessed portion of the church in all ages. From all this it flows that some psalms speak of Christ Himself as alone making atonement; others of His sorrows in life as taking up the cause of the godly and being perfectly so Himself; others the prophetic provision of the expression of right feelings by the remnant in the latter day, into whose condition He thus enters in spirit.

We will examine the Psalms a little to bring this out. The first psalm presents the blessedness, natural in God's ways, to the perfect man under the law; distinguishing Him from the wicked. The second presents the title of Christ, in the decree of Jehovah, to the headship over the heathen, as set King in Zion. The third at once turns to the actual position. The righteous man is surrounded with enemies—suffers instead of reigning. The rest show out all the thoughts of God as to this, in sorrow, or in purpose and final glory. “How are they increased,” says the righteous man, “that trouble me! There is no help for him in his God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield;” closing with the great testimony in Israel—ever true— “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. His blessing is upon his people.” The fourth: They turn His glory into shame. But they would know that Jehovah had set apart the godly man for himself. Many could say there was no good, but for him the light of Jehovah's countenance satisfied him. The Lord only was his refuge. Here we have the position of

the righteous remnant fully provided for, and the spirit of Christ entering fully into it; putting real strength into it, for the name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Fifth: He finds himself surrounded by confident wickedness; but God does not take pleasure in it. He knows God's name. There were bloody and deceitful men. He calls on God to destroy them. He will come into His temple. The Lord would bless the righteous. Sixth: In the midst of these workers of iniquity the righteous soul sees death before it. His soul is vexed. He sees the righteous indignation of God upon the people. The Spirit of Christ enters into that which was due to, and ought to be felt by, the righteous remnant in the day of trouble as really due to it. The righteous soul felt it as the chastening hand of God, saw the rod, and who had appointed it, and bowed down as in the presence of death (the simple pass on and are punished); but looked perfectly to the Lord in that condition, saying, “Thou, O Lord, how long?” The Spirit of Christ entering into this, does not ‘preserve' from seeing the rod and feeling the burthen, but quite the contrary, and enables the soul to look constantly to the Lord.

Christ, then, does enter in spirit into this sorrow of the remnant fully: but it is not His relation to God as due to Him as associated with the people. It is because He is near God through it all, that He can hold the soul of the remnant in the place of sustaining grace by faith in the position where they were to receive the chastisement. It is not Himself at a distance, as the place of the sinful man under wrath (save in atonement) in His relation to God; but the link with the remnant in spirit, when in the circumstances where they would feel all pressing upon them, and could not have been near God, being sinners, and guilty as a nation; but that He who had drawn them to seek righteousness maintained them in spirit, brought them into the sustaining value of His place by entering into theirs in grace. The position is the position of the remnant; the link with God in it, Christ. Sometimes it rises up therefore to where He alone could individually stand, and becomes a direct prophecy of Him; and then we find His interest in, and application of, all this to the remnant as a distinct body from Him. In general, to understand the Psalms, we must see the Jewish remnant faithful in trial, and the Spirit of Christ taking up this position to link them with the strength of Jehovah, as well as (in some psalms) bearing sin alone in the way of atonement that He might be able to do so. Sometimes it is the deliverance and glory which this strength will accomplish as the answer.

So (Psa. 7) Christ pleads in the midst of the people in His righteousness, and calls to Jehovah to awake to the judgment which He has commanded, lifting up Himself in anger against the rage of His enemies. Christ, as He was, did not do this, and could not, but the contrary, for higher and more glorious reasons—nor, can the church now. It is His spirit speaking in and for the remnant. Yet the Spirit of Christ knew perfectly his title to this righteous vengeance: but He had a higher work to accomplish. He could have asked His Father, and have had twelve legions of angels; but the Scriptures were to be fulfilled. The disciples were not even to tell that He was the Christ: the Son of man was to suffer, and hold a higher and more glorious place. He had come to save men's lives, not to destroy them; and He prayed for His ignorant enemies.

Hence, from the accomplishment of the effect of Christ's taking up the cause, and entering thus into the circumstances of the earthly people, in Psa. 8 Jehovah, the God of Israel, has His name excellent in all the earth, as the God of the Jews, in the exaltation of the Son of man. In Psa. 9 we have the judgment executed against the enemies so often complained of, and an enlarged account of it. So in Psa. 10 the wicked thus domineering in the latter day are fully described, and the result for the humble remnant, whose heart God prepared and caused his ear to hear. In the psalms which follow on this, this is fully entered into; that is, the Spirit of Christ draws out the whole

scene, becoming the spring and portrayer of all the varied exercises of feeling in that day, in the fullest sympathy with the humble, whose heart God had prepared. And it is exceedingly lovely to see all the weaknesses, sorrows, thoughts, feelings, exercises, spoken of by the Spirit of Christ Himself. All this supposes weakness. ‘I had said almost as they,' says the poor oppressed upright one in that day—that, when all the circumstances by which they shall be occasioned in that day are there, they may have, by the word, the vehicle to their hearts of this sympathy, and the certainty of it in the very thoughts presented by it for and in the circumstances. It is not an excellency out of the reach of their condition; it is the entering of the Spirit of Christ into it. This is partially true of us; but it is not quite the same, because there Christ descends in sympathy into the circumstances, as there with them, whereas for us He is on high, and we having received the Holy Ghost consequent on the knowledge of full redemption, to join Christ in heaven, and so be ever with Him, we have Him as our high priest on high to bring us in spirit there, out of where we are, and having suffered being tempted, maintaining the communion of the weak with the perfectness of the light we belong to, and the fullness of glory and perfection which we see by faith, and in which we walk. The Holy Ghost in us presents those groanings which cannot be uttered, because, being already associated with the joy and glory of that new creation, we groan, being burthened with our connection with the old. Our enemies are spiritual. We do not look for deliverance by the execution of judgment on earthly foes, though we see and can desire the deliverance of earth by it in due time. But here the blessed Jesus provides His sympathies for a people who are not in this position, but in trials from which, for the most part, unless killed, the execution of judgment can alone deliver them; and they wait for the Lord, saying, ‘How long?' and find in the words of Jesus that He has not forgotten them, knows their sorrows, and furnishes them through His Spirit with the expression of them, an expression of them of which God takes notice as being of the Spirit of Christ Himself who has made the atonement for the nation, though it he but the cry of weakness, but divinely suited to their state. They, too, vent their sorrow in what they know outwardly and inwardly, for it cannot be otherwise, for the words of God are sweet and known by His own to be the words their God has given them.

Often, as in Psa. 14 we have the Lord's view of all this. He rises above the circumstances and takes a view of them. How encouraging to the poor tried remnant! yet, putting them in their place as sinners, for they are not by known redemption out of that, though they wait and hope for it. Hence it is, too, that these psalms often suit souls awakened and in that state. Hence, in Psa. 15, we have just a description of the character of those who shall find a place in God's tabernacle. In the sixteenth, we find one of those psalms which shows us (as the apostle quotes their general principle as illustrating the position of Christ), that Christ did not merely depict and express, or sympathize, in a way of provision for, or in divine intelligence, the sorrows of the remnant, but that He came Himself into their place, and suffered, being tempted, and tasted all the sorrow, so as to be able to succor them that were tempted. He was in the place, not of distance, but of dependence. It is saints who want sympathy, however weak, and however their feelings are the expressions of infirmity—not man at a distance and disobedient. He was in the position of dependence, in the place of sorrow, but perfection in the dependence, of a saint. Here Christ looks to be preserved by God, for, as a man, He puts His trust in Him. He said to Jehovah, “He was his Adon, his Lord; to the saints and the excellent one arth, all his delight was in them” —not with man at a distance, as Himself obnoxious to wrath because He was there (though saints may feel their sins when called into the place of trial and repentance and chastening, feel them according to

grace), nor with the mass of disobedient Israel, but with the saints and excellent of the earth. This is Christ's place in the psalms, unless alone in the atonement. Still it is in Israel: He will not go after another God: Jehovah was the portion of His inheritance; and He sees in this confidence in Jehovah, the resurrection as His path of life and joy.

“I think I see in these psalms, which are the expression of the thoughts of Christ Himself, in a certain sense a higher tone, more perfectness, in that He is in the absolute completeness and perfectness of feeling which belongs to perfectness in the place in which He is. He may be in the very depths, but He is perfectly and perfect there. He has exactly that feeling which suits a perfect apprehension of the place He is in. He enters perfectly into the tossings to and fro of the hearts of His poor saints who through grace feel rightly, but hardly know how, and do not know how to estimate absolutely (it would be impossible and contradict their place as exercised because of imperfection, and always feeble, never divine), the place they are in relation to God. He enters, I say, perfectly into their feelings; but His feelings are perfect, and hence there is an exact perfect setting of each thing in its place, which leaves no broken or vague impression. We see one who has scanned in the light the whole extent of His position, though that position be the depth of darkness itself, giving God perfectly His place in relation thereto. Hence these psalms become as centers of thought for the whole book (as stakes in the hedge which sustain and keep it all in place, though others form it), as they will be in fact for the remnant, as a pledge of blessing for all in similar circumstances of trial, though Christ were alone in the expiatory part of them—and this they habitually express also.

Thus this Psa. 16 So Psa. 22 Forsaken of God, no uncertainty, no hope He may not be. He is (O wondrous thought and blessed one that it should. have been so!) yet equally perfect in His estimate of God: ‘Thou continuest holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' All the powers of evil were then against Him, and at the same time forsaken of His God, for whom to be near Him He cried in the hour of His distress: but perfect in owning the perfection of God in it notwithstanding all. Weakness, hostility, and abandonment did not give an imperfect thought of all that God was. He was heard. So in my judgment, Psa. 23, where He walks the path of the blessing and trial of faith, and presents the confidence of it (putting forth His sheep, He goes before them), and shows it to them whatever He had to suffer in it, assured to them what Jehovah was—Be whom He was proved Himself to be, Psa. 24 But one word as to Psa. 20; 21, in their connection with Psa. 22 In the two preceding psalms, the Spirit presents Messiah the object of the contemplation of the saint in spirit prophetically, for we must remember they are prophecies. Psa. 19 gives the testimony of creation and the law, such as they really are. But in Psa. 20 Messiah is seen in the day of trouble. Strange sight! but one that the saint must enter into and he knows now that the Lord saves His anointed, and none is to be trusted but Jehovah. Here it is the day of trouble, and the saints can enter into it—Jewish saints and expressed in Jewish circumstances. It closes with their Hosanna. In Psa. 21 they contemplate the answer, seeing Messiah not only delivered but exalted; glory and great majesty set upon Him. What they had looked for, as interested in His desires, Psa. 20:4, they see answered, Psa. 21:2; and much more, too, as the answer opens out upon their view in the blessing and exaltation of the Messiah, with whom they had identified themselves in heart in the day of his trouble prophetically; but all this in Jewish association, and hence they see His power in judgment. “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies.” But in Psa. 22 it was not sufferings in a day of trouble which could be contemplated and

entered into by others, and the psalm is, and must be, in the mouth of Jesus Himself. He alone could enter, and in entering understand, that depth. And hence, being of expiatory power as hearing the forsaking of God, which was not the portion of His believing people, He, as now heard in resurrection, can declare Jehovah's name on a new ground to His brethren; and assembling the remnant round Himself, sing in the midst of the congregation, the gathered remnant of Israel redeemed into fuller blessings, and which became the nucleus of the church—the church, in fact, itself in its commencement. But thereon He calls on all Israel also, in virtue of this His being heard. And His praise is in the great congregation—all Israel, when fully gathered hereafter; and then all the ends of the world, “For the kingdom is the Lord's.” This gives a very peculiar force to this psalm. In its own proper depth, beyond all our feelings, and the foundation of all our hopes.

In the sixty-ninth Psalm, we have another of the character I have just now mentioned, which will afford us much instruction, and where the Lord fully expresses the well known and well defined position He is in before God, and really in His ways, as well as His sorrows. The waters had come into His soul. He cried to God—his throat was dry while waiting for Him—His eyes failed—there was no standing in the depth he was in—His enemies were there, and mighty. But even here, in speaking of foolishness and sin, which we know to have been of others, not His own, He speaks as fully in the presence of God, all being in the light. “Thou knowest my foolishness, my sins are not hid from thee.” His whole case is before God, He knowing it. It is not merely the sorrows and effects of sin down here. Hence, as I have said, He pleads for other godly ones (what touching grace in such a case), that He, having to suffer the full depths of rejection, having taken all on Him, may not be an occasion of stumbling to the godly, the remnant who waited upon God. How likely in hearts prompt to say, on His apparent rejection, because man had rejected Him, and His own word ill believed, “We thought that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:” as in the latter day, in Psa. 73 when the godly man felt, “therefore his people return thither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them;” and they were ready to say,” Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.” “Let not them that wait on thee be ashamed for my sake: let not them that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel, because for thy sake I have borne reproach;” and the Lord shows the real ground on which, on man's part, trouble had come upon Him—His grace is sorrow toward them. But still in all the trouble also He is fully and consciously before God. “Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor,” though as a man reproach had broken His heart, and He cried for deliverance. Here also we find judgment claimed from the God of Israel against the enemies; and in verse 26, Christ brings together Himself and the remnant. In the end, seeing all the result, “their heart should live that seek God; for God will save Zion.”

Again, in another Psalm (51), we have, though inspired for them by the Spirit of Christ, the confession of the remnant, the bloodguiltiness being indeed of all from Abel to Zacharias, but surely above all of Christ Himself. Then the confession of the remnant in Israel by the Spirit of Christ clearly applies to them, and not to Christ, save so far as Christ has taken it all on Himself indeed in grace. “In sin did my mother conceive me” cannot in any sense be applied to Christ; for it was not only the absence of personal sin, but an entirely different manner of introduction into manhood, which distinguished the position of Christ. It was a Holy Thing which was born, so born as to be called the Son of God, so that there was a necessary and special relation between Him and God His Father, even as a man born into the world, whatever He took on Himself, or into

whatever He perfectly entered.

In Psa. 40 where we have Christ personally again, we find Him pleading His entire and unfaltering faithfulness—but having come to do God's will, and that through the offering of His body once for all (for we have the apostle's application of it here), His iniquities take such hold upon Him, that He is not able to look up, they are more in number than the hairs of His head. It is not His being sorry for them, or remission, as deliverance, or relief, but the weight of them on Him. Again, He asks judgment on the enemy, and that the remnant may rejoice.

In Psa. 102 we have again one which applies personally to Christ, rises up to the height that is of His person, though never separated from the interests of His people. He had been lifted up, as One chosen out of the people, as Messiah, and cast down to the lowest place. His days were like a shadow, but, as ever, the full recognition, as standing in the light, of the glory of Jehovah in relation to Him: “Thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever.” Let Him suffer and be cut off as He might, Jehovah and His glory, His remembrance (and that was to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God revealed to Moses) should endure. He should arise and have mercy on Zion, and the Spirit of Christ goes on to the time of the remnant in the latter day. The set time was come, for the servants of God (for such these were, see Isa. 65 and 46) took pleasure in her stones. Also when the Lord built up Zion, He would appear, and His glory among the heathen be established, for He would look down and hear the cry of the poor remnant appointed to death. But what should Christ do? His strength had been weakened in the way, His days had been shortened, yet had He cried to God, “He asked life” of Him. But what a glorious answer to bring out the full person of Christ, in contrast (yet in full recognition and connection in unity of person) with His suffering, dying humanity, and with the sparing of those appointed to death, on whom the Lord shall look down on that day. “Of old” —is the glorious answer— “thou hast laid the foundation of the earth; the heavens are the work of thy hands;” they would perish, but He was the same, His years should have no end; the sufferer was Jehovah, the Creator Himself. And then the remnant of Israel are brought in millennial blessing. “The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.” He, all glorious as He was, could not do without them: nor could they fail who had waited on such as He, though suffering as listening to His word in the midst of the enemies of His name, and appointed to death.

In Psa. 25 we have Christ entering as the head of the godly remnant into the sorrows and consequences of the sin of Israel which that remnant cannot repudiate, but, on the contrary, are known by the confession of, as we see in Daniel. The wicked say, as in Malachi, Wherein have we offended? It is a weariness to serve. The remnant confess. And note here, Daniel is reserved, and makes his confession amongst the Gentiles, now recognized as beasts after the restoration: showing that, for the full and best intelligence of the mind of God, there was no restoration yet really of the people. Loved infallibly of God as His people, they were still in condition Lo-Ammi, not God's people. Hence the post-captivity prophets never call them so, though prophesying that they will be in a future day. Daniel, taking fully their position in prophetic sympathy by the Spirit of Christ, can address God according to His mind, and confessing their sin, consider Jerusalem as the holy mountain, and all in the full light of God's unchangeable thoughts of love (see Dan. 9); and their condition as driven out, is the curse he speaks of in which they were. But he speaks also in the certainty of divine love, and of the people as God's people, called by His name.

In the twenty-fifth Psalm, then, Christ speaks as the head of the remnant, so to speak. “O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies triumph over me;” for in the presence of ungodly enemies we ever find Him, never associated with them. And, therefore, suffering, He prays that He may not be shut up with them. “Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed that transgress without cause. Lead me. Remember thy tender mercies. Remember not the sins of my youth [here Israel is personified—Christ entering into their case; for sins of his youth are clearly not His relation to God], but according to thy mercy remember me.” He enters into the spirit of that word (God's real and only possible way of dealing with Israel) “that he might have mercy upon all.” Christ had come for the truth of God to confirm the promises, but He had been refused of Israel, and now Israel must come in under mercy. This the remnant understand. The meek are those the Lord will accept and guide. The Lord's ways are owned; and so conscious are they of no excuse on Israel's part for their sin, that their forgiveness is based on the name of the Lord, the only sure ground, as it is necessarily perfect in its power. The man that fears the Lord will be taught in this way; and, finally, Israel will be redeemed (so is the desire) out of all his troubles. I have noticed this psalm, because it shows the spirit in which (in association in grace with the remnant, with those that wait on Jehovah,) Christ takes up in spirit, as in the condition of the people, looked at not as bearing the sin Himself, but in the feelings of the remnant about the sin of Israel (right though sorrowful feelings), in which, I say, He takes up the sins and the cause of this remnant: for if He did not take up the question of their sins, He could not take up their cause, nor His Spirit be the inspirer and expresser by the word of right feelings in them. For, have they these feelings, they must feel, own, recognize, and even groan under the sins which have brought them to that low estate, as is true of every saint, whose sorrow under the consciousness of sin is the fruit of the working of the Spirit of Christ, not his relation to God, as at man's distance from Him. I will now turn, therefore, to some other psalms, referred to as expressing the greatest positive anguish in respect of these sins.

In Psa. 38 Israel is evidently viewed in the anguish of the bitter consequences of sin; but then, mark, of sin, confessed as the true source of the anguish, unrighteous as was the oppressing enemy. Seeing it as the hand of the Lord, and bowing under it, and hoping in the Lord who would hear, and saying (as Job at the close, when the testimony of Elihu and Jehovah had reached his spirit, and made the suffering spiritually available), he would declare his iniquity, and be sorry for his sin. In a word, he no longer keeps silence, and guile is not now in his heart, so that we recognize the working of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant; and, consequently, here expressed according to the perfect workings of that Spirit. All my desire is before thee. The condition is the condition of Israel under the heavy hand of God's chastening—the sentiments are the sentiments of the elect remnant (and so in spirit morally true of any soul in such a case), in faith confessing the sin, and sure that God will hear—a certainty expressed for them by the Spirit of Christ, who fully enters into their case, and produces the sentiments, as having made the atonement which enables Him thus to lead them to God, though as yet they know not its value and are crying out of the depths.

They are the remnant that, in the midst of trial, “follow the thing that good is.” Now that was Christ's place. He sorrowed in the sorrow of Israel, and suffered the suffering of Israel; but His soul was with God about it, though the effect of His righteous path was to bring trial and forsaking upon Him, and the Lord left Him there till all was complete, but, however groaning deeply in spirit, knowing

that the Father heard Him always. As in His previous life, one doubtless of deep thoughts about Israel unknown to man, He knew well, though subject to the path of ordinary duty as of God till God called Him, that He must be about His Father's business, thus shelving, not merely an unchangeable and eternal relationship as Son in the bosom of the Father, but, a known relationship down here (and that in service), according to that which He was as a man born of God, who was His God from His mother's belly, who made Him hope when He was on His mother's breasts; and as such He grew in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man. Nor can it be doubted that He entered into the sufferings and sense of Israel's guilt in a more peculiar way, when sealed and anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power for official service, though I doubt not His heart felt it all along. But He waited in private upon God. Look at the sense of the presence and working of His enemies, and the pressure of the ungodly, the contradiction of sinners, which are invariably spoken of in these psalms. And when was that the case? Was it the blameless carpenter who had grown in favor with God and man, whatever His inward thoughts (and I doubt not at all they were deep and full of the glory of God, the glory of God in Israel, of God dishonored in Israel, and deep and earnest love to His people, and His glory in them)? Or was it the anointed servant of Jehovah declaring His righteousness in the great congregation, and following His ways so as to confound the hypocrites, and asserting His glory in the temple itself, when the zeal of His house ate Him up, that found that the reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him, that felt the desolation of a people sold for their iniquities to the Gentiles, and the enmity of a cruel nation, and whose lovers and friends stood aloof? But in all these psalms this pressure and sense of enemies are found.

In such a psalm as the thirty-eighth then, Christ enters into the sorrow of the godly remnant where He had been, but in the confession, and inspiring the confession, of their sin, taking guile out of their heart, and as One who could do it, as He who had come into all its bitterness and had borne all its weight as known in the light of God.

So in the sixth, it is not the iniquities, but the grief and prostration of spirit, and that in the presence of these same enemies, which brings the weeping souls of the remnant to the gates of death; but this, according to the perfectness of the Spirit of Christ (in man in effect and previously to reading such a word, often mixed with unbelief and the sorrows likely to produce disheartening and turning to the world)—here encouraged by the comforting testimony for their hearts in that day. “The Lord hath heard,” but it is here because of “all mine enemies,” but the hand of God looked to in it: not chastening on man at a distance, but a cry acceptable, and heard because the Spirit of Christ is in it, and heard in the judgment of their enemies, which note.

In the eighty-eighth psalm, we get deeper into this scene of trial; and as we know that Christ was heard in that He feared, that His soul dreaded death and the cup that his Father gave him to drink, though perfect in obedience, so He expresses this all here. His perfectness before God was seen: that no sin, no evil, no distance had clouded His sense of how terrible separation from God and His wrath was in that which His soul here expresses. He looks at it as under it. He had seen and apprehended it, we learn here, from His youth up. But it was His nearness to God, and sense of what He was, made Him feel what the sorrow and horror was of the contrary. He was the Lord God of His salvation; His loving-kindness as to man (hence not declared in the grave as to man in the flesh) well known; that is, the relation of God with His people, the godly ones before him according to His faithful love to Israel; but, on the other hand, the full depth of judgment, sorrow, and wrath,

entirely entered into, often anticipated, and now measured and known; for He could measure and know it, and He alone, for He has passed under it.

“Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; I am shut up, I cannot come forth. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.” This is no escape or extrication from a state of distance from God. He is afflicted with all God's waves: He is in the lowest pit. His soul is cast off. God's fierce wrath went over Him. His terrors cut him off. That Christ anticipated this we know. That He anticipated it in all its extent during the time of His service in the intelligent power of the Spirit (doubtless His righteous soul entered into it before) we know. But with what result? To escape it partially, or extricate Himself from it? No. Or was it merely after His service was closed that He entered into another position? No. Jesus knowing all things that should come upon Him, steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. That the hour of the power of Satan's darkness, and the hour of the dreadful wrath of God, were different from all before, from the holy anticipation of it, and from that service during which Satan departed from Him for a season, having first tried to seduce, and now, having been unable to succeed, oppressing Him with terror, sorrow, and death—all this is quite true. But the thing weighed by the Spirit of Christ in this psalm is the terror, and the wrath, and the waves in their full extent. Till it was accomplished, He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened till it was accomplished. That Christ's feelings varied, though the foundation of them all was the same, is undoubted. He could speak of our partaking of His joy, and of the fellowship of His sufferings. He had meat to eat in accomplishing His Father's work, and a cup to drink so bitter, that it, and it alone, He prayed might pass. But it did not, and He had to drink it, but at His Father's hand. He might be in the joy of communion with Him who heard Him always, in the service of love to men, or grieved, infinitely grieved, with the unbelief and contradiction of sinners; in glory, speaking of His decease with the saints in glory, or suffering it under the wrath of God. He could be led in the Spirit to be tempted, and return in the power of the Spirit to cast out devils, having bound the strong man; and Satan return as the prince of this world, to whom Jesus would not be subject, nor own: and He was perfect in each position—I mean perfect in His feelings relative to that position. So He might enter prophetically into the sorrows of others, and by His prophetic spirit so record His own that the word became His word when He was in them. But in all this His perfectness never changed in His own relation to God, nor His nearness to Him as man, as Son of God down here born of the virgin. The time of atonement had another character, and this we know He anticipated in spirit. And here I would remark, that, instead of escaping wrath to which He was relatively obnoxious, whether by position or appointment, we do find Him, when that one cup had to be drunk, seeking that it should pass, though perfectly submissive; but it could not. For nothing else was like that. For before, the reproaches of them that reproached God fell on Him, and, though He suffered in every way, in the midst of it all, He looked constantly to God. Every groan in spirit, as in the case of Lazarus, was heard, and reproaches because of unbelief turned in the same hour into thanking God in spirit, who hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes.

The sense of unbelief, even in His disciples, which disabled them from using the power of His name against the demon that tormented the world, which made Him feel, on descending from the momentary vision or rather realization of glory, that that generation was not long to be supported,

nor He to be with them, yet turns without an interval into the exercise of love and display of power against the enemy, while He was with His poor unhappy people—with unhappy man. But now, when this cup, not reproaches for God, not contradiction from sinners, but wrath from God because man was at a distance, was proved to be so, proved incapable of being won back by anything such as He was, was to be drunk—now, He prays it may pass that from this hour He may be saved. But no, it could not be. We well know why: our hearts know it well. That cup could not pass. Not that one. It was drunk for us; and He drinks it in love to His Father, in obedience, and in accomplishment of His blessed and precious love to us. And our souls adore Him, and Him who gave Him for us—Him who came to do the will which sanctifies and perfects us by one offering. Associated with us in wrath, from which He extricates Himself, and escapes, in part, by prayer, faith, and obedience I Does not the soul revolt from such a thought, and leave it with disgust to the friends or dupes of Satan to entertain or adopt it? But let us turn rather to the Lord.

I will add also a few words on Jeremiah, which is also used to puzzle the minds of the saints, recalling the fact, that the question is not, if Christ in spirit entered into the sorrows of Israel: I believe that, as being always near to God, He could. The doctrine taught is, that He was under wrath in a way we never can be, and did not suffer all its consequences, but saved Himself from it.

Jeremiah then, in spirit, by the Spirit of Christ, entered in his measure into the sorrows of Israel: not as subject to the wrath (though as a man he was, of course) but as having the mind of Christ's love, and His word about them.

“I have set thee,” says God, “for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.” (Jer. 6:27.) God had sanctified him for this (chap. 1:5), and the nation would fight against him. (Ver. 19.) This is not sufferings as associated with them, but as separated from them, though divinely interested in them, that is, as a prophet. (Chapter 15:15.) We have his trials under it, and what was the ground it went upon? Just so far as he was there in the Spirit of Christ. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart... I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.” Now, here he is filled with it. How? Is it by being naturally exposed and obnoxious to it, and extricating himself out of it? No, but as sanctified to it by God, and called by His name, it is as partaking of the word of God that he suffered, and suffered as far as that was the case, as Christ did. And this was the identification with Israel which made him suffer—according to the grace of God, and in spiritual understanding according to His mind; his heart and spirit being associated with them, according to God's love to them, and feeling their sorrow and their sins; the grace of God identifying itself in the prophet with the people as loved of Him—suffering in their sorrows, and calling for judgment on them who willfully opposed the testimony, despised the sorrower, and helped on the evil. But this was the opposite of suffering the inflictions of God's wrath from Him as due to the people. Jer. 10:24, 25, show plainly the impossibility of such an idea of wrath, so due and escaped from: “O Lord, correct me, but with judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.” Now, no such desire could be expressed as to inflictions of God's wrath, to which a man was naturally obnoxious. It looks for correction, but not in anger. No one could look for, nor acquiesce in this way in, the infliction of the curse of the law. And as to the Lamentations: that Jeremiah and the Lord Jesus entered into the sorrow of the actual wrath and evil that had fallen on Israel, who doubts? But this was not exposure to it from which the prophet preserved himself. His heart entered into it all, as sorrowing over what was loved of God but guilty, and with which he identified himself, being

in such a case. Here also the enmity of ungodly Jews is not lost sight of. (Lam. 3:14.) Besides, here also mercy is what is referred to and expected, not wrath due and avoided in a measure, but suffering felt from wrath executed, and looking to mercy out of it, because of God's goodness and His love to the people. He had seen affliction. (See ver. 22, 31, 32, 48, 52, to the end.)

Chapter 182

Fragment: Sufferings of Christ

Self-judgment by grace always tends to promote humility and love. The man who has passed through such an exercise as to the beam in his own eye will be able to act the more tenderly in casting the mote out of his brother's eye.

Chapter 183

Fragment: Two Roles of Christ

1 John 2. Christ is not only a mediator with God, but an Advocate or Patron with the Father. That is, He restores communion, fellowship with the Father when practically lost. His advocacy is founded on two things: on propitiation for our sins, so that He pleads in grace if we fail; and on righteousness in His own person, our righteousness, so that this is the standing in which we are before God. It is our place in heaven, on one side, and the meeting of our need, on the other.

Chapter 184

Fragment: Truth and Error

There is no equality in an alliance between truth and error; since, by this very alliance, truth ceases to be truth, and error does not thereby become truth. The only thing lost is the authority and obligation of the truth.

Chapter 185

The Ways of God: 7. the Glory or Kingdom

The short period of universal judgment which we have been considering cleanses the sphere of the kingdom from everything which offends, and them which do iniquity: and ends in the coming of the Son of man Himself with power and great glory, to execute the last blow of judgment; and to reign over the world during the continuance of the kingdom. When it is established, God will have accomplished in and under His Son, His counsels and purposes as to everything which had been put into the hands of the first Adam, and by Him defiled and destroyed.

We have seen the first Adam, innocent, and surrounded with blessing, failing: losing his place of dominion over the earth, and subjecting the creature to vanity by his fall. (Born. 8. 20.) Left to himself when fallen, and outside the center of good, he fills the earth with corruption and violence, and Satan usurps the place God should have had in his mind. Afterward the three great systems, set up in the world—the Jew under law, the Gentile without law, and entrusted with supreme power, and the Church under grace—each proving a failure where entrusted to men; I speak of the Church as a witness in the world, in the place of responsibility and testimony, not as the body of Christ in heaven.

In the days of the kingdom the last Adam will be there. In His own perfect, stainless manhood, He came and stood among the ruins of a lost world, and was confronted by Satan, who had obtained his power through the lusts of the first Adam when fallen. (Luke 4) He stood in His inheritance, and found the “kingdoms of this world and the glory of them” in the hands of Satan, sin-defiled and in ruins. He took it thus, with its load of sin and defilement. He foiled and vanquished Satan in the place of his power; bound the strong man, and then proceeded to spoil him of his goods. The prince of this world came, but had nothing in Him. He went down into the domain of “him that had the power of death, that is the devil” (Heb. 2) and through death He destroyed his power. In due time He will cast him out of the heavenlies with his angels (Rev. 12); and when he has for a short period consummated his stupendous wickedness, in the revived Latin Empire, and the Antichrist, He will bind him and cast him into the bottomless pit till the thousand years of the kingdom are ended, and then He will cast him into the lake of fire. When Christ was here, He exhibited the “powers of the world to come,” or of the kingdoms, casting out evil spirits and healing man. When that day shall be here, Satan shall be in the bottomless pit, and “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.” (Isa. 35)

The creature, which was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of man when he fell, groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for that day of its deliverance, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. We read in Gen. 3, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.” But of the day of its regeneration, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree.” “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” Again, the sentence pronounced upon Cain, “When thou

tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength," shall be removed; for we read of the day when God shall cause His face to shine upon restored Israel, that "then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us; God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Psa. 67)

The Jew, restored, will be the center of God's recognized government in the world under Christ. Supremacy over the Gentiles established in Him, who shall rise to reign over them; Jewish royalty restored to the house of David, and priesthood in its excellence and purity made good.

Men had attempted to form a name and a center, apart from God at Babel, and had been broken into nations and tongues. (Gen. 11) Israel was the nation with regard to which they had received their inheritance; it was proposed as the center of God's government in the world. (Deut. 32:8) It became unworthy of the trust; as we read of Jerusalem, "Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem; I have set it in the midst of the nations and the countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have refused my judgments, and my statutes they have not walked in them." (Ezek. 5:5, 6) And the Gentile king endeavored to make a religious unity apart from God. (Dan. 3) Many have been the centers of gathering proposed amongst men to reverse that sentence of scattering pronounced at Babel by God: and as many times have they failed—God has but One! "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10.) When He came to Judah He was rejected. "Beauty and Bands" were broken (Zech. 11); and there was no gathering of the nations. Again His name was proposed as a center, when mercy rejoiced over judgment at Pentecost, and God in grace took occasion of tongues, the sign of judgment, to let the nations bear, each in the tongue wherein he was born, of the wonderful works and grace of God. But again, His center was refused, and there was no gathering of the nations, but of a people out of them for His name and for heaven, to which the center of gathering, refused on earth, had been removed. In the days of the kingdom, of which we speak, that which we find revealed in Gen. 28 to the wanderer Jacob in a dream, of a ladder connecting the heavens with the earth (God Himself doing in grace what man had assayed to do in self-will at Babel). We see a type of the days of the kingdom, when Christ (as John 1:51 informs us) will be this link of union between the heavens inhabited by the glorified saints, and the millennial earth, when the seed of Jacob, wanderers now on the face of the earth, without land or altar, "shall be as the dust of the earth;" and when God will have brought them again into their land, and have done all that He hath spoken of. (Gen. 28:15.) The seed of Jacob will then be the head and not the tail (Deut. 28:18); and "many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. 8:23.)

Again, Jehovah had passed over Jordan before the tribes under Joshua, in their former days, by the title of "The Lord of all the earth" (Josh. 3); but when Israel ceased to be a witness to this title, and was set aside, and the dominion transferred to the Gentile king, God assumes the title of the "God of heaven," as we have before seen, and retains such all through the "times of the Gentiles." But during the introductive scene of judgment which we have considered, His claims as the "God of the earth," are again proclaimed by His witnesses. (Rev. 11) He then assumes that title fully,

and the substance of the Gentiles, who desired to have the world without God, is consecrated unto the “Lord of the whole earth.” (Mic. 4:13) “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” (Zech. 14:9; see also Isa. 54:5.)

Jerusalem—trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled—will, at that day, be restored; when the “Redeemer shall have come to Zion.” (Isa. 59; Rom. 11) It will be said to her, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side; the forces of the Gentiles shall come to thee, the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall minister unto thee; they shall come with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas, thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.... For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness, violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates praise.” See also Isa. 65 “Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. . . . And they shall build houses, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people: and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble! for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.... the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.” (Isa. 65) Jerusalem, long forsaken of Jehovah, as the beginning of Ezekiel informs us, when His glory departed to heaven, and He transferred the sword to the Gentile, becomes again the dwelling place of His glory. Ezekiel, in view of her day of glory (chap. 40-44) describes the restored city and the sanctuary. We read in chapter 43:2-5, “And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like the noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city and the glory of the Lord came into the house and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.” And again, “The name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah,” or “the Lord is there.” (Chap. 44) “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord: and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem” (Jer. 3:17), and this in the day when Israel and Judah shall be one nation in the land.

Her people shall be all righteous, as we read, Isa. 4:3: “It shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is left among the living in Jerusalem.” And again, “Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand, that I may be glorified.” (Isa. 60:21.) The law shall be written in their hearts. “After those days, saith the Lord I will put my laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jer. 31:33.)

The notions also shall all call upon the name of the Lord. When He has executed the judgment which delivers the remnant of His people, we read, “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9.) Again, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” (Psa. 22:27.)

The unconditional promises to the fathers will then be fulfilled in grace, and brought in, as we have seen, by judgment. Psa. 105 is prophetic of this, and offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls upon, the seed of Abraham, and Jacob, to whom they had been made, to sing unto Him, and glory in His name. For “He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, which covenant be made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.” (Ver. 7-11.) We may remember that in considering the past history of the nation we saw that these promises have never yet been fulfilled: the people having taken their inheritance under law-lost it. They will be made good to them in sovereign grace, and, as verse 7 declares, by judgment, evidencing most clearly their still future application.

The knowledge of the Lord and of His glory shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea and the throne of God, and His righteous government shall be known in the world. “Judgment will have returned to righteousness.” (Psa. 94:15.) And “righteousness and judgment shall be the habitation of his throne.” (Psa. 97:2.) Christ will be the Prince of this world, and Satan bound, who is its prince now. Obedience will be paid to His manifested power, and when this obedience is not observed, excision will be the result, which, if it takes place during the continuance of the kingdom, it will be recognized that it is by the judicial nets Of God's government; and all will go on peacefully and happily. Satan will not be there to act on men and tempt them to sin. We find the principles of Messiah's government in the land in Psa. 101-” A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off; him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me… He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” We have excision the result of sin also in Isa. 65:20, where we read, “The sinner living an hundred years old shall be accursed,” that is, if cut off it will be recognized as excision for sin in the government of God. The kingdom of Israel will be the earthly center of the administration of God's government in the world. “He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. . . He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river

unto the ends of the earth. . . The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. . . . There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth. . . Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." (Psa. 72) Again, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. . . Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." (Isa. 32)

Thus far we have briefly seen the earthly blessings of the kingdom. We left the saints of the heavenlies, who had been received up at the coming of Christ to heaven, as well as those who had been martyred during the crisis of judgment which introduced the kingdom, seated on thrones at His manifestation, to reign with Him for a thousand years. Let us now look at the heavenly blessing of the kingdom. In Rev. 21:9; 22:5, we find a description of the millennial display of the heavenly Jerusalem to the world. The prophet sees her "descending," (not descended; that she never does) out of heaven from God. What the saints should be in this day of trial lights in the world" (Phil. 2); the Church is in the heavenly places to the world in the day of glory, reflecting all the glories of God and of the Lamb; the seat of the heavenly administrative power of the kingdom ("know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"); her heavenly character and position, and yet her connection with the millennial earth is revealed—clothed with divine glory, such as that of Him who sat upon the throne in chapter iv. Angels are the willing door-keepers of that secure city, which is the chief fruit of the travail of Christ's soul. It has the fullness in perfection of administrative power towards and over the world; twelve gates, for the gate was the place of judgment. The varied displays of God's nature, under the figure of precious stones, which shone in creation (Ezek. 28), and in grace, in the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28), here shine in glory. The city and its street is formed in divine righteousness, of which gold is always the fitting emblem, and holiness of truth, "like unto clear glass." The Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple and its light. The nations (spared through the judgments on earth) walk in the light of the celestial city, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor to it (never "into" it); they own that the heavenly kingdom now established, and the heavens themselves, are the source of blessing to the earth. "The Lord shall hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth;" and they own that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26.) No evil of man or Satan is there, and nothing enters in that defiles or makes a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. The river of God and the fruits of the tree of life are for the refreshing of the Lord's redeemed; no tree of responsibility is now there, but one tree, which is the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations of the world. The city is the vessel of grace to the world at that day—grace characterizes her; as the royal supremacy of the restored earthly sanctuary, and city of Jerusalem, is ever preserved; for we read, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." (Isaiah 60:12.)

Thus we find all that has been ruined and defiled by the first Adam, made good in the day of the kingdom, in and under Christ. The three great systems set up by God, and destroyed by men, established in glory. The Jew in earthly supremacy and blessing; the Gentile subordinately

blessed around, governed in righteousness, and the Church of God in the heavenly glory; the center of the administration of kingdom, and the vessel of grace to the world; the river of God. (Psa. 66) His stream of blessing, ever full of water, has ever been dried up in its outflow in this world, not as to its source, but as from time to time God formed a channel for the blessing in and towards the world; it has been corrupted, and He has been forced to remove the pure stream to other courses, ever intent upon the blessing of man; the channel having proved itself unworthy of the stream. In Eden it took its rise in the beginning when the dispensation proposed was one of earthly good, and it divided into four heads, to bear to the world the riches of such a dispensation. Soon, however, as we know, its channels became corrupted, and there was found no place for such blessing to flow, and so the sources were stopped, and channels obliterated by the waters of the flood.

Again, when Israel was redeemed, and God amongst them, the river took its rise in the rock which was smitten for His people in the wilderness. “They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them,” during the forty years' journey, till they were safe in the land. Then, in the daily and yearly round of feasts and gatherings to Jehovah, the people was refreshed with the waters of Shiloah, which ran softly amongst them—of the river “the streams whereof made glad the city of God.” (Psa. 46) But again the channels were corrupted, so that when He, who was their source, came to visit that one family, whom He knew of all the families of the earth (Amos 3:2), and whom He had chosen to form the objects of the outflow of the river of God, and to be its channel to the Gentile world, He found it had so corrupted itself that He could not own it or permit it to defile the stream; and so, again, the source was transferred to another place, and the world became fully, what it was to Him and what it has been ever since to His people, “a dry and thirsty land where no water is.” (Psa. 73)

The source was now to be the glorified Son of man in heaven; and the dispensation one of spiritual blessings in the heavenlies; and the channel of the blessing, His members on earth. We read in John 7, where the Lord passed by and could not own the channel (the yearly returning feasts), which had rendered itself unfit for the river of God: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” Faithless as His people have proved themselves in this dispensation, and much hindered as the stream has become, still it flows on and will never be exhausted or dried up. “He (the Holy Ghost) shall abide with you forever.”

But the day is coming when it will be not only a dispensation of spiritual blessings in heavenly places, but one of earthly good as well. When there will be one glory of the celestial, and another of the terrestrial. When all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, will be gathered together in Christ. When the Lord “will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel” (Hos. 2:21, 22), the seed of God. The river of God will then have a twofold source—in heavenly and earthly blessing, its source in the heavenly glory will be the heavenly Jerusalem—the Church of the glorified: “The pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb in the midst thereof.” (Rev. 22:1.) And the source of the earthly glory will be the sanctuary of the earthly Zion, when living waters will flow out of the restored Jerusalem, for the

blessing of the Gentiles and of the millennial earth. “Behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward,” &c. (Ezek. 47; comp. also Joel 3:18, Zech. 14:8.) And Christ will be the true Melchisedec, a Priest on His throne; the link between the heavenly and the earthly glory. The true feast of tabernacles will be kept both by Israel and the Gentiles, but also by the saints in the heavenlies, after the harvest or ingathering, and the vintage of judgment, at the end of this age. “And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which come up against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” And the nations that refuse to go up, will not partake of the refreshing streams of the river of God. The Lord hasten the day in His time.

Chapter 186

The Ways of God: 8. Satan Loosed for a Little Season, the Great White Throne, and the Eternal State

After the close of the kingdom, before Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father, and God is “all in all,” we find another testimony of man's ruin. Having beheld Christ, and having been set in the midst of, and surrounded by the blessings of the kingdom, still we learn that man is ever the same. We had the testimony of Scripture that all are righteous at the commencement of the kingdom. The inhabitants of the world had learned righteousness by the judgments which introduced it, but we have not the same testimony as to those who shall be born during its continuance. And the closing scene proves to us the fact that grace and regeneration are as necessary then, as now, that man may be brought to God. It is clear from this, that there will be a declension during the continuance of the kingdom.

After the close of the kingdom, Satan is loosed for a little season, and goes out to the four corners of the earth (he never returns to the heavenlies), and the nations are thus tested for the last time, and the unrenewed fall, in numbers as the sand of the sea, into his hands. They who are thus deceived, go up against the camp of the saints on earth, and are destroyed by the fire of God's judgment—thus separated by judgment from the faithful. Satan is then cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet had been, after which the great white throne is set; and the earth and the heavens flee away from the presence of him that sat thereon; and no place is found for them. The wicked dead stand before the throne, and are judged by Him who judges the secrets of men (Rom. 2) and who knows them! This judgment is according to their works, and their responsibility. The book of life was opened but none of them are found therein, and they are cast into the lake of fire. Death the last enemy is destroyed, and hades, the place of departed spirits, exists no longer; its whole contents were cast into the lake of fire. “Then cometh the end, when Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) may be all in all.” (1 Cor. 15:24-28.)

Then follows the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth “wherein righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3), not that over which “a king shall reign in righteousness,” but where righteousness dwells, for all things had been brought into full order and subjection, so that blessing unhindered flows forth from God. God dwells amongst men! Yet in this state of supreme blessedness we find that the Bride, the New Jerusalem, has her own peculiar place, she is the tabernacle of God among men! He wipes away all tears, and there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; for former things, connected with sin, have passed away. The overcomer has God for his God, and he shall be his Son. And yet—solemn thought for those who would oppose the

truth—even in this eternal state, when the Lamb's mediatorial kingdom has passed away, and God is all in all, eternal punishment goes on, side by side, through the endless ages of eternity, with eternal blessing! Unto God “be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!”

NOTE.-We may have observed that chapter 20 and part of 21 is succeeded by the description of the millennial state of the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Chapter 20 begins with the binding of Satan, at the commencement of the kingdom, and goes on through the time of the kingdom, or 1000 years, to verse 7, then it takes up the interval of Satan's last acts of wickedness when loosed for the little season; and finally the judgment of the dead, and destruction of the last enemy, death, before Christ gives up His kingdom to God (to Him who is Father), and God is all in all; so that verses 1-8 of chapter 11 follow on in their consecutive order into the eternal state, as the verses we have quoted in 1 Cor. 15. Then the Spirit turns to describe that which had not before been given, the millennial glories of the Heavenly Jerusalem, during the days of the kingdom, as is evident from verses 10, 24, 26, and verses 1 and 2 of chapter 21. The division into chapters and verses has thus disconnected the true order.

9 - Conclusion

We have now passed along the chain of the great dispensational dealings of God in their larger features, as through grace we have been enabled: from the fall of man in the garden of Eden to the eternal state.

We read in Psa. 25, “The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.... The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.” And, in His dealings with His servants, we find that He acts according to the principles of His own word: for we read in Num. 12 “Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” And in Psa. 8:7, “He made known his ways to Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” It is to those who are morally near Him He deals thus, giving them capacity to understand Him, and the communications of His mind. This is solemn. For while Israel could only know Him in His overt acts, they were morally far from Him, and consequently unfit to hear the communications of His counsels and ways. This is ever so there is a moral fitness in one Christian—a practical obedience to His mind and will as revealed—a desire to bow to Him, and respond to the way He has revealed Himself, that He waits upon, and guides and instructs; while another is dull of hearing, and learns but little, and even that little has not its freshness and power in his soul. “The natural man,” on the other hand, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14.) “If any man will (desire) to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:17.) is a simple principle, and yet bow much it involves! God does not reveal His truth, to be a mere sum of knowledge learned, for the gratification of the mind. What He teaches, with so much condescension, is imperfectly learned, if learned at all, when the conscience has been unexercised, and the claims of His truth have not found a response in the soul, so as to judge the darkness, and set the feet to walk in, and use, and live in the power of it. And besides this, divine truth is so contrary to every thought of men, even of the best of men, that even the soul which enjoys the revelation of it, is prone to sink into human thoughts, and human use of the truth.

Our meditations have led us, we trust, through grace, into some understanding, of the greater features of the dispensational dealings of God, than which nothing is more important: without an understanding of dispensational truth, the soul is unsteady in its testimony. If laboring for the Lord, it makes the need of souls the paramount object; and the claims of the Lord upon the souls of His people are too often forgotten. The “alabaster box of ointment” should be joined with “this gospel,” that is, the publication of the activities of the grace of God by the Gospel, meeting the soul's need, united to such teaching as would lead the soul, through grace, thus satisfied and set at rest, into such an apprehension of the person of Christ Himself, and such an appreciation of Him, that the knowledge of His mind and will is sought; and the heart learns to bow to His claims, and to walk in the path of intelligent obedience, which His eye would mark out, and His written word direct, so that it may please God. (1 Thess. 4:1.) I am bold to say that without a knowledge of dispensation, this is quite impossible: doubtless there may be, and there is piety amongst many; but piousness,

while it meets with a certain amount of respect, even from the man of the world, whose heart is not seared, is not “the truth of God.” It is one thing to be pious, another to walk in the truth. The soul that has been established in dispensational truth, and that has ascertained the ways of God during the various dispensations (and even when the testimony entrusted to men in each dispensation has been corrupted and destroyed), learns how to respond to God's way; how to walk before Him in accordance with His mind and will; even when the dispensation has fallen into ruins. Surely one judges that the path marked out in one dispensation, would be unsuited for another; and judges, too, with spiritual discernment, that a path right in the beginning of a dispensation, necessarily changes its character when the dispensation has fallen into ruins through the unfaithfulness of those to whom the testimony is entrusted; yet all the while recognizing that divine principles never have changed, even while the vessel proved that it could not hold the treasure committed to it. The Christian, thus instructed, sees that which answered to God in a divine way, the fruit of the Spirit's teaching, in the soul of a godly Jew under law, when his nation, as an elect earthly one, was owned of God, necessarily altering its character when his nation became corrupted; while the divine counsels altered not. And still he is able to see the more vividly that the pathway of a godly Jew, in an earthly nation, under the law, cannot be that of a Christian in a dispensation where his calling is one out of and above the world altogether; and, moreover, that the experience of a godly Israelite in his dispensation is not such, in its best state, as is suited to a member of the body of the risen Christ; that to be satisfied with such is to ignore the position, of the Christian as such, and to return to Judaism in principle. It is to walk as those of whom it is said, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord” (Psa. 119:1), is right and blessed in its time, while to “walk in the light, as he is in the light,” is quite another, and far beyond it; it is to realize that the dispensation with an unrent vail has ceased, that the things permitted in such a dispensation have passed. away, and that the Christian is now within the vail, in the full light of God's presence, set there to walk as becomes such a position, and to judge everything in his ways inconsistent with the place, in the liberty of grace. The whole range of his responsibility flows from his position and from the relationship in which he is placed.

The Christian, so instructed, is enabled to pass through the world, with the truth girding his loins, and with a moral apprehension as to the work of all its vaunted progress in civilization, religion, politics, and everything around: and although his testimony may be, as it were, an individual one, “clothed in sackcloth,” still his faith is confirmed by the very principles around him which tend in an opposite direction—and he feels that through grace “none of these things move” him; and that the day is coming when his testimony, if in accordance with the mind of the Lord, will be owned, and that then he will see to the full, the use the Lord has had for him as a witness, when to outward appearance he was, as Jeremiah, “shut up” —and when he “sat alone,” the word of the Lord the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Let me ask the Christian soul a question. Are the claims of the Lord Jesus on you, of deep and paramount importance in your eyes? In proposing such a question, I do so to those who profess to love and own Christ as their Lord; and whose consciences have been forever set at rest; and introduced by faith into the full cloudless presence of God, in Christ—to those who see every question that could hinder their perfect peace, answered by the atoning blood—past, present, future—all secure. Are the claims of Christ of sufficient weight, that you would seek to know His mind and will, even if it were to break up the most cherished associations of your heart? And,

knowing His mind and will, are you seeking for grace to walk therein? I feel this a deeply solemn question in the present day, a day of the highest sounding profession, without conscience or life toward God. Religion is putting forth her fairest and most seductive forms; seeking the aid of science, and poetry, and art, to deck herself withal; holding in her hand a cup of prostitution, which stupefies the senses, lulls to sleep the conscience. And even where she is not putting on the outward adorning, she practices all sorts of deceits. Those whose senses would not be ensnared by the outward adorning, are ensnared by the specious arguments of expediency, and a round of evangelical activity-works perfect, it may be, before men, but not perfect before God. (Rev. 3:2.) She is suiting herself more and more to natural, unregenerate man, and under the name of Christ, she turns away her eye from Christ, and boasts that she is “rich and increased with goods and has need of nothing.” (Rev. 3:17.) “The form of godliness, without the power” surely is the condition of things around us. The Lordship of Christ is ignored. The presence of the Holy Ghost either denied in words; or, what is worse, professed to be acknowledged in words, and completely denied in practice. This is truly solemn. The very vital central truth of Christianity, and of the Church of God—that which marks off, in a clear line, this dispensation from all that went before or which follows, denied; and the whole merged into a heap of confusion, out of which souls can find no clue; and are “ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” “The foundation of God stands sure,” whatever man's unfaithfulness has been. God's principles do not alter. And the responsibility of His people never alters either. While it is their blessing to know that “the Lord knoweth them that are his,” still their responsibility is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,” iniquity connected with the great house and its corruptions. (2 Tim. 2:19, &c.) The Christian is to purge himself from the vessels unto dishonor, that he may be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for his master's use, prepared unto every good work. He must not, as we have before touched upon, rest satisfied with the corruption—nor need he try to repair the injury that has been done; that will never he repaired till the professing mass meets its end in judgment. His path is a plain one. “Depart from iniquity.” “Purge himself from the vessels to dishonor.” And now comes his personal walk of holiness. He is to “flee also youthful lusts; and then his walk, in the company of others, to “follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” This is the principle—a plain one—separation from evil, and to God in the midst of it. May He, who alone can do so, give subjection to His word to those whose eyes fall upon these pages, and a growing separation and deepening subjection, as they go on their pathway, to those who by grace have learned in their measure to walk therein! “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;” and if a man love me, he will keep my words.” (John 14) This is characteristic of Christianity. It is intelligent obedience rendered to a person, not to a law. The time was when the faithful and undefiled in the way were blessed, who walked in the law of the Lord. (Psa. 119:1, &c.) Then God was unrevealed. He was hidden behind the vail and the dispensational barriers of the age. He was hidden and had sent forth His claims to men in the law; and although it had said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength,” still it did not reveal a person to attract the heart. That time has passed away. Christ has come; and “by him we believe in God” (1 Peter 1), and to him we owe the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives—one whose love constrains us to live henceforth, “not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.” (2 Cor. 5) It is a person we are thus called upon to live for and to love; one who has sanctified us unto obedience such as that which characterized His own (1 Peter 1:2), surrendering self, life, all, for those who

hated Him. The law proposed that a man should love his neighbor as himself. The obedience of Christ was the surrendering of self altogether for His enemies!

The Lord Jesus appealed in His day to the Jews (Luke 12:54-57) to discern “the signs of the times,” even by the force of natural conscience, and to judge what was right. His word should find an echo in many a Christian heart now, that has sunk down to sleep amongst the dead. (Eph. 5:14.) Everything around us in the present day, religion, the state of men, nations, powers, kingdoms are each gradually and perceptibly taking their places for the closing scenes of judgment. The Christian, instructed beforehand of these things, can watch them calmly and quietly, awaiting the coming of his Lord. He knows his calling is a heavenly one where judgments cannot come. The coming of the Lord, the Son of God, for His people, is the one boundary, or horizon, of his hopes. His actions, and service, and plans, and sojourn here, are arranged in view of that event; and if called to serve his Lord and Master here, he does so in the sense that he serves as in the last days. May a deepening sense of this fill the souls of His people; and may this, their proper hope, ere the day dawn, be formed in their hearts, and serve to direct their ways! It has been, I believe, said by some one, that the Old Testament scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness, and the New with that of the “Morning Star.” Sweetly beautiful is this. The godly remnant of Israel who feared the Lord and spake often one to another, &c. (Mal. 3), had that precious consolation before them—that of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings. (Mal. 4) And we find them in Luke 2, the Simeons and Annas, and “all them that looked for redemption in Israel” (ver. 25-38), rejoicing in the advent of the “Sun of Righteousness,” the “consolation of Israel.” But, alas, His beams fell coldly on the hearts of His nation; they had no heart for Him. Men were morally unfit to have God amongst them; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded the cross, and to reserve the day of blessing till another season. Meanwhile, our calling was revealed, and our hope presented to us; not as the “Sun of Righteousness,” but as the “Morning Star.” The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watcher during the long night who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian's hope; he watches during the moral darkness of the world, till the dawn; and just as the darkness is deepest and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the advent of the “Sun of Righteousness,” his hope is rewarded in seeing the “Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16), in His earliest brightness, coming to take His people to Himself, that they may shine forth with Him as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43), when He reveals Himself to the millennial earth as the Sun of Righteousness.

May He, who alone can give blessing, abundantly bless the consideration of these things, and give that hope its own sanctifying power in our souls!

“I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches; I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and the Morning Star.... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.... Amen.” F. G. P.

Chapter 188

Fragment: What the Grace of God Does

It is the nature of the grace of God, not merely to be gracious, but to produce abundant blessings toward, and in, and for, those for whom it is active and works.

Chapter 189

Fragment: Why Should We Think We Possess a Perfect Mind?

Why am I to think we are arrived, just in our day, at the perfection of the human mind, so that we are exactly right now? The age in which Christianity was introduced or made progress among the gentiles, was very far from a superstitious age. Witness the various forms of mind—the Philos, the Celsuses, the porphyries, the Alexandrian school of Neo-Platonists, the Lucians, and others, whose reputation is publicly known, to say nothing of earlier Grecian philosophy, which led the way, the theory that man's mind is the measure of revelation, and of what God ought to be, makes truth and error, and the very character of what God ought to be, depend on the age a man lives in.

Chapter 190

Woolen and Linen: Part 1

“Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together.” - Deut. 22:11.

The path of the Church of God is a narrow path, such an one that the mere moral sense will continually mistake it. But this should be welcome to us, because it tells us that the Lord looks that His saints be exercised in His truth and ways, unlearning the mere right and wrong of human thoughts, that they may be filled with the mind of Christ.

The case of Elijah judging the captains of the king of Israel, referred to as it is in the course of the Gospels, brings these thoughts to mind. (See Luke 9:52-56.) The Lord had steadily set His face toward Jerusalem, under the sense of this, that “he was to be received up.” Something of the thought of glory and of the kingdom was stirring in His soul. I believe the consciousness of His personal dignity, and of His high destiny, as we speak among men, was filling Him as He began His journey toward Jerusalem. “It came to pass when the time was come that He should be received up, he steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face.” The expression of conscious dignity breaks forth from this, and gives character to the moment, and the disciples feel it. They appear to catch the tone of His mind, and therefore, when the very first village through which the path of their ascending Lord lay, refused Him entrance, they resent it, and would fain, like Elijah in other days, destroy these insulting captains of Israel.

This was nature, the natural sense also of right and wrong. Why then did the Lord rebuke it? It was not wanting in either righteousness or affection. The day will come when the enemies of Christ, who would not that He should reign over them, shall be slain before Him. There was nothing unrighteous in the demand, “Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?” if we but think for a moment of the person and rights of Him who was thus wronged and insulted. Nor was there a wrong affection in this motion of the heart. Jealousy for their Divine Master stirred it: this motion may be honored, the moral sense may justify it fully; but Christ rebukes it. “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,” said the Lord to them.

But why, again I ask, this rebuke? Was it because they were exacting beyond the claims of Him whom they sought to avenge? No, as we have said, for such claims will have their day; but the disciples were not in the spiritual intelligence of the moment through which they were passing. They had not “the mind of Christ;” they did not discern the time so as to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12); they were not distinguishing things that differ; they were not rightly dividing the word of truth. This was their error: “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” It was not a wrong principle of moral action which the Lord discovers in their souls, but ignorance of the real or divine character of the moment through which they were passing. They did not perceive, what thousands (disciples of this day, as they were of that day) do not yet perceive, that the path of Christ to glory does not lie through the judgment of the world, but through the surrender of it; not through self-vindication, but through self-renunciation. This was their mistake, and this is what the Lord rebuked. They naturally thought that this indignity must be recognized; that if the prospect of glory was filling the mind of their

Master, and if they themselves, in the spirit of such a moment, had gone before His face to prepare His way, whatever stands in the way must surely be set aside. Nature judged thus; and nature thus judging would be justified by the moral sense of man.

But the mind of Christ has its peculiar way, and nothing guides the saint fully but that: analogy will not do, there must be the spiritual mind to try and challenge even analogies. Certain correspondences were remarkable here—Elijah was but a stage or two from the glory, just going onward to be “received up,” when he smote again and again the captains and their fifties. He was on a hill full of great anticipations, we may say, and the chariots and horsemen of Israel and his heavenly journey were lying but a little before him in vision. The soul of their Master appeared to the disciples on this occasion to be much in company with that of Elijah. But analogies will not do, and the use of them here was confounding everything, taking the Lord Jesus out of His day of grace into the time of His judgments; inviting Him or urging Him to act in the spirit of the times of Rev. 11 when He was in the hour of Luke 4 The witnesses of Rev. 11 may go to heaven through the destruction of their enemies, fire going out of their mouth to consume them that hurt them, as after the pattern of Elijah; but analogies are not the rule. They must be challenged by that “mind of Christ” which distinguishes things that differ, and which teaches, in the light of the word, that Jesus goes to heaven through the salvation and not the destruction of men; through His renunciation of the world and not His judgment of it. Elijah avenged himself on the insulting captains and then went to heaven; the witnesses will ascend to heaven, and their enemies shall behold them: but Jesus takes the form of a servant, and is obedient unto death, and then God highly exalts Him. And so the saint, so the Church. “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed me.”

Here was the mistake; here was the not knowing what manner of spirit they were of. Analogy strongly favored the motion of their minds. The moral sense which judges according to man's thoughts, and not in the light of God's mysteries, justified it. But He who divinely distinguishes things that differ, rebuked it. “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” The way of the disciples here would have disturbed everything, counteracting all the purpose of God. They remind me of the servants in the parable of the tare-field, The disciples were right according to man, and so were those servants. Is it not fitting to weed the wheat? Are not tares a hindrance, sharing the strength of the soil with the good seed, while they themselves are good for nothing? The common sense of man, the right moral judgment would say all this, but the mind of Christ says the very contrary: “Let both grow together until the harvest.” Christ judged only according to divine mysteries. That is what formed the mind in the Master, perfect as it was; and that is what must form the like mind in the saint. God had purposes respecting the field. A harvest was to come, and angels were to be sent to reap it, and then a fire was to be kindled for the bundled and separated tares; but as yet, in the hour of Matt. 13, there were no angels at their harvest-work in the field, nor fire kindled for the weeds, but all was the patient grace of the Master. The Lord will have the field uncleared for the present. The mysteries of God, the counseled thoughts and purposes of heaven, precious and glorious beyond all measure, demand this; and nothing is right but the path that is taken in the light of the Lord in the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Nor is the Church to go to heaven through a purified or regulated or adorned world, any more than Christ would have gone to heaven through a judged world. This is to be well weighed; for what is Christendom about? Just practically gainsaying all this. Christendom affects to regulate the world,

to keep the field clean, to make the path to heaven and glory lie through a well ordered and ornamented world. It has put the sword into the hand of the followers of Christ. It will not wait for the harvest nor will it go into “another village.” It avenges wrongs instead of suffering them. It orders the Church on the principles of a well regulated nation, and not on the pattern of an earth-rejected Jesus. It is full of the falsest thoughts; judging according to the moral sense of man, and not in the light of the mysteries of God. It is wise in its own conceits.

I know full well there beat in the midst of it, a thousand hearts true in their love to Christ; but they know not what manner of spirit they are of. I know that zeal if it be for Christ, though misdirected, is better than a chill at the heart, or indifference as to His rights or His wrongs. But still the only perfect path is that which is taken in the sight of the Lord, in the understanding of the mysteries of God, and the call of God, and the directions of the energy of the Spirit and not merely after the fashion or dictate of the morals and thoughts of men. And the call of God now demands, that the tare-field be left unpurged, that the indignity of the Samaritans be left unavenged, that the resources and strength of the flesh and of the world be refused rather than used, and that the Church should reach the heavens, not through the judgment of the world by her bands, but through the renunciation of it by her heart, and separation from it in company with a rejected Master.

“He that gathereth not with me scattereth” (Luke 11:23), i.e. he that does not work according to Christ's purpose is really making bad worse. It is not enough to work with the name of Christ: no saint would consent to work without that; but if he do not work according to the purpose of Christ, he is scattering abroad. Many a saint is now engaged in rectifying and adorning the world, getting Christendom as a swept and garnished house; but, this not being Christ's purpose, it is aiding and furthering the advance of evil. Christ has not expelled the unclean spirit out of the world. He has no such present purpose. The enemy may change his way, but he is as much “the god” and “prince of this world” as ever he was. The house is his still, as in the parable (see Luke 11:24-26). The unclean spirit had gone out: that was all; he had not been sent out by the stronger man; so that his title to it is clear; and he returns and all that he finds there, had only made it more an object with him. He finds it clean and ornamented; so that he returns with many a kindred spirit, and thus makes its last state worse than its first.

Mistakes of this kind are very old mistakes. David was erring this way when he purposed to build a house for the Lord; but it was an error though committed with a right desire of the heart. The time had not come for building the Lord a house, because the Lord had not yet built David a house. The land was still defiled with blood; and till it was cleansed, there was no place for the rest and kingdom of the Lord. David therefore greatly erred, yet not through double mindedness, but through ignorance. David's error was this—that the Lord could take His throne in the earth, before the earth was purged. The servants in the parable erred, on the other hand, in this that the Church was made the instrument of purging the earth or the world. I might say in the language of the Levitical ordinance that David was about to put on a garment of “divers sorts,” but the Lord prevented it. The motion of his heart—as far as it was expressive of himself—was acceptable with the Lord, but still it was hindered and disappointed. Something to tell us, how jealous the Lord is, that His own principles be observed, and the position in which He has set His servants and witnesses be maintained; nay, that even the most affectionate and jealous desire of the saint though it be valued by the Lord, and get its personal reward or acceptance, can never reconcile

the mind of the Lord, to an abandonment of His thoughts and purposes. All would be confusion. David's thoughts, however innocent, and in some sense to be approved of God, would have confused everything, bringing about this strange result—the Lord taking His throne in an uncleansed kingdom, and allowing His servant to give Him rest, before He had given His servant rest! What confusion this would have been! What an evil testimony these mixed principles would have produced! Who could have read in the result, had it been allowed, either the grace or the glory of the God of Israel?

The rebuke of Peter at Antioch was more peremptory; for Peter erred, not like David, through ignorance, but through the occasional fear of man, which, as we are taught and as we experience, “bringeth a snare;” and it was something worse than confusion, it was perversion (in Deut. 20:19, 20 we have an ordinance against perversion, or turning things to a wrong use). But still even if it amount only to confusion, and that by the hand of the dearest and most loved servant, it is not to be allowed, as this case of David skews; as also in his other act of bearing the ark from Kirjath-jearim. The confusion there was not made excusable by all the true-heartedness and religious joy that attended it (1 Chron. 13): it could not be. Place by subjection was not to be given to it for an hour, and, however acceptable with God the motion of David's heart was, these ways must be withstood, because the way, and purpose, and counsel, and thoughts of the Lord are precious in His sight and are to stand forever. It is not that either David or Peter were men of mixed principles, as the word is, or were wearing, as the ordinance speaks, garments of woolen and linen; but these instances in their history illustrate a serious truth, which is much to be remembered, that the Lord will vindicate His own principles, in the face of even His dearest servants, that He will and He must withstand the motions of their hearts, if they go to obscure or disturb His purpose and His testimony, even though such motions have much of a personal, moral character in them, which He can accept and delight in.

But beside these cases of David, and of Peter, and of the disciples in Luke 9, who in mistaken, misapplied zeal for the Lord whom they loved, would have avenged His wrongs with a true and righteous affection, there is a generation who are seen apart from the way of God, through double-mindedness. Such a generation may be tracked all through Scripture, a people of mixed principles, as we say, who wear garments of woolen and linen, contrary to the call of God, and the pure ordinances of His house. It may be humbling to oneself more than to most others, to look at such a generation, but it has its profit for the soul, and its seasonableness in this hour. Lot was associated with the call of God. Like Abraham, his uncle, he left Mesopotamia, and then after the death of Terah, his grandfather, he came with Abram into Canaan, and he was a righteous man, and there was no palpable blot upon him. Abraham betrayed the way of nature, again and again recovering himself, with shame too, from the snare of Egypt and of Abimelech. But Lot was not so rebuked all the time he sojourned in Sodom. We only read of him that his righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. But withal, he was sadly of the generation I am now speaking of. If Abram's garment was soiled now and again, it was not “a garment of divers sorts,” but Lot's garment was “woolen and linen.” He was untrue to the call of God: he became a citizen when he ought to have been only a sojourner, choosing well-watered plains, and taking a house in a city, when God's witness was going over the face of the country, from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. Fewer mistakes are recorded of him; but what then? He was a man of mixed principles all his days, while Abram all his days was true to the call of God. And his

life of false principles leads him into sorrows that are his shame, and that is the real misery of sorrow. He was taken captive while he lived in the plains of Sodom, and was nigh unto destruction after he had removed to the city of Sodom, and he is still, and ever has been in the Church, the witness of one, saved it is true, but “so as by fire.” He had no comfort in his soul; his righteous soul was vexed day by day. This is told of him, but no brightness is there: no joy, no strength, no triumph of spirit is told of him. The angels held much reserve towards him, while the Lord of angels was in nearness and intimacy with Abraham. He had to escape with his life as a prey, when Abraham was on high beholding the judgment afar off. And what is full of meaning, we observe, that after he had taken his own course, and become a man of mixed principles, departing from the track where the call of God would have kept him, he and Abraham had no communion. Abraham will run to his help, in the day when his principles were bringing him into jeopardy; but there is no communion between them. They could not meet in spirit. The saint of God will own him as his kinsman, and do him the kinsman's service; but there is no present communion between them. And this is no uncommon case to this day. Such was Lot. Instead of making his calling and election sure, he is one whom the people of God receive, on the extraordinary testimony of the Holy Ghost rather than on the necessary and blessed credit of his assured call of God, or as one of that people of whom Paul could say, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

Nature prevails sadly and variously in all the recorded saints of God, in some more, in some less, just as the fruitfulness of the Spirit is seen in them in affections and services, in some thirty fold, in some sixty, and in some an hundred. But this is a different thing from being men of mixed principles. It was so with David. Nature prevailed in him at times, but he was never a man of mixed principles. He never deliberately sat down in a connection which was untrue to the call of God under which he had to act. His character was formed by that call, and his ways were according to it, but it was not so with his friend Jonathan; his life was not formed by the call of God, and the energy of the Spirit working in the rule of that call. He acted nobly and graciously at times, but still he was not the separated man. He was not true to the pure principles of God made manifest in that day. He was a man of faith, and of many endearing spiritual affections, such as give him, without reserve, a place in the recollections of the saints. But withal he was not where the call of God would have had him. Saul's court was a defiled, even an apostate, place then. God was with David then. The glory was in the wilderness with him; the dens and caves of the earth hid it in that day. The ephod was with David, the priest, the sword of God's strength, the witness of victory. The flower and promise of the land were with him also, those who gain a name in the cave of Adullam, or in the day of vengeance at Ziklag. Such sons of Israel as these, such as shine afterward in the court and camp of the kingdom, are all with David then. The call of God was then to the caves and dens of the earth, with the son of Jesse, and the energy of the Spirit worked there; but Jonathan was not there. That is the sad story. Jonathan was not where the glory was, where the priest with the ephod was, where the rejected man after God's own heart was, where all the promise of the coming kingdom was. That is the sad story. Jonathan was lovely individually, he had done some noble deeds, and was breathing some heavenly affections; and to the end, we may be sure, David lived in his heart; and many misgivings about his own father, we may be equally sure, that same heart was troubled with. He never personally gave David anything but joy; while we know those who companied with him, even in his afflictions, were betimes both a shame and a sorrow to him. But still his position was not true to the call of God in that day. It kept him apart from all that was of God then though he had the Lord with himself personally. Till he falls on Mount Gilboa, he is with

the camp and the court that fall with him there, dishonored and defeated as they were, having ere then lost the glory, and all that was of God nationally departed from them. A common case he illustrates. Was it ignorance of the call of God or double-mindedness? We will not say; but still in this our day there is, like Jonathan, many a saint, dear to one's heart and outshining in personal graces the larger number of the day, who is found apart from the place where the energy of the Spirit, according to the rule of the dispensation, works. Noble and generous deeds are done by them individually; but their connection is their dishonor, as it was Jonathan's—linked with a world which is speedily to meet the judgment, and in courts and camps which are to lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that be slain with the sword. “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon.” Jonathan illustrates this, and this is known abundantly to this hour. But Jonathan cannot sanction the place; Jonathan's presence did not make Saul's camp or court other than it was. The only impression the soul has of Lot in Sodom is that of a tainted Lot, and not of a sanctioned, purified Sodom. According to the word in Haggai, “If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.” But “If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.”

There are however “things that differ,” and the soul exercised of God is to distinguish them. There is a soiled garment, which is however, at the same time, not a mixed garment, a garment of “divers sorts,” of “woolen and linen.” Our way under the Spirit is to keep our garments undefiled; and anything other or less than that is not the way of communion with the Lord. But still, a soiled garment is not a mixed garment; nor is a garment with a thread now and again of another sort, to be mistaken for one whose texture is wrought on the very principle of “woolen and linen.” Scripture, ever fruitful and perfect, exhibits characters formed by what has been termed “mixed principles” and characters which occasionally become tainted by such, but are not throughout formed by them. The life, as we have been seeing, of Lot, was formed of mixed principles throughout. There was double-mindedness in Lot; I say not the same with the same clearness of Jonathan; but still the life of each of them, from the outset to the close, when the scene of temptation set in, was tainted by connection with evil. Lot, though associated with the call of God, was a man of the earth; Jonathan, though witnessing the sorrows and the wrongs of David, continued in the interests of the persecutor unto the end. Their life was thus formed by connections, which were untrue to the way of God and the presence of the glory all through. The garment upon each of them was made of divers sorts, of woolen and linen. But look at Jacob in contrast, and in him we find one of another generation: he was a cautious man, who had his worldly fears and schemes, and calculations; and they greatly disfigure several passages of his life. His building of a house at Succoth, his buying of a piece of ground at Shechem, were things untrue to the pilgrim life, the tent life, which a son of Abraham was called to know. But Jacob is not to be put with Lot; his life was not formed by Succoth and Shechem, though we thus see him there, and out of character there, but he was a stranger with God, in the earth. And in the closing days of his pilgrimage, when he was in Egypt, though with many a circumstance around him there, to tempt him to have it otherwise, we have many a beautiful witness of the healthful and recovered state of his soul.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 191

Woolen and Linen: Part 2

“Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together.” - Deut. 22:11.

The days, for instance, of Ahab king of Israel, king of the ten tribes, were fruitful in illustrations of this kind. There were in those days an Elijah and a Micaiah, a Jehoshaphat and an Obadiah, beside seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal; and all these in the midst of the foulest departure from the ways of God, the times of Jezebel and her abominations.

But all these are not to be classed together. To use the language of “woolen and linen,” or “garments of divers sorts” I might say, there was no mistaking the cloth of Elijah and Micaiah. The leathern girdle of the one, and the prison bands of the other tell us what men they were, and bespeak their complete separation.

The seven thousand we cannot speak of particularly; we know them only under the hand of God as “a remnant according to the election of grace,” and that, in an evil day, they “had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” But Obadiah was not Elijah, and again, as between him and Jehoshaphat, we are still to distinguish: such was the moral variety illustrated for our admonition in these days.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, of the house and lineage of David, was a separate man, but a man who, at times, and that too pretty largely, is found in defiling connection. He was of Jacob's generation, though it may be more faulty than Jacob in that generation. Vanity betrayed him again and again, as worldly policy betrayed the patriarch. Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab. In the day of the battle, be put on the royal apparel; a garment sadly and shamefully of “divers sorts,” and it was near costing him his life, as the same clothing nearly cost Lot his life in the city of Sodom. He acted there in terrible inconsistency with the sanctity and separateness of the house of David. But though all this is so, I am not disposed to put Jehoshaphat in company with Lot. His life was not one of mixed principles; his garment was not advisedly wrought of “woolen and linen” together, though sadly and shamefully untrue to the testimony which became a son of David and a king in Jerusalem. Very noble deeds were done by his hands, and very dear affections were breathed by his spirit, and the God of his father owned him; but like Jacob, and to a more painful extent he was betrayed; he was betrayed into connections which make his testimony a very mixed, imperfect thing. It was not merely nature prevailing at times—that may be seen in all, in those of the best generation, in Abraham and in David. It was not merely a soiled garment whose blot is palpable, but a garment the texture of which is scarcely discernible, whether indeed it be of one sort, or a condemned garment of “woolen and linen:” so shamefully do the “divers sorts” appear in it at times, but not throughout.

But the garment which Obadiah wore in those days cannot be mistaken. It needs no close inspection to make out what it is. The “divers sorts” of woolen and linen are to be seen in it from head to foot. His life was of that texture. It was not that he was betrayed at times merely, nor was it that his way was stained at times, but his whole life evinces a man of mixed principles. He was a

godly man, but his ways were not according to the energy of the Spirit in that day. He had respect to the afflictions of the prophets, hiding them in caves from the persecution, and feeding them there; but all the while he was the adviser, the companion, and the minister of king Ahab, in whose kingdom the iniquity was practiced. The “linen and woolen” thus formed the garment that he wore all his days. It was not the leathern girdle of Elijah; and, when they come together, this difference is preserved and expressed most strikingly. Obadiah is at some effort to conciliate the mind of Elijah. He reminds him of what he had done for the persecuted prophets of God in the day of their trouble, and tells him that he feared the Lord; but Elijah moves but slowly and coldly towards him. Painful all this between two saints of God; but it is far from being rarely experienced; it is a common thing I would say; but much more commonly felt than owned. (1 Kings 18)

There could have been no blending of time spirits of Abraham and Lot, after Lot took the way of his eye and of his heart, and continued in that direction—a citizen of Sodom. We are not told this, it is true, in the history; but we find from the history, as I observed before, that they never meet after that, and we may easily know why. Because such things are real and living things still. The Abrahams and the Lots of this day do not meet; or if they meet, it is not communion. They do not enjoy refreshment in the bowels of Christ. Abraham rescued Lot from the hands of the king Chedorlaomer, but this was no meeting of saints; they could not blend. And if the people of God cannot come together in character, they had better be asunder. In spirit they are already severed.

So was it, in a far more vivid expression of it, in Elijah and Obadiah. The man with the leathern girdle—God's stranger in the land in the days of Ahab—could not be found much in company with the governor of Ahab's house. But they meet in an evil day, a day which may remind us of the day of the valley of the slime pits, the day of Lot's captivity. Ahab his master had divided the land with Obadiah to search for water in the day of drought. The Lord his God had put the sword of His servant Elijah over the land to give it neither rain nor dew; and, in an hour of Obadiah's perplexity and of Elijah's commission under God, they meet.

The occasion is one of interest and meaning, and has lessons for our souls.

There is effort on the part of Obadiah and reserve with Elijah. This is naturally and necessarily so. Obadiah seeks to combine with Elijah, but Elijah resents the effort. Obadiah calls Elijah his lord, but Elijah reminds him that Ahab is his lord. For this will not do. We are not to be serving the world and going on in the course of it behind each other's back, and then, when we come together, assume that we meet as saints. This will not do; but the attempt to have it so is very natural, nay, it is very common to this hour. But Elijah acted in character, faithful to his brother now as he had been to his Lord before; and beautiful this is, and precious it ought to be whenever we get it. Obadiah had been walking with the world in Elijah's absence, and Elijah cannot let him now assume that he was one with him, though in his presence. Obadiah pleads, “What have I sinned,” says he, “that,” &c. But why this? Elijah had not accused him of sinning. Why this alarm and perturbation of spirit Elijah was not hazarding his life, or safety, or any of his interests; he was disturbing nothing that belonged to him. Why this alarm and taking refuge in the thought, or finding his plea in the fact that he had not sinned? It is a poor low state of soul when a saint has only the consciousness of this—that he has not sinned. Is that enough to enjoy the communion or understand the mind of an Elijah? Had not Obadiah been in Ahab's palace when Elijah was by the brook Cherith That is the question, and not the question whether he had sinned or not. Had

Obadiah been with him over the barrel of meal or the cruse of oil? Elijah had not told him that he had been sinning; he need not shelter himself or commend himself thus. But Elijah cannot but let him know that their spirits were not blending; for they had met from different quarters. “Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets?” What was all this to the point? Elijah had not been going over his past history: it was better to leave the most of it untold; and it is a miserable thing for a saint of God to be trading after this manner on his character or his past ways. This is no title, no sufficient title, for the present communion of the saints, nor competency for it either.

And these are Obadiah's thoughts, and refuges, and pleadings, now that he is in the presence of a faithful witness of Christ. He had not sinned, and in days past he had done service. What a low sense of the common calling of the people of God the soul must have that can think it can be maintained, and that saints can go on together on such a title and competency as this! if the world be served when we are behind each other's back, though we may not have sinned, as people speak, and though we may have had character and done services in past days, we are not fit for each other's presence as saints of God.

Have we been in heaven or in Ahab's court? Have we been making provision for the flesh or desiring the things of Christ? There are other things than pleading “we have not sinned,” or trading on established character and past services. These are what alone fit us for the true communion of saints. Obadiah was governor over Ahab's house; how could such an one as Elijah be comfortable or at ease with him? He felt reserve, and he expressed it in manner if not in words. Obadiah is the man of words on the occasion—that was natural also, and is the ordinary style of such occasions or of such intercourses between Elijahs and Obadiahs to this hour. For indeed it is not communion when there is effort on the one side and reserve on the other. This is surely not the communion of saints. But it all has a voice in it and is common enough now-a-days. They were not in company with each other: that was the fact. Their spirits could not blend. The garment of divers sorts, of woolen and of linen, which a saint of God could not but wear in Ahab's court, ill-matched the leathern girdle of a separated suffering witness of Christ. We see this saint of God thus in his party colored dress but once; but this voice is thus full of holy, serious meaning to us. The poor widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah had lately left, enjoyed the full flow of Elijah's sympathies; and that humble, distant homestead, with its barrel of meal and its cruse of oil, had witnessed living communion between kindred spirits, and presented a scene which had its spring and its reward with God. But Elijah and Obadiah were not thus in company with each other. Elijah is too true to let Obadiah come near to him in spirit, or to answer the effort he was making to conciliate him.

There is character in all this, I am fully sure. Abraham and Lot never met, as we have said, after they parted on Lot's lifting up his eyes on the well-watered plains of Sodom. There was moral distance quite sufficient to keep them asunder, though a sabbath-day's journey might have brought them together. Very significant evidence that is! And so Elijah and Obadiah: their meeting was no meeting. As well might Abraham's rescue of Lot out of the hands of Chedorlaomer be called a meeting. This was not “the communion of saints.” This was not refreshment of bowels in the Lord. But all this repeats for the heart an oft-told tale.

Ebed-melech, in the days of another Elijah, was a man of this Obadiah generation, not however so strongly marked as his elder brother. Like him he loved the prophet of God, and in the face of an

injurious and insulting court; and, hindered by the timid policy of the king, pleaded for Jeremiah and served him with gracious personal service. But he was not a witness as the prophet was. He was afraid of the Chaldean (Jer. 39:17), the sword of the Lord's anger, and such was not the condition of the Lord's witness. But his weakness was not despised in the rich grace of God. His measure received its measure again, and in the day of the judgment of the Lord, Ebed-melech gut his life for a prey, when Jeremiah was had in honor. Ebed-melech was saved then, but that was all; the prophet was rewarded.

Thus have we seen a generation in other days who, though the people of the Lord, show themselves sadly apart from the place to which the call of God would have led them. Such was Lot and such was Jonathan, and such were Obadiah and Ebed-melech. It was more or less double-mindedness in them, or love of the world in greater or smaller power in their souls. But such a generation is abundant to this hour. Saints are seen in situations and connections from which the call of God would separate them just as surely as it would have kept Lot out of Sodom. But this may be added with equal sureness in a multitude of cases—this impure connection arises from ignorance, or want of hearts instructed in the kingdom of God. They have not listened to the voice of the mysteries of the kingdom, but conferred with flesh and blood. They have not heard the Shepherd's voice calling them outside. They have not understood the Church as a heavenly stranger on the earth, and that connection—religious connection—with the world is Lot in Sodom, or an Israelite with a garment of “divers sorts of woolen and linen.”

The world is marked for judgment even more surely than Sodom was; ten righteous would have spared the cities of the plain, but nothing can cancel the judgment of “this present evil world.”

Here let me add, however, that the distinction of Lot and of Jonathan may be seen in many a soul now-a-days. Lot had nothing to sanction Sodom to him: all that he knew to be of God was outside; and even nature had no plea to plead for Sodom. Abraham and Sarah were outside, the witnesses of the call and presence of God, and his kindred in the flesh. All that was sacred in religion or nature were outside; and providences pleaded with him to the same end, for the plains of Sodom had already brought him into jeopardy of life and liberty, and warned him to dread the city. It was the world and nothing else that was heard in Lot's heart in favor of Sodom. But with Jonathan nature had a plea. All that was of God, it is true, was in that day outside Saul's court and camp; but the claims of kindred, the voice of nature, nay, the authority of nature were known and felt from within. The father and the family were there, though David and God were not.

And so now-a-days. There is many a thing that pleads from within. Nature, things moral and religious plead there; opportunities of service and testimony, obedience to authority, maintenance of order, the dangers and evil threatened to the social well-being, the peace of families, and example to children and servants—these things are pleaded, and they all come from within, and put in various claims for the course of the world.

But these and all such put together, can never speak to the saint, or plead with him with the authority of the call of God. If the Church be a heavenly stranger on the earth, alliance with the world defiles her, nay, ruins her as a witness for. God; and to defile after this manner, to seduce from the place of testimony, is the enemy's purpose, and has been so from the beginning. Was not the serpent in the garden seducing Adam from the place the Lord God had set him in? Nay, earlier even than that, are we not told about the angels that sinned, that they kept not their first estate?

So afterward with Israel, “ye are my witnesses,” says the Lord of them; but the enemy prevailed till the testimony was gone. “His house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Here were successful attempts of the enemy, to drag from the place in which God had set His witness. It is not merely that there was a soil, or a blemish, or a rupture, but a revolt, a departure, a yielding up to the enemy the great purpose or thought of God.

The contrary effect precisely, in the precisely like attempt, as has been observed by another, is seen in Jesus. “If thou be the Son of God,” said the tempter. His design was to lead Him to the abandonment of His place, His place of perfect and entire subjection which knows only God's will. But all was perfection and victory in Jesus, but in Jesus only, whether before Him or after Him; for the witness of this dispensation has been as corrupted as others. That which was set to be a heavenly stranger on earth, the companion of the rejected Christ, has faithlessly allied herself with the rejecting world; and what ruin can be more complete than this?

The “man of God,” who was deceived by the old prophet, would have had security in the divine principles, had his soul been alive to them. The word received, it is most sure, would have secured him; for it expressly forbade his eating and drinking in that place. But divine principles would have been his shelter also. The word he had received, when he set out on his journey, was founded upon them, as we may easily perceive. For how, I ask, could the Lord employ an unclean vessel? The old prophet had been clearly laid aside as unfit for the Master's use. He was dwelling in the very city where the Lord had a business to be done, but he was passed by. The Lord had gone down to Judah to get a witness against the altar at Bethel, though a saint of His own was living on the very spot. How could “the man of God” think that the Lord could employ the prophet of Bethel, as His vessel? He had already passed him by. He had already, after this manner, treated him as unfit for His use, according to the principles of His own house, that an unpurged vessel is not fit for service. (2 Tim. 2) How could the man from Judah be careless about all this? The word he had received was enough to tell him how this principle of God's honor was at that moment, so to speak, alive in God's thoughts, because he was enjoined neither to eat nor to drink in that unclean place, nor was he to return by the way that he came: so particular was the commandment in keeping him apart from all fellowship with that against which He was employing him to testify. And yet “the man of God” is beguiled to receive a message as from the Lord by the hand of one who was in contact and communion with the unclean thing, against which he has been brought all the way from Judah to testify! Strange forgetfulness! sad and shameful carelessness about the principles of the house of God. A saint as he was, and servant as he was, faithful too, in the face of the offers of a king—his carcass is not to come to the sepulcher of his fathers. (1 Kings 13)

When the eye is single the whole body is full of light. There is consistency and harmony in the action, when the moving principle is maintained single and unmixed Micaiah's action in 2 Chron. 18 was of such a nature, but Jehoshaphat's body was then anything but “full of light.” In the hour when he left Micaiah to go to the prison of the king of Israel while be himself accompanied that same king of Israel to the battle, who would have known him to be a saint of God? where was the body “full of light” then? It was the clouding and overcastting of all the illumination which he really partook of. There was no harmony, there was no pure and cloudless noonday, marking the pathway of Jehoshaphat then, no making of “his calling and election sure” as the apostle speaks. It is happy to follow that dear man a stage farther. (2 Chron. 20) For in the days of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, Jehoshaphat's body is again “full of light.” He acts as a son of David ought to act,

he seeks the Lord and the Lord only; and all is faith and victory and joy. But when in the earlier day Micaiah was sent to the prison of Ahab, and he himself went to the battle of Ahab, where was the son of David then? The whole body was full of darkness.

The captives, returned from Babylon to the land and city of their fathers, in like manner read us an instructive lesson on this subject of the garment of “divers sorts;” and their history affords both encouragement and warning. They do not refuse to accept the punishment of the nation's sin, and therefore, they take their place in subjection to the Gentile power whom God had set over them for their sins. They accept the favor of Cyrus, of Darius, and of Artaxerxes, in the spirit of the injunction “honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear.” They speak of a Gentile power as “the great and noble Asnapper,” and evidently feel grateful for the kindness shown to them by one of these powers after another, blessing God because of them, and ready-hearted, I am sure, to pray for the Life of the king and of his sons. But with all this they were a separated people. Their refusal of Samaritan connection was as earnest as their acceptance of the favors of the Gentiles.

The zeal, and revenge, and clearing of themselves of the mixed principle and of the abomination of bringing Greeks into the temple to pollute that holy place, was as simple and firm as it would have been in the days of Joshua or of David. They refused the garments of divers sorts. If they would have worn that livery, it might have saved them much trouble in the progress of the work of their hands, which was also the work of the Lord; but they could not and would not. The thing was not according to the ordinance; and they would not.

Paul might have saved himself a prison if he had accepted the testimony of the damsel at Philippi; but it was Samaritan help again, or something worse, and he could not; and the man who on that occasion refused the garment of woolen and linen, must, therefore, for his faithfulness, have his feet made fast in the stocks and wear prison bands. But all is right in the end, whether with Paul or the returned captives. Their God pleads their cause.

Here, however, some new and serious points of instruction on the matter of mixed principles occur. I feel I can pursue this with a sense of personal need and application. The further history of the captives from Babylon warns us as well as instructs us. They refuse the strange alliance, they will not wear the garment of divers sorts; but then they wear their own garments without a girdle—that is the moral of the story. They go to build their own houses when the Samaritan enmity stops their building of the Lord's. This is warning to us, as it was shame to them, and the Spirit of the Lord has to awaken them as from sleep and intoxication. They serve themselves when the service of the Lord was interrupted. Ease and indulgence and self-pleasing take the place which had now been left vacant. Haggai and Zechariah have to call them to the girding of their loins, and the trimming of their lamps. By no means do they send them back to make terms with the Samaritans. They do not tell them that they erred in refusing the garment of divers sorts; they only call on them to gird up the pure garments they were wearing—to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, though Samaritans might again withstand them.

All this is full of meaning for us. The Spirit of God, let the exigency be what it may, will never have the saint in “woolen and linen;” but at the same time He would have the pure garment girded. An ungirded garment, though pure, is not after His mind; and often does He find that wanting, as in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, and this is our deep rebuke—a pure position kept with little spiritual grace.

The returned captives were in the right position. Their place was a better place than that of their brethren, who dwelt still in the distant cities of the uncircumcised, and they did well, as I have been saying, when they refused alliance with the Samaritans; such alliance would be but the wearing of garments of divers sorts, of “woolen and linen.” This they did not do, but those who stand such a trial, fail under another: Though they thus refuse to wear mixed clothing, their garments, as we have seen, were not girded, and even worse than that, they were sadly soiled and spotted. These returned Jews were doing much worse than their brethren who were off in the distant lands of the heathen. Their ways in the Holy Land were deeply rebuked by the ways of their brethren among the Gentiles.

Chapter 192

Woolen and Linen: Part 3

“Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together."- Deut. 22:11.

The Jews abroad had redeemed their brethren from the heathen, to whom they had been sold; while the Jews at home, or the captives returned to Jerusalem, were selling their brethren for debt. (Neh. 5) What a sad sight! What a humbling and searching fact! Is there not much that is miserably kindred with this to be known still? This is something like “form without power.” “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” Position may be quite according to God, but the practical godly grace, with which it is filled and occupied, may be scanty and poor. And how should this warn us not to count on the virtue of a merely pure and separated position! If it he trusted in or held with an unjudged and unwatched heart, even they among the uncircumcised may rebuke us. Much love and service is often to be found within, as I have been speaking, while little of the power of holiness, and of the mind of heaven, accompanies those who go outside. What I mean is this—that there is often less grace and moral power in the purer position than there is in the defiled connection. As with Jonathan. David loved him dearly, and yet he was not David's companion. But the companions of David's temptations were at times a trial to him, talking on one occasion of even stoning him, while Jonathan personally was always pleasant a him. What an outside and an inside was this! And yet David's outside place was the place of the glory then, and his companions were in the right position. But what exhibitions are all these! And yet we see the time around us at this hour. There is no lesson I would more press on the attention of my own soul than this—and I think I can say I value it: Position without answer, principles beyond practice, jealousy about orthodoxy and truth and mysteries, with little personal communion with the Lord—all these the soul stands in constant fear of, and in equal judgment and refusal.

The earnestness about many and many a right thing at was found at Ephesus, the stir and activity even a religious nature, that prevailed in Sardis, and the orthodoxy of Laodicea, were all challenged by the Lord, and we deeply justify the challenge. (Rev. 2; 3) The tithing of mint and anise, when judgment and mercy were passed by, was exposed by the divine mind of Christ; and in the Spirit the saint joins in the exposure, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt.”

We refuse position without power, as we would principles without practice; or truth, and mysteries, and knowledge without Christ Himself, and personal communion with Him. But in the stainless, perfect page of the word we find all honored, and nothing thoroughly according to God but where each and all is in its place and measure honored. As He says Himself, “These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” But here I will turn aside for a moment to what is a sweet relief to the soul: that to know Him in grace is His praise and our joy. We instinctively think of Him as one that exacts obedience and looks for service. But faith owns Him as the One that communicates; that speaks to us of the privileges rather than of the duties; of the love, and the liberty, and the blessings of our relationship to Him, rather than of the corresponding returns from us.

This is truth, beloved, we need also now-a-days, though it may be a little beside my leading thought just now.

The call of God separates us, but we need the Spirit of God to occupy the place according to God, and the loving devoted mind. “Salt is good,” the divine principle is the good thing. But salt may lose its saltiness. The right position or the divine principle may be understood and avowed, but there may be no power of life in it.

What variety of moral instruction is thus provided for the soul in the words of the Lord! But let us still listen, and we shall still learn, for the mine is never exhausted.

The history of the two tribes and a half has its peculiar instruction for us. They do not stand in company with the Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they may remind us of him. For, as I have just said, it is wonderful what a variety of moral character and of Christian experience puts itself before the soul in the histories of Scripture; the lights and shades are to be traced, as well as the leading features. This strikes us forcibly in the history of this people. They are not Lot, but they remind us of him. Like him, their history begins by their eyeing well-watered plains good for cattle. While yet on the wilderness side of the Jordan they think of their cattle: Abraham, their father, had never been on that side of the river. Moses had said nothing to them respecting those plains of Gilead. Nor did their expectations, when called out from Egypt, stop short of the land of Canaan. But Ruben, Gad, and Manasseh had cattle, and they sue for an inheritance there, on the eastern or wilderness borders of the river, for there cattle might graze to advantage.

They had no thought whatever of revolting, of sacrificing the portion of Israel, or of separating themselves or their interests from the call of God. But their cattle would be nicely provided for in Gilead, and there they desired to tarry, though, of course, only as Israelites under the call of God. How natural! how common! They hold to the hope of the people of God, though not walking in the suited place of that hope. In power of character and conduct, they were not a dead and risen people, but they are one in faith with such. They would declare their alliance with the tribes which were to pass the Jordan, though they would remain on the wilderness side of it themselves. They were not, like Lot, a people of mixed principles, who deliberately form their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God; but they were a generation who, owning that call and prizing it, and resenting the thought of any hope but what was connected with it, are not in the power of it. Again I say, how common! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to wonder at this.

Moses is made uneasy by this movement, and he expresses his uneasiness with much decision. He tells this people that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies, whom he had sent out, years before, from Kadesh-barnea, and whose way had discouraged their brethren, and occasioned forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call of God out of Egypt, in the hope of Canaan, thus to linger in any part of the road; and Moses resents it. And it is bad when this is produced, when the first instinctive thought of a saint, walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ, is that of alarm at what he sees in, or hears from, a brother: and yet how common! Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh have to explain themselves, and to give fresh pledges that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren; and they do this with zeal and with integrity too. In this they are not like

Lot. They would not have taken the eastern Gilead had this been the forfeiture of their identity with those who were going to the western Canaan.

But Moses cannot let them go as Abraham parts with Lot; they are not to be treated in that way. Neither does the judgment of God visit them, as it did the unbelieving spies, who brought up an evil report of the land. But Moses eyes them and fears for them, and has his thoughts anxiously and uneasily occupied about them. What shades of difference do we find in these different illustrations of character! What various textures may we inspect in these woolens and linens! Different classes among the people of God, and shades of difference in the same class. We have Abraham and Moses and David, we have Lot and Jonathan and the tribes in Gilead, we have Jehoshaphat and Obadiah—and yet these are the people of God. Sodom was Lot's place, Saul's court was Jonathan's place, and the palace of Ahab was Obadiah's; while Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of God at the brook Cherith, or in the Gentile Sarepta. Here were distances. And so as between Jonathan and others, for Jonathan was (strictly speaking or distinguishing) neither Lot nor Obadiah, though we set them, generally, together as a class. Neither was Obadiah Lot exactly. And as between Lot, Jonathan, and Obadiah on the one side, and Moses, Abraham, and Elijah, and such like on the other, we see the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh—a generation who will not admit the thought of their separation from the call and the people of God, but who betray in moral action that which is inconsistent with that call. And this is indeed a common class—nay, this is the common class. (See Num. 32) One's own heart knows it full well. Joshua, who had the spirit of Moses, holds this same people in some fear and suspicion, just as Moses had done before. He calls them to him, and he addresses to them a special word of exhortation and warning, when the time of action in the camp of God begins. (Josh. 1) Little things of Scripture are at times very symptomatic. It is so, I doubt not, in Josh. 1. As to the tribes generally Joshua has but to say, “Prepare you victuals, for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.” They were free, they were in traveling order; they had but to know the hour of departure. Like Noah all was ready for the voyage into another world, and he needed only time to put himself and his family into the vessel. The two tribes and a half were not so equipped in traveling order. They were encumbered, and instinctively, as it were, Joshua acted towards them, as towards a heavy baggage in the hour of decamping. He had to challenge them—at least he felt he had—to remind them of their pledges to Israel, for they were not under his eye, as if they had been altogether Israel themselves. In measure he is to them what the angel who came to Sodom was to Lot.

So mark this same people again in Josh. 22.

The ark had gone over, the feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of the Jordan, and the ark had gone over conducting and sheltering the Israel of God; and it is true that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh Each gone over too. But Israel and the ark remained there, and the two tribes and a half return—return to settle, where their brethren had but wandered—return to present this questionable and strange sight, Israelites finding their place and their interests outside the natural boundary of their promised inheritance, find a home where the ark had never rested.

Ere they set out on the return, Joshua seems to feel this, and specially warns and exhorts them, and as soon as they make the passage and but touch the place which they had chosen, they

begin to feel it also. They are not quite at ease in their souls, and they raise an altar. This is full of language in our ears. An Israelite in the land of Gilead at this living day of ours understands it.

Jehoshaphat was, after this manner, uneasy when he found himself on the throne with Ahab, and under the pressure of that uneasiness (which attends on the heart of a true Israelite in an uncircumcised place) he asks for a prophet of the Lord. This is the language of the renewed mind in a foreign land. The two tribes and a half raise an altar and call it “Ed.” It was a witness, as they purposed, of this: that Israel's God was their God, that they had part in the hopes and calling of the Israel of God. But why all this? Had they taken up their portion in Canaan they would not have needed this; they would have had the original and not a reflection. Their souls would have had the witness within, and “Ed” would not have been needed without. But they were not in Canaan, but in Gilead. Shiloh was not in view, and they had to give themselves some artificial, some secondary help to prop up their confidence by some crutch of their own devising, that it might be known that they and the Israel of God were one. All this is full of meaning, and is much experienced to this day. Some witness of what we are, and who we are, as saints, is craved by the soul, and called for by others, when we get into a position in the world which the call of God does not fully combine with. Some artificial or secondary testimony is felt desirable; the countenance or acceptance of others, the examination of our own personal condition, with many a restless action of the soul, reasonings with ourselves about it all, remembrances of better days invoked now and again. Something of this secondary character, like the altar at Ed, is needed, where the soul is not fully simple and faithful: all this is still known, and all this, I judge, is the writing on this pillar in the land of Gilead. Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, has a writing upon it, which the divine Master Himself has deciphered for us, and, I doubt not, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, would have us, under His anointing, read and learn the writing on this pillar, which Israelites outside the natural bounds of the promised inheritance once reared. It may warn our souls if we love quietness and assurance of heart, and deep peace of soul, not to return and find a settlement where the Church of God has duly found a pilgrimage. Does my soul read this writing? Every heart knows its own humiliation. These disturbances of spirit, this demand of Jehoshaphat for a prophet of Jehovah, this altar of Ed, witness both for and against us. They bespeak the saintly or renewed mind, but they bespeak it in such conditions, such exercises and experiences, as a more single-eyed and full-hearted love to Christ would have spared it.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh are challenged a second time. Joshua and the tribes in Canaan have to challenge them now, as Moses had to do before. Their altar in Gilead awakens suspicions now, as their desire to settle in Gilead had awakened suspicions then. This is all natural and common and all symptomatic. Saints in Gilead are not such as “make their calling and election sure” to the hearts of their brethren, at least without some inquiry. A great stir is made among the tribes who were now in Canaan, and within the conscious possession of Shiloh, and of God's tabernacle there, and an embassage is formed to inquire into this matter. Something, they know not what, struck their eye, which, at least, appeared to be at variance with the common call of Israel; and it must at least be explained. What a living picture this is! We are surely at home in such a spot as this, and know the customs of the place. I believe the apostle, in the Epistles to the Corinthians is very much, in the New Testament form, a Phinehas, a son of Eleazar the priest, crossing the river to inquire after the pillar in the land of Gilead. There were things at Corinth which alarmed Paul, symptoms of sad departure from the common call of the heavenly saints. They

seemed to be “among the princes of this world,” to be “reigning as kings on the earth.” His ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting to be despised, and others were getting to be valued, because of their place and advantages in the world. The way of the schools, the way of the wisdom of men, was regaining its authority, and saints seemed as though they were returning to settle where the Church was to be but an unknown stranger. In the zeal of Josh. 22, Paul crosses the river, and, whatever the discovery may be, the action is a painful one, and the need of it a scandal in the history of the Church. The tribes of Gilead may satisfy Phinehas and his brethren more than the Corinthian saints satisfied the apostle; all such differences and varieties in the conditions of the people of God are known at this hour, but there is this common sorrow and humbling that the calling and election is not made sure; and we have either to take journeys, or to occasion journeys, that our ways, our Ed, our altars, our pillars, the bleating of our flocks in the plains of Gilead, may be inspected and inquired after, instead of our resting and feeding together, and together gathering around and learning the secrets of the tabernacle and altar at Shiloh. In the New Testament, the Church at Corinth was the Israelite on the wilderness side of the river. The apostle's fears respecting the saints there, were not respecting Judaizing influences, nor were they on account of the working of liberty of thought and infidel speculations, at least at the time of the second Epistle; nor were they respecting the turning of grace into lasciviousness. These fears occupy the mind of the Spirit in addressing other saints and churches: but at Corinth it was world that was dreaded. A certain man appears to hare gained attention from the saints there; he was one who had, both from nature and from circumstances, something to attract the mere worldly heart of man. He was, I believe, as modern language speaks, a gentleman. He had a fine person and an independent fortune, and the Corinthian saints had evidently to a great extent got under his influence. To some extent they were beguiled. They had begun to look on things after the outward appearance; they were suffering a man to vaunt himself and to take occasion to be somebody among them, simply from the advantage he had from nature and from circumstances.

Such a bad condition of things the apostle had to withstand. Affection and confidence towards himself had been withdrawn in measure, because he had no such advantages to boast, which they were thus beginning to prize. And surely he was purposed not to affect such things at all. And though he had certain things “in the flesh” of which lie might glory, still be would glory rather in his infirmities. He would be “weak in Christ.” The natural or worldly advantages which this man had and used among the saints, our apostle exposed, as Moses would expose the woolen and linen garment or other mixtures. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” says he to the saints now; as Moses had said of old to Israel, “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together; thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and of linen together.” But Paul himself was not thus yoked and clothed; indeed he was not. He was among the foremost of the tribe of Judah in crossing the river.

Surely I may say all these things illustrate profitable lessons for us. We are not to be mixed up with that from which the call of God separates us; we are not to wear the garment of divers sorts. But if we refuse it and put on only the pure clothing, take the place and be found in the connection to which the call of God leads, we are to be there with a girded as well as with an unmixed garment, and to watch too that it be unspotted. The world is that, not to the improvement of which Christ calls us, but to separation from which He calls us. But if, beloved, in form we take the separated place, let us seek the grace and the power which alone can adorn, and furnish that place for the

Lord!

And such is the character of the hour we are now passing through. The god and prince of this world is allowing the citizens to sweep and garnish his house, and they are led to admire it afresh in its adorned condition, and to flatter themselves that it is by no means the same house that it once was. But this delusion is solemn; it is as much the home of the unclean spirit as ever it was, and only the more suitable for him, because it is swept and garnished, and ere long he will use all these operations of the citizens for his final and most awful purposes. “He that gathereth not with me scattereth.” Is our labor according to the purpose of Christ? Is it by the rule of His weights and measures? If it be not, though we may labor in His name, we are but doing what the enemy will soon turn to his own account. In the parable, the sweeping and the garnishing turn out at the last to have been all for the unclean spirit to whom the house as much belonged as ever it did, though it be true he had left it for a season. Whatever is done for the improvement of the house, is done for the master of the house, and Satan is the god of the world as much as ever he was, and will be till the judgment of it by the Rider on the white horse takes place. The lengthened peace of the nations which Europe so long and till lately enjoyed, gave abundant occasion to the sweeping and garnishing of the house. In man's way the sword was turned into a plowshare. The earth and its resources, man and his skill, have been produced and cultivated beyond all that ever was known; and the house looks a different thing from what it was, now that it is under these cleansing and ornamenting labors of its servants. Advancement in letters, morals, refinement, and religion is immense; peace societies, temperance societies, literature for the million, and music for the million, with the general confederacy of the nations, loudly tell all this, as do the boasts in the age, which are heard every hour. But this diligence is according to the mind of the real master of the house, or the god of this world. This is serious truth. “He that gathereth not with me scattereth.” This is a serious word. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” It is confusion. It is the illicit weaving of woolen and linen together. But, beloved, while one says this, the heart owns it and would be humbled by the confession of it, that many a dear, honest-hearted servant of Christ, who is laboring with a mistaken purpose, and working not by the weights and measures that are according to the standard of the sanctuary, with a true affection and zeal, and singleness, and diligence, and fervor, may be far before others of us who have clearly discerned their mistake.

I dread indifference even more than mixture. I would shun Laodicea more than Sardis. May we learn the lesson in both its features, Sardis with its religious bustle which gave it a name to live will not do; Laodicea, with its selfish, cold-hearted ease, and satisfaction, will not do. Let us be diligent but in pure service; occupying talents, but occupying them for a rejected Master, looking for nothing from the world that has cast Him out, but counting on everything in His own presence by and by.

Galatians

Galatians. — The apostle would establish the saints in personal, immediate confidence in God, from which Judaism was withdrawing them. He does this by showing them his own commission, revelations, experience, and acts, all immediate and personal (chap. 1, 2); and then by challenges and reasonings. (Chap. 3) Thus he would form Christ in them, the spirit of the free woman. (Chap. 4) Hope and service of love would be the fruit of this. (Chap. 5) And so, personal and immediate with God, would he have them in commonest duties (chap. 6:14); and in like spirit he closes with his body and their spirit. He would set each of us for himself at the door of the tabernacle to learn the secrets of God for ourselves. (Lev. 8; 9) The patriarchs, sinners in John's gospel, as well as Paul, went down to Arabia; that is, they needed no ordinances [like Israel under law], having immediate, personal communion with God in Christ and the promises. Paul would have Peter take that journey (chap. 2), and the Galatians take it again. (Chap. 3, 4)

John Gifford Bellett

Chapter 194

Outline of Romans

Dear Brother,— I send you a brief outline of the order followed by the Epistle to the Romans in treating the principal subject it presents. This exposition of the order of the epistle necessarily implies a development of its doctrine on the subject of our justification and of our standing before God. This outline, while pointing out the form of the epistle and the distribution of the subjects it treats, will, I think, be profitable to your readers, as regards the doctrine itself. At least, I can say, that I have myself found this point of view both profitable and interesting. What I have to say will be very simple, while, at the same time, it connects itself in part, with the experiences—often so intricate—of Christians; but it explains them also.

The seven first verses of chanter 1 contain the address of the epistle; only, while presenting the claim the apostle had to the attention of the saints at Rome, they give the contents of the gospel which forms the subject of his apostleship, the fulfillment of the promises made with regard to the Son of David, and the testimony given by resurrection that the same Blessed One is also Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. Then, to the god of verse 17, follow a few explanations, as to what had hindered him from seeing them before; and these explanations close with the declaration, that it was not that he was ashamed of the gospel; for in that gospel the righteousness of God Himself was revealed, on the principle of faith, to faith.

This naturally introduces his subject. But he first of all declares the need there was for that gospel on account of the condition in which man was. The wrath of God was upon men, a wrath which the condition of sin in which man was had kindled. But it was no longer merely a wrath which was kindled on account of the repeated rebellion of a people which He had taken unto Himself on earth, from among the nations that had spread over its surface, a wrath which manifested itself and was appeased through punishments, which, as to their sphere, did not go beyond the world where the visible government of God was exercised and manifested but it was the wrath of God, which was revealed from heaven upon all impiety, and upon the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth while walking in unrighteousness (that is to say, upon all the world, both Gentiles and Jews). He develops his thesis from verse 19 to the end of the chapter. The awful condition of the Gentile world is presented. (Ver. 19, 20.) They are guilty, on account of the testimony of the creation (ver. 21 and following); they abandoned the knowledge of God when they possessed it.

Chapter 2. The apostle condemns the philosophers, who moralized and were not better than the mass, and who were thus treasuring up wrath in the day of wrath. For God demanded realities. The form of the law would be of no avail. All shall be judged according to their works, whether Jew or Gentile, and the Gentile who, pressed by his natural conscience, fulfilled what the law required, would be in a better ease than the Jew who possessed that law and who broke it. As many as had sinned without law, should perish without law; and those who had sinned under law, should be judged by law, in the day when God should judge the secrets of the hearts of men (not the conduct of the nation by earthly judgments) according to the gospel committed to the apostle.

Such is the general exposition of the ways of God in judgment upon every soul of man, judgment founded on the testimony of the creation, the knowledge which man (in Noah) had got of God, the testimony of the natural conscience, the positive testimony of the law, adding that one despised the goodness of God which was leading man to repentance. But the Jews, who pretended to special privileges, needed a few words beyond this. The apostle, be the law itself, brings them out guilty. The Jew, tenants the Gentile, boasted in the law, in the light he had, in the divine teaching he had, and afterward he did the very contrary of that which that light and that law required from him. Again, I say, God demands that which is real and true, and the Gentile, who, having no law, did what the law required, should be in a better place than the Jew, who had the law and broke it. Had not the Jew then any superiority above the Gentile? He had, without any doubt, and every way. Specially, he possessed the oracles of God. Now, says the apostle, let us see what they say. The Jew was saying, They are for us alone; the Gentiles have nothing to do with them. I agree to it, says the apostle. Whatever the things the law says, it speaks to them who are under the law. It will spew you therefore what you are. Here you are: not one righteous, not one who seeks after God, not one who understands. According to your assertions, that is what it says of yourselves. The Gentiles have nothing to do with it. Outside all righteousness and slaves of sin, it is no question of them here. Such then is the picture that God gives of your condition, and every mouth is stopped, amid all the world become under judgment to God.

I come now to what led me to send you these lines—the remedy which God Himself has prepared, and which He presents to us, for the condition of wretchedness into which sin has plunged us.

From chapter 3:21 to the end of chapter 5:11, the apostle takes up the question of sins; and from verse 12 of this last chapter to the end of chapter 8, the question of sin. In both cases he shows the blessing which is the result of God’s intervention in grace. At the end of chapter 3 the blood of Jesus is presented to us as the means of our justification. God Himself has presented Jesus to us, as a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood. The righteousness of God in the passing by the sins of the Old Testament believers is manifested, righteousness which becomes the foundation of our hopes in the present time, that is to say, since the accomplishment of the work of Christ. In chapter 4, he speaks of the effect of the resurrection of Christ on this question. He has been delivered for our offenses, and has been raised for our justification. The efficacy of the death of Christ has been clearly shown by the resurrection, as well as the power of a new life for us—the life of Jesus risen—which has its place, when all our sins have been atoned for by Christ. But all this refers to sins—to what has been committed. He has been delivered for our offenses, and has been raised for our justification. The first eleven verses of chapter 5 show us the blessings which flow from this, peace and grace now, glory in hope, and the knowledge of the love of God by the Holy Ghost which is given to us; so that we also boost in tribulations, being made capable, through that love, to interpret them; then we make our boast in God Himself. This chapter goes even farther than the eighth in this, that the fifth presents to us more God Himself in His sovereign grace, and our joy in Himself; whereas the eighth chapter shows more our position before Him and what He is for us. Nevertheless, in the latter, there is deeper experience.

At chapter 5:12 begins the teaching of the apostle with respect to sin. The difference is evident. If it be a question of sins, you, my reader, you have yours, and I, I have mine. If it be a question of our nature, of our flesh, we are but one, one sole nature, one sole mass. Hence the apostle turns to the heads or sources of our nature, whether as to good or as to evil: Adam and Christ.

Now, to the end of chapter 8, it is a question of sin, and not of sins. Sin shall bare no dominion over you—sin taking occasion by the law. Here Christ died to sin, not for our sins. I learn, not what I have done, but what I am. I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell. Thus the experience is deeper; often, also gone through after having understood the forgiveness of our sins, and, consequently, casting the soul into perplexity and uncertainty. But peace, also, is much deeper when once it is founded on the truth which is taught here; but it is learned in an experimental way. My faith here does not rest upon the fact that Christ died for my sins, but on the truth that, He being dead, I am dead with Him. Hence, mark it well, there is no question of forgiveness here. I forgive my child his faults; I do not forgive the evil disposition which produced them—I try to correct it. The correction of sin in the flesh is death. Now, we are dead in Christ. The apostle begins this teaching by showing, that, by the obedience of Christ alone, those who are linked with Him in the sight of God, are constituted righteous; that, as Adam's disobedience placed in the position of sinners before God all those who were connected with Adam by descent, so the obedience of Christ placed all those who would be found connected with Him by grace in the position of righteous persons, and this in contrast with the law that killed each guilty sinner for his own faults. No doubt we, each one of us, have committed our own sins, completing the evil each one to his own account. But it is none the less true, that, if by the disobedience of Adam we are constituted sinners, the obedience of Christ has constituted us righteous—us, I say, who believe in Jesus.

The objection made to the doctrine of justification by the obedience of Christ first presents itself to the apostle. The value of the work of Christ does not stop in Him who accomplished it, but it extends to others. It matters little, therefore, if they continue to live in sin. Here is the answer: How live, if we have died? It is a very simple thing. We are baptized unto His death, identified with Him in the likeness of His death. Our portion—in that He died to sin once for all, and that He lives to (or, for) God—is to reckon ourselves dead, and alive to (or, for) God in Christ Jesus. We thus obey, according to the new life of which we are made partakers. This same truth as to death applies (chap. 7) to the law, for it rules over a man as long as he lives. But we have died; nature, the old man to which the law applied, no longer exists. We were in the flesh: we are not in it (that is, not in Adam), but in Christ. The end of chapter 7 is the experience gone through, of the effects of the law on the soul of a renewed man still under law, known now as being spiritual.

In these experiences the soul learns, by the teaching of God, that sin is not the true I (which, in effect, detests sin), but is the sin that dwells in me; then, that sin has dominion over the I, although the latter wills that which is good. The soul learns that in it (in the old I, that is to say, in the flesh) good does not dwell. Such is the lesson which is so needful, but so humbling. One has come to the end of what man is, viewed, as he is, a child of Adam, enmity against God; but he who, though not willing it, had been a slave, is delivered through redemption. He is in Christ dead to sin, and alive to God by Him. He gives thanks to God; he is not in the flesh at all. It is not, as we said, Christ dead, viewed as bearing our sins in His body on the tree, that the believer owns as his Deliverer, however precious and needful this truth may be; but Christ dead to sin, and the believer dead with Him. Our resurrection with Him is less in evidence here; but we must reckon ourselves dead, and alive to (or, for) God by Him.

Thus this second part of the teaching of the epistle shows us as dead, as to the old man, as regards the flesh, for faith (that is, as to our position as children of Adam), and alive to (or, for) God

by Christ. The effect of the desires of the new man, when we are under law, is to render us unhappy; but we learn, through this moral discipline, to have done with the flesh for faith, by distinguishing between self and the flesh, and having learned that the flesh is too strong for me. But then redemption comes in; and we are in Christ risen, and not in the flesh; we belong to the second husband, Christ risen, and not to the first. But we learn that the flesh has been—not forgiven, but—condemned. When? When Christ was made (a sacrifice for) sin. The flesh is dead and condemned already, when I belong to Him who is risen; but I am not in the flesh, I am in Christ.

In this second part of the doctrine, we find therefore our place in Christ, before God, as we saw in the first that God has blotted out our sins, as responsible beings in the flesh, by the death of Christ.

I do not develop the happy consequences which the apostle draws from this in chapter 8. We are children; the Holy Ghost dwells in us, shows us our inheritance, helps us in our weaknesses, while everything is secure; seeing that God is for us, as He who gives and He who justifies, and that His love in Christ (who has, in grace, gone through all our sorrows, and is now at the right hand of God) keeps us when we realize the experience of it.

Chapters 9, 10, 11 conciliate there being no difference between Jew and Gentile, with the special privileges of the Jews; they form a supplement, added to the main doctrine of the epistle. But I have attained my object, if I have presented clearly to the Christian the difference of the work of Christ for our sins (chap. 3:21 to 5:11), and of Christ dead to sin, and ourselves dead with Him, so that, for faith, we have done with sin (chap. 5:12, to the end of chap. 8), sin having been condemned, when Christ died on the cross, and ourselves as having part in His death, dead with Him to that which was condemned, belonging also to the second husband—Christ risen. We have peace through forgiveness; deliverance, by the Spirit of life, in that we are in Him, and alive by Him, in consequence of accomplished redemption.

Christ dead for sins; Christ dead to sin, and we in Him, in consequence of redemption: such is the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans, which distinguishes clearly its two parts.

J. N. D.

Dublin, 1865.

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 195

The Law

Not only does the law give no life, but it reveals no object. As being creatures, it suffices not that we have a nature capable of certain affections; we must have an object too, and which even forms them. God alone can create, but has no need of objects. Now, the law gives neither. It says, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God;” but who—what is He (save the terror of His judgment if disobeyed)? It is a rule, and the consequences of breaking it—that is all. But it gives no nature to enjoy what is blessed, nor any blessed object to be enjoyed and to form the heart. Christ is both, revealing God as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father.

Chapter 196

What is Death to the Believer?

(2 Cor. 5)

The hope of the believer is not death. It is “not to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life.” He need not be unclothed, that is, of himself. The purpose of God is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the image of Christ. (Rom. 8) Our proper hope is to see Him as He is, and be like Him. It is the power of divine life conforming us to Christ the Head that we hope for; and this is what He has wrought us for. Being in utter ruin, we can now only look to what are God’s thoughts and purposes about us, and therefore hope comes in as a very necessary help; but hope is not all our joy now, and when we get to heaven, there will be no hope left. Our proper joy is not hope at all, though now, seeing there is nothing satisfying here, one of our greatest joys is hope. What He has brought us into now is not subject of hope at all. We do not hope for the divine nature or the love of God. The divine joy of the believer is having these, while rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

We have a hope in death, but death is not our hope. There is that in it which is more than hope—the possession of life; and that death does not touch but set free. There are some things we should be at home in. We should be at home in God’s love; and at the judgment-seat of Christ, being like Him, we may be at home. True, we are at home, too, in conflict here, temptation, &c.; the promise is “to him that overcometh. But, in spite of conflict, our hearts should be at home where God has put us. We cannot be at home where no water is. So far as the Spirit of God animates and fills us, we find no water here.

When death comes in, it breaks every possible thought of nature; it is a terrible thing in this way: every thought of man gone—not a single thing to trust in—everything in nature broken down.

Another point is, it is the power of Satan which none can control. God has the power of life, but if He had called in question Satan’s power in death, He would have annulled His own sentence. Death must come in, breaking every tie of nature, and bringing in every terror connected with Satan. The sentence must be executed by God Himself, and therefore it is the judgment of God. There is judgment after it. “It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment.” What can this judgment be? If I die and God brings me into judgment, I must be condemned for the sin that brought me there. “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (I am not now speaking of deliverance.) In every sense death is a terrible thing. Besides the natural dread that even an animal has, there is a terror in it, because all ties are broken by it; everything, however loving, is gone, when death takes it. The power of Satan ushering into judgment, it can bring nothing but condemnation for sin. It is also what God has put as a stamp on man, and no skill of man can avert it. It comes with bitter mockery amidst all the progress of which man boasts. In all this we see what death is in itself, as the wages of sin. But there is another way to look at it. The way God has taken it up and entirely delivered us (those who believe); and now, if there is a bright spot in a man’s (a Christian’s) life, it is at his death. It brings in a bright gleam of the future, entirely by Christ. “If one died for all, then were all dead,” &c.; “that through death he might destroy him

that had the power of death,.... and deliver them who through fear of death," &c. This blessed truth is simple in itself, familiar to us, that the Son of God, of whom it is said that it was not possible He should be holden of death, did come down into it has gone under it and is risen. The second Adam came into the very place of the first Adam.

Then we were under sin, judgment, wrath, condemnation, and He has been under it all—He was made sin. Had God not measured the sin? Yes. Did He not know the consequences of it? Yes; and He "spared not His own Son," &c. Did Christ not know all that was involved in it? Yes; and He came in the full love of His heart to accomplish the purpose of God—to drink the cup; but such was His agony at the thought of what the cup was, that He sweat great drops of blood. It was the thought of sin, death, and judgment that made Him shrink from the cup, but He went through it with God. The power of death was gone, in a sense, when those who came to meet Him saw Him, "They went back and fell on their faces." He had nothing to do but to go away then, but He did not: He offered Himself up. His disciples might go away, because He stood in the gap. Thus He takes the cup as judgment, suffering the penalty of sin. It is not now Satan (as in the agony in the garden), but God. When on the cross He cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He drank the cup thoroughly on the cross, then He died. His body went down to the grave. Was it the power of Satan when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit?" No. He gave up His spirit, waiting for the resurrection. He went down under death, took up the whole thing—sin, Satan's power, wrath, &c. He was made sin for us. "He died unto sin once." We have thus seen what death was for Christ. Now see what it is for us. In nature it is everlasting wrath: but there is not a bit of the wrath, not a bit of the sin remaining for the believer. Is God going to judge the sin He has put away? No; there is not a trace of it remaining. "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" — "condemned sin in the flesh." The strength of it all is in this—that He was "made sin," because He had no sin of His own. He suffered for it once, the just for the unjust. (1 Peter 3:4.) "Condemned sin in the flesh." God has done it once for all, and now He lives, and there is no more about the sin. "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," having nothing more to say to it, and apart from the question of sin altogether, to take us into glory.

Looked at as the nature, He had no sin, but I had sin, and that is put away; sin is entirely put away, abolished forever. He has come up from under the consequences of death, after sin is put away. The life He took up is in the "power of an endless life." I have new life in Him, life born of the Spirit, and "the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God," &c. Then what about the old man practically? As I have this new life, the old man is reckoned dead. I am dead. What is dead? The old man; I am "baptized into His death." The "corn of wheat" must die. Death ended all connected with it, for dying is unto that by which I was held. The law has killed me. The effect of the law, if we see its value, is that it has killed me, and I have life in Christ. Scripture does not speak of our dying to sin, or of our dying to ourselves; but we "are dead," and are to "reckon ourselves dead." "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though alive in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" The old man is an antagonist in its a ill; but I am dead to it. I have done with that which hindered my going to God. Has not a man done with that to which he has died? Literally, when death comes, I shall have done with what is mortal. Mortality is to be "swallowed up of life." The old nature is a thorn I shall be glad to get rid of; it is mortal, corrupt, and now by sin under the power of Satan. But then it will be gone, this corruption and mortality. The

mortal body having died, I shall have nothing more to do with death or the old nature.

What of the new nature? Is this clone with? No; it is getting home, where the affections will have full play. In death we have done with the old nature, the first Adam, and get a great deal more of the Second. This is “far better.” I shall have got rid of mortality when I die. “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” Who is this person? The new man. I am absent from the body, present with the Lord. Leaving this wretched, poor mortal, to be with Christ, is positive gain. It will be better still to be in the glory with Him, complete in all with Christ; but now it is “gain” to die.

What was Christ’s own thought about dying? What He said to the thief shows: “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise:” and to His disciples He said, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go to my Father.” In Christ there was the perfect consciousness of gain. Was Stephen less happy in his measure when he died? Hear him saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” The fact of death is leaving the old man entirely behind, and going to be with Christ. There is positive gain in having done, in measures, by faith now, or in fact by and by, with the mortal.

Then there is the dying daily. But there is not a single thing in which death can come, but it is positive gain, and for the life of the spirit. The sorrow which comes in, by the breaking of natural ties, is for blessing, reducing the flesh, &c. If there is will in the sorrow, it is bad; but trial is to be felt. Peter did not like the thought of the cross; his flesh was not broken down to the point of the revelation he had from God. Then there must be a process gone through to break it down, either with God in secret or through discipline.

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 197

A Few Words on the Trinity

The application of numerals to divine or any moral being is absurd. We do not mean the same thing by unity in figure and in minds. But I deny that God was, or ever could be, fully revealed as one. He is one; but He never was revealed as one. He was revealed to be one in contrast with a multiplicity of gods. But when revealed to be one, He was not fully revealed. He existed always in trinity in unity—not that I pretend to fathom this, but I know it, because, when fully revealed, He is so revealed. When He was revealed as one, He did not suffer Himself to be approached, carefully sheaved this, dwelt (as so made known) behind the veil; in a word, He used various sensible figures to show that He was not known, that the true light did not shine, and that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest.

But when He does reveal Himself, the Son is on earth yet in the bosom of the Father. He is the image of the invisible God. He that has seen Him has seen the Father. The light of God was in the world, but man did not see nor comprehend it. The revealed one, the Father, was known or to be known in goodness by the Son. Though the invisible God was made known by Him who was His image, yet if He had ceased to be invisible, Christ would have ceased to be a special revealer and image. If He had not perfectly shown and revealed Him as really manifested (i.e., if He had not been God), no love, goodness, forbearance, patience, power—no revelation would have been. If He had not been Son, He could not have revealed the Father to us as such.

But this is not all. The darkness comprehended not the light. The Holy Ghost became power (when the needed work was done to put us according to God's holy, righteous nature into that place, without which He would not have been so known, i.e., in truth) to give competency of apprehension, and to reveal, not as object but as communicating power, having quickened us so as to have a capacity to apprehend. I am not saying this a priori, but from the revelation of God.

Without the Trinity love was not known, righteousness, holiness—the spiritual nature of God and purity as such. That is, He never was revealed as He is and always was. All the true nature of God, i.e., what He is, without the Trinity is unknown. The Father wills; the on quickens whom He will; but because we have separate wills, why necessarily have the Father and the Son? The Spirit distributes to whom He will; but this is not separate from the will of the Father and the Son. They have not the same counsel but one counsel, mind, purpose, thought; yet they act distinctly in the manifestation of that counsel. The Father sends the Son, and the Son the Spirit. Yet when the Son comes, He is not thereby separate from the Father. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." So He casts out demons by the Spirit of God; yet He casts them out. There is unity in all that constitutes oneness when we speak spiritually—not unity as one by arriving at the same things, or union, or by being united as we are by having only one Spirit dwelling in all, but—by being one in eternal being; so that all else flows from that one will and counsel, yet so as that distinction in action in that will is revealed to us: not distinct will but distinct willing.

Not that I have the least pretension to fathom this divine mystery where all are God, all one God, God all three; yet the Father is revealed, the Son reveals, the Holy Ghost quickens and makes

known. The Son who reveals is not different from the Father whom He reveals, or He would not reveal Him. By the Spirit who quickens and makes known, we are born of God and know God dwelling in us. He reveals Him to us by His own presence and is in every way the power of God, active in the creature.

Nor could the creature reach to God; or God would not be God. It is simply impossible; for if finite reach to infinite, there is neither finite nor infinite. And the infinite God could not as such reveal Himself to a finite creature. Nor is this mentally true only; for if God in His glory had done so, the creature could not have existed before Him. So if morally revealed (i.e., as righteous and holy and simple glory), man could not have stood before Him. There was contrariety morally. Not even love would do; for what was it to man as he was? No link, no desire, and, if man was a sinner, no fitness in the simple display of it.

But in the Son by the Holy Ghost, by the work of Christ and the operation of the Holy Ghost, God is revealed and in the love of the Father, righteousness and holiness are maintained and glorified, with capacity of communion in enjoyment of both the Father and the Son and intelligence of all these ways conferred by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Hence while John says, God so loved the world, we find whenever he speaks of grace and power bringing man into the knowledge and enjoyment of God, be speaks of the Father and the Son, adding afterward in the words of Christ the presence and work of the Comforter. John is the one who speaks specially of the revelation of God, not of the presentation of man to God, though he does this; as Paul also speaks of the revelation of God, but specially of man’s presenting to God.

Thus we see that there could be no full revelation to God, but through the Son by the Spirit, and thereby of the Father. The full revelation of the one God is only thus Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This, this only, is what the one God is, one identity of will and being, so that they are essentially one and one only, yet distinct in willing and acting (and we can distinguish them in willing and acting. Hence we commonly speak of persons), yet never willing or acting but in the common will and unity of nature.

I fear much human language on this. But I affirm that the only full revelation of the one true God is the revelation of Him in the Trinity. Our prayers rise up the same. Through Him (Christ the Son) we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 198

Paul with the Romans and at Rome

After a long, wearisome, and changeful journey, through chapters 21-28 of Acts, during a period of two long years, for which time he had not seen any brethren, the apostle at last finds himself approaching Rome. (Chap. 28:13-15.) He had, some time before, written to the saints there, expressing his desires towards them, and his prayer that he might come to them prosperously and with joy, and that they might be refreshed and comforted together. (See Rom. 1:10; 15:32.)

They met him on his journey, some at Appii Forum, a distance of fifty miles; and some at the Three Taverns, a distance of thirty miles.

This was their answer to his letter, and this was also the Lord's answer to his prayer. For now, on seeing them he was refreshed, just as he had prayed; refreshed, let me say, by their love, a richer refreshment than that which gift or communicated knowledge provides for the soul. When he saw them, we read, "he thanked God, and took courage."

This was, indeed, receiving a lovely answer both to his letter and to his prayer.

When he wrote his letter, we may be sure that he little thought he was to see them as Rome's prisoner. He made request that he might have a prosperous journey to them (Rom. 1:10), and had told them to pray that he might reach them with joy. (Rom. 15:32.) But it is beautiful and blessed to see, that though the hand of the Spirit of God had given his journey to them and arrival among them this character, he does not treat it as anything less than a full answer to his desires. "He thanks God" as owning the answer of his request.

All the ends, I may say, of the mercy he looked for are fulfilled to perfection. He had prayed, First, that he might come to the saints at Rome; Secondly, to be comforted in them;

Thirdly, to have some fruit among them.

These had been his desires (Rom. 1:10-13), and these are, each and all of them, answered. (Acts 28:15-24.) He sees them, he takes courage, and, through preaching, gathers fruit there as well as among other Gentiles.

I would add a little contemplation of Paul at Rome to this of Paul with the Romans.

It is said that sorrow has a tendency to make us selfish; that when we are in trouble ourselves, we think we may be indifferent to others in the demands and pressure of our own necessities.

The way of the Lord Jesus has been noted as the contradiction of this. Not only through His life of sorrow was He ever ministering to others, but in the agony of the cross remembering the sorrow of others, and saying to John, "Behold thy mother."

So also His dear devoted servant, the apostle of the Gentiles. He testified to the elders at Miletus that bonds and afflictions abided him. He had nothing but personal sorrow in prospect, but he was even then full of concern for others, his own case not moving him. And so, when he reaches

Rome. He was there for two years, bound with a chain and kept by a soldier; but he was thinking of others. He reasoned with the Jews, received all that came to him, and, caring for all the churches, wrote to Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Philemon. He appears to have been then called before Caesar, and to have been striped, and under such condition, in fervent care for the truth and for the saints, to have written to the Galatians. [?] Finally, at the time of his second call before Nero, when “he was ready to be offered up,” in still deeper solicitude for others, he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy.

Beautiful fruit of divine workmanship! Sorrow may naturally lead us to indifference to others in the care of ourselves, but the Spirit forms character as well as nature, and what is the bearing of that last letter of his, the Second Epistle to Timothy, but an urging on his dear son in the faith to toil, and serve, and watch for others in spite of all disappointments?

Chapter 199

Nicodemus, the Samaritan, the People, the Jews

(John 3-8.)

To apprehend the light or truth of the Lord is needful to our safe conduct through the scene around us; but to discern His Spirit, His tastes, habits of thought, sympathies and aversions, all pure and perfect as they were, so many expressions of the divine mind, gives elevation to our conduct.

Something of His sympathies and aversions may be discovered from His different method with Nicodemus, the Samaritan, and the multitude in John 3; 4:6. There is this common purpose in all these scenes. The Lord is putting the soul upon a sinner's ground.

This, however, is done by a different method in each case; and in this different method His Spirit, His tastes, His sympathies or aversions, as we have expressed it, manifest themselves.

Nicodemus was "a master in Israel," a religious "ruler of the Jews." He was of the Pharisees, one, therefore, of a party that had set itself boldly against Jesus. But at this time there was evidently some working of conscience in him. He comes to Christ as a pupil, to learn lessons and mysteries. The Lord transfers him from that ground and puts him under the uplifted serpent, that is, instructs him to come to Him as a bitten Israelite, or as a poor sinner that needed life.

He does this, as we might say, shortly or at once, stopping him at the first utterance of his lips; but withal patiently, and with evident interest in him personally.

The Samaritan woman was one of the thoughtless children of the world. Life and its enjoyments and occupations were all to her. She was shrewd and a woman of good understanding, and, as far as that led her, not ignorant of the religion of the day. But life in the world was her object. She was on the ground where common fallen nature had put her. She had not, therefore, sought the Lord like Nicodemus, but one of the ordinary circumstances of human life had thrown them together. Such an one, I may say, was just the one for the Son of God. He meets her, therefore, in her place, and speaks in her own language to her. But from that place, without rebuke, without abruptness, He removes her on the ground of a convicted sinner, and then reveals Himself to her.

She had assumed a place as the ruler had, and Christ allows the whole passage from darkness to light to be made more rapidly. The same occasion witnesses the whole journey, as it does not in the case of Nicodemus. The Lord at first only turns him toward the right road.

The multitude are distinct from both. There was no working of conscience in them, as in Nicodemus; nor were they simply on the ground or in the place of nature, like the Samaritan. They were in the religious activity of the day, and were making their profit by it. They followed Jesus, not because they saw the miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled. They followed Him for what they could get. Such a material is very offensive to the mind of Christ; nothing more so. But He does not at once cast it aside. He can bear with anything in the patience of His grace towards sinners. He does not, therefore, cast the multitude aside, though they did thus form a material so repulsive to Him. He was decisive and yet patient with the Jewish master.

He was serving and leading the poor Samaritan from first to last, without a strong or rebuking word; and now in a long discourse He strives with the multitude, and would fain put them on paschal ground, or in the place of sinners who needed the life of His flesh and blood, evidently, however, throughout with a mind much averted from the place and character in which they were spewing themselves, and begins His answer to them not merely shortly, but rebukingly. (Chap. 6:26.) How perfect in patience and grace, and yet in the various expression of taste and of sympathy, all these ways and methods are! And, let me say, there is no joy like that of learning our lessons from the Lord in the place and character of sinners, that place which the Lord is putting us all into, ere He will teach us anything. For all that we get from Him in that character brings with it this conviction—bow rich and wondrous that love must be that will give anything to creatures so vile and worthless. And Peter was on that ground to which the Lord was here either turning or seeking to turn Nicodemus, the Samaritan, and the multitude. (See chap. 6:68, 69.) His soul dealt with Jesus as its life—that was the true apprehension, the apprehension of one who stood in the place to which the drawings of the Father always lead.

The early chapters in John's Gospel, as we have now seen, have this object—to spew how the Lord put all those who came to Him on the ground of sinners. He would receive them only (whether Nicodemus, the Samaritan, or the multitude) as sinners.

I ask, was not this the echo of Exodus 12:2? Was not this a telling of them, as they had already been told by that ordinance, that they must begin as poor sinners?)

Most happy for our souls is it to see, and see so clearly, this way of the Lord. He cannot welcome us, if we bring not our sins with us, if we come not as to a Savior.

These chapters, however, present another class to us, called, "the Jews." We see them specially in chapters 5, 7, 8. This is a distinct class of persons. We have Nicodemus in chapter 3, the Samaritan in chapter 4, and the multitude in chapter 6; but in these three chapters, we have "the Jews," as they are called.

They were, evidently, the religious head, or rulers of the people, scribes and Pharisees, but John, generally, calls them "the Jews." (See chap. 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13, &c.) In chapter 5 the Lord convicts them. They had the witness of the Father's works done in the earlier days of their nation, like to which works were His own works at the pool of Bethesda—they had the testimony of John, they had their own scriptures. But they had not been obedient, they had not believed, and were indulging their enmity and murderous purposes against Him—and all this because they had not the love of God in them and received honor one of another.

In chapter 7, He convicts them further. They had not been subdued by the previous word, but were, as before, still seeking to kill Him. (See chap. 5:16; 8:1.) He now further convicts them by the law of Moses, and by their own practices under the law of circumcision.

In chap. 8 He convicts them still further, apprehend the light or truth and character which now attached to them—as representing the atheistic revolt of man from God, "the seed of the serpent."

This is indeed a most solemn matter. Direct enmity is, accordingly, in the scene of this chapter, put between them and Him, "the woman's seed," as we read in Gen. 3, and "the serpent's seed."

The whole scene may easily remind us of that chapter, as well as direct though tacit reference to it in verse 44.

The serpent found in Eden a scene of purity and happiness. He entered it with the intent of corrupting and ruining it. “He was a murderer from the beginning.” And the deadly weapon he used was a lie. “He abode not in the truth: he is a liar: when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is the father of it.” And he accomplished his purpose. Through his lie he ruined the creature whom God had lately fashioned and blest. But now, in contrast with all this, the Son of God had begun His action. He came and found the scene altogether different from Eden. Misery and death by reason of sin filled it. A convicted adulteress, and not an unspotted. Eve appeared before Him. But He had come with the intent of saving. And the instrument of His ministry was the truth, “He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.” And He shelters the convicted sinner in His own presence as, “the light of life,” rebuking her accusers away, and hindering the fiery anger of the law from reaching her. But their resistance of Him leaves for them, under His judgment, this awful place and character,” ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” The serpent had resisted the lovely work of God in the garden of old and ruined an upright creature; they were now resisting His work in a ruined world, coming to save it. They were at enmity with the person and work of the woman’s Seed.

But even with this class of persons (occupying, as we have now seen, the most solemn position that man not irrecoverable, could fill) the Lord pleads, saying “if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” (John 8:24.) It is short in the midst of most awful condemnation, but still it is pleading—as with all the rest.

Chapter 200

Death of Lazarus

John 11

“Sorrow is a sacred thing,” it has been justly and beautifully said. But it is a fruitful thing also. If a sorrowing house be a sanctuary, so that no rude foot should trespass, it is also a spot for divine husbandry, and ready to yield its good and profitable fruit.

The sickness and death of Lazarus procured for the loved family at Bethany a visit from the Lord; a circumstance in itself full of blessing and of promise, and in that visit we see several things which may well engage our heart and attention.

He sympathizes with the sorrow, and then removes the cause of it. He “wept” first, and afterward said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

The purpose which He carried with Him of removing the occasion of the misery, left His heart still the seat of present compassion with it. It was so in the case of sending out the apostles. He was about to give them pastors according to His own heart; but looking on them as sheep that had no shepherd, He had compassion on the multitudes. It was so again in His feeding the people. He was about to give them bread enough and to spare, but, on seeing them, He had compassion. (Matt. 9; 15)

No prospect of the future, be it as bright and certain as it may, can rightly close the heart to the claims of the present. The follower of Christ will “weep” as he enters the house of mourning or the chamber of death, though he knows that the power of resurrection, in season, will close the scene in all its own magnificence and joy.

With this sympathy and this power over the cause of the sorrow, we see, moreover, the instructions of wisdom and the lessons of God enjoyed through His sorrow.

Martha speaks of her grief to the Lord, and much ignorance is expressed through the natural and in some sense pardonable exercises of her wounded heart. But Jesus teaches her the way of God more perfectly. He lets the light of some wondrous truths break in upon her soul, truths deeper and more precious than what the hours of her undisturbed ease and happiness had been able to discover. The light of the day of prosperity had not shown her what Jesus now brought with Him in this night of weeping. She is made to see some bright shinings of the glory of God through the tears of that sorrow, through that gloom of death which had entered her dwelling. “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” The place was indeed a sanctuary, and Jesus Himself treads softly. He wept. He owned the claim of such a moment. But it was a spot for Him to cultivate also. It was a garden of the Lord’s; and He enriches it with fresh fruit and growth of knowledge. Again, let me say of this affecting scene, that it is made productive to others also. Many believe, when they witness how the grace and power of the Lord had dealt with this sorrow. “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.”

I ask, is not all this as much the history of this our day, as it was of the day of Martha and Mary? Who need live long and travel far to know that the sorrows of the saints still draw the willing visits of Christ? and that, during such visits, He sympathizes and teaches? Who, I ask, need live long and travel far to know this? Gracious it is in the Spirit, and gracious to us, to have the record of such things in the book “written for our learning.” But is it less gracious in Him, or less gracious to us, that these things are not merely the things of history, but the common things of experience and observation?

And further. This sorrow is the occasion of fresh acts of supplication and of worship. “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me,” said the Lord. And is this at all more strange or less a matter of experience than the others? What say our own souls?

“Trials make the promise sweet, Trials give new life to prayer; Trials bring me to His feet, Lay me low and keep me there.”

This is not history, but experience. It is not the light of other days which, as we hear, was wont to cheer the night of weeping or the house of mourning, but the light which, as we know, is still wont to hold its court and display its power in the dark valley and in the shadow of death.

I am bold also to add another thought—a thought, too, lately made very precious to my own heart—that the blessed Lord, in unjealous love, allows both our sorrows and our mercies to be fresh links between Himself and our poor fond hearts. The widow of Sarepta was afresh bound to the prophet, when she received her son from the dead. Her joy, in one she so loved being restored to her, acted as another link of tenderest and yet strongest texture between her heart and the man of God, the witness of Christ; and the Spirit allowed it, I am sure. (1 Kings 17:24.) So in much later days, the Lord allowed His servant to be thankful and take courage on seeing brethren again, after a long separation, though during that separation he had enjoyed His presence and encouragements in a sweet and large measure. (Acts 28) And so here. Receiving their brother from the dead, the dear family at Bethany are more than ever the Lord’s. In the power and joy of resurrection they sit with Him. (Chap. 7:1.) They delight in Him afresh through the mercy which their common natural human feelings had received.

Chapter 201

Thoughts on Righteousness

It is evident there are two aspects of righteousness—justice as against evil, and adequate appreciation and even recompense of good. “Vengeance is mine; I will recompense, smith the Lord,” is a different thing from “the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance beholdeth the upright,” though both are abstractedly the just estimate of good and evil.

As regards the former, God has the character of a Judge, and His righteousness as a Judge is in Scripture connected with blood, as in Rom. 3, and so in the Passover. But as to the principle, no man could ever plead a part in the second dealing of righteousness, save Christ Himself; for all are sinners. Christ even as a man down here could be accepted as perfectly agreeable to God. But then Christianity, and even Judaism in its figures, goes a great deal farther; for grace reigns through righteousness, and sinners were to be justified or accounted righteous. To be justice, in the common sense of the word, it must be the just estimate of conduct itself or adequate satisfaction for the fault. Thus a man, owing me nothing, renders me service: I am just in recognizing this I owe him in the place wherein he stands. If he owes me money and another pays it, or has done a wrong and another repairs it, he is clear. In the case of material service, another’s doing a man’s duty may suffice, though of the service be owed by the man I am not bound to accept it; still in material service, if the service only be due, and the man not in responsible relationship to me, I may be perfectly satisfied.

But in relationships and moral right and wrong, this is not so. I cannot accept what my son owes and be satisfied with my son. Righteousness here requires the duty to be fulfilled or is not satisfied. To be atoned for and put away as guilt can be rightly, because the guilt is owned; but not a doing the work or duty, so that there should be no guilt. The latter weakens the personal obligation and sets it aside; the former owns and atones for it.

But in Christianity there is more; for God is to be displayed, grace to reign, and man to be brought to God Himself. Hence the measure is God’s glory as in Christ; not man’s duty, as in the law. But any attempt to meet responsibility in relationship by another’s fulfilling the claims tends to destroy the sense of guilt in it and is morally heinous. If another has done my duty, and it is as if I had done it or better—the claim satisfied then, I have done it as to justice and I am not guilty. The idea turns what is due into a material debt and destroys the moral nature of failure—becomes doing, not conduct. I ask if another’s doing my child’s duty would in any way affect the relationship of my child to me?

This I see in the figures of old. Propitiation must have an altar or blood shedding. Wrongs may be repaired toward man or toward God: and so it was ordained under the law; but in questions of obedience and relationship not so. There is guilt, and atonement must come in: omission or commission is all one here. Do I fail in worship? Can another act for me? Now all our questions are questions of obedience and relationship. Though all be done according to the glory of God (for indeed it is one act—the death of Christ), yet the application of the work to man is different. The brazen altar met man’s sin, coming as a sinner. The mercy-seat was introduction into the presence

of God; it was a golden throne; it was judgment against sin and righteousness to enter into His presence. So it was in Christ. He was both. He made propitiation for our sins; He is our righteousness in the presence of God, in virtue of His sacrifice wherein God was perfectly glorified. There is the firmness of God's judgment against sin, and perfect access to Him in light and glory. But then, note, it is in either case grace—God acting sovereignly for Himself, and hence all must have the value of this. Our very forgiveness is God's righteousness. We have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins. Hence God shows His righteousness in forgiving—is righteous and justifies, according to this, the believer. God's righteousness is upon all that believe.

Chapter 202

The Absolute

There can be no absolute knowledge in man by his own reason, but only relative. God only is absolute; all other existences can be only relative, because there is only God absolute.

There is that which is next to it—the “I,” which is out of time and space, and by its nature as such precludes relation; but it does not make the “I” absolute. First, there is no consciousness of absoluteness in it, though it helps one to the idea from the negation of relationship, while a negation is not a notion of the thing contradictory of that denied. But, further, consciousness (or the “I”) is corrected by perception; for I perceive other things—not the “I.” Be they ideas or things, it is all one, they are not the “I,” and the “I.” becomes relative, is not absolute, existing in itself or infinite. The “I” is not “I am.” “Am” is affirming something about “I:” and as man I get into relativeness at once. When one says “I,” infiniteness is excluded as well as time; but when the “I” reflects on itself, there is (I do not doubt) the consciousness that it is not absolute but dependent, has a source or cause, cannot say “being,” though it can say “am” —not “becoming,” (that is false), but “am.” If I say “being” in any other sense than “am,” I make myself God, as “I am.” But, not being, I have to inquire what I am becoming, because what is not absolute has possibility of change: and what has possibility of change in becoming, has necessity of becoming to be, i.e., though existing, is not absolute, but flows from and depends on an absolute Being.

If it be inquired, if my relationship even with perceived things denies my absoluteness, has God not relationship with what exists, with me? None but what is the fruit of His own will. I am necessarily in relationship with what has caused me to be, by reason of which I have become, or with things which exist without my will. I am in relationship according to my being; I exist in that condition: God does not. He may form such relationships; but they are the fruit of His will; and His being remains in its own absoluteness. I have no doubt that man has an intuitive consciousness of relationship, and of relationship to a superior Being, independent of himself, with whom be is in relationship, though his ideas of that Being may be utterly false and corrupted; but that which is false and corrupted is in his natural intuition. Mind cannot know God, because relative cannot know Absolute. But if imagination works, it corrupts the intuition mythologically. If mind works, it shows by its efforts its incapacity to reach what it is; but both the mythology and the efforts show that there is the intuitive idea which sets the imagination and mind respectively in movement. But there is more than this. The immensely wider extent and preponderance of superstition, the rareness and short-livedness of mental rejection of God theoretically, prove the power and strength of the intuition above mere mind. This may despise in its pretentiousness the intuition of a Being above us on which we are dependent; but the intuition is master of it always. Indeed, in detail the strongest minds are therefore grossly superstitious, because the want of the soul has not through the mind its natural pabulum.

Hence Renan and Scherer are perfectly right when they say, “all is relative;” and perhaps even when they say, “all (save the ‘I’) is relation.” Even what the “I” is, is entirely relative. But it is because they are wholly ignorant of God, who alone is absolute.

That science is become history is true, because thought has run itself out to the conviction of its incompetency, and can only relate what it has been thinking with a partial point of truth in it, but not the truth, of which the mind is incapable and owns itself such by making history of science. That this is all that can be, it is incompetent to say. It can only say and does admit that this is all it is competent for; because it cannot go beyond itself, and, being only itself, cannot say of itself that there is nothing else which is competent, or that in some other way it cannot be arrived at or received. I admit and accept of its confession of incompetency.

Scherer reduces man to the lowest estimate of judgment of God and good. “Le vrai n’est plus vrai en soi” [the true is no more true in itself]: a ridiculous sentence, because “le vrai” then cannot be. “Le vrai, le beau, le juste meme se font perpetuellement, ... ils ne sont autre chose que l’esprit humain.” [The true, the beautiful, the just reproduce themselves perpetually they are nothing but the mind of man.]—(Revue des deux M., Feb. 15,1861.) Now this is a statement that no nature can be, in apprehension or being, above man; or else ‘le vrai, le beau, le juste,’ may be vrai, beau, juste en soi.’ Nor is this all. As to man they are relative, because he is so; yet, if there be a superior relation to One who is absolute, there is a fixed vrai, beau, juste’ morally in relation to Him, because He is the Absolute. It is simply a total denial of God or anything beyond the changing states or apprehensions of man; and makes man the end and beginning of himself; for if there be another thing or being to which he is in relation as end or beginning, there is as regards man a fixed measure of true, beautiful, just. So that this is merely the declaration that there is no relation beyond self; for if man is the measure and changes, it is simply self. This is philosophy.

Now I admit the partial truth (with a cloud of thoughts about it in philosophizing), of which modern philosophy can only give a history, being even as to this partial truth effoeta veri. But progress is questionable. One man reasons from perceptions and sensation to prove God, another from final causes, another from intuitions, another from an innate perception of the absolute. All are true as a subjective, intuitive, or intellectual necessity; but they never reach objective knowledge either way: and man vacillates between all of them and arrives at—concludes—nothing. But the want and the craving do prove the truth, not of what the object is, but that there is an object—an unknown one. It is the ■γνωστος θε■ς. You cannot know, but you cannot dispersuade that there is something to know. Hunger is not food or the knowledge of food as possessed; but it is an irrecusable proof to the hungry (take it as reasoning or want) that there is food to be known. And this moral condition is because man, in whose nostrils was breathed the breath of life from God, is thus in nature formed for God, and has not God.

Thus, when men have made the λ■γος the human mind or the human reason—the impersonal reason—with a vast system of philosophy to give it a body, there is a germ of truth; for there is that spirit in man which comes from the inbreathing of God originally. Yea, in wretched Pantheism there is a germ of truth; for God is above all and through all. All too live and move and have their being in Him. By Him all things consist. But where God is not known objectively, this centers in self: “Ils ne sont autre chose que l’esprit humain” (the most degraded of sentences); and centering in self is the perfection of degradation. But all these germs of truth, the truth (the word of God) gives us as certain truth in two words without the cobweb spinning of philosophy which proves its incompetency, the mind of man vacillating between systems formed from their germs without the true object of them; for that is philosophy.

But the truth does more; it gives us their true object as beginning, present fullness, and end, with the assurance of knowing as we are known, knowledge being now in part. And it takes us out of self by an object. And now see the divine wisdom with which this is done. I want the absolute but cannot have it, because I am in a relative condition; yet, if I have it not, I am reduced to what “n’est qu’humain” —self occupied with self. In Christ I have the absolute become relative, giving me the absolute goodness in coming into relation perfect love and perfect light. But I have it more fully. I have the truth as to everything from the supreme God to sin, the world, the devil its prince, death itself and the dust of death with triumph over it. If I can see. I have the perfect vrai, beau, juste;’ and if not, I have it relatively to me—to man. But now I have it maintained to my soul in God, in Christ’s life as perfect man, relatively to God, and to the whole character of God in the atonement on the cross. I get absolute moral attributes glorified in God at the cost of abnegation of self in man (i.e., in man who was the Son of God), love, righteousness, majesty, and truth. God was glorified in Him.

Thus I have the absolute in qualities maintained for my mind—my moral mind—in the cross, and self absolutely gone in man; I have the absolute in good become relative, so that my heart can and does know and delight in it. Could God’s ways be more perfect or more wise?

Wise philosophy objects to this display of God’s absolute character at Christ’s expense, not seeing that it is the additional beauty and moral excellence of His giving Himself—the moral perfection of man, as absolute as what is relative can be, and absolute in Christ because He could give Himself. “Therefore Both my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again,” yet this, that it might be perfect in man, as obedience to His Father— “this commandment have I received of my Father.” But how can philosophy understand this? “Is ne sont autre chose que l’esprit humain;” that is, self varied in its hopeless efforts to enlarge but never getting out of self. We cannot but in a subordinate sense give ourselves, because we are relative; we are not our own; for what is relative is bound to conformity to that relation. But, God having revealed Himself and Christ in grace to us, the discovery of this supreme relationship in absolute claim does free us from all other and lead us to give up self in all things in which it is sought, while sanctioning the relationships in which God had originally placed man, or to which be is rightly subjected as being of God Himself, such as magistracy, &c. Yet these may be given up (I mean natural relationships as connected with self) by a superior motive, the divine object taking possession of the soul in active love to others.

How admirable and divine the whole scheme is! The very wants suit, taking man out of self by the absolute become relative and perfection in the relative toward God and toward man, while the absolute is maintained to our souls its every sense by the sacrifice of Christ and man’s perfect abnegation of self in the same to glorify God. The result is man dwelling in God (and God in him) and that in glory; this last known Only in hope through positive revelation, yet felt to be necessary because of the preparation laid for it (see beginning of John 17), the rest enjoyed now, though this could only have been by divine actings (and we have it by divine communication as to truth and power, which is another subject), but when known, enjoyed as known truth in itself. He that believes not has made God a liar; be has not believed the record or testimony; but he that believeth on the Son of God has the witness in himself.

But if all be relative and relation, according to logic by the doctrine of excluded middle, there must be an absolute. Not that this makes us know anything but that there is the thing. For the truth of excluded middle is, I suspect, always simply that the term is really a negative or involves one—that is, proves that there is an intuitive consciousness that there is the thing negated, not that we know it, and I suspect is never true but in the case of the absolute. Thus, if I say, It is good or bad, it is only if I view the term absolutely that I can say so. It is a color, therefore not white or black, both which negative absolutely all color. It is when a term implies that it embraces in its nature all but its opposite. Both need not (indeed cannot) be absolute, but one must be; and the reasoning is always from the non-absolute to the absolute, because the absolute can exist without anything else existing. Nothing else can; for not being absolute, it is in relation. It is simply therefore the proof of the intuition of the existence of the absolute.

It is a mistake to suppose that metaphysical skepticism denies the certainty of knowledge within the sphere of knowledge. It only affirms that the finite cannot know the infinite that no conclusion is the truth, because it is not the knowledge of God. Truth is what is told, not what is concluded, and hence, as to what is beyond physical fact, must be a revelation. Once God is admitted, certain abstract general conclusions can be drawn because they are involved in the meaning of the word; they are merely the expression of the relation. But they are not the truth, because this speaks of fact. Now it is not necessarily a fact that the relation subsists intact and that man has not denied it: Christianity teaches that he has. At any rate, it is not proved he has not—yea, it may be proved he has. For fatalism and the moral immutability of man are absurdities. Our will is at work. Nor does the unchangeableness of general laws as to facts or results touch the question of will. If it proves motives, it proves a will to be moved: of this I have spoken elsewhere. ‘Until a will be denied, it cannot be denied that a given state in relationship may be departed from. Hence even right conclusions as to the relationship are not necessarily the truth, though they be right. Indeed all the effort to insist on general laws is the revolt of man’s heart against the relation with God being according to what we are, and the unwillingness to admit we have broken it.

I do not enter on the proofs of general laws from without, because physical general laws do not touch the question. That man acts by a will, without contradicting them, is evident; yet as to him all depends on what his will was. He builds or does not build a house: gravity and every other law remains the same. But he may have been selfish, or unjust, or generous in doing it, whether they be or not. I think my nature as ideally abstract as most philosophers’; but this does not affect the question whether there are divine facts which meet these ideas, and whether they are not the just idea for which God formed man as so having them. Thus, supposing man God’s image in his constitution, the ideas flowing from this would not be the source or end. But God (or the revelation of God as being the truth) the cravings of a dependent creature sought after but heeded not. Yet it is equally true, whenever be pretended to have anything to meet the wants or to form a system by them without God, he was in open rebellion by independency. And this is what spews the fullness of simple Christianity (which totally rejected, as evil, heathenism and philosophy), and yet the measure of truth but real departure from God of the Clements and Origens, who accepted these cravings as part of the truth. They were not, though the truth met them when not simply lusts. Christ alone is the truth; His word is, because He is τ■ν ■ρχ■ν ■τι κα■ λαλ■ ■μ■ν. I do not lose sight of the absolute in speaking of absolute qualities: if I have one, I have the other; and what is relative is, if simple, absolute as a quality. In common use it is found by negation of what is or of

variety. Some words or qualities are only relative. Still, when truly known, they become absolute. Thus “heavy” is simply relative; but when I know it, it is attraction: if there were none, it is absolutely negative in respect of weight; and as weight is relative, I can conceive its absence, because its presence is not necessary; for it is a relative quality. Absolute Being is God alone. But, taking man as a center, we may speak practically of certain things as absolute when they are negative.

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 203

Hints on the Greek Article

All my experience has confirmed the principle stated elsewhere, that the article is used when the object of the mind is spoken of, and is left out when the word or combination of words is characteristic. This does not at all conflict with its being the notion expressed by the substantive as viewed by the speaker as an individual, which, as another form of the thought, is correct enough, but gives no expression to the import of the absence of the article. All the particular cases and rules are but reducing expressions under the general principle, often multiplied (as in Middleton) by ignorance of it. I doubt altogether that his notion that the general rule does not apply where there is a preposition, or with proper names, &c., has the least truth in it.

Thus, as to abstract nouns here, the rule only perplexes. I confess I do not understand particularizing an abstract idea: perhaps individualizing or personifying is meant. ■ ν■μος may be abstract or not. If I have spoken of a particular ν■μος, ■ ν■μος realizes that ν■μος as an individual; or, as I should say, presents it as a definite object to the mind. If I have no such law mentioned, ■ ν■μος would be “the thing law,” law viewed as an object before my mind as such. Abstract nouns are a kind of personification. “Law” does this, “law” does that. If I say δι■ ν■μου, it is something that happens on that principle; it is only characteristic.

Anarthrous nominatives (such as, καλ■ς γ■ρ θησαυρ■ς πα■ ■νδρ■ σπουδα■■; χ■ρις ■φειλομ■νη, Isocr. p. 8 B: λ■γος ■ληθ■ς.... κα■ δ■καιος φυχ■ς ■γαθ■ς κα■ πιστ■ς ε■δωλ■ν, Id. p. 28 A:) express moral characteristics—beings or things that have a certain quality. It is what each is, anything that has this character. It is not an abstraction but an universal, that is, a species which is known by a predicate of each individual that has such a character. There may be many a χ■ρις and all sorts of λ■γοι not such as these. So π■ντων χρημ■των μ■τρον ■νθρωπος (Plat. Theaet. 8) is the character of the measure used. ■ ■νθρωπος would point out an object, the race viewed as one whole, where some specified individual was not meant (i.e., if you please, one individual, real or ideal); it is always a subsisting thing to the mind about which something is affirmed. Hence, as an abstract noun is an objective personification of the idea, it has the article. But an universal, or species, as in these anarthrous instances, is the character of all the individuals composing it. If a characteristic universal be not seized, it is impossible to understand the omission of the article in Greek.

An abstract noun as such has always the article, because it is always the personification of the idea, its reduction to an objective individual. But in so intellectual (or if you please imaginative) a language as Greek, it requires keen perception to see why or why not an article is used. Just so in English. “The daylight came.” I am thinking of daylight as a positive substantive thing. “It was already daylight.” Daylight characterizes the state of atmosphere, of surrounding nature, spoken of as day. ‘It’ is the mind’s object, “daylight” the state or character of it. I could perfectly well say “Daylight came,” and I should think of the state of the scene around me, though the thing characterized is not expressed. We have a strong case in ν■μος παρεισ■λθεν. ■ ν■μος would have been the Jewish law: here it would not do, either, to say ■ ν■μος for the abstract idea. It was

merely the legal principle which characterized the dealings of God, the state of things; but, as “daylight,” it means the state in which the world is. This explains ε■ρ■νη ■στ■ τ■γαθ■ν. It is peace, a state of peace. You might have said ■ ε■ρ■νη and then it would have been the thing itself. But τ■γαθ■ν, is not a predicate characterizing ε■ρ■νη—does not affirm that peace is good, but that peace is the good thing, the one good thing. It is the abstract idea individualized. It would have been ■γαθ■ if it had been a predicate.

In Matt. 1:1, (Β■βλος γεν■σεως ■ησο■ Χριστο■,) it is the common case of a title and exceptional; as in English one might say, “Book of Wisdom;” yet were I making a sentence, I should say, “The Book of Wisdom is so and so.” It is elliptical. The name of what follows (not anything as to each) is τ■ν ■σα■κ. The article is usually put with known persons, because they are definite objects before the mind. Were one never heard of before, it would be anarthrous; but with the article it would be “that Isaac which you know so well of in Genesis, the well-known Isaac.”

The same remark applies to Matt. 7:25, 27. It is the well-known rain and floods, the rain came on. I should say in English, “The rain was very heavy on a particular day—the rain spoiled flowers.” It is a well-known particular object in nature before the eyes. But it would be better to say, “The rain spoils the flowers,” because both become objective. The rain did it. I could say, “Rain spoils flowers.” This is aphoristic; which is always anarthrous, because essentially characteristic. If I say, “The rain spoiled,” it is again objective—the rain on a given day in my mind. If I say, “It was not heat, it was rain spoiled them,” rain becomes characteristic, in contrast with heat, of a state of the weather. It is something of a proper name, but a proper name has not an article when the person is not known or has not been mentioned.

I do not believe that there is any difference as to Κυρ■ος or Θε■ς, save that they may be proper names. Compare for Κυρ■ος, Matt. 1:20, 22, 24; 2:15, 19; 3:4; 4:7, 10; 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; 13:20; Acts 2:20, 39; 3:22; 5:9, 19; 7:31, 37; 8:26, 39; 12:7, 23; 13:10, 11. ■ Κυρ■ος is often not a name but an office as ■ χριστ■ς, unless they may have been mentioned before so as to make them a present object here. In Matt. 1:20, Κυρ■ου is the character of the angel, ■γγελος is the simple way of saying one when there are many; ■ ■γγελος would not do if there were many, unless followed by a characteristic word, the angel of the Lord: then I think of one to the exclusion, at least then, of all others.

As to Matt. 13:6 (■λ■ου ■νατ■λαντος) I do not accept the ■λ■ου being a proper name. It is at sunrise-a characteristic state. I might say “the rising of the sun,” as in Mark 16:2; then I have an object. So with γ■, θ■λασσα, κ■σμος, ο■ρανο■ς, ■μ■ρα, ■ν■ρ, γυν■, πατηρ, &c.

Again, τ■ ■ρος in Matt. 5:1; 14:28; Mark 3:13 (cf. Luke 6:12, 17), does not mean some particular mountain well known by this name (as Wetstein and Rosenm■ller think). Not “a mountain” (as in the Authorized Version, Campbell, Newcome, Schleusner) but “the mountain” in the sense of the hill-country or highlands, in contrast with “the plain.” The same principle accounts for τ■ν π■τραν in chapter vii. 24, 25; only that this is made more obvious by the expressed contrast, in verse 26, of τ■ν ■μμον. Just so with τ■ν ο■κ■αν, Matt. 9; 10:12, 13, in contrast with “without” or “the open air,” and τ■ ■γρ■ contrasted with “the city” or “town;” similarly ε■ς τ■ πλο■ον “on board ship” (Matt. 13:2, &c.), in contrast with being “ashore,” unless in cases where reference required the article, as perhaps in chapter 4:21; 9:1. In Mark 1:45, ε■ς π■λιν is purposely characteristic (and not a license because of the preposition as is commonly said) “into town,” any town: so ε■ς

■γρ■ν, in chapter 16:12, and ε■ς π■λιν in chapter 2:1, meaning “at home.” The article might or might not be used in many cases; but the phrase or thought is never precisely the same.

With a proper name as such, one can hardly have an article, save as a reference, and this not immediate, I apprehend. If I say ■ Ξενοφων, it is the well-known man, or the Xenophon I have been speaking about always, as a designated object of thought: why so, it may be a question, which only appears afterward and hence is anticipative. When the person is named historically, the article disappears; when spoken of as a direct object before the writer’s mind and meant to be so pointed out to the reader, the article is used (as in ordinary appellatives). When not thus referred to or presented, one cannot point out a name as a subject-matter of thought: it is a predicate then and anarthrous as usual.

So π■σα ■ερο σ■λυμα is not an exceptional case. ‘I. is a name, and as such without an article; and the name is necessarily an individual. You cannot gather a name of a city into one as a country or province, like π■σα ■ ■ουδα■α. By the article, a country is brought before the mind as one whole. But if one thinks of a name simply, the article is excluded, a name being not a thing but something said about a thing. The sense in this case is π■σα [■ π■λις, which city is called] ■ερο σ■λυμα. A river has the article; because from its nature, like a district, it needs this sign of unity as a whole.

Rom. 4:13 is a simple case of the general rule, to which I admit no exception for prepositions; δι■ ν■μου was the character or way of his getting the promise. So δ. δ. π., “by righteousness of faith.” It was not by law. The case is a very simple one. So in Rom. 1:17, ■κ π■στεως characterizes the revelation, ε■ς π■στιν the manner of its reception. God’s righteousness is revealed not merely δι■, but ■κ π., excluding claims of birth, ordinances, works, &c., by faith as the sole ground and therefore open to faith wherever found.

The abstract noun is more abstract, if that could be said, with an article than without. It is in the essence of its nature, all things foreign to it apart; ■ ■μαρτ■α is “that thing called sin,” as such in itself. A being is only what it is, or it is not that being, but another. Hence when it is said ■ ■μαρτ■α ■στ■ν ■ ■νομ■α, they are identical: one of the things before my mind is itself and no more; but the other is the same with it, as itself and no more. This is the effect of all article with an abstract noun.

There are nouns, it may be remarked here, which are generalizations more than abstractions. Thus ν■μος: in general, it is a certain particular rule, and becomes a general idea of acting on the principle of a rule. In such cases it is hard to use the article without returning to the particular form which one has generalized. Law gives the idea of an actual concrete thing, Hence I have a mental difficulty to decide in Rom. 4:15, whether it is abstract. It would be more naturally abstract law,” the thing law;” but with this word, which is first known as an actual existing objective code, it is difficult, when thus taken by itself, not to return to the particular. When, ■ ■μαρτ■α is used, I should have no difficulty.

Chapter 204

The Assimilating Power of Christ

1 John 3:2

(1 John 2.)

There is one very precious feature that is found in John's Epistle and indeed elsewhere, in his writings, that we cannot see Christ really as He was and is without being wrought upon and formed according to Him. There is such an assimilating power in Christ that it is impossible to have to do with Him without feeling His constraining influence and becoming like Him. The apostle even traces this through the main particulars of His life and glory. Thus knowing Him as the life, we have life ourselves. Again He is the Son, and knowing Him thus, we too become sons of God. So in Rev. 1. If He is the King, if He is the Priest, as none other ever was or can be but Himself, He has made us kings, He has made us priests, and given us to be kings and priests as none can be, save those that are made so by Him.

But this is also true morally, because as He is our life and we have life even eternal life in Him, so also He is our righteousness and we are righteous in Him and by Him, yea, made the righteousness of God in Him. And this is not only true as to the present but as to the future. We have seen Him now by faith, and all the blessing comes by faith. But we shall see Him soon face to face, and then as we see Him outwardly face to face, as well as now inwardly by the Holy Spirit, we shall be both outwardly and inwardly conformed to Him. Thus does the Apostle preserve this most precious thought everywhere, bringing it out and applying it to us in the most unexpectedly full manner.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." It never was so displayed before. It was predicted that it was to be, but it never was so brought out, till Himself, the Son of God really and properly came: and we then become not only sons in title, but children (for such is the true force of it), as being really born of God. To be sons, glorious as it is, is not so intimate a thing as to be children, born of God. A person might have the title of a son without being of the family. But while we are and shall be owned as sons of God, we are children. "Therefore," he says, "behold the world knoweth us not." But why? "Because it knew him not." There we have the very same thought again. If it is nearness to God, there never was any one so near to God as He was; but now we are brought into the very same nearness, as He says, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." Thus what is His becomes ours. But now, looking at the other side, the world does not know us. How comes this? For the most precious reason—because it knew Him not. Whatever was His portion is our portion. If the world cast Him out, must I wonder if it cast us out also? If the world called Him every bad name, we must expect no better. Only let us take care that we do not deserve it. The Lord give us more and more faith that we may know what it is to be outcast for Christ's sake! it was His portion from the manger to the cross.

Having given us these two portions, he distinguishes what is from what shall be. “Beloved, now are we the children of God.” As he had before simply said “that we should be called the children of God,” there might have been a question whether it was really so or not. But now he adds, “Now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” It does not appear to the world; it does perfectly appear to us. He is not speaking of what we know, but of what is to be manifested to the world. For we ought to know it now as perfectly as we shall in the glory. It rests upon God’s word, as it flows from His grace; and God’s word will not be plainer in heaven than it is upon earth. Nothing can make the word of God plainer or surer. There may be the putting down of opposing influences, but “the word of God liveth and abideth forever.” And this is the strength of our Christian health and well-being, the very spring that gives us power of separation unto God, that we wait for no signs, that we accept His word and rejoice in it, and take it as our sure portion, not because we deserve such grace, but because Christ does; and Christ deserves it now as much as ever He will. And as it is nothing but the fruit of the grace of Christ, he says, “Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” But why? Because it is guaranteed by His infinite power? Nay, true as this may be, it is not the reason. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” We see Him now as He was, and this constrains and conforms us into the likeness of what He was, surely then we shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him as He is. Yea, in spirit we see Him as He is now, and are even now changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Lord grant that having such a hope, grounded upon Him and upon nothing in ourselves, we may be found seeking that our ways and conversation should practically testify that we purify ourselves according to this measure and this standard although it be an infinite one.

Chapter 205

God Seeing Us and Our Seeing God

Hebrews 11:27

(Hebrew 11:27.)

“For he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

If you compare this with an expression in Gen. 16, I think the force of both is made much more distinct. “And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?” In the one case Moses sees God; in the other, although Hagar looks after Him, it was God that saw her. We are apt in everything to look at the lower end of the truth, to content ourselves with the scantiest portion that can sustain us.

Now Hagar did not really go beyond this. She was the bondwoman: she knew nothing of the liberty of grace. She might look after God, but what she reached was this, “Thou God seest me.” Now the simple consciousness that God sees us, never goes beyond the knowledge either that He is a Judge noticing our ways to deal with them, or, at most, that He is a guardian to protect in the hour of difficulty and danger. But love, liberty, rest, joy in God, are never known through the bare truth that God sees us. No one denies it to be a truth; but what I must maintain is that, as believers, we are entitled to the further and more precious privilege of seeing God, of seeing Him who is invisible. This was, in the principle of it, what sustained the heart of Moses. Hagar did not endure. She ran away; she was protected, she was brought back, she was finally expelled from the house of Abraham and Sarah, and the child of flesh along with her. It was the bondage of the law that was set forth by her. Now the law does bring out this—that is to say, God seeing man, God occupying Himself with man, God dealing with man, God judging man, yet God, it may be, showing mercy to man, as we see in Ex. 34. But communion with God there never is nor can be, till there is the consciousness that grace reigns. Not that the law is weakened, dissolved, or destroyed; not that its authority is touched. It is not so that God brings us into the place of liberty; that would be to set the ways of God against His sovereign grace. But the believer is brought out of the region where law applies—out of the scene of death, and darkness, and bondage, into the place of light: he is brought to God. There is no law in the presence of God. Law deals with flesh in the world. If I am in the place of flesh and of the world, I must be under law or I shall be lawless. The Christian is neither the one nor the other; but he is brought in peace, by the grace of God, unto God. He endures, not because God sees him, but because he sees God. He endures “as seeing Him who is invisible.” He endures, he knows God in Christ, he has rest in His presence, for he knows Him whom He has sent, and “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” This is what He has done and what law could not do, for it has no propitiation to give. It may demand, but it has nothing to give: it waits to receive, and it receives the deeds, alas! of darkness, of fear, of feebleness; it can only receive whatever poor man’s conscience may offer, trying to make his peace with God. But grace makes the peace by a gift of His own love, gives the peace that it has made through the blood of Christ’s cross, and brings into the consciousness of the love of Him who has suffered all for us. And

therefore, instead of our being afraid of Him and avoiding Him, instead of its being a sort of guess-like way of wondering, doubting where it may end, fearing what it may bring, endurance is the word for us.

This is the portion of the Christian, this is what characterizes him. It is enduring “as seeing him who is invisible.” We know in whom we have believed; we know that we have eternal life. “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.” We endure “as seeing him who is invisible.” And so it is all the way through. The new life is fed, nourished and strengthened by faith, “while we look not at the things which are seen:” —such are the things which flesh has to do with and law deals with. But we look not at these things, but “at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” So, again, to the life itself. The law dealt with a man as long as he lived. We begin with the confession that we are dead; and now we live in an eternal life. “And the life which I now live in the flesh” —not merely in heaven, but in this world—is “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” There is no uncertainty here: whatever may be the practical testimony we bear to Him, there is no weakness nor failure in Him who is our life. There is endurance, but for us it is as seeing Him who is invisible.

The Lord strengthen our faith!

Chapter 206

Ecclesiastes

It is a common and a correct thought that the Book of Ecclesiastes is a writing, under the Holy Ghost, upon the vanity of all things “under the sun.”

This is so, most surely. Solomon was lifted up, that he might be able, from his position and resources, to inspect and test the vanity of all human conditions. All that either business or pleasure could provide for him, all that wealth, or station, or learning commanded was within his reach and at his disposal. And he challenged it all to say what it was worth.

He went through all the conditions of human life which carried with them a single promise to contribute anything to him. His search was complete. His inspection and testing left nothing improved. And each and all were equally vain and unsatisfying. No one thing relieved the disappointment which another had produced. His journey was a wearying and vexatious pursuit of what was ever and equally eluding him. From everything the sense of vanity pressed on his spirit, and there was nothing to relieve or deliver him of all that was done or that was found “under the sun,”

The principal business of this Book of Ecclesiastes is to tell us this. And a valuable as well as serious lesson it is. Well if we learn it, and the better for us the better we learn it.

We should, not, however, fully honor the wisdom of God in this book, if we said that this was its only business. It is not so. It teaches us principally, it is true, the general vanity of all the scene around us, but it likewise lets us know that there is one outlet, one relief from the oppressive sense of the common, universal emptiness, and that is found in the service of God. This is its second lesson.

I may here call to mind how the apostle teaches us, that there is but one outlet from the scene or condition of condemnation. He tells us that we are “shut up” to the faith of Jesus. Law and works and all other provisions fail and prove themselves vain, for all of us are concluded under sin and no escape from such condition of death, but faith in the Lord Jesus now revealed to us. (See Gal. 3)

This Book of Ecclesiastes reminds me of that. For in it I see one way, but one only, open to us as an escape from the condition and from the sense of an universal vanity. We are “shut up” to it. In these thoughts we know this analogy. Faith in Jesus, says the apostle, is the one only outlet from a state of condemnation: the living to Jesus, says the Book of Ecclesiastes, is the one only outlet from a state of vanity. And we may well rejoice in the simplicity of such relief from such heavy and grievous conditions.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.” (Chap. 11:1)

Here there is found something solid, something abiding, something which does not partake of the common universal vanity. The serving of Christ has the value of eternity in it. The bread cast on the waters is found after many days, or at a future hour.

Just the lesson which all the New Testament reads to us. For there we learn that there are bags which wax not old, and that it is service to Christ which fills them for us—that there is such a thing as being “rich toward God,” and such a treasure as “faileth not,” no thief approaching it, no moth corrupting it. And there also we learn, according to the whole bearing of this Book of Ecclesiastes, “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

Happy, serious, simple lesson! The highest attainments or richest prosperity in things under the sun are all vanity, while the smallest service to the Lord, even the giving of a cup of cold water in His name, has the value of eternity in it.

Chapter 207

Are You Brought to God?

1 Peter 3:10-18

(1 Peter 3:10-18.)

The apostle leads us to expect suffering. There will be more or less of it; for though called to "inherit a blessing," it is through suffering here. This passage spews out the result of God's government, but, besides that, it shows that we are brought to God. This is the great central truth. Christ "once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God." There is little doctrine laid down in the epistles of Peter, but strong and vivid bringing out of fundamental truths. At the end of 2 Peter we have God's government of all this present scene; and things that the world are trusting in are all to be consumed; for indeed "the world and all that is therein will be burned up." There is not a single shelter here to be trusted to: all is going to be rolled up as a garment. Peter does not dwell upon what was done for believers by Christ at His first coming, but on God's government closing in the terrible judgment. Are we brought to God?

Ver. 10. The moral government of God is not brought to an issue, and cannot be while grace is going on, but the principles of it exist. E.g., a quiet, peaceful, upright man would be better off than a turbulent man, &c. "What a man sows that will he reap" even now. It is not that everything gets its just recompense now—quite the contrary; but there are certain consequences a man will suffer for his deeds. There cannot be in this world now the full, final expression of God's government, because sin has come in; and if He were to act in judgment, He would cut it all off; but as a general thing the principle is true— "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil;" and behind and within it all there is something more. His own power and grace are at work in the gathering out of souls to form His Church. In the Millennium evil will not be allowed, the sinner will be cut off. There is a secret exercise of this principle now. "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." There is the working of sin and evil; but, though the terror of the wicked is here, "be not afraid." The only thing is to have the single eye and serve with a good conscience; but if you do, you will find plenty to oppose you. "Be not afraid of their terror neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary." In spite of the blessedness of a peaceful walk, there may be the whole power of Satan brought out against you; but you have the whole power of God: therefore "be not afraid."

There are two characters of suffering noticed by the Lord in the sermon on the mount, as here by Peter—suffering for righteousness' sake, and suffering for Christ's sake.

The effect of being a Christian is to have a conscience exercised to know what is right for him as such; he walks in God's presence, and therefore in the light; he gets his will thwarted. Thus many things in the world, he finds, will not do for him as walking in the path of righteousness: the world will not have this scrupulosity; and therefore trial comes from them for the believer. His hopes and joys being elsewhere, his treasure and his heart are elsewhere. "Blessed are they that suffer for

righteousness' sake." Then the Christian must expect to suffer for Christ. And "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, &c., for my sake." When God becomes the object and motive, he takes suffering as a natural portion.

Then it comes to be a question of testimony for God to those who are not with God; that is a different thing from suffering for conscience' sake, or righteousness' sake.

In chapter 4:13, 14, it is Christ's sufferings, and Christ's glory. The same Spirit that makes me partaker of the suffering, makes me also partaker of the glory. I should be a witness of His power through the Holy Ghost, a witness for Christ, and not only keeping a good conscience. As a witness for Christ, in being a vessel of His testimony, you share the glory He is in.

Peter does not speak of the Church's place. As in the Church, we are all partakers alike of glory according to the gift of grace, we are all predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. But here it is as individuals and the glory is put before them as the reward of suffering. An energy of love ever goes out if the Spirit of Christ is really there. I cannot see a person perishing, and not care. The spirit of love cannot look upon perishing sinners, and not care for them. This becomes an occasion of suffering.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." God must have His right place in our hearts in both these things; giving God in my heart His true character is sanctifying Him. In whose heart has God this perfect place of power and love? I do not mean in activity, that is according to gift, but in the heart. Where is the heart that keeps itself entirely for God, that is filled with God's love and holiness. All that is in the world, pleasure, vanity, &c., does but rob God of His glory in us. God is not then sanctified by us, and this is the secret of our weakness. Could you say today—yesterday—that God has had His right place in your hearts? What is the consequence? It ought to be a bad conscience. Ought I to forget my forgetfulness? I shall find it out in weakness, if I do not find it in confession. Power for testifying for God is not there, if I have been talking idleness or vanity. If I turn to anything for God, as if my whole heart were in it, I am in danger; I do not sanctify the Lord in my heart. There may not be insincerity or hypocrisy in it, but the lack of the sanctifying the Lord; and when He has not the place in us that makes us happy and that gives us power (for the joy of the Lord is strength), there is not the blessing flowing over to others. We want the practical power of the God that loves us, working in our hearts. What a thing this supposes! If I do not know God, I cannot sanctify Him. It is as being brought to Him I can sanctify Him. The thought of getting to God when I get to heaven, supposes that I have not come to Him now. All we have been speaking of flows out of giving God the place He really has. We are to sanctify the Lord because He is there, trusting in that love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Why is the conduct of one man different from another man's? One is without God, and the other has Him a present spring of delight and strength, love, comfort—he has had a total immense infinite change. What a thing to be without God as regards the soul! Immortal beings without God! having faculty, intelligence, sagacity, but without God! Human affection is lovely in the creature, but it is not God. The objects of affection may come in between the creature and God, even what He has created in us; for blessing may be an occasion of idolatry.

It is not responsibility here. My leaning on a friend is not responsibility, my being happy with a friend is not responsibility. If I drink when I am thirsty, it is not responsibility; but God is there, when I drink of the living water which Christ gives me. He makes these affections to flow out to Himself,

necessarily and divinely. He is working upon me communicating to me in the sovereignty of His grace: therefore it is not responsibility. If God then can communicate Himself in our hearts, what a well of water is springing up I have got trouble, but what is that? I have got that, yea, Him, to give me joy in the trouble, that the trouble cannot touch. I have a spring within and a sanctuary around me. If there is such blessedness in God being sanctified and enjoyed. by us, perhaps some of you say, I know nothing about it. I do not speak of enjoyment now; but where a man is a believer, it is not a question of whether he has the relationship of grace, but whether he has failed in it. If I am unfaithful in this love, and unhappy in the consciousness of having done so, it is because I really have it. The thing he has to enjoy is what is in God Himself, and that is His own love. If we believe what God communicates to the soul, by dwelling in us, “we know and believe the love that God hath to us.” A person may say well—I do not know, I cannot speak of the present, but I hope to get to God. The questioning how a man is to get it, is very solemn and a sure sign that He is not there.

“That you may be able to give an answer to every man,” &c. It is not you suffering for sins; but if the will of God be so, it is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing; but do not suppose you are suffering for your sins: Christ has done that for you. If you suffer for righteousness’ sake, it is all well, but for sins—Christ has done it for you—left you nothing to suffer for them.

How mighty this inward purpose of God! This one act brings a man to God. Christ suffered all His life long, but from whom? Man. But there at the end, inside all this, the center of all, we are brought to God Himself. God is in a man’s heart or He is not.

But the suffering for sins Christ bore, was from God Himself. Here we get the purpose of God, not His government; and notwithstanding such a death, all the wrath of God, all the power of Satan, all the consequences of sin brought to bear upon Christ on the cross (this was suffering for sin), He did it in respect of what man was, and in respect of what God was, and it was to bring them together. All that was in God was fully brought out. His love brought out suffering, wrath, &c. All that my heart must be rightly exercised met there. I could not go to God without God knowing what my heart is; and (all the difference of good and evil being known to Him) can He know the evil and be indifferent to it? Can He say it is no matter? Impossible! It would be unholiness in Him. Could He see all the levity, ill humored, willfulness, indifference in the presence of His cross and be indifferent? What is He to do with it? What is He to do with you? He must put sin away, and He must deal with it in the perfectness of His love and holiness. We have turned God into a Judge by our sins, and I find myself in the presence of the God whom I dreaded. He has put away the sin from my conscience, put His love in my heart, given me to delight in holiness. He who was just suffered for the unjust; and now, being brought to Him, there is nothing in God, with whom I have to do, but I have been made acquainted with (not His glory yet, of course); but I am the sinner He has been engaged about. He has made Himself known to me by what He has done. I know God. What a home I have! Its spring is the love in God’s heart, and it has brought me back to the source of that love. I am brought home to the enjoyment of His love, and am partaker of His nature.

After this I need not say that there are all the exercises of heart in consequence, conflict with evil, &c., but I can testify to sinners “God so loved the world.” How do you know this? it may be said. I have tasted it. Thus we are fellow-workers with God. We have the immense privilege, according to the sphere given us, of testifying of the love that has saved us. But if I have not this love in my heart, how can I testily of it to others? If I say to one who is weary, “Come unto me all ye that labor

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," says Christ, you will turn to me and say, Have you got rest? A person may warn another, and be exercised himself; but he cannot testify to the truth of deliverance. Could you go and say He has received me? I can say He has received me, and none viler. Now if you have not got God, you have your sins, your will, your responsibility—but not God. Why did Christ suffer for sins? It was because you were away from God. Now have you the consciousness of having been away from God, and are you, like the prodigal, brought back? If not, it is very solemn. You have loved vanity, you have loved your pleasures, you have loved yourself, and have not got God; not willfully opposing, perhaps, but in the ignorance of unbelief, you are without God—the God of love.

If you have not yet come to God by the cross, may He give you to see it, that you may walk in the spirit of blessing, and sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, living a life of communion with God, and bringing forth the fruit of communion in ways according to it, till you come to the full enjoyment of eternal blessing in the Father's house on high!

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 208

Faith's Ivory Palaces

By-and-by all the Lord's garments will smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, by reason of the greetings of His people. God will have anointed Him to the throne "with the oil of gladness;" and they will welcome Him out of their "ivory palaces." (See Psa. 45)

That dear woman, whose memorial is in the gospel all the world over, began this greeting while Jesus was still in humiliation (faith in her overlooking the flesh, the disallowance of men, and even the cross itself in the sight of the resurrection and the kingdom).

Beautiful and precious faith! a faith that could talk of life in the midst of death, of glories and crowns in the face of degradation and scorn, and which thus raised and gladdened the heart of Jesus when full of approaching paschal sorrows.

Against the day of His burying she had kept that ointment. She knew Him as appointed to death, but she knew Him as appointed to resurrection also. And she comes in the faith of "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that were to follow," to make Him glad out of her ivory palace. (Matt. 26)

Love did an acceptable service afterward. It came to bury the dead. It brought its spices to the tomb. It wept with them that wept. It died with Jesus. "Let us also go," it said, "that we may die with him." But this was not faith. Faith looked beyond the grave; love looked into it.

Different measures of light will separate disciples from each other, but not from their common Master. This woman, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was not at the tomb afterward. Her richer knowledge of Christ kept her apart from such a journey and such a task. She could not have been there. Faith, or light and knowledge, forbad her. But Magdalene and others are there, and the angels and the Lord of angels will meet them there, though Mary cannot.

Oh the sweet and sure truth which all this illustrates in days of distraction like these! Disciples are now separated, through divers measures of light and knowledge, like these women of faith and love; but those who, though in the place where faith would not have them, are yet where love had sent them, shall know something of heaven and of the presence of Jesus.

Well to know the meltings of pity over sorrow according to love, and well to know the gladdenings of hope over sorrow according to faith. But the spices of the women at the tomb were but as graveclothes; the box of spikenard of the woman of Bethany was an ivory palace. Faith used it in anticipation. The humbled Jesus was then to faith the anointed King, and faith was saying, "while the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."

I may add, the wise men of the east had ivory palaces for the Babe at Bethlehem, their faith treating Him as the King of the Jews, the enthroned God of Psa. 45. Beautiful faith that was indeed, and somewhat kindred with hers who anointed the despised Galilean at Bethany. They greeted the Babe, she the Lamb appointed for the slaughter, out of her ivory palace. (Matt. 2)

It will be an easy thing to greet Jesus in the day of glory. All will do it then. (Psa. 45:8.) But to have done it thus at the opening and close of His humiliation, at Bethlehem and at Bethany, was excellent faith indeed.

Chapter 209

God Manifested in the Flesh

Throughout John's Gospel we may perceive that a sense of the glory of His person is ever present to the mind of Christ. Whether we follow Him from scene to scene of His public ministry (chap. 1-12), through His parting words with His elect (chap. 13-17), in the path of His closing sorrows (chap. 18, 19), or in resurrection (chap. 20, 21), this is so.

This full personal glory that belongs to Him is declared at the very beginning of this Gospel (chap. 1:1), and there recognized by the Church, conscious, as she is, that she had discerned it. (Chap. 1:14) But, as I have just said, it is always present to His own mind. He is in the place where covenant arrangements put Him, and He is doing those services which care for the manifestation of the Father's glory laid on Him; but still He takes knowledge of Himself in the fullness of the Godhead glory that belonged to Him, essentially and intrinsically His. (See 2:21; 3:13; 4:14; 5:23; 6:40, 62; 7:37; 8:58; 9:38; 10:30, 38; 11:11, 25; 12:45; 14:9; 16:15; 18:6; 19:30; 20:22)

The Spirit in the saint, after this manner, glorifies Him still. The saint may recognize him in the place of covenant subjection, or think of Him in His sorrows and sufferings, but (like Himself in the day of His flesh) never loses the sense of that personal glory which is essentially and intrinsically His. Christ's own way when He was here, and the saint's present experience, are thus in perfect concord. And when we look a little at the epistle, we shall find something still in harmony—I mean in this particular. The Spirit in the apostles does not meet an injurious treatment of the person of Christ in the same style that He does a wrong dealing with the truth of the gospel. And this difference in style is very significant. For instance, in the Epistle to the Galatians, where the simplicity of the gospel is vindicated, there is a pleading and a yearning in the midst of earnest and urgent reasonings. So there are measures and methods recommended (such as charging, rebuking, stopping the mouth, 1 Tim. 1 and Titus 1), and not a summary process and outlawry at once, when Judaizing corruptions are dealt with. But when the person of the Son of God is the thing in hand, when His glory is to be asserted, there is nothing of all this. The style is different. All is peremptory. "They went out from us, because they were not of us." "Receive him not into your house." "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." The Spirit, as I may say, holds the decree most sacred, and guards it as with instinctive jealousy, "that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23.)

All this about His full divine glory is precious in the thoughts of His people. We are, however, led to look at man in Him also, and through a succession of conditions we see in Him man presented to God with infinite though varied delight and satisfaction. I have, long since, traced Him in the following way, as man in all perfectness:

Born.—The material, so to speak, moral and physical, is presented in Jesus as the born one. He was a taintless sheaf of the human harvest. Man in Him was perfect as a creature. (Luke 1:35.)

Circumcised.—Jesus, in this respect, was under the law, and He kept it, as of course, to all perfection. Man in Him was thus perfect as under law. (Luke 2:27.)

Baptized.—In this character Jesus is seen bowing to the authority of God, owning Him in His dispensations, and man in Him is perfect in all righteousness, as well as under law. (Luke 3:21.)

Anointed.—As anointed, Jesus was sent forth to service and testimony. In this respect man is seen in Him perfect as a servant. (Luke 3:22.)

Devoted.—Jesus surrendered Himself to God, left Himself in His hand to do His utmost will and pleasure. In Him man was therefore perfect as a sacrifice. (Luke 22:19, 20.)

Risen.—This begins a series of new conditions in which man is found. This is the first stage of the new estate. John 13:31, 32, intimates a new course in man, as here said. The corn of wheat, having fallen into the ground and died, is now capacitated to be fruitful. Man in the risen Jesus is in indefeasible life.

Glorified.—The risen Man, or man in indefeasible life, wears a heavenly image. The new man has a new or glorious body.

Reigning.—The risen and glorified Man receives, in due season, authority to execute judgment. Dominion is His. The lost sovereignty of man is regained.

Scripture leads us through this series of contemplations on the Son of man. And though I speak here of the Man, as before I did of the divine glory, yet I divide not the person. Throughout all, it is “God manifest in the flesh” we have before us.

We need to walk softly over such ground, and not to multiply words. On so high a theme, precious to the loving, worshipping heart, we may remember what is written, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.”

John Gifford Bellett

Chapter 210

As It Was at the Beginning? and What Is Its Present State? What Is the Church?

We may consider the Church in two points of view. First, it is the formation of the children of God into one body united to Christ Jesus ascended to heaven, the glorified man; and that by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the second place, it is the house or habitation of God by the Spirit. The Savior gave Himself, not only to save perfectly all those who believe in Him, but also to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Christ has perfectly accomplished the work of redemption; having offered one sacrifice for sins, He is seated at the right hand of God. For by one offering He has forever and perfectly purified those who are sanctified. Whereof also the Holy Ghost witnesses to us, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” The love of God has given us Jesus; the righteousness of God is fully satisfied by His sacrifice; and He is seated at God’s right hand as a continual testimony to the accomplishment to the work of redemption, to our acceptance in Him, and to the possession of the glory, unto which we are called. From heaven, according to His promise, Jesus has sent the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who dwells in us who believe in Jesus, and who has sealed us for the day of redemption, that is to say, of the glorification of our bodies. The same Spirit is, besides, the earnest of our inheritance.

But all this would be always true, even if there were not a Church upon earth. That is, it is one thing that there are individuals saved, children of God, heirs of glory in heaven; quite another is their union with Christ, so as to be members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; and yet another it is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. We will speak of these latter points.

There is nothing clearer in the holy Scripture of truth, than that the Church is the body of Christ. Not only have we salvation by Christ, but we are in Christ and Christ in us. The true Christian who enjoys His privileges knows that, by means of the Holy Ghost, he is in Christ and Christ in him. “In that day,” says the Lord, “ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” In that day, that is to say, in the day when we should have received the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Accordingly we are in Christ and members of His body. This doctrine is largely unfolded in the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapters 1-3. What is there clearer than this word— “He gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body?” Observe, that this marvelous fact began, or was found existing, at soonest when Christ was glorified in the heavens, even though all that is found contained in these verses is not yet accomplished. God, says the apostle, has raised us up with Him, and has seated us together in Him in the heavenly places—not yet with Him, but “in Him.” And in the third chapter, “Which [mystery] was not in other ages made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel... that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.”

Here, then, is the Church formed on earth by the Holy Ghost descended from heaven, after the glorification of Christ. It is united to Christ, its heavenly Head; and all true believers are His

members by means of the same Spirit. This precious truth is confirmed in other passages; for example, in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 12, “As in one body we have many members, and all the members have not the same office; so we who are many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

It will not be necessary to cite other passages, we will only call the attention of the reader to chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. It is clear as daylight, that here the apostle speaks of the Church on the earth, not of a future Church which shall be made good in heaven, and not even of churches scattered over the world, but of the Church as a whole, represented, however, by the church of Corinth. Therefore is it said, at the beginning of the epistle, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their’s and our’s.” The totality of the Church is clearly seen in the words, “And God hath set in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then, gifts of healing,” &c. It is evident that apostles were not in a particular church, and that the gifts of healing could not be exercised in heaven. It is the Church universal on earth. This Church is the body of Christ, and the true believers are its members. It is one by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of this one body, though many, are one body; so also is Christ.” (Ver. 12.) Then, after having said that all these many members work, each in its own function in the body, he adds (ver. 27), “Now ye are the body of Christ and members each in particular.” Bear in mind that this is come to pass by the baptism of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Consequently this body exists on earth, and embraces all Christians wherever they may be; they have received the Holy Spirit whereby they are members of Christ and members one of another. Oh, how beautiful is this unity! If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it together.

Here the word teaches us besides that the gifts are members of all the body, and that they belong to the body as a whole. The apostles, the prophets, the teachers are in the Church, and not in a particular church. Consequently these gifts, given by the Holy Ghost, are exercised in all the Church where the member is found, because he is a member of the body. If Apollos taught at Ephesus, he teaches also when he is at Corinth, and in whatever locality be may be. The Church is, then, the body of Christ, united to Him, its Head, in heaven, and one is a member by the Spirit who dwells in us, and all Christians are members one of another. This Church, which will be by and by made good in heaven, is at present formed on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who abides with us, and by whom all true believers are baptized into one body. The gifts, in the next place, are exercised as members of this one body, in the entire Church.

There is, as we have said, another character of the Church on earth; that is to say, it is the habitation of God on earth. It is interesting to see, by examination that this had no place before redemption. God did not dwell with Adam even while innocent; nor with Abraham, though He visited with much condescension both the first man in paradise and the father of the faithful. Nevertheless, He never dwelt with them. But no sooner was Israel redeemed out of Egypt than God comes to dwell in the midst of His people. As soon as the building of the tabernacle was revealed and regulated, God says, “I will dwell in the midst of Israel and I will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who hath taken them out of the land of Egypt to dwell in their midst.” (Ex. 29:45, 46.) Thus the dwelling of God in the midst of the people was the end of

the deliverance: the presence of God in the midst of the people is their greatest privilege.

The presence of the Holy Ghost is what characterizes true believers in Christ. “Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.” (1 Cor. 6:19.) “If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Christians taken together are also the temple of God; and the Spirit of God dwells in them. (1 Cor: 3:16)

Not to speak more of the individual Christian, I will say, then, that the Church is God’s habitation on earth by the Spirit. Most precious privilege! The presence of God Himself, the source of joy, strength, and wisdom for His people! But at the same time there is very great responsibility as to the way in which we treat such a guest. I will cite some passages to prove this truth. In Eph. 2, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Here we see that, though this building is already begun on the earth, the intention of God is to have a temple formed, made up of all that believe after that God had broken down the partition-wall that shut out the Gentiles; and that this building grows till all Christians are united in glory. But meanwhile the believers on earth form a tabernacle of God, His habitation through the Spirit, who abides in the midst of the Church.

In 1 Tim. 3 the apostle says, “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” By these words we see that the Christian on earth is the house of the living God. That this epistle teaches Timothy how to behave himself in this house, We see also that the Christian is responsible to maintain the truth in the world. The Church does not teach, but the apostles taught. Teachers instruct, but the Christian maintains the truth by being faithful to it. It is the witness of the truth in the world. Those who seek the truth do not seek it among Pagans or Jews or Mahometans, but in the Christian Church. It is not authority for the truth, but the word is its authority. The Church is the vessel that contains the truth; and where the truth is not, there is no Church. Such is the Church, the body of Christ, who is its heavenly Head. Such is the house of God by the Spirit on earth. When the Church is complete, it will join Christ in heaven, clothed with the same glory as its Bridegroom.

Now it is necessary, before speaking of the state of the Church as it was at the beginning, to notice a difference which is found in the word of God as to the house. The Lord said, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” It is Christ Himself who builds His Church; and consequently the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. Here it is not man who builds but Christ. Wherefore the Apostle Peter, speaking of the spiritual house, says nothing of the workmen, “To whom coming as unto a living stone ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood.” (1 Peter 2) This is the work of grace in the heart of the individual by which man approaches Christ. Accordingly, once more, in the Acts it is said that “the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” This work could not fail, being the work of God, efficacious for eternity, and manifested in its time. We read, moreover, in the Epistle to the Eph. 2, “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” This building which grows may be manifested

before the eyes of men; but if the effect of this work of efficacious grace is not manifested in its exterior unity before men, God will not for that fail to do His work, gathering His children for eternal life. Souls come to Christ and are built upon Him.

The Apostles John and Paul, and more particularly the latter, speak of an unity manifested before men in testimony to men of the power of the Holy Ghost. In John 17 we read, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Here the unity of the children of God is a testimony borne to the world, that God has sent Jesus in order that the world may believe. Now this truth is, consequently, the evident duty of God’s children. All know how the state opposed to this truth is a weapon in the hands of the enemies of this truth.

The character of the house and the doctrine of the responsibility of men are still more clearly taught in the word of God. Paul says, “Ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every one take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” Here it is men who build. The house of God is manifested on earth. The Church is the building of God; but we find there not only God’s work, that is, those who come to God moved by the Holy Ghost, but also the effect of the work of men, who have often built with wood, hay, and stubble. Men have confused together the exterior house built by men and the work of Christ, which may indeed be identical with the work of men, but it may also differ widely. False teachers attributed all the privileges of the body of Christ to the great house composed of every sort of iniquity and of corrupt men. But this fatal error does not destroy the responsibility of men as regards the house of God, His habitation through the Spirit; any more than it is destroyed in respect of the manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in one body on earth.

I considered it important to notice this difference, because it throws much light on questions of the day. Let us now pursue our subject. What was the state of the Church at the commencement when it began at Jerusalem? We find that the power of the Spirit of God was wonderfully manifested. “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2) And in chapter 4, “And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own, but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands, or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:32-35.) What a beautiful picture of the effect of the power of the Spirit in their hearts—an effect which was too soon to disappear forever; but Christians ought to seek to realize it as much as possible.

The evil of the heart of man soon appeared; and Ananias and Sapphira, as also the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration,

manifested that the sin of man's heart joined to the devil's work was still working in the bosom of the Church. But at the same time the Holy Spirit was in the Church and acted there, and was sufficient for putting out evil and changing it into good. The Church, however, was one, known by the world; and one could say that the apostles, having been let go, went to their own company. One only Church, filled with the Holy Ghost, bore testimony to the salvation of God and to His presence on earth; and to this Church God added all those who were to be saved. This Church was all scattered abroad because of the persecution, save the apostles who abode at Jerusalem. Then God raised up Paul to be His messenger unto the Gentiles. He begins to build the Church among the Gentiles, and teaches that in it there is neither Gentile nor Jew, but that all are one and the same body in Christ. Not only the existence of the Church among the Jews, but still more the doctrine of the Church, of its unity, of the union of Jews with Gentiles in one body, is proclaimed and put in execution. It was the object of the counsels of God already before the foundation of the world, but hidden in God; a mystery which had been hid from the ages in God, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God: which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. So also in Col. 1:26, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

All Christians were known, all admitted publicly into the Church, Gentiles as well as Jews. The unity was manifested. All the saints were members of one body, of Christ's body; the unity of the body was owned; and it was a fundamental truth of Christianity. In each locality there was the manifestation of this unity of the Church of God on the earth; so that an epistle of Paul addressed to the Church of God at Corinth arrived at a single assembly; and the apostle could farther add to it "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." Nevertheless if we speak specially of those at Corinth, he says, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." If a Christian member of Christ's body went from Ephesus to Corinth, he would have been equally and necessarily also member of Christ's body in this latter assembly. Christians are not members of a church but of Christ. The eye, the ear, the foot, or any other member which was at Corinth, was equally such at Ephesus. In the word we do not find the idea of members of a church, but of Christ.

Ministry, as it is presented in the word, is likewise a proof of this same truth. The gifts, source of ministry, given by the Holy Spirit, were in the Church. (1 Cor. 12:28, 8-12.) Those who possessed them were members of the body. If Apollos was a teacher at Corinth, he was also a teacher at Ephesus. If he was the eye, ear, or any other member whatever of Christ's body at Ephesus, he was also such at Corinth. For this subject there is nothing clearer than 1 Cor. 12: one body, many members; the Church one, in which were found the gifts that the Holy Spirit had given—gifts which were exercised in any locality whatsoever, where he might be who possessed them. In Eph. 4 the same truth is set forth. When Christ ascended on high, He "gave gifts unto men and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning

craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

This unity and the free activity of the members are found realized in the time of the apostles. Each gift was fully owned as efficacious to accomplish the work of the Lord, and was freely exercised. The apostles labored as apostles, and likewise those who had been scattered on the occasion of the first persecution, labored in the work according to the measure of their gifts. It is thus that the apostles taught. (1 Peter 4:10, 11 Cor. 14:26-29.) And it is thus that the Christians did. The devil sought to destroy this unity; but he was not able to succeed as long as the apostles lived. He employed Judaism for this work; but the Holy Spirit preserved the unity as we read in Acts 15. He sought to create sects in it by means of philosophy (1 Cor. 2), and of both together. (Col. 2) But all these efforts were vain. The Holy Spirit acted in the midst of the Church and the wisdom given to the apostles to maintain the unity and the truth of the Church against the power of the enemy. The more one reads the Acts of the Apostles, the more one reads the Epistles, the more one sees this unity and this truth. The union of these two things can only take effect by the action of the Holy Ghost. Individual liberty is not union; and the union of men does not leave the individual his full liberty. But the Holy Spirit, when He governs, necessarily unites brethren together and acts in each according to the aim which He has proposed to Himself in uniting them, that is to say, according to His own aim. Thus the presence of the Holy Ghost gathers together all the saints in one body, and works in each according to His will, guiding them in the Lord's service for the glory of God and the edification of the body.

Such was the, Church: how is it now and where does it exist? It will be perfected in heaven. Granted: but where is it found now on earth? The members of Christ's body are now dispersed; many hidden in the world, others in the midst of religious corruption; some in one sect, some in another, in rivalry one with another to gain over the saved. Many, thanks be to God, do seek unity; but who is it that has found it? It suffices not to say that by the same Spirit we love each other; for by one Spirit we have been baptized into one body. "That they all may be one" says the Lord, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." But we are not one, the unity of the body is not manifested. At the beginning it was clearly manifested and in every city this unity was evident to all the world. All Christians walked everywhere as one Church. He who is a member of Christ in one locality was so also in another, and he who had a letter of recommendation was received everywhere, because there existed but one society.

The Supper was the outward sign of this unity. "We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10:17.) The testimony the Church gives now is rather that of proclaiming that the Holy Ghost with His power and grace is unable to surmount the causes of the divisions. The greatest part of what is called the Church is the seat of the grossest corruption, and the majority of those who boast of its light are unbelievers. Greeks, Romanists, Lutherans, Reformers cannot take the Supper together; they condemn each other. The light of God's children who are found in the sects is hid under a bushel; and those who are separated from such bodies, because they cannot endure the corruption, are divided into hundreds of parties who will not take the Supper together. Neither the one nor the other pretend to be the Church of God, and they say that it is become invisible; but what is the value of an invisible light? Nevertheless

there is no humiliation nor confession in seeing the light become invisible. Unity with respect to its manifestation is destroyed. The Church, once beautiful, united, heavenly, has lost its character, is hidden in the world; and the Christians themselves, worldly, covetous, eager for riches, honor, power, like the children of the age. It is an epistle in which one cannot read a single word of Christ. The greatest part of what bears the name of Christian is the sect of the enemy or infidel; and the true Christians are lost in the midst of the multitude. Where can we find one loaf, the sign of one body? Where is the power of the Spirit who unites Christians in a single body? Who can deny that the Christians were thus? and are they not guilty for being no longer what they were? or shall we call it well to be in a state totally different from that in which the Church was at the beginning and from that which the word demands from us? We ought to be profoundly grieved at such a state of the Church in the world, because it no way answers to the heart and love of Christ. Men rest satisfied in being assured of their eternal salvation.

Do we seek what the word says on this point? Here is what we read there, in a general way, for what concerns every economy or dispensation and the ways of God with the Jews and towards the branches from among the Gentiles who were substituted for the Jews. (Rom. 11) “On them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Is it not a serious thing, when the people of God on the earth are cut off? Certainly the faithful are and will be kept; for God has no thought of failing in His faithfulness; but all the systems in which God glorifies Himself on the earth may be judged and cut off. The glory of God, His real visible presence, was once at Jerusalem, His throne was over the Cherubim; but ever since the Babylonish captivity His presence abandoned Jerusalem, and His glory as well as His presence were no more in the temple in the midst of the people. And though His great patience endured long, until Christ was rejected, yet God cut them off as regards that covenant. The remnant became Christians, but all the system was terminated by judgment. Such will be the issue of the Christian system, if it continue not in the goodness of God. But it has not continued in God’s goodness. Wherefore, though I believe firmly that all true Christians shall be preserved and caught up to heaven, yet for what concerns the testimony of the Church on earth, the house of God through the Spirit, it will exist no more. Peter had said already, the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And in Paul’s time the mystery of iniquity was already working and was to be continued till the man of sin appeared; already in the apostle’s time all sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. The apostle tells us farther that after his departure there should enter among the Christians in the Church grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and that in the last days perilous times should come, men having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; that evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; and that finally the apostasy should come. Now is all this continuing in God’s goodness?

And this unfaithfulness is it a thing unknown in the history of man? God has always begun by putting His creatures in a good position; but the creature invariably abandons the position in which God set it, becoming unfaithful therein. And God, after long forbearance, never reestablishes it in the position it fell from. It is not according to His ways to patch up a thing which has been spoiled; but He cuts it off to introduce afterward something entirely new and far better than what went before. Adam fell; and God will have the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. God gave the law to Israel who made the calf of gold before Moses came down from the mountain; and God will write the law in the hearts of His people. God ordained the priesthood of Aaron, but his sons from the

very first offered strange fire; and from that moment Aaron could no more enter the holiest with his garments of glory and beauty. God made the son of David to sit on the throne of Jehovah; but, idolatry having been introduced by him, the kingdom was divided, and the throne of the world was given of God to Nebuchadnezzar who made a great image of gold and cast the faithful into a burning fiery furnace. In every case man was faithless; and God, having long borne with him, interposes in judgment and substitutes a better system.

It is interesting to observe bow all the things in which man has broken down are established in a more excellent way in the Second man. Man shall be exalted in Christ, the law written in the heart of the Jews, priesthood be exercised by Jesus Christ. He is the Son of David who is to reign over the house of Israel. He is to govern the nations. Likewise as regards the Church, it has been unfaithful; it has not maintained the glory of God which had been confided to it. Therefore shall it be cut off as a system on the earth, the order of things established of God shall be closed by judgment, the faithful shall go up to heaven into a state much better to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, and the kingdom of the Savior shall be established on the earth. All this will be an admirable testimony to the faithfulness of God, who will accomplish all His counsels, spite of the unfaithfulness of man. But does this take away the responsibility of man How then, as the apostle says, could God judge the world? Ought not our hearts to feel that we have cast the glory of the Lord into the dust? The mischief began in the times of the apostles; each added to it his own; and the iniquity of ages is heaped upon us; and soon the house of God will be judged. The blood of all the righteous has been asked again of the Jewish nation by Jesus, as also Babylon will be found guilty of the blood of all the righteous.

It is true that we shall be caught up to heaven; but, along with that, ought we not to mourn over the ruin of the house of God? Yes: formerly one, a beautiful testimony to the glory of its Head by the power of the Holy Ghost; united, heavenly, so that the world could recognize the effect of the power of the Holy Spirit who put men above all human motives, and, causing distinction and diversities among them to disappear, made believers in all countries and of all classes to be one family, one body, one Church, a mighty testimony to the presence of God on earth in the midst of men.

But it is objected that we are not responsible for the sins of those who have gone before us. Are we not responsible for the state in which we are found? Did the Nehemiah, the Daniels, excuse themselves for the sins of the people? Or rather, did they not mourn over the misery of the people of God as belonging to them? If we were not responsible, why then should God put them aside, why judge and destroy all the system? Why should He say, “I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.” Why does He judge Thyatira, replacing it by the kingdom? Why does He say, “I will spew thee out of my mouth?” I believe that the seven churches furnish us with the history of the Church from the beginning to the end; in all cases we have there the responsibility of Christians as to the state of the Church. It will be said perhaps that there are none but local churches which are responsible, and not the Church universal. What is certain is that God will cut off the Church a4 a system established on earth.

Still more to demonstrate responsibility continually from the beginning to the end, let us read in Jude, “There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.” They had already slipt in. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of

these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all." Thus, those who in the time of Jude had already crept in, would bring the judgments on the profane professors of Christianity. In this Epistle we have the three classes of iniquity and their progress. In Cain there is purely human iniquity; in Balaam ecclesiastical iniquity; and in Korah rebellion, and then they perish. In the field where the Lord had sown the good seed while men slept the enemy sowed tares. It is very true that the good seed is gathered into the garner, but the negligence of the servants has left the enemy the opportunity of spoiling the Master's work. Shall we be indifferent to the state of the Church, beloved of the Lord, indifferent to the divisions that the Lord has forbidden? No, let us humble ourselves, dear brethren, let us own our fault and have done with it. Let us walk faithfully, each for his part, and endeavor to find once more the unity of the Church and the testimony of God. Let us cleanse ourselves from all evil and all iniquity. If it is possible for us to gather together in the name of the Lord, it is a great blessing; but it is essential that this be done in the unity of the Church of God and in the true liberty of the Spirit.

If the house of God is still on the earth and the Holy Spirit abides in it, is He not grieved at the state of the Church? And if He abides in us, should not our hearts be afflicted and humbled at the dishonor done to Christ and the destruction of the testimony that the Holy Ghost is come down from heaven to bear in the unity of the Church of God? He who will confront the state of the Church as it is described to us in the New Testament and its present state, will feel his heart profoundly saddened by seeing the Church's glory dragged into the dust and the enemy triumphing in the confusion of the people of God.

Finally, Christ has confided His glory on earth to the Church. It was the depositary of that glory. There the world ought to have seen it displayed by the power of the Holy Ghost, a testimony to the victory of Christ over Satan, death, and all the enemies that he has led captive, triumphing over them in the cross. Has the Church preserved this deposit and maintained the glory of Christ on the earth? If this has not been done, tell me, Christian, is the Church responsible for it? Was the servant, to whom the Lord entrusted the care of His house (Matt. 24), responsible or not for the state of his Master's house? It will be said, perhaps, that the wicked servant is the outward Church, which is corrupted and is not really the Church; as for me, I am not a member of it at all. But I reply that, in the parable, the servant is alone, and the question is whether this sole servant is faithful or unfaithful? It may be true, that you are separate from the iniquity which fills the house of God, and you have done well; but is not your heart bowed down because of the state of that house? The Lord shed tears of grief over Jerusalem, and shall we shed none over that which is still dearer to His heart? Here the glory of the Lord has been trampled under foot: shall we say that we are not responsible for it? His only servant is held accountable. Even though, individually guided by the word, I may be apart from all the iniquity which corrupts the house of God, nevertheless, as Christ's servant, I ought to identify myself with the glory of Christ, and with its manifestations to the world. It is in this that faith is shown: not merely in believing that God and Christ possess the glory, but in identifying this glory with His people. (Ex. 32:11, 12; Num. 14:13-19; 2 Cor. 1:20.) First, God entrusts His glory to man, who is responsible to maintain himself in his position, and to be faithful in it, without leaving his first estate; by and by God will establish His own glory according to His counsels. But, first of all, man is responsible where God has set him. We have been set in the Church of God, in His house, in the habitation of His glory on the earth: where is it? J. N. D.

(Translated from the Italian.)

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 211

A Thought on Preaching

It must be a subject of deep interest to the laborer for God to ascertain the divine method of drawing souls after Christ. We all understand what is commonly meant by influence, and nothing oftentimes is more dangerous than personal influence; for, led on by it, fascinated by the individual exercising it, the soul may find itself, like one under the charm of the rattlesnake, approaching each step unconsciously nearer and nearer to its destruction. We all likewise know that there is a great deal in what is called natural gift. There are some men in whose company we cannot be for long without discovering that they are people of weight; their words have a weight, which we feel not in the words of others they are born, as men say, to lead. Others have that natural gift of arresting the attention of their fellow-creatures, placing truths perhaps in a new light, and interesting the understanding. So souls are drawn to hear the gospel of God's grace, who would not otherwise turn aside to listen to it. They attend their ministry, it may be, from the charm of their eloquence, the power of their language, the originality of their thoughts, or the aptness of their illustrations. Even personal appearance exercises no inconsiderable power over some. The natural man is attracted. He admires the gifts displayed. They appeal to something within him they stir up his feelings, they excite his emotions. He is affected for the time. But the all-important question remains: is his heart really reached? Is the man, not his feelings, really laid hold of and brought a captive to the feet of Jesus? For surely nothing less than this is the aim of all faithful evangelizing efforts, that, if the instrument be removed, the souls may stand steadfast, because they have been brought into living communion with the Lord Himself.

Where shall we turn to get the answer we seek, but to Him by whom at the first salvation "began to be spoken." As Son of God, He knew what man was, for He had created him. As Son of man He must have had power to act on man's heart, and appeal to that within him, more surely and more powerfully than any of the fallen children of Adam; and He could have used that influence which sways the hearts of a multitude, and bows them as the heart of one man. How then did. He act? How did He attract souls to Himself?

In Luke 2 we get a glimpse of what He must have been amongst men before He began His public ministry. At the age of twelve years He is found in the temple among the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. He did not teach them, for that would not have been comely in a child of twelve years of age, but His power of entering into all they said, and the questions He asked, evinced an intelligence of no common order, "for all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." From this He went to Nazareth, and was subject to His mother and Joseph. And we read, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Surely He must naturally, as men would say, have attracted all who knew Him during His childhood, youth, and manhood; and till. He began His ministry, He must have prepossessed all in His favor. And all that in man appeals to man He must have possessed in no common degree, as beauty of character, power, weight, influence, wisdom. That He had power which could make itself felt, and overawe those opposed to Him, is only a matter of history. See Him at the commencement of His ministry in the temple at Jerusalem (John 2), driving out with the scourge of

small cords which He made, those who traded within the precincts of His Father's house, with their sheep and oxen, overthrowing the tables of the money changers, and pouring out their money on the ground. Will it be said they richly deserved this treatment, for desecrating the courts of that house which they owned was the temple of Jehovah? Granted. But how loath are men to acquiesce quietly in any measure however right, when it touches their self-interest? Yet here, whatever the feelings of the people most concerned may have been, we do not read of one who ventured to strive with or resist Him. There was that clearly seen in Him which made all submit to this strange and unexpected act of the reputed son of Joseph of Nazareth. Could this submission have arisen from a strong prepossession in His favor, the result of many years' intercourse? See Him at the close of His ministry, when the passions of the rulers and chief priests had been fully aroused, and they had even attempted several times His death; in the same place, and in a similar way, He cleared the traders out a second time; and on that occasion spoke of it as His house, declaring that He was Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel (Matt. 21; Mark 11; Luke 19). The chief priests when they heard it sought how they might destroy Him, but not one of all who witnessed it ventured to oppose Him. They felt a power they could not resist. Again, shortly after in the garden of Gethsemane, a great company of officers, with swords and staves, came to apprehend Him in the midst of His disciples. Eleven men with Him, with only two swords, ready to run away when He was apprehended, what had that company, strong in numbers and weapons, to fear? Yet we read at the words, "I am he," they went backward and fell to the ground. There was something in Him which overawed the natural man; but did He ever use this power to overcome the opposition of the heart to His teaching?

He could also by His acts excite enthusiasm in the minds of those who followed Him. We can understand this. Some noble generous deed, a spirit of true philanthropy, the desire for the temporal welfare of others, calls forth the enthusiastic admiration of mankind. We have instances of this. Nor can we be surprised that He, who went about doing good, should, by His acts for the welfare of others, excite this spirit in those who received of His bounty. He feeds the multitude in the wilderness, multiplying the few loaves till all are filled. They desire to make Him king, convinced from this miracle that He is the prophet that should come into the world. (John 6:14, 16.) Does He foster this spirit of enthusiasm? Does He use it to advance His claims, His just claims to the kingdom? They were bent on taking Him by force to make Him king. He departed again into a mountain Himself alone. In Matt. 8:19 we have recounted the history of a scribe, apparently attracted by what he had seen, in all the fervor and enthusiasm of a new convert, declaring he will follow Jesus wherever He goes. Does the Lord forthwith enroll him among His disciples? He speaks a word to damp the ardor of nature, and dispel all illusion of the mind. But at the close of His ministry He does allow the multitude to hail Him as king. He enters Jerusalem the center of an admiring crowd, the observed of all observers. The Pharisees say among themselves, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the whole world is gone after him." Had they a deeper perception of the heart of the people than He had? Impossible. He was God. He knew the heart. He knew how fervid was the enthusiasm in His favor which then prevailed. But when the evening was come, He left Jerusalem and departed to Bethany with the twelve. (Mark 11:11.)

Many people are drawn to an individual by his gift of speech. There is a power in speech which rivets the attention; it may be wisdom of words, aptness of expression, readiness of response, or felicity of illustration. This not only interests for the moment, but exercises a mighty influence over

the human mind. The Lord Jesus was not deficient in all this. In the synagogue at Nazareth all bare Him record, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. But He spoke a little more, and they led Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down' headlong. A second time He visits the city, and teaches in their synagogue. They were astonished at His wisdom. Yet He could do no mighty works there, and had to depart to the villages to teach. (Matt. 13, Mark 6) Again, in John 7 many, hearing Him, marvel at His knowledge. "How knoweth," they say, "this man letters, having never learned?" His words impress the people, and many said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ;" and the officers sent to apprehend Him return, unable to execute their orders, for they said, "Never man spake like this man." So at the close of His life He answers the questions of the Sadducees, the Pharisees and Herodians, and the scribes, in such a way, that none durst after that ask Him any more questions. Perfect master of the art of reply, He does not, however, by this draw them to swell the train of His followers.

Another means of arresting attention is the power of miracles. Men are attracted by any appearance of the supernatural. Witness the Samaritans (Acts 8), whom Simon Magus had a long time bewitched with his sorceries. Herod rejoiced when he saw the Lord, because he had heard many things of Him, and hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. (Luke 23:8.) Many at Jerusalem believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did (John 2:23); but Jesus did not commit Himself to them. At Nazareth the people in the synagogue were evidently on the tiptoe of expectation for some display of supernatural power (Luke 4:23), but He made none. At Capernaum all were amazed when they saw the devil cast out in the synagogue; "and they glorified God being filled with fear saying, We have seen strange things to day," when the paralytic man walked out of the house carrying with him that whereon he had lain. (Luke 4:36; 5:26.) So many were His miracles that men questioned whether, when the Christ came, He would do more miracles than Jesus had done. (John 7:31.) Holding John high in estimation as a prophet, they drew a contrast between him and Jesus in favor of the latter, saying, "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there." (John 10:41, 42.) The raising of Lazarus from the dead attracted many to Bethany; and, as the Lord entered Jerusalem in triumph, the people who had witnessed it bare record of it, and for this cause many more swelled the royal procession. (John 12:9, 17, 18.) Here again was something which appealed to the natural man, an argument in favor of the Lord it must be confessed of no mean power. By the exhibition of supernatural power on the part of the magicians of Egypt Pharaoh's heart was hardened to disobey God. (Ex. 7:22.) By miraculous power, to be exercised in a future day, the second or two-horned beast will deceive them that dwell on the earth. (Rev. 13:14.) Miraculous power has a voice for all classes; yet we never find the Lord using it to draw disciples after Him. On the contrary we find Him retiring from observation, desiring that the miracle should not be made known, or working it outside the city, and before the multitude could collect. (Mark 1:44, 45, 34-38; 5:43; 7:33-36; 8: 22-26; 9:25.) In a word, whilst the Lord could use all that influence which appeals irresistibly to the natural man, He did not use it to make disciples of the multitude. And why? Because He aimed at the gaining of the heart, not the moving merely of the feelings; the conscience, and not simply the intellect. He desired the welfare of the souls around Him, and not mere personal popularity, however great or lasting. And is not this what laborers in the work at the present day should aim at? How are they to accomplish it? The Lord has shown us.

If the Lord did not use any of those means, commonly called lawful, by which to draw disciples after Him, He yet had a plan most successful, more potent than any man could devise, by which the heart was reached, and the confidence of His hearers gained. He was presented, and presented Himself, as supplying in Himself just what they wanted. Those who, like the Church at Laodicea, thought they had need of nothing would not be attracted by this. The Pharisees, who were covetous, might deride Him as He spake of a life beyond death to be thought of; but those whose hearts told them of the need of something more satisfying than this world could give, would have an ear open for His words as He spake of the well-being of the soul, and adjusted before their eyes the relative importance of temporal and eternal interests. As meeting what man needs, the Lord met those in need.

Whether in Galilee, Judea, or Samaria, it is always the same. He stands forth as the depositary of all man wanted. Was it rest, food for the soul, refreshment for the way, divine guidance for the sheep, light in darkness? He was all this. To the weary He offered a rest which He could give. To the hungry He presented Himself as the living bread, the true manna. To the thirsty He spoke of a stream of which all who believed on Him could drink—nay, more—never thirst, because the well of water should be in themselves. The sheep had only to follow Him, the Shepherd; and He was the light for all who desired it. And if death, the dread enemy, should overtake them, in Him they had the perfect answer to it, for He was the resurrection.

But how did this act on those who were brought into contact with Him? If we turn to John 1 we read of John's testimony to Christ before his two disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God." Hearing this they followed Christ, and abode with Him that night. What was it that attracted them to Him? We read of nothing He said, no reply He made to John; we read of nothing about some powerful influence which His presence exercised over them. But these words were spoken by John, and they followed Jesus, for they met their need Baptized with the baptism of John, they had owned complete failure under the law. A sacrifice was needed; He was the Lamb, God's Lamb, just what they wanted. The next day, Andrew, one of the two, finds his brother Simon. He desires to bring him to Jesus. What is the inducement he holds out to attract his brother? "We have found the Messiah." There were godly souls looking for Him to appear, and accomplish salvation for Israel. (Luke 2:38.) Simon is drawn by the announcement that Messiah had appeared; and he comes to Christ, the commencement of nearly forty years' ardent attachment to the person and cause of his Lord. Philip is called by the Lord Himself. Was it something in the manner of His call which irresistibly impelled him to follow? We are not told, but we do know what He said to Nathanael to induce him to come after Christ. It was nothing about the charm of the Person, but the discovery of who the Person was: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael comes to Christ full of prejudices: all go like the morning mist before the sun, and he owns Him as the Son of God, but also as the King of Israel—just what the remnant looked for and expected. Again, when the Lord called Matthew the publican, who arose and followed Him, if it be maintained that there was something in the manner of utterance of these words, "Follow me," which forbad disobedience, we see he has understanding of the Lord, and what He can do, by his gathering sinners to the feast; and the Lord vindicates his selection of the company before the face of the Pharisees by saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," It was such as these he had collected, who needed the remedy the Great Physician alone could supply.

If we take the case of the woman of Samaria, we find the same principle. Jesus had spoken to her of the gift He could bestow. Ignorant of her need, she cannot understand His words. The conversation proceeds. He reaches her conscience. She perceives He is a prophet, and shortly after gives Him her confidence. She expects Messias to come, who will tell them all things. The Lord then declares He is the one she has waited for. Thereupon she runs to her people, and urges them to come to Christ, saying, “Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?” She does not say, Another prophet has come, but announces the presence among them of the Christ. Was this mere enthusiasm on her part? Men are not want to be enthusiastic on behalf of the one who unveils their life of iniquity. Surely it was the consciousness that the Great Teacher stood before her that impelled her to act as she did. And the people responded to her call, and came to see the Christ. At their request He abode with them two days. The Samaritans find for themselves that He has what they need, as they say to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” Was not this what they required? The Savior of the world, not the Savior of the Sews only, but of the world; then, whatever the Jews might say, He could save them. He was their Savior.

What kept the apostles steadfast when many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him? His word had stumbled them. The words He had spoken kept the apostles. Whatever may have been the power felt by some as He said to them, “Follow me,” Peter tells what kept them from turning away with the others “Lord, to whom shall we go: thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Holy One of God” (for so the chief authorities read). His words satisfied the cravings of their souls.

And once more in John 12 we read of many among the chief rulers who believed on Him, but, afraid of being put out of the synagogue, did not confess Him. How does He meet these? In the synagogue they worshipped, as they believed, the Lord Jehovah, and there they heard the Old Testament Scriptures, which revealed to them His mind. The Lord Jesus then, to strengthen them to confess Him, tells them that all they looked for in the synagogue He could give. “He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” And further, if they feared the wrath of man and the consequences which might come from it, hearkening to Him there was to be obtained everlasting life. (Ver. 50.) So that in Him they had the full answer to all that the Jews could do, and if put out of the synagogue, they could find, when outside, God, light, and eternal life.

If such was the way the Lord acted in the midst of Israel to draw hearts to Himself, how did those who came after Him attempt to spread the faith? Did they try to create enthusiasm for Him as the victim of Jewish malice, by expatiating on His goodness, acts of kindness, and mighty works? Peter at Jerusalem, and Paul at Antioch and elsewhere, preach Christ, but a Christ for sinners, and what, believing on Him, the soul can receive from God. At Pentecost, at the Beautiful gate of the temple, before the council (Acts 5), in the house of Cornelius, in the synagogue at Antioch, or at Corinth, the plan pursued was always the same. Successful then, it will be successful still; and, whatever people may say of the beautiful moral picture exhibited in the life of the Lord on earth, and however they may endeavor to account in their own way for the spread of Christianity, what Scripture sets before us as the grand secret of engaging the heart, and drawing disciples after

Christ, is just simply to preach as Peter and Paul preached, and imitate His example, who proclaimed that He could meet the deep necessities of fallen man; and that in Himself they had what nowhere else could be found, the answer to death and judgment—all that man dreaded, and that inexhaustible fountain which quenches forever the thirst of the soul.

What matter that the sea is rough, if Christ is there to make us walk on it? what good that it is calm and smooth, if He be not?

Chapter 212

Letter on Eternal Punishment

My Dear Brother,

My answer has been delayed through constant work and absence from the house for evening meetings, &c., but I should gladly help you in this to the utmost of my power, for this doctrine is a deadly and demoralizing heresy, or, rather, infidelity. I ever refuted it, but I never saw so much of it as latterly at New York and Boston. It issues in denying responsibility and conscience, enfeebling, in the most deadly way, the sense of sin, the value, consequently, of the atonement, and ultimately the divinity of Christ. All do not go this length, and are unaware of it, but it has led thousands in America there. It is its just result. Some hold simple annihilation; others, though death is ceasing to exist, yet a resurrection for judgment, and then torment. The greatest part of their proofs are from the Old Testament; and the moment you know that the mass of their texts refer to temporal judgments on earth, all that part of the fabric comes down. Then they dodge to words in the New Testament: as if, e.g., “destruction” means ceasing to exist. This is not true, as “Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” In the original it is the same word where it is said, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” God can say, “I create and I destroy;” but otherwise it is used constantly for ruin in a general sense, as in the boat the disciples say, “Carest thou not that we perish?” They admit there can be no annihilation in nature, and do not like the word. Next, death never means ceasing to exist. Scripture speaks of casting the soul into hell after the body is killed; so, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, they subsist after death. They say that is a Jewish figure: I admit it; but it is a figure to show how they subsist after death. Again, it is said in Luke 20, “For all live unto him” —dead men but always alive to God. Besides, if it be then ceasing to exist, there is nobody to raise for judgment. The second death even is casting into the lake of fire, where they are tormented; that is, it is not ceasing to exist. They say eternal life and eternal death does not mean eternal. This is not true; eternal life and eternal punishment are spoken of together, and it is the regular force of it in Scripture— “The things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal.” Nothing can be plainer than that. So we have “the eternal God,” “the eternal Spirit,” “eternal redemption,” “eternal inheritance,” —all contrasted with time.

What is so morally dreadful in it is the weakening the sense of sin and atonement. For if my sin only deserved death, Christ had only to bear this for me, which hundreds have borne besides. Sin becomes little and atonement nothing. Hence a vast number speak of what Christ obtained for us by His death, but drop the atonement for our sins as of any consequence. Again, if death means ceasing to exist (and this is the basis of all their statements), then Christ ceased to exist. This leads many on to deny His divinity (I do not say all, though it is far the greatest number in America). If they say, “No, He was a divine person, He did not,” still He was a true man, body and soul, and truly died; and death does not mean ceasing to exist. Further, this materialism as to the soul is entirely contrary to Scripture. In Genesis, the way man is created is carefully distinguished from beasts. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: this He never did to the beasts. Hence Adam is called the son of God, and Paul declares we are the offspring of God. Hence to

liken our soul to the beasts is false, besides what I quoted from the gospels as to its subsistence after death. The one text, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment,” proves demonstratively that we subsist after death. Death dissolves our present state of existence, but that existence does not cease at all. So far from death being the full wages of sin in this sense, it is after death we get all we are adjudged to. That is, death as to the body is the result of sin here; the judgment of the man, to receive the real consequences of it before God, comes altogether after it. Hence there is a resurrection of the unjust, a resurrection to judgment. Remember, we conceive of eternity as prolonged time; that is, we do not conceive it at all. It is an eternal Now. And this is the very definition of the word given by writers of the apostles’ time.

I have thus, dear brother, given you rapidly, as far as a letter allowed, the way the question has actually come before me, and my reply. The effect in destroying responsibility was fearful and, in people with grosser habits, rejection of all truth and immorality. The tree was bad, had a bad sap, and so was cut down, and there was an end of it. Where is sin and atonement there? One, the most eminent, quiet and most guarded (who had learned much truth from brethren in England, and a very popular preacher), said, he believed that the elect were the only souls God meant to exist; the rest were the fruit of man’s lust after the fall. When asked how he would reconcile the doctrine of thus perishing of souls simply bad and responsibility as stated in Scripture, he said he could not, but, as he found it there, he did not deny it. But he was wholly a materialist as to the truth of a soul; he would not call it material, but it is born by mere physical generation. I regret to have to refer to such things. Keep your mind simple if you can by grace and receive what scripture says in simplicity as it stands. I think I have some tracts on it, but written when I had not tracked it out as I had to do in America, particularly New York and Boston but elsewhere too. Thank God, several were delivered and found clearly it was Satan’s power, others arrested who were in danger. I will look up the tracts to send them.

Your affectionate servant and brother in Christ.

J. N. D.

Chapter 213

On Ecclesiastical Independency

(1) The point I take to be fatally dangerous is confounding private judgment and conscience. We see the full-blown fruit of it in the present state of Protestantism, where private judgment is used to authorize the rejection of everything the individual does not agree with.

The difference is plain in the case put. A father's authority is admitted. Now if it be a matter of conscience, Christ's authority or the confession of His name, of course this cannot stand in the way. I am bound to love Christ more than father or mother. But suppose I reject my father's authority for everything my private judgment differs in as to what is right, there is an end of all authority. There may be cases of anxious inquiry as to what my duty is, where spiritual judgment alone can come to a right judgment. This is the case in the whole Christian life. We must have our senses exercised to discern good and evil—not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and such exercises are useful.

But the confounding a judgment I form simply as to right with conscience is, in result, confounding will with obedience. True conscience is always obedience to God; but if I take what I see as sufficient, confusion of a deadly character soon comes in. Does one not submit to a father's authority unless be can bring, even in an unimportant matter, a text of scripture for everything he desires? Is there no setting up of self and self-will in such a principle?

But I go farther; and it is the case in question. Suppose in an assembly a person has been put out for evil. All admit that such, if truly humbled, should be restored. The assembly think he is humbled truly: I am satisfied, supposing, that he is not. They receive him. Am I to break with the assembly or to refuse subjection to their act, because I think them mistaken? Supposing (which is a more trying case to the heart) I believe he is humbled and they are satisfied he is not, I may bow to a judgment I think erroneous and look to the Lord to set it right. There is such a thing as lowliness as to self, which does not set up its own opinion against others, though one may have no doubt of being right.

There is another question connected with it—one assembly's act binding another. I do not admit, because scripture does not admit, independent assemblies. There is the body of Christ, and all Christians are members of it; and the Church of God in one place represents the whole and acts in its name. Hence, in 1 Corinthians, where the subject is treated of, all Christians are taken in with the assembly of Corinth as such, yet this last is treated as the body as such, and made locally responsible for maintaining the purity of the assembly; and the Lord Christ is looked at as there; and what was done was done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is wholly ignored when one speaks of six or seven clever, intelligent Christians and a number of ignorant ones.

The Lord in the midst of an assembly is set aside. The flesh, it is said, often acts in an assembly. Why assume it does and forget it may in an individual?

Again, why speak of obeying the Lord first, then the Church? But supposing the Lord is in the Church? It is merely setting up private judgment against the judgment of an assembly meeting in

Christ's name with His promise (if they are not, I have nothing to say to them); it is simply saying, I count myself wiser than those who are. I reject entirely as unscriptural the saying, "First Christ, then the Church." If Christ be not in the Church, I do not own it at all. It assumes that the Church has not Christ, making them two distinct parties. I may reason with an assembly, because I am a member of Christ and hence of it—if it is one, help it. But if I own it as an assembly of God, I cannot assume Christ is not there: it is simply denying it is an assembly of God. The thought is wanting of what an assembly of God is. This is not surprising; but it necessarily falsifies judgment on the point, which is not "if the word" —but, if I see not the word for it. It is justly trusting one's own judgment as against others and the assembly of God.

I could not for a moment put a question of blasphemies against Christ on such ground. It is really wickedness. The attempt to cover them by church questions, or by pleas of individual conscience, I abhor with a perfect abhorrence.

Allow me to put the question on minor questions in another shape. Suppose I am of an assembly, and I think they judge something in a mistaken way. Am I to impose my individual way of thinking on them? If not, what am I to do? Leave the assembly of God if it be such (if not, I do not go there)? You cannot help yourself. If I do not continue in an assembly, because it does not agree with me in everything, I can be of no assembly of God in the world. All this is simply a denial of the presence and help of God's Spirit and of the faithfulness of Christ to His own people. I cannot see godly lowliness in it.

But if an assembly have judged as such in a case of discipline, admitting all brotherly communications and remonstrances, I distinctly say another assembly should, on the face of it, receive their act. If the wicked man is put out at Corinth, is Ephesus to receive him? Where then is unity? where the Lord in the midst of the Church? What led me out of the Establishment was the unity of the body: where it is not owned and acted on, I should not go. And independent churches I think quite as bad or worse of than of the Establishment. But if each assembly acts independently of another and receives independently of it, then it has rejected that unity—they are independent churches. There is no practical unity of the body.

But I shall never be brought to such wickedness as to treat acceptance of blasphemers as an ecclesiastical question. If people like to walk with them or help and support the bearing with them at the Lord's table, they will not have me. I distinctly judge the principles defended show want of lowliness as to self and a setting aside the very idea of the Church of God. But I am not going to mix the two questions. I do not accept the setting aside my spiritual liberty: we are a flock, not an enclosure. But in questions of discipline, where no principle is denied, nor truth of God set aside, I do not set up my judgment against that of the assembly of God in that which God has committed to its care. It is just setting myself up as wiser, and neglecting God's word which has assigned certain duties to an assembly, which He will honor in its place.

Let me add that there is such a thing as obedience in what we do know, which goes before speculating on possible claims in obedience, where we should like to be free to go our own way. To him that hath shall more be given. Doing what we know in obedience is a great way of knowing further.

Again, “the bond of unity between the churches is said to be the Lordship of Christ.” But there is not a word about churches [when we speak of unity], nor bond of churches; nor does unity consist of union of churches. Lordship is distinctly individual. Nor is Lord of the body a scriptural idea. Christ is Lord to individuals, Head to the body over all things. Unity is not by lordship. Of course, individual obedience will help to maintain it, as all godliness will; but unity is unity of the Spirit, and in the body, not in bodies. Both Ephesians and Corinthians teach us distinctly that unity is in and by the Spirit, and that Christ has in this respect the place of Head, not of Lord, which referred to individual Christians. This error if acted on would falsify the whole position of gatherings, and make mere dissenters of them, and in no way meet the mind of Christ.

(2) Confounding authority with infallibility is a poor and transparent piece of sophistry. In a hundred instances, obedience may be obligatory where there is no infallibility. Were it not so, there could be no order in the world at all. There is no infallibility in it, but a great deal of self-will; and if there is to be no obedience where there is not infallibility, no acquiescence in what has been decided, there is no end to self-will and no existence of common order. The question is of competence, not of infallibility. A father is not infallible, but he has a divinely given authority; and acquiescence is a duty. A police magistrate is not infallible, but he has competent authority in the cases submitted to his jurisdiction. There may be resources against abuse of authority, or in certain cases a refusal of it when a higher authority obliges us, as a conscience directed by God’s word. We ought to obey God rather than man. But there is never in scripture liberty given to the human will as such. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. And this principle—our doing God’s will in simple obedience, without solving every abstract question which may be raised—is a path of peace, which many heads who think themselves wiser miss, because it is the path of God’s wisdom.

The question then is a mere sophistry, which betrays the desire to have the will free, and a confidence that the person’s judgment is superior to all that has been already judged. There is judicial authority in the Church of God, and if there were not it would be the most horrible iniquity on earth; because it would put the sanction of Christ’s name on every iniquity. And that is what was sought and pleaded for by those with whom these questions originated: that whatever iniquity or leaven was allowed, it could not leaven an assembly. Such views have done good. They have the cordial abhorrence and rejection of every honest mind, and of every one who does not seek to justify evil. It is possible you may think or say, that is not the question I am asking. Forgive me for saying I know that it is, and that only; though you do not, I am well assured. But the judicial authority of the Church of God is in obedience to the word. “Do ye not judge them that are within? Them that are without God judgeth. Wherefore put out from among yourselves that wicked person.” And, I repeat, if it be not done, the Church of God becomes the accrediting of every vileness of sin. And I affirm distinctly, that where this is done other Christians are bound to respect it. There are remedies for fleshly action in it, in the presence of the Spirit of God amongst the saints, and in the supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; but that remedy is not the totally unscriptural and miserable one proposed by the question—the pretension of competency in every one who takes it into his head to judge for themselves independent of what God has instituted. It is, taken in its most favorable aspect, not an individual pretension, which is its real character, the well-known and unscriptural system which has been known since Cromwell’s time—that is, independency: one body of Christians being independent of every other as a voluntary association. This is a simple denial of the unity of the body, and the presence and action of the

Holy Ghost in it.

Supposing we were a body of Freemasons, and a person were excluded from one lodge by the rules of the order, and instead of looking to the lodge to review the case, if it was thought to be unjust, each other lodge were to receive him or not on their own independent authority, it is clear the unity of the Freemason system is gone. Each lodge is an independent body acting for itself. It is in vain to allege a wrong done, and the lodge not being infallible; the competent authority of lodges, and the unity of the whole is at an end. The system is dissolved. There may be provision for such difficulties. All right if it be needed. But the proposed remedy is the mere pretension of the superiority of the recusant lodge, and a dissolution of Freemasonry.

Now I openly reject, in the most absolute way, the pretended competency of one church or assembly to judge the other, as the question proposes; but what is more important, it is an unscriptural denial of the whole structure of the Church of God. It is Independency, a system I knew forty years ago and would never join. If people like that system, let them go there. It is in vain to say it is not that. Independency merely means that each church judges for itself independently of another, and that is all that is claimed here. I have no quarrel with those who, liking to judge for themselves, prefer this system; only I am perfectly satisfied that in every respect it is wholly unscriptural. The Church is not a voluntary system. It is not formed (or rather unformed) of a number of independent bodies, each acting for itself. It was never dreamed, whatever the remedy, that Antioch could let in Gentiles, and Jerusalem not, and all go on according to the order of the Church of God. There is not a trace of such independency and disorder in the word. There is every possible evidence in fact, and doctrinal insistence on there being one body on earth, whose unity was the foundation of blessing in fact, and its maintenance the duty of every Christian. Self-will may wish it otherwise, but certainly not grace, and not obedience to the word.

Difficulties may arise—we have not an apostolic center as there was at Jerusalem. Quite true; but we have a resource in the action of the Spirit in the unity of the body—the action of healing grace and helpful gift, and the faithfulness of a gracious Lord who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. But the case of Jerusalem in Acts ay. is a proof that the scriptural church never thought of, and did not accept the independent action insisted upon. The action of the Holy Ghost was in the unity of the body, and is always so. The action directed by the apostle at Corinth (and which binds us as the word of God) was operative in respect of the whole Church of God, and all are contemplated in the opening of the epistle. Does any one mean to pretend, if he were to be put out at Corinth judicially, that each church was to judge for itself whether he was to be received, that judicial act pass for nothing or operative only at Corinth, and Ephesus or Cenchrea to do as it liked afterward? Where then was the solemn act and direction of the apostle? Well, that authority and that direction is the word of God for us now.

I am quite aware it will be said, Yes, but you may not follow it rightly, as the flesh may act. It is possible. There is possibility that the flesh may act. But I am quite certain that what denies the unity of the Church sets up for itself, and dissolves it into independent bodies is the dissolution of the Church of God, unscriptural, and nothing but flesh. It is therefore judged for me before I go any farther. There is a remedy, a blessed gracious remedy of humble minds in the help of God’s Spirit in the unity of the body, and the Lord’s faithful love and care, as I have said, but not in the pretentious will which sets up for itself and denies the Church of God. My answer is, then, that the

plea is a sophistry which confounds infallibility and divinely-ordained authority met by lowly grace, and that the system sought is the pretentious spirit of Independency, a rejection of the whole authority of Scripture in its teaching on the subject of the Church, a setting up of man instead of God.

It is clear, that if two or three are gathered together, it is an assembly, and if scripturally assembled, an assembly of God; and if not, what else? If the only one in a place, it is the assembly of God in the place. Yet I do object practically to taking the title, because the assembly of God in any place properly embraces all the saints in the place. And there is practical danger for souls in assuming the name, as losing sight of the ruin, and setting up to be something. But it is not false in the supposed case. If there be one such and another is set up by man's will, independent of it, the first only is morally in God's sight the assembly of God; and the other is not. at all so, because it is set up in independency of the unity of the body. I reject in the most entire and unhesitating manner the whole Independent system, as unscriptural and a positive unmitigated evil. Now that the unity of the body has been brought out, and the scriptural truth of it known, it is simply a work of Satan. Ignorance of the truth is one thing, our common lot in many ways; opposition to it is another. I know it is alleged that the Church is now so in ruins that scriptural order according to the unity of the body cannot be maintained. Then let the objectors avow as honest men, that they seek unscriptural order, or rather disorder. But in truth it is impossible to meet at all in that case to break bread, except in defiance of God's word: for Scripture says, "we are all one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." We profess to be one body whenever we break bread; Scripture knows nothing else. And they will find Scripture too strong and perfect a bond for man's reasoning to break it.

Chapter 214

Dr. Capadose and the Dutch Reformed Church

Allow me to send you some extracts from a pamphlet recently published in Holland by Dr. Capadose, a man well known in Holland and elsewhere, as a Christian, (converted from Judaism, I suppose, nine and thirty years ago), and valued and respected in the religious world since. It is not for clearness of views, as to the Church, nor an exact interpretation of Scripture, that I send it. I should think, from some expressions, he is not what I should account clear on these heads. I send it as a sign of what is going on in the world; and to all a solemn warning as to where we are. It is earnest, serious, with feeling ardently genuine, and contains principles of the deepest importance; and if some prophetical points, or apprehensions of the unity of the body be not clearly seized, and that the circumstances of the reformed church, so called, in Holland, have led Dr. Capadose's mind to the conclusion he has arrived at more by conscience as to the evil than by attraction of the good, it is only so much the more a witness, that in all circumstances where the Spirit of God is acting, the sense of the times we are in presses on the spirit. The conclusion Dr. Capadose has arrived at has been the conviction of the writer of this these nine and thirty years, and is participated in by a vast number of your readers. I give these extracts as additional testimony from an upright and right-feeling soul of the state things are come to. For indeed what was a matter of principle forty years ago is now verifying before our eyes. The doctrines of the Church, of the rapture of the saints, are a relief and source of consolation and joy in the midst of the evil. May Dr. C. find this too!

The principles of his pamphlet, however sorrowful the occasion, are as true as they are urgent. The public ministry of the reformed body in Holland is almost universally infidel, and, since the publication of Mr. Renan's Life of Jesus, this infidelity has become bold and pretentious. This is what seems to have urged Dr. C. to the step he has taken. The inscription of the pamphlet is Isa. 52:11, 12, which I give in the English translation: "Depart ye, depart ye; go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward." I now give the preface: it shrws the spirit of the work.

"I hope the few pages which follow here will be read and weighed with the same seriousness as that with which the writer has penned them. They have not, however small in compass, to thank a fugitive passing emotion for their origin. No, already for more than a year, my heart has been urged by the feeling of an urgent need to communicate openly and make known the results at which I have arrived with the deepest conviction, what a ripe and continually-repeated searching out has taught me of the painful state of the church of our fatherland, and what the holy calling of Christian professors within this requires. I must give testimony. And not only I feel myself compelled to this for myself, but I must recommend to, and press on, others with all insistence the holy way of earnest search. I am conscious, moreover, of having in these pages, respected the conscience of brethren who think otherwise, though not without fraternal exhortation. Let each search his heart and follow what is enjoined him by the Spirit of God, but distinguish there also well what God's Spirit wills. The state of mere appearances (that is, of lies) must cease where

people desire to follow the truth in everything. It is happy for myself that I know and love upright brethren in all churches who are attached to the same principles of life and faith, and trusting to remain to the end, in the strength of Jesus the Lord and Savior, His witness, and to be able to persevere as a living member of Christ's Church. I here declare openly and officially, that I cannot any more belong to any church communion so called."

Dr. C. then states he cannot really call it separation, for the simple reason that be no longer recognizes any Netherland reformed church as such remaining among them. He goes over the ground of former evil and trying states of the church: but that never was there an open combating on a wide-spread scale, by teachers of the church of the Christian faith within the Church itself, not only before the reading public, but from the pulpit itself, and baptism and the Lord's supper administered and profaned, and that unhindered, by persons who are not Christians. "This is," he adds in a note, "unhinderedly allowed, while people strongly deny to Christians, but who are not ordained, competency to do it. I myself," he says, "approve for order's sake, that the administration of the sacraments in the normal state of the Church, by unordained men, should not be permitted, but judge that the ordained modern teachers, who want what is the fundamental principle of a Christian, is far away less competent for it than the believing brother, who wants the fundamental ecclesiastical principle of ordination for it." I thought it well thus far to spew what Dr. Capadose's principles are, not to misrepresent his mind.

I add now what is more important. He says, "If people will give the Dutch reformed body the name of church, they must; call her the church of confusion, not a Christian church, and thus no reformed church;" and that he must leave what thus steals the name. If others hope for restoration, for his part in no case can he cherish any hope of her restoration. Many efforts earlier in the work and more definitely some four and twenty years on a broad scale, and showing sympathy with the reformed congregations in his country might, perhaps, have led to restoration, but if not absolutely opposed, certainly were not supported or furthered even by well-minded ministers. "They have let the opportunity be lost, and now through this much-to-be-lamented want of zeal, the canker of infidelity has penetrated continually deeper and deeper, and we are come to the beginning of that apostasy of which Paul speaks (2 Thessalonians) that definite apostasy from Christ, which must precede the revelation of Antichrist. And this apostasy, already long prepared beforehand, is nothing but the consistent development of the unresisted, if not fostered, progress of infidel science in the church.. Yet the epoch of apostasy is there, and will continually spread more and more, as well in every worldly government which by its institutions more and more excludes God, as in all churches wherein the true Christ, the God-man, will be more and more denied by the deifying of man. Do we not forget the reproving saying of our Lord: 'Ye can understand the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?'" He notices the breaking out of it in Roman Catholic and Protestant countries at the same time, and presses the fact of the growing canker of infidelity, and the near approach of the dissolution of the different churches.

"The Church of Christ, the Church of the crucified One, that and that alone has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; but also the holy calling to bear the cross after the crucified One."

The voice of the Lord calling in the signs of the times makes us bear a higher claim. The question is not of a choice between church and church, but between Christ and Antichrist."... "The Lord

Jesus calls all who believe in Him in truth to unite themselves together round Him, as He in its own time will bring together all His elect out of all tongues, peoples, nations, and races, so He calls now His believing ones out of reformed, out of dissenting, out of Lutheran, out of Roman, and other churches, to attach themselves to Him; and to go away from places where Belials are to be found, by the side of Christ. The great and mighty combat begins, if we can call a fireproof combat. Let the Lord's word be a light in everything, a light to our path, and that word calls to us. Do not bear the same yoke with the unbeliever," &c.

What I have transcribed will give, I think, a just idea of this earnest appeal. Though there may be a mistaken application of some passages as to the apostasy and trial, I heartily feel that the apostasy in principle is begun, so that on this point the appeal is just, and I am not afraid of a mistake in interpretation which does not affect the substance of it.

Dr. Capadose adds extended reasoning on the particular proofs of what he insists on in the Netherland reformed church so-called, urges at length that believers should not be arrested by temporal difficulties in presence of the faithfulness of the Lord, and adds a kind of second part where he insists that, if the clergy have not the courage to leave the system, they should at least absolutely separate (in every religious service of every kind, schools, and all Christian service) from those who deny Christ. The details of these parts I do not give. It is the solemn warning (one of the multiplied signs of the times, the proof of the principles which, by the operation of the Spirit of God, are at work in men's minds), which, I thought, might be alike in the best sense interesting and profitable to your readers.

Liverpool, June 22.

Chapter 215

Leviticus 25:1-25

The ordinances of God in the old time of the law will be found, in their materials, to have been very homely, such as had to do with the commonest transactions of human life; and yet, in their meaning, to have disclosed or shadowed forth the deepest mysteries of Christ: for instance, the ordinance of the servant with the bored ear. The material there was the common matter of hiring a domestic, a thing, we will allow, of the most homely nature; and yet in it was involved, and through it was shown forth, the mystery of the riches of the grace of Christ. So in the scripture am now looking at. The subject or material is the sale and purchase of laud, the price at which such bargains shall be regulated, and the term of years for which such transfers of property shall continue. But the truths conveyed through this ordinance are some of the profoundest and most interesting parts of the ways of God. This quality in the divine institutions only sets them off to greater admiration, while conveying to the soul the knowledge of Christ. The more homely they are in their materials, the more serviceable they must be to us, and the more welcomed they ought to be by us. We should afresh honor the skill of the Master who can teach so profoundly with such a book. And we have another beautiful illustration of that truth, “To the poor the gospel is preached.”

The divine ceremonies are not ceremonial, if I may so speak. They are ceremonies, as being the due ways of the house. But they are not stiff and stately. They do not keep us at a distance, or require some special occasions for their display. The disciple learns them, and the worshipper observes them, in the midst of family or social life. Among these institutions or divine ordinances, I would now look a little more particularly at that enacted in this scripture, Lev. 25:1-25. The great principles of the whole chapter will be found, I believe, in this portion of it; and therefore I look only at so much of it.

First, there is the principle of “earnest,” a well-known principle, I may say, in the actings of God with us. The grapes of Eshcol were the earnest of Canaan to the camp of Israel while still in the wilderness or on the way. The Holy Ghost is, now the earnest of the inheritance in the saint traveling on through “this present evil world” to “the rest that remaineth.” And the sabbath of the land, enacted in this scripture, was the earnest of the jubilee, while the term of forty-nine years, the age of the confusion and disorder of man’s way, was still existing. It was a bunch of the fruit of the jubilean year brought into the midst of the wilderness again. This sabbath did not do the business of the jubilee, but still it savored of it; it did not anticipate it, but it witnessed it. (See ver. 1-7.)

In the next place, we find the principles of redemption by purchase, and redemption by strength in this scripture; and the gap or interval, which we know there is between the seasons of these two actions of the Church of God, is likewise beautifully intimated. The kinsman, according to this ordinance, was to redeem the sold possession by paying the proper price of it to the stranger who had purchased it. This was to be done during the forty-nine years, the age of misrule and confusion, “man’s day,” as Scripture would call it. But then, also, in due season, or on the fiftieth year, the jubilee would, by its own native strength or virtue, restore every such sold possession, and with it every sold Israelite, to that place in the land and among the people appointed at the

beginning by the Lord of the land and the people. Every man was then to return to his family and his possession. God's order, disturbed for forty-nine years by man's traffic, was then to be asserted and exhibited again.

These are some of the deep purposes of God in Christ. Paul speaks of "the earnest of the inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1), thus disclosing the very principles we discover in this beautiful ordinance, as we have seen! the earnest, the purchase, the full redemption or restoration, and the necessary interval between the purchase and the redemption. So again in Rom. 8; for there he speaks of "the firstfruits of the Spirit" in the saints, while they wait for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

And what (I pause for a moment to ask) is the living power of such mysteries in our own souls? Peace and hope dwelling there together with the taste or enjoyment of the Spirit's presence; the peace which the accomplished purchase by the blood speaks; the hope which the approaching jubilee or full redemption inspires; and the consolation of the indwelling Spirit who is the seal of the accomplished peace and the earnest of the expected inheritance. When peace and hope dwell together in the soul, and the indwelling Spirit is enjoyed, we do, in living experiences, understand the mysteries of this fine scripture.

Further, however, still. This ordinance tells us, that the Lord God, if I may so express myself, will not allow man to have the last word, or to take eternity into his hand and dispose of it as he pleases. Dian has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb God's order. But that license is limited. It continues, as we have seen, only for forty-nine years. But "the land shall not be sold forever," says the Lord, "the land is mine." (Ver. 23.) In the fiftieth year the Lord will assert His right and restore all things according to His own mind. A time of "refreshing" that will be, a time for "the restitution of all things."

What a bright and happy truth thus shines in this verse of our chapter! "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," is the fine proclamation of Psa. 24, as of this ordinance. And then the challenge goes forth, "Who shall ascend into the bill of the Lord?" i.e., who shall take the government of this earth and its fullness? And the answer is made by another challenge to the city-gates, the seat of government, to lift up their heads to the King of glory, the Lord of hosts; a fervent style and form of words whereby to convey the truth, that the Lord in strength and victory, the Lord as Redeemer and Avenger, the Lord alone shall have the government in the ages to come, when man, as the corrupter of the earth, shall have closed his career.

How does the voice of this ordinance thus join in concert with other words of the same Spirit! And I may again say, What bright and happy truth thus shines through this ordinance touching the common matter of buying and selling land! No material or subject, I may also again say, could be more homely, no mysteries more profound and blessed. We cannot but admire the wisdom which thus teaches, which finds, as people have aptly said, "sermons in stones and words in the running brooks;" which leaves the memorial of the Lord and His counsels in the midst of the occasions and circumstances of everyday life.

But further still. There are moral admonitions and principles of godly conduct here, as well as deep and precious mysteries. The Jew was taught by this ordinance to measure the value of his worldly possessions by the year of jubilee; for his sales and purchases were to be appreciated by either

the distance or the nearness of that season. All his trading or worldly business, therefore, of necessity reminded him of the fiftieth year, or God's approaching kingdom. All his traffic in the land measured for him how near or how distant that season was.

What a consecration of all the business of life was this! What a constant sense of God did this maintain in the hearts of the children of Israel! Just as the Spirit, through the apostle, seeks to maintain the same in us, saying, "the time is short; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that buy as though they possessed not."

But I must speak still once more. This beautiful scripture exhibits the encouragements of the Lord in obedience, as well as the commandments or admonitions to it. For the Israelites are here animated in the observance of the sabbath of the land by a promise of great increase every sixth year.

How lovely this is as well as all the rest! and how significant of another well-known way of the Lord! For to this hour, in our own dispensation, encouragements of the highest character are given to the obedience of the saints. For to those who keep His words, the Lord says, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Chapter 216

Hosea 14:9

Hos. 14:9.—We have to remark that all the dealings of God with Israel were not again of absolute final pardon or clearing, but governmental. As a figure, their redemption as a nation was at the Red Sea; and they were brought to God. They then took up law first; afterward they were put under the revelation made to Moses when God's goodness passed before him. And were so governed. Only as a chosen people, in all their affliction he was afflicted; and his gifts and calling are without repentance. No doubt, to deliver them really, as they were sinful men and a sinful nation, Christ must die for that nation; and this they will find out at the end according to Isaiah Eli. But the ways of God meanwhile were governmental pardons and chastisements on the way. I add, till grace is fully known and redemption, the mind may put these together, because sin has deserved judgment and final rejection, and God is not known. Only in the Psalms there is provision to sustain faith till redemption be fully known to them.

Chapter 217

Evangelical Organs of 1866 Christian Observer

In “The Christian Observer” for August, 1866, an article appears on “Plymouth Brethrenism,” largely cited, and adopted without question, in “The Record” of August 20. This I purpose to notice briefly, not so much to vindicate what they assail as to point out the state both morally and doctrinally of the party they represent.

1. Much is said of the lofty claims of those who charge Christendom with departure from first love, through worldliness and judaizing (pp. 599, &c.) But in what atmosphere have these men been living? Do they not know that all good men, at home and abroad, mourn over the present general defection from primitive holiness, unity, and the fresh sense of divine grace, and of the Savior’s love, which made His yoke easy and His burden light? But there is more than this. For who can deny that the actual state of Romanists, Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Abyssinians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Moravians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, &c., does not agree with, but flagrantly opposes, the system of the Church which we find formed by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the Acts and regulated by the apostolic epistles? Did not the Evangelical Alliance grow out of this feeling? and is it not a sort of corporate confession from Protestants in general that the present state of things within the various orthodox denominations affords no adequate means of exhibiting Christian unity, no proper enjoyment of the fellowship of saints beyond party enclosures? As to this the chief point of difference from the members of that Alliance is that the so-called “Brethren” believe that, as it is a duty to cleave to the assembly of God when duly constituted according to His word; so it is equally incumbent to abandon all fellowship which is fundamentally unscriptural. This seems to them not “arrogant pretension,” but obedience—the truest and humblest position for any child or even creature of God.

It is not true that they arrogate to themselves the designation of “the Brethren.” (Pp. 599, 601.) They are content to be Christians only and not some peculiar species (Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, &c.) Others style them “the Brethren,” which title, if they themselves employ it, is generally marked within inverted commas to show that it is a citation. But no intelligent person in their midst ever means thereby to weaken for a moment, still less to deny, the common brotherhood of believers. And in fact they carry out the recognition of that brotherhood more thoroughly than any others. For where else can a godly man be received at once frankly and fully according to the place the Lord has given him in the Church of God? Where else can he (without being first tried by some denominational Shibboleth, be free to open his mouth in praise, prayer, or edification through the word in the Christian assembly? Who else recognizes this save as a courtesy accorded by the minister or the congregation? With “Brethren” so-called it is the practice, the simple consequence of accepting the truth of God’s assembly, once a man is known to be a member of it and to walk after a godly sort according to his measure of light. “Brethren,” therefore, desire grace to carry out Scripture consistently and uniformly; exercising patience with their brethren who may not yet have felt the evil of “sects” in the sight of God, and believing that all truth is best learned within the assembly of God, save of course the primary confession of the Lord’s name, which is the sole condition of entrance there. This is a main reason why “the best out of all

communions" sympathize so much (spite of contrary interests and prejudices), and why others are wont to designate them "the Brethren."

The truth is that the evils, against which the Apostle Paul and the rest contended during their ministry, burst all barriers after their death. Nothing proves this better than the remains of the Fathers. For there is no right testimony in them to the nature of the Church, nor faith in the personal action of the Spirit, nor even a clear, full understanding of salvation by grace. Ministry is everywhere confounded with priesthood, the institutions of baptism and the Lord's Supper perverted into ordinances of life-giving virtue. The Reformation, so blessed of God in giving the nations an open Bible, and recalling the great truth of justification by faith, did not fully emancipate believers from the bondage of ecclesiastical tradition or remove the clouds which still obscured the Lord's return as the constant hope of the Christian. Why should it then seem incredible that God from the rubbish of ages should recover His truth on that which is essential to the well-being of the Church, as He did in the sixteenth century for the peace and blessing of the believer? What is corporate naturally follows what is individual. Do they suppose that the Reformation restored all that was lost? or that the God who acted for His own glory in helping souls then is indifferent to other wants now?

Among the different co-ordinate sects of Christendom, not one even contemplates the manifestation, according to Scripture, of the one body of Christ: for Popery is not to be thought of save as the veriest and most corrupt pretender on earth. And of the rest, which so much as aims at the idea? What was to be done then? Were we to give up fidelity to God's truth about His Church, Christ's one body, as a mere theory or only to be realized in heaven, and not a matter for faith, and action, and suffering, in the earth? Let those so act who seriously believe they can justify it before the throne of Christ. "Brethren" desire to cast themselves fearlessly on the unfailing word and Spirit of God, and, in order to meet in God's way, have had the trial of severing from associations founded only on principles of expediency or some other ground altogether human. What claim have these bodies on the allegiance of God's children? Are they, were they ever, constituted according to His revealed will? If not, how do Paul's warnings to the Corinthians against schism apply? The divisions (σχ■σματα), heresies or rather sects (α■ρ■σις), of which he speaks, were among those who really formed the assembly of God at Corinth. Is there much force in the argument that, because it is sinful to separate from what is divine, it is equally so to separate from what is human? It was wicked to leave the Corinthian assembly; is it therefore wicked to leave Popery, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, or any other society of the sort? Mathematical study, to which the Christian Observer invites us for the exercise of reasoning powers, seems to have sadly failed its advocate here. Those whose principles of Church association are divine, who stand on nothing but Scripture as to this, are entitled to urge the apostolic exhortations against schism, not the men whose very constitution (for I speak not of mere disorder or erring individuals) is now and has always been both schismatical and in other respects contrary to Scripture. Nationalism essentially contradicts the one body, for it asserts the principle of distinct Church system though on a large scale; Dissent contradicts it to the extremist limits. Why is it counted sectarian for Christians to come out of human societies (i.e., sects), and fall back on the original ground of the Church? Why is it schismatical to abandon the schisms we were in, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? One thing only can account for such blind and senseless clamor—the will to blacken those whose adherence to God's word condemns such as see error enough but have not

the faith to renounce it at all cost. Till they cease doing the evil they know, how can they expect light from God to discern the good they very probably do not know?

But it seems “Brethren” insist on “separation from all other communions.” Not so: we advise no Christian to leave even that which we believe has no authority whatever, till he is sure that it is a duty. Never do we think it right to employ fear or favor, which is not the case with our adversaries. Each Christian is exhorted to seek light from God and a single eye. It is the fact, no doubt, that, as the nature of the Church’s worship or ministry is gathered from Scripture, no faithful man helps on that which is inconsistent with the truth. But all is left to conscience. There is no rule, expressed or understood, which forbids “Brethren” to hear a sermon or join in a service elsewhere. Only it is clear that the Christian who comes to the conclusion that Anglican or Dissenting rites involve the dishonor of God’s Spirit, or the denial of truth, is not free in conscience to participate. Compulsion, however, would be altogether wrong. Thus conscience and liberty are both preserved. Men who have no fixed principles may consistently perhaps go to the Anglicans on Sunday morning, to the Presbyterians in the evening, and to Methodists or others during the week. But do the Christian Observer and the Record endorse such laxity? Do they blame “Brethren” for first seeking to ascertain God’s will as to Christian communion, and then refusing to swerve from it? The Anglicans, it is to be supposed, count the Dissenters wrong, as the Dissenters do the Anglicans: why are we then to blame if we judge them both by the only unerring standard? We do not complain if people judge us, or our ways, or our writings, by the same rule: only it were well to examine all fairly and even lovingly as in the sight of God. If we are sure we are right in going back to scriptural fellowship, rather than cling to innovations of Protestant times, are we to hide from our brethren the truth we know? Has not God’s word the same claim on His children in matters of communion as in doctrine or in personal conduct? To us it seems that the real sectarianism consists in despising God’s will about His Church, not in abandoning sects because of our faith in His word.

6. But “the Plymouth Brethren” are divided among themselves, from which the Christian Observer infers that they are “essentially sectarian in spirit.” A man’s notion of reasoning or common sense, of which the writer says so much, must be strange who could draw such a conclusion. “Brethren” were indebted to the Anglicans for one who turned out heterodox as to Christ’s person and relation to God, which he taught to be one of like distance from God as in any other child of Adam. This led to separation among us. It was not with us an Act of uniformity, driving out multitudes of pious men, but a fundamental question of Christ, which made us prefer diminished numbers or a total rupture, rather than accredit the subversion of Christ’s personal glory. “Brethren” never guaranteed that all who came amongst them would stand faithful. Do those who depart, or are put out, or refused fellowship, destroy the testimony of those who hold fast? Do parties of carnal men prove those who refuse such evil to be “essentially sectarian?” If frequent splits into sects or heresies evince essential sectarianism, what would such an argument compel us to think of the early Church? The truth is that it is a mere absurdity. The precise reverse is the apostle’s inference in 1 Cor. 11:19— “There must be also heresies (sects) among you;” not that sects are thereby justified, cannot be avoided, must not be spoken against; nor that all are essentially sectarian; but “That they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” We never boasted of our unity, as these men falsely say (p. 600); but we cannot let any consideration induce us to sit down in communions which systematically set aside the unity for which God holds us responsible. And if

we cannot force others to quit that which is unscriptural, we are not the less bound to be found true to God's word ourselves, as far as our souls have apprehended it. Again, has the Christian Observer any real ground for saying, "it is no longer in humble good works they employ themselves, such as 'visiting the widows and the fatherless in their affliction,' or in seeking to bring lost sheep to Christ?" Was it not a mere piece of idle declamation? Does he not know that the very reverse is true? Unquestionably, the movement of "Brethren" has set many free to preach the gospel to the unconverted at home and abroad, as well as many others to engage in more unobtrusive ministry from house to house. But it becomes one not to be provoked into speaking of ourselves, where indeed we have abundant cause for humiliation. Of God's principles, on which we seek to act, we feel we can never boast enough; and therefore we cannot but desire that all Christians should act—yea, let it even he so faithfully as to put us to shame. It is mere puerility to suppose that this desire for the Church's blessing is inconsistent with the most earnest zeal for perishing sinners. Would that both were true of us in an incomparably larger proportion!

7. But what shall we say of the statements in p. 601? No doubt "Brethren" have said, as others, that the apostles and first Christians met in private houses (not in public buildings) to "break bread," to pray, and to hear the word of God expounded. But where has this been made a plea, as they represent, for leaving this or that communion Who has ever dreamed of the folly "that after the apostles there was to be no such thing as a Christian ministry?" The clear contradiction of this was insisted on in the "Lectures" of which the Christian Observer speaks, but knows almost nothing. "'That all believers are equally priests" is true; but the added words "or ministers" prove that the writer neither understands "the Brethren," nor ministry, nor priesthood: else no such blunder was possible. It proves that the Christian Observer judaizes, like the post-apostolic Fathers who introduced the same fatal confusion. One might have supposed that every Christian held, nominally at least, that the Holy Ghost was the sole administrator now (or at any time) in the Church, sent down for that purpose by the exalted Lord Jesus; but this is treated as peculiar to "Brethren," who certainly deny neither apostles and prophets of old, nor the continuance of the other ministerial gifts which follow in Eph. 4, such as evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Further, who can deny that there was but one body gathered by our Lord on earth? that, though we hear of "churches" of this country or that, all Christians then enjoyed intercommunion? It was the Church everywhere. Ought this, or ought it not, to be so now? Ought the Church to consist of known unbelievers as members, or 'ministers, and perhaps in the highest station? Nowhere do we say that separation from all assembly of God is necessary because evil enters; but we do say that the manifest allowance of evil, the absence of discipline, the refusal to judge what is out before the eye, leavens the whole lump and finally deprives an assembly of its claim to represent Christ. The candlestick is removed. Its character is lost.

The Christian Observer opens p. 602 with a remarkably easy way of sheaving themselves "honest minded." "We say— 'Let us follow out these new principles by all means, and whatever may be the consequence to ourselves, if they can be established by the word of God.'" Unfortunately, however, it is but "we say," without the smallest serious thought about the truth, still less of doing it. "These new principles" are just a return to the old divine ground on which God originally set the Church, laid down in His perfect word, and with reliance on the ever-present Spirit. Whether the objector is "honest minded" may appear from the first point adduced: "The first Christians met to break bread in private houses: therefore so we will meet." This is followed by an "upper chamber,"

&e. “Brethren” can judge both the spirituality and the common sense of such arguments as these. We do just as our earlier brethren did—use rooms, upper chambers or not, private or public, according to need and opportunities as the Lord gives. The puerility or worse is entirely on his part who puts into our mouths what is a were invention of his own, for which there is no ground in our words or principles.

8. Lower down the page the Christian Observer asserts that “the Brethren” take the Corinthian Church as their mode], repeated in p. 603. Now the writer must know, if he have “common sense,” that we do not take the state of that or any other assembly as a model, but the inspired epistles which set forth the right things and correct what was wrong. Neither do “Brethren” make a point of any circumstances which may or may not have been. But does this warrant Christendom in perverting the Eucharist, for instance, from its original simplicity, and in foisting in ordained administrators where Scripture gives no sign 7 yea, where the fullest account inspiration affords on it goes to prove there could be no such official for its due celebration? Is it “honest minded” for any man in his senses to quote 1 Cor. 11:22 “as bearing upon the principles set up by the Brethren about meeting to break bread in private houses 7” Is it “logical” to infer that “they were not to receive in private houses, but only in company with the Church of God?”

“Brethren” insist, as the writer well knows, on the Ephesian Epistle just as much as on those to the Corinthians; he had the evidence of it in the “Lectures” before him. Yet he repeats the nonsense that they take the Corinthian rather than the Ephesian Church as their model; and adds, “We (sic) cannot fail to notice that in more orderly churches, such as the Ephesian, no such miraculous powers are referred to,” &c. The Christian Observer had scarcely failed to notice this very difference more correctly pointed out in the “Lectures,” though he deigns to insinuate the contrary. The truth, however, is, that the very disorder of the Corinthians led to an unfolding of the interior working of the Christian assembly, such as we have neither in the Ephesian Epistle nor in any other than the First Epistle to the Corinthians; and it is precisely this which convicts Christendom, not of disorder merely, but of the far graver evil of systematic departure from God’s only sanctioned plan for the meeting together of Christians as such. One can easily comprehend why the Christian Observer so diligently misstates the facts both as to 1 Cor. 12; 14, and as to Eph. 4.

Nor is it true that “the Plymouth Brethren fail to make any distinction” between the synagogue system and that of the temple, which is a matter of the commonest knowledge. Where do they apply “the camp” (Heb. 13) to the synagogue worship? Thus the argument is represented: “The Christianized Jews were to leave the tabernacle worship which was now abolished—in other words, to come out of the Jewish Church; therefore we Christians are to come out of the Christian Church, even where its worship is as simple as that of the synagogue This is one of the sort of non sequiturs which the Plymouth Brethren are continually making. Correct reasoning is plainly no part of their system.” What we do infer from this scripture, beyond its immediate application to the Christian Jews, is that “the camp” represents the middle ground of earthly religion for men in the flesh, in contrast with the Christian position with its heavenly joy and full cleansing within the veil, on the one side; and, on the other, utter rejection in this world with Him who suffered without the gate. Does not the Anglican glory in that medium which answers to “the camp?” Do not “Brethren” insist on that Christianity which unites worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins, with the shame of the cross as our present portion here? As to the reasoning of the Christian Observer, it is all a mistake. Christians come out of that which falsely calls itself a Christian church

in order to meet as God would have them. They never come out of the Christian church. But, moreover, in the same page (604) we are told that the Church of England adopts the synagogue worship!! and then lower down, rather more truthfully, that “it was as simple as any service can possibly be among the Brethren’ themselves, consisting only of prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing, and preaching, or expositions of the word of God; it might be by any qualified to give it.” Is this then a specimen of correct reasoning? Is it the fact that the Plymouth Brethren fail to distinguish the synagogue from the temple? Is it true that in the Church of England the system of worship is as simple as any among Brethren themselves, consisting only of prayer, singing, scripture reading and exposition, it might be by any one qualified to give it? Really the Christian Observer reasons extraordinarily here for “the Brethren” against his own system. If the synagogue was “a providential platform for Christian assemblies,” the reader must judge where the resemblance is most real, and who it is that presents the most striking non sequitur. As the apostle did not refuse to go to the synagogue where there was the fullest liberty for the word of God to be expounded “by any one qualified to give it” (Acts 13:15), so “Brethren” never decline any meeting on similar principles among God’s people. Nor is the objector correctly informed, if he supposes that there is not ample room among them for “elders” such as we hear of in James 5:14. Only when men pretend to ordain elders, we are entitled to inquire whether the ordainers possess the scriptural authority requisite for the purpose.

Equally mistaken is he as to “the Brethren’s” alleged judgment of men’s hearts.~ We cannot exclude a secret hypocrite; but we can abstain from seeking the union of those manifestly unconverted in the worship of the Lord. Does the Christian Observer seriously contend that those who confess they are not born of God should join in blessing God for privileges they are strangers to? Are hymns to be chosen to please men or to praise God? This is what was condemned as not of the Holy Ghost in the “Lectures,” from which the writer charitably infers that the lecturer assumed to speak for the Holy Ghost, and to determine what He does, and what He does not, suggest! To understand an author is desirable before criticism. Further, the irregularity (p. 606) he tries to fix on the open, unformal character of the assembly is a question he must settle with Scripture; for 1 Cor. 14 is quite exposed to his irreverent attack. It is absurd to pretend that the order of that chapter answers to the routine of an Anglican service, by which the Christian Observer evidently measures things. Yet here it is that, all being open to the action of the Spirit by the various members of Christ’s body, the apostle does not scruple to say that “God is not the author of confusion but of peace:” “let all things be done decently and in order.” Did this order most resemble the Anglican morning service, or “the Brethren” met as an assembly?

As to the parable of the tares and wheat, it is not worth while spending words in refuting the Christian Observer’s misapplication. The field is not the Church, but the world; and the warning is not against putting offenders out of the assembly, but against cutting off the wicked. Toward such the Christian is to walk in grace, not in earthly righteousness as James and John were disposed to do with the Samaritans in Luke 9

The writer shows, in pp. 606, 607, that he knows absolutely nothing about the Church of God. Let him weigh Matt. 16:18 and say whether the Lord represents that building as an old or a new thing. Let him consider Acts 1; 2 with 1 Cor. 12:19 and say whether the baptism of the Spirit (not His operation in giving life and faith) was not a new privilege and yet absolutely essential to the formation of the “one body,” the Church. Was, or was not, that baptism first known when Pentecost

was fully come? Let him answer whether the partition wall was broken down, whether Jew and Gentile were united in one before Christ ascended and sent down the Spirit to give them both access to the Father. It is easy to misrepresent what is evidently but ill understood; and it is not easy to convince where the word of God has small authority, and the Spirit's action is almost unknown, and a man has no small confidence in his common sense, his correct reasoning, his study of mathematics, and his honest-mindedness. But he will not satisfy any, save partisans, that the "one body" "of course means the Plymouth Brethren" in Lectures which always maintain the contrary. Nor will he set aside the many scriptures which limit the Church to a New Testament order of things quite different from that of Old, by citing "the church in the wilderness" which even Bishop Pearson would tell him means the congregation of Israel. Nobody disputes "the faithful" and the olive tree both in Old and in New Testament times; but it is not expressly stated that God founded His Church of real believers till redemption was wrought, and Christ took His place as Head in heaven. The writer has no perception of the question; which is not about believers then, for no one doubts it, but whether there were not new privileges afterward, and whether those who partake of them be not styled the Church, the one body, &c. A parallel among Jews and Christians does not prove that they are the same; and a new thing might perfectly well be compared with an old. When a writer with the New Testament in his hand can affirm that God since the creation makes no absolutely new thing but only gives new forms to the old, it is high time to suspend reasoning with him and rather to pray that God may be pleased to remove the scales from his eyes and the hardness from his heart, if peradventure he may repent to the acknowledgment of the truth. He may then with sorrow and shame confess that what he ignorantly scorned as "veritable nonsense" (p. 608) was a sound exposition of a most certain and momentous truth of God.

13. But the last clause of the same page contains a charge which will surprise every man of real learning among the Anglicans as well as anywhere else in Christendom. "And when Scripture does not use the exact words that suit his theory, he [Mr. Kelly] undertakes, with the most astounding presumption, to speak for the Holy Ghost and says (referring to the expression, Acts 9:31, "Then had the churches rest'), But that which I am persuaded the Holy Ghost wrote here, was the Church.' The Holy Ghost is continually made answerable for what Mr. K. asserts, which to us sounds very much like profaneness, not reverence. Whether it be so, let others judge." Others will judge (and this, were they the bitterest enemies of "the Brethren") that the Christian Observer has committed itself here to unwarrantable abuse, growing out of an ignorance of New Testament criticism which is in the highest degree disgraceful to a man who presumes to write on such subjects, and to the party which could produce and reproduce such flippant floundering about God's word. The candid reader is requested to examine the "Six Lectures on Fundamental Truths," pp. 85, 86. Is it true that the author undertakes to speak for the Holy Ghost when Scripture does not suit? It is a baseless calumny; and the writer must be totally incompetent to understand the grounds on which the decision of such a point turns. For there is an ample statement of the overwhelming ancient authority of manuscripts and versions, which reject the vulgar "churches" as not Scripture, and read ■κκλη■■α, "Church" as the exact word spoken by the Holy Ghost.

A second instance the writer adduces in p. 610. "And where Scripture does not seem to express just what they think it ought to express, that is, just what suits their notions, they have a ready way of correcting it in the name of the Holy Ghost. We have given one instance of this from Mr. Kelly.

Here is another. ‘For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.’ This, I believe is what the Holy Ghost wrote and meant.” (Kelly’s Lectures on the Galatians with a New Translation.) Now here it is a question of correct translation. Will the Christian Observer stand to the error of the English versions since Tyndale? Will the writer be bold enough to deny that ■να μ■ ■ ■ν θ■λητε, τα■τα ποι■τε means “that ye may not do” (not, “so that ye cannot do,” which is bad doctrine as well as false translation)? Real scholars, like Bishop Ellicott and Dean Alford, or indeed any others of any land you please, will unhesitatingly condemn the two organs of the Evangelicals. Will it be contended that the Spirit of God sanctions the false reading, the false version, or the narrow-minded spite which disclosed its astonishing ignorance in refusing and calumniating a correction because it emanated from “the Brethren?”

The instance next given, in page 610, “of the way in which Scripture can be twisted by the Brethren,” is really an instance of pure mistake through their desire of finding fault. But it is not worth saying more than that 1 Cor. 12:3 was not aimed “at the doctrine that Jesus bore the curse of the law for us,” but at the blasphemy, of which the Christian Observer does not seem to have heard, that Jesus was born into the ordinary distance of fallen man from God. This, an evident offshoot of Irvingism, is the evil doctrine which led to our refusing communion to its propagator, a former Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. All the virtuous indignation expended on this head is therefore quite superfluous, and proves inconsiderate haste and want of proper knowledge; for these things were not done in a corner.

16. Page 611 opens with the usual want of ingenuousness. Is it true that “Brethren” “assert for themselves an exclusive possession of the Holy Ghost?” The writer had in his hands books which over and over predicate this privilege of all Christians equally. The real divergence is that “Brethren” net as if they believed it, while others act as if they were still waiting for what they have not, but expect. We never affirm that the Holy Ghost is not in all Christians; but that Christians in general do not act scripturally as those possessed of so great a blessing—do not leave that open door, which is requisite for the due development of His operations. In short, we arraign our brethren’s want of faith in that Holy Spirit whom they, equally with us, have “personally and not by influence merely.” Even when we take this ground, which they cannot but own to be humble, want of charity insinuates that we are insincerely stating that which is nothing but the simple truth.

17. The law has been discussed fully enough elsewhere to render many words needless now. Neither the Christian Observer nor the Record ever writes on the subject without affording a practical comment on 1 Tim. 1:7. “Brethren” hold fast the apostolic truth that the law is good if a man use it lawfully, knowing this [which they who make it a rule of life for the believer do not know] that the law is not made for a righteous man [which we presume the believer is], but for the lawless and disobedient [which we trust all our adversaries are not].” We do not abandon the law objective for Quaker subjectivity; but we believe that the Christian is under grace, which really does accomplish the righteous requirement (τ■ δικα■ωμα) of the law in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And here let me commend 1 Cor. 9:20, 21 to the Christian Observer and the Record, and let them not fall into the egregious error of fancying that we add to the Scriptures, because we say that the Tex. Rec. and the Auth. V. present the passage in a mutilated form. The clause μ■ ■ν α■τ■ς ■π■ ν■μον”(not being myself under law)” properly comes in before the last clause of verse 20, resting, as it does, on the amplest authority of the best MSS. and Vv. It was

omitted δι■ ■μοιοτ■λεντον, as was indeed a much larger portion of the same verse in one ancient copy. So far is it from being the fact that “according to the Plymouth Brethren the law, even the law of the Ten Commandments is entirely abrogated” (p. 612), that the Christian Observer had before him a distinct objection to the Auth. V. of Rom. 7:6, which really does stick to a bad reading that contains this error. No intelligent man amongst us asserts that the law is dead, but that the Christian is dead to it, as the right reading conveys. The grace under which the Christian is widens the sphere and deepens the character of Christian obedience, the directory of which is all the word of God, which the Spirit alone can enable us rightly to divide and really to carry out. Whether this be Popery, Quakerism, and Irvingism, without certain of their evils or goods, some Christians will judge with less of passion or prejudice than the friends now before us. It would be somewhat difficult to reconcile the common cry that we pick out the more spiritual of all denominations with the reproach that those most generally laid hold of are “silly women and equally weak men.” (p. 614.) Is it not strange that “the best Christians out of all communions” should so turn out when refined a little in our crucible 18. Remarkably enough too, after recurring in p. 614 to the old charge of an intensely sectarian, proselytizing spirit, tinctured deeply with spiritual pride, the Christian Observer admits that the present mixed condition of the professing Church, “we are as sensible as the Brethren, is only the world under another form,” yet contends that we are not to separate but “help to leaven, or rather salt, the whole lump.” The admission is fatal. Scripture is uniform that separation from the world, especially the Babylonish or Christian world, is always right, separation from a true assembly of God is always wrong. The Christian Observer knows really nothing of the latter, and contradicts Scripture as to the former. How painfully religious tradition approaches the confines of infidelity! Professor F. W. Newman boldly says that he now loves the world. This organ of the Evangelicals is not ashamed to confess that they go as far as we in owning that the present condition of the professing Church “is only the world under another form,” and yet they would have us not to separate, as God’s word invariably enjoins, but stay to leaven! or rather salt it!! It is not usual to salt what is corrupt, nor is it more promising in spiritual things than in physical. To plunge your hand in a bucket of pitch will not make much difference to the bucket, but will decidedly defile yourself. Testimony to the world, as one not of it, is a very different thing.

The conclusion is that the new system (i.e., a recurrence from the system of sects with human constitutions to the sole authority of Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Ghost in the unity of Christ’s body) “is a delusion of the great adversary.” “The Plymouth Brethren are essentially idolaters,” practically and mentally; their liberty is bondage, their results illogical logomachies; their consciences are weak and crotchety. The Christian Observer’s great end, like Mr. Howels’s, is “common sense in matters of religion.” We are not careful to answer our accusers in this matter. Those who judge by the word of the Lord will want other evidence than the estimate men form of themselves or of the “Brethren.”

Chapter 218

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

Genesis 2; Genesis 3

Gen. 2; 3

The loss of innocence closed evidently the simple enjoyment of blessing in thanksgiving. The knowledge of good and evil being come, God, in saying “the man is become as one of us,” has declared that man, to be with God, must be with Him as suited to Himself as knowing good and evil—in a word, in righteousness. One must (as knowing good and evil) be suited to what God is according to it.

But there is a certain modification of this to be introduced, not the diminishing or lowering of required righteousness (δικα■ωμα), so as to allow of any evil (for that is impossible: God cannot allow evil—He would not be holy if He did); but the taking the measure of the knowledge of good and evil according to the real light and moral condition of the position in which he is. I do not mean as fallen in this position, but according to the moral elements of the position in which he is with God. If he is perfect to the level of that position, he may righteously live there and enjoy God there: man never was; but it was put before him. It is the law. If as man he loved God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, he would righteously as man be happy with God; because he would meet the mind of God perfectly as knowing good and evil in the position in which he was according to the knowledge he had of God; he would be perfect according to that. Man was never so because he had lusts; but the case was put; he never de facto could have been so, because he got the knowledge of good and evil in and by sin. Unfallen Adam had not a bad conscience; but he had not a good one. The truth is, there was no such position of man, because he set up to be like God, knowing good and evil; he made the measure for himself in desire and would have risen up to God by robbery—would have been equal with God. He broke through to be with God; and now he must be with Him or shut out. He cannot of course be independently equal, which would be absurd; but he must be morally fit according to God’s presence or be excluded from it. There is no return to innocence, or to the tree of life, on that ground.

The law, however, never took the ground of introducing into the presence of God as He is according to the absolute revelation of His nature: Christianity alone does that. The law keeps man without, hiding God— “Thou hast said that thou wouldest dwell in the thick darkness.” It gives to man then without, but from God Himself, a perfect rule of right for the creature as such, condemning withal all that entered into man’s state contrary to this, and, further, putting man into relationship with God, on the ground however of natural creation but assuredly in the rest of it—a thing really impossible now that evil was entered, and meant to show this; but still for this very purpose established on this ground.

The perfect rule was loving God with all the heart and loving one’s neighbor as oneself; sin and lust condemned; and the sabbath added to all. But for a sinner evidently this had no reality but to condemn, and it did not profess to bring to God. It gave a rule to a people outwardly who were

already brought into relationship with God, but with a barrier and a double veil and a priesthood; but it gave the perfect rule of right and wrong to the creature who had the sense of it according to his nature in the creation. But he was a sinner. There could be no rule in respect of sin save condemning it, but the law contained, as Christ spewed in extracting it, the perfect positive rule. In this respect the perfection of the law's bearing is most wonderful. Only it was the opposite of bringing (an unjust) man to God, who was concealed. He has been manifested in grace in Christ; but through His death the veil is rent. Christ suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

This accordingly is according to good and evil as known of God Himself; and as walking in the light as He is in the light, we are to be fit for God as He is, rejoice in hope of His glory; we joy in Him. Our estimate of good and evil is the divine one; what is fit for God's presence? In view of this Christ has made the expiation: He is sitting in the full condition belonging to it as man at the right hand of God. It is an unspeakable blessing but the necessary result, we may say, of the work being God's according to His counsels and wrought by Christ; for where should Christ be as to His person or in desert of His work? Then the Holy Ghost is come down thence, while Christ is there, according to infinite love, to bring us in spirit into it, to bring us through the rent veil into the holiest of all.

Such is our knowledge of good and evil and the fruit of Christ's work. The darkness passes, the true light now shines. Our coming to God is renewed according to His image in righteousness and true holiness. It is an immense blessing. There never was really any being with God on another ground than in the light as He is, as brought by grace and power out of the darkness into the light, knowing good and evil. He cannot, with this knowledge, do anything short of Himself (i.e. what was fit for, worthy of, Himself). So that, as when man was ruined and got into darkness with the knowledge of good and evil, God only could deliver him, He delivered him necessarily for His own glory according to His own nature. He put man provisionally on another ground of perfect creature blessing (but as a sinner apart from Himself) to bring out where he was in sin, and which therefore spoke of sin and a positive curse; but this was by the by for a special end. The only real thing is innocence, or glory. Innocence in human condition is earthly, or in an angelic condition sustained is heavenly. Hence, morally speaking angels could not be brought back because of the knowledge of good and evil into the light with God (and so man in the case of Heb. 6) But, innocence lost, with the knowledge of good and evil the work of God is according to His own glory and hence necessarily brings into it. The law provisionally spews the abstract moral perfection of a knowledge of good and evil in a creature, but was in fact founded relatively on prohibition of evil which brought in, when really apprehended, the conviction of sin.

Chapter 219

Prospect and Retrospect

Psalm 65; Psalm 66

(Psa. 65; 66)

How different oftentimes is the anticipation from the result! Conjuring up bright visions of the future, man looks forward with eagerness to what fades away as he approaches it, like the mirage of the desert; or, if the event expected really happens, the reality falls far short of the conception. The happiness anticipated either eludes the grasp, or comes alloyed with some bitterness, the fruit of man's sin. Eve desired the fruit of the tree to make her wise. She got it, and discovered her nakedness. Gehazi carried home the garments and talents, and found himself and his house burdened with the leprosy of Naaman forever. Judas received his price, but found life insupportable. God "gave Israel their request, and sent leanness into their soul." (Psa. 106:15.) Yet we are to live in anticipation of the future. There is more to be enjoyed than we have yet entered into. "We are saved in hope." (Rom. 8:24.) The Lord would have His sorrowing disciples embrace the hope of His return to sustain them during His absence. And this, the expectancy of a future of blessing, has characterized God's people in all ages. Man's visions of the future are often visionary indeed. What God has promised will surely come to pass. For though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him," He has revealed them by his Spirit. There is a future then before His saints; they have a prospect, not a mere creature of the imagination, a phantom conjured up by the brain, but a solid substantial reality. What the joy of it will be who can express? But the hope is none the less sure for that. So with the remnant of Israel in the latter day, but with this difference: their blessings are on earth—so can be described in words; ours are in heaven—so what language can express them? We may enter into their joy at going up to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. chanting His praises in Zion, without fear of man. But who can yet enter into the joy of being in the Father's house? Separated by God's Spirit acting on their hearts from the apostasy around them, the remnant are taught by the same Spirit what to desire; and, their expectation being according to God, they pour out their hearts in full confidence to Him about it. This is what we have in Psa. 65 Psa. 66 is the telling out to the earth, and all that fear God, how fully He has responded to their desires. From the one we learn their prospect, in the other we have a retrospect.

As the righteous in Israel, their first thoughts are for God and His house. "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." Such is the condition of matters in the city of the Great King. A change will, however, come. "Unto thee shall the vow be performed." We learn in Psa. 63 how the soul can be filled with marrow and fatness even in the wilderness. But present personal enjoyment of God is not all that the godly soul desires. Has not God confided to such a one His counsels? Shall the soul, made the depositary of such knowledge, be content till all is accomplished? In the wilderness it may find refreshment as it remembers Him; but what of His honor, His glory, and the place associated with the display of His power? Till all that God has spoken of in connection with His manifestation as King over the earth is fulfilled, the godly soul cannot rest satisfied. The altar

profaned, the house desolate, the worship of God stopped, are no light matters, even though he may realize the presence of the Lord where He is. Is there not something here for believers of the present day? Is my soul's salvation the ultimate end to be desired? Am I then to be satisfied, or am I also to wait God's time, but wait, expecting till the Lord takes His place on his own throne? In a word, am I to be content with knowing I am delivered from wrath, or am I to look forward desiring the advent of His kingdom, that He should have His place, His inheritance?

To return. How checkered had been the history of God's house in Mount Moriah? Often had the sound of praise been heard there, chorus answering chorus, the trumpets, cymbals, and harps joining in the melody. Now it lay waste. First shut in the days of Ahaz, it lay waste for seventy years after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. Rebuilt by the remnant in the days of Zerubbabel and Ezra, the voice of praise to God was hushed in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and all sacrifice and worship of God forbidden by royal authority. Again re-opened, it was destroyed by the Romans after the remnant had crucified the Messiah, and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. From Scripture we gather it will rise again from its ashes, to be broken down and burnt once more, ere the glory of the Lord shall be seen returning to it by the "way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east." (Psa. 74:3-8; 79:1; Ezek. 43:1-8.) It is probably of the time of its last destruction—yet future—that this Psalm speaks. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." It is silent now (see margin), but "unto thee the vow shall be performed." They look for this. For in Jerusalem alone, the place which the Lord had chosen in which to put His name, could their vows be paid. They might make them, as we read they will (Psa. 66:13, 14), when far off in the land of Jordan and the Hermonites; but to pay them, they must be at Jerusalem, and the house be rebuilt.

Bright as that day will be, they look for something else. A great change will then take place. They anticipate it. "O thou that nearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." Jerusalem, the center to which their eyes turn, shall become the center for all flesh then. The way to Zion, so often trodden by their forefathers, will be filled with others besides the remnant of the seed of Israel. The prophets have predicted this. (Isa. 2:2, 8; 66:23; Zech. 14:16.) The remnant, we see, expect it. With this another feature in the prospect is brought out. Who is worthy to appear before the Lord? They own that certainly they are not. "Iniquities prevail against me." Whatever others may think, however much men may attempt to excuse their offenses as venial faults, slight indiscretions, the godly in Israel at all events are alive to the heinousness of their sins. There is the sense of individual transgressions, and the consciousness of inability to amend their condition. They "prevail against me." Can there be a way of escape? The answer comes, "As for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away" (literally, make atonement for them). And so complete will be the work, that they look forward to the blessedness of dwelling in God's courts, and being satisfied with the goodness of God's house. The moral character of those who shall ascend to God's holy hill had been described in Psa. 15. Now, in the prospect of it, they speak of the blessedness such will enjoy. They will "dwell in thy courts." Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer night and day, knew something of this blessedness; but these will enter into it in a fuller way, for the Lord will be king, and the heathen have perished out of His land.

What a picture does this bring before us! — "satisfied with the goodness of thy house." Had the nation only valued its blessing, it had never left its land. Had Jerusalem known the time of her visitation, she would have been standing to this day. (Luke 19:44) Their blessings were justly

forfeited, the temple laid waste, strangers ruled over them, the city of the sepulchers of their fathers laid low in the dust and now, after centuries of oppression, reproaches, and wandering, they look to be satisfied with the goodness of God's house. Had the hopes of the remnant been raised only to be forever disappointed, after that the Beast and Antichrist shrwed themselves in their true colors? They yet look for the fulfillment of their desires. Psa. 36 had announced that the righteous should be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house. Here is something more specific from those who have been mourning their sins. They speak with confidence, not merely of the righteous, but, of themselves. "We shall be satisfied." The blessing will come in their day. With the word of God before them, what else could they expect? It is grace indeed, but God had beforehand announced it. It is not a taste of goodness, a slight sense of what God could give, that they look for now, but to be satiated, as Jeremiah so beautifully expressed it: "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:14.) How different is the heart of the remnant from that of their ancestors! They turned from the fountain of living waters to broken cisterns, which can hold no water. These turn to God and His house to be satisfied. This shows a thorough change of heart wrought in them: it shows too God's grace to them. Before, however, they can reach that house, there is a work to be done. They must cease to be strangers in the land of their fathers. Who is sufficient for this but God? Here again He is brought in on their behalf. The God whom their fathers had forsaken is their hope, The very One whom their ancestors crucified (for as Psa. 68 tells us, it is Adonai) will undertake their cause. "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are far off in the sea." The God of salvation is their God. Moreover He is the God of creation. His works attest His strength; the sea owns His might; the nations shall be subdued under Him.

Worship to be restored in Jerusalem—all flesh to come there to God—the transgressions of His people to be purged away—the poor persecuted flock to be satisfied with the goodness of God's house and to dwell in His courts—God interposing in righteousness on their behalf against their enemies: such is the prospect their hearts contemplate. Moreover it will be made good: they believe in their day. On what is their confidence founded? Jeremiah had suing of a day when "they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." (Jer. 31:12, 18.) Ages have passed since these words were written. Generations have come and gone, yet these promises are unfulfilled. How, then, can they feel sure it will be fulfilled to them in their day? This they proceed to explain: "Thou hast visited the earth and watered it." Their eyes see this. In the laud as the restored remnant, though outside Jerusalem, they have witnessed the renewed fertility of the soil so long, comparatively speaking, uncultivated, keeping its sabbath. It once more yields its fruit abundantly. God has remembered the laud according to His promise. (Lev. 26:42.) And this same word which speaks of that has a word of comfort for the people likewise, for He will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This renewed fertility is, therefore, expressly connected with the restoration of the people in blessing. (See Ezek. 36:8-13.) The mountains of Israel shall shoot forth their branches, and yield their fruit to God's people Israel; "for they are at hand to come." Again, Amos (chap. 9:13-15) speaks of the time when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the

treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. But that time is connected with Israel's return, and replanting upon their land to dwell there forever. That the land has been visited the remnant perceive. God has smiled on it. He has crowned or encircled the year with His goodness. It is not merely a fruitful season has been enjoyed, but the whole year bears witness to God's care of the laud. His eye is manifestly on it. The flocks have clothed the pastures once more, the grass on the hills revives, the valleys produce corn abundantly. Beholding this taking place around them, the fulfillment of God's word about the land, they look forward with certainty to its fulfillment as regards themselves. Nor are they in this disappointed, as Psa. 66 makes plain.

Jehovah has fulfilled His promise. Adonai has given the word. All the earth is summoned to make His praise glorious. Terrible things had God done for them of old. (Deut. 10:21; Isa. 64:3.) Terrible things had they looked for Him to do again. (Psa. 45:4; 65:5.) Their expectations have been answered, and all the earth is exhorted to confess it before Film. "Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works." Who can withstand Him? The heart may be unchanged, but the knee must how. For "through the greatness of thy power," they add, "shall thine enemies yield feigned obedience unto thee." (See margin.) "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Not that all will submit in heart. Some, as we all see, will yield only a feigned obedience, ready when the opportunity presents itself to rise up against Him. (Rev. 20:8, 9.)

But what are the terrible doings all are called to behold? All that He will do for them has not yet taken place. The ten tribes probably have not yet re-entered the land. Gog and Magog with their armies have not invaded the country. But the train of events has begun to unfold which usher in the final blessing of the people. "He has turned the sea into dry land." They add, "They shall go through the river on foot, there shall we rejoice in him." Part is accomplished. They look for the whole. When God brought His people out of Egypt, a Pharaoh pursued after them: the Red Sea owned His power. When Israel entered Canaan under Joshua, Jordan was driven back. Is it of these events they speak? A day is coming when their second deliverance shall be uppermost on men's minds. (Jer. 16:14, 15.) Is it not of this rather that they now speak, the recent intervention in power predicted by Isaiah (chap. 11:15, 16), the utter destruction of the tongue of the Egyptian sea? With that the prophet connects the smiting of the Euphrates, that men may go over dry-shod, in order that the outcasts of Israel should be assembled, and the dispersed of Judah gathered together. "They shall go through the river on foot." The deliverance of Judah and Benjamin precedes, it would seem, the return of the ten tribes. Isaiah in the passage speaks of what is needed for the return of both. Does the psalm distinguish between them? His power displayed in their deliverance, the world will know Him as King, "ruling by his power forever." Such is the character in which He will be displayed to the Gentiles, "His eyes behold them. Let not the rebellious exalt themselves." If such the admonition addressed to them, how cheering is the note His ransomed ones raise: "Bless our God, ye nations, make the voice of his praise to be heard." And why? Because there is another character in which He has been displayed to His own, "Holding our soul in life and suffering not our feet to be moved." This was their experience. Tried they had been, and that by God; purified too as silver in the fire. Zechariah had spoken beforehand of this. (Chap. 13.) Brought into the net, they had been conversant with affliction. Men had ridden over their heads, for God had permitted it. (See Isa. 51:23) Fire and water had they passed through. But they have the same tale to tell about all. Jehovah had preserved them (Isa. 43:1-3)

and placed them in a wealthy place.

God had done great things for them, what shall they do for Him? This now occupies their attention. To His house they will go, for it is open to them; the way to Jerusalem is no longer barred against them. Each individual of the remnant will gladly tread His courts, and pay their vows. “I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings, and pay thee my vows.” And this in no scanty, niggard way. Burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams, they will offer with bullocks and goats—all the animals of the flock and herd which the law allowed. What sacrifice too costly from those who have received so much? What offering too great for Him who has done so much? Yet all is not done that they can do. The earth was exhorted to see God’s terrible acts. They that fear Him are exhorted to come and hear what He has done for His people. The poor and afflicted had cried to God in their extremity, and He had heard. Sinful they were, but He had answered them, a proof of righteousness in their walk, and acceptance before Him. But it was all of grace. “Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.” What a tale have they to tell of God? Looking back on what they had passed through, they rest not till all who fear Him are acquainted with it. When the Lord was on the earth, one only of the ten lepers returned to give glory to God; now all the ransomed ones desire to make known His praise. This occupies the heart so much that they look, by God’s mercy and blessing, to be displayed towards them, that the nations, the peoples, the Gentiles should share in it. Through their blessing shall God’s way be known on earth, His salvation among all the Gentiles (Psa. 67:2.) Nations, yea all nations, shall praise Him; peoples shall rejoice and be glad; for God will judge nations in uprightness, and give rest to the people on the earth. What a change does this indicate in the political world resulting from the blessings of Israel! Their thoughts in harmony with God’s mind run on to this. For the earth has given her increase (Psa. 67:6), not “will,” but “has.” They see the earnest in this of all that follows. Israel shall be restored, the ten tribes be brought back to join their brethren now in the land. God’s word must have its accomplishment. “He shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.” Who would have thought that the seed of the houseless, homeless Jacob should ever be a blessing to the world? God promised it when to outward eyes Jacob’s fortunes were at the lowest ebb. (Gen. 28:14.) God will fulfill it, however great the vicissitudes which may intervene.

Chapter 220

On Prophecy

There are two distinct parts in prophecy: the prophecies addressed to the people of God during the time they are owned of Him, and those which refer to that people when they are not thus owned. In the first case, the prophecy appeals to the conscience of the people; in the second, there is a certain amount of truth containing the details of the ways of God during that time, and deposited in certain hands for the use of the people, when they will turn again to the Lord their God. But it is not addressed to the people. Such is the difference between Isaiah and Jeremiah on the one hand, and Daniel on the other. The difference is, that, in the first case, God addresses His people according to the principles of His government; while in the second, it is a sovereign government, outside His own special ways with His people. He acts in this way or in that way with the Chaldeans and diverse nations, but it is not according to the acknowledged measure of His ways with His people.

This gives us two classes of prophecies. When the people are thus acknowledged in the prophecy, it is a question of the outward enemy that attacks them; in the other case, it is a question of certain powers of which God gives us the history, of powers which oppress God's people and hold them under bondage._

Then, when it is a question of the people, if we come to details, there are two things. First, the responsibility of the people as such—their responsibility to own Jehovah, His law, &c. Secondly, the responsibility of the family of David, which is quite another thing, because God gave David in grace, when the people had altogether failed. We may add besides (but it is a special point), the responsibility of having rejected Christ.

We have spoken of the Jews; but there is another subject of prophecy, that is, the Gentiles. The distinction, already made between the people as owned or not owned, is again found here. Men having exalted themselves at Babel, God judged them by scattering them. But, by means of languages, God forms the nations as a circle round Israel which becomes their center. (Deut. 32:8.) On the other hand, the nations do not own Israel; on the contrary, they rise up against them, and make war against them, yet without success as long as they are faithful to their God. But later on Israel fails also, and all is changed. Men not having retained the blessing through obedience, God introduces a different thing altogether: He commits power unto man; then the Gentiles come in. (See proofs in Jer. 27:6; Dan. 2:37; 5:18.) This is not the general rule of God's government, it is only a special case. In the case of the Gentiles, it is not a center for God, like Israel, nor is it any longer a people forming the center; it is a man who is center, and, moreover, the center is no longer for God; it only becomes a center for man.

In Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah, we find prophecy when the people are owned, but Judah is threatened with Ephraim's fate; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel looking at the crisis of Jerusalem.

Jonah is apart: Nahum and Obadiah also proclaim the judgment of the Gentiles.

Ezekiel is between the two, at the time when Israel are about to be led captives, and when they already go into captivity.

Joel and Habakkuk are occupied with the dealings of the last days.

Then we have the three prophets of the captivity. These hold a special place, because there was a small remnant that God had restored in the land. They are connected with this remnant according to the grace of God toward the latter. In the last three prophets God never says “My people.” All these elements are found again at the end: the repentance of Israel, the acknowledgment of Christ, the judgment of the nations, the Assyrian, &c.

In Daniel we have the times of the Gentiles, and in particular the era of the head of gold, namely, government committed to man, and its consequences. This prophet never takes up the time of God’s government; he goes as far as the limit and then stops.

In Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi you have the two things: the Gentiles and the remnant owned during the time of the power of the Gentiles. They are owned in judgment (so also the two witnesses in the Apocalypse).

Zechariah presents Christ and the nations.

Malachi has rather, it seems to me, a special character. It is with Jehovah that he has more particularly to do: he is occupied with the law, with the prophets, with Jehovah—he urges a return to Jehovah.

It is a most serious thing to see the government of God, because men pretend that, it’ only they had power, all would go on well; and God gives them power that they may make the trial. We shall only find details at that point of departure when God’s government has ceased, and we find the beasts. (Dan. 7-9.)

The first six chapters of the book give us the historical circumstances, and Daniel does but interpret them. In the following, it is revelations given to Daniel, and the consequence is that here we have not only the history of the world, but the remnant and their connection with those who have power in the world.

Chapter 7. First, there are three visions in this chapter: the first vision, verse 2; the second vision, verse 7; the third vision, verse 13. After this we have the explanation.

But, in verse 9, translate “the thrones were set,” not “cast down” on earth. The thrones were set for judgment. In verse 11 the question is not about the manner in which the judgment is executed. Verse 12 is literally, “As to the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; but a prolongation of life was granted unto them for a season and a time.” Then, in verse 13, we have the introduction of the Son of man, and the fact that the kingdom is given unto Him. He does not yet judge the beasts. Verse 18. Who are the saints mentioned here? There are saints who belong to heaven by their calling, as there are saints of the high places on the earth. The first form the Church; the latter are saints who pass through the earth before the moment is come when God gives the reward; but then they do not on that account lose their reward. God finds them again, in resurrection, for heaven. These would be the saints in this verse, those whom the beast slays, &c.: but though slain here below, they fail not to have their reward on that account. They are named

without anything about the Church, which is the body of Christ.

Here we have the fourth beast; but when we come to details, we have the last half week.

Verse 20. A horn represents the power of a beast; the ten horns are the power of the last beast. The ten horns arise from the beast; the barbarians did not arise from the empire, they entered into it.

Verse 24. “Another shall arise” (the little horn). This is its character: it subdues three kings; it speaks great words against the Most High; it wears out the saints. It is not the saints that are given into his hand, but the times and laws. I do not believe that, in the word, the saints are ever given up thus. This it is important to remark, because men have tortured their brains to find out in what circumstances they will be given up. Well, then, I say, Never.

It is very evident that in Rev. 13 there are two powers which subsist together; here the little horn belongs rather to the beast. This applies much more to the first beast in Rev. 13. I doubt whether the little horn be the Antichrist. The beast assumes the character of this horn, at least, in the eyes of God, for He judges the beast for what the horn did.

Chapter 8. Now we have the east.

Verses 11,12. Included in a parenthesis is verse 11 and the beginning of verse 12. Read these verses as follows: “(And he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and from him [the prince of the host] the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a time of distress was appointed [not to the Prince of the host] for the daily sacrifice on account of transgression). And it [the little horn] cast down the truth to the ground,” &c. At all events, the daily sacrifice is taken away from the Prince of the host. It is not said that it is the horn which takes away the daily sacrifice. The writer begins the parenthesis by saying “he;” and after its close he returns to the little horn by saying “it” (as in connection with verse 10). Verse 12 “And a time” —it is a military term, so as to mark a time of distress.

Verse 19. It is at the time of the end. All this is for the end. It is impossible to apply it to Mahomet, although there is a certain similarity. Therefore we have here the time of the end clearly marked. It is God’s indignation against Israel, and the Assyrian is the instrument of it. My desire has been to attach myself more particularly to the explanation that is given of the prophetic word, because it presents things very clearly, and it is well to lay hold of the things clearly given in the word.

In Dan. 7 the little horn subdues three kings; and of this the book of Revelation says nothing, because Daniel gives the history, and the book of Revelation that which is characteristic.

In chapter 9:27, “And he shall confirm a covenant with the mass [of the people].” In Hebrew, it is “to the many.” The word “many” admits of the article in Hebrew; and when Daniel uses it with the article, it is to designate the mass of the people as contrasted with the remnant. Dan. 12:3 means, “They that shall have instructed the many in righteousness,” i.e., the mass of the people. Christ confirms the covenant only with the remnant; this prince makes his with the many, or mass.

Chapter 221

The Place of Faith, the Work of Faith, and the Present Reward of Faith

Hebrews 6

(Heb. 6)

As we have no place on earth, but are called out of it, our place now must necessarily be only known to faith and held by faith; and if I am not in faith, I must lose sight of my place. The word of God gives me my place, declares it to me, and it is by faith that I abide in it. If I am “going on to perfection,” I am discerning things good and evil: the favors of God have not been in vain to me. I am not like the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, only to bring forth thorns and briers. I hold by faith the place which God has given me, and I abide therein, occupied with the interests of God and not my own. If I am in a place of faith, I must be dependent on God, and therefore taking thought for myself is a divergence from the place of faith.

Now if I am not in the place of faith, I cannot properly engage in the works of faith. If I depart from the place to which alone I am called, it is plain that I cannot do the things suitable or incumbent on me in that place; but, on the contrary, every attempt that I make at them must tend to damage and hinder others. Abram was called to a place in Canaan, by faith simply depending on God for it; therefore be could not choose any place for himself. Lot chose one and dropped out of the place of faith; therefore he could not serve others. If he attempted to do so, it would be but to lead them in the same downward road with himself. The works of faith did not belong to the place which he had chosen. Abram abides in the place of faith and is secure from the troubles in which Lot is involved, which is ever true even now. It may be said that a faithful Christian does not escape from the effects of tumults in the world. True, he does not escape as to temporal things; but if be by faith in heaven in Christ, be does in the spirit of his mind escape from the effects of tumults down here. Like Abram I am to have faith and patience. To abide in heaven in Christ is my place. My faith is exercised here, and the suffering here may be prolonged and continued; but I abide there, and while abiding I engage myself with everything connected with God, and with reference to the place He has set me in. In that region where He has set me, and where He alone can keep me, and where I am simply dependent on Him, it is His interests alone which engage me, and thus it is that I ministered to the saints and do minister. I do the things which accompany salvation, I am engaged with works connected with the place of faith. Thus did Abram. He gathers together all his resources, and, at his own risk, by night uses and exerts them to deliver his brother Lot. God’s love is towards men, and as I am in the power of it, I must act according to the power of it, and in the direction in which it works. If I am in the place of faith, God’s interests must occupy me, for if I serve Christ, I follow Him, and when I follow Him, I am serving best. Serve Him I cannot, unless I am in the place of faith; and if I am there, I am, though “enduring afflictions,” I am occupied with His interests according to His own mind. Peter, like Lot, diverged from this place when he said “I go a fishing.” And seven went. Instead of serving, he was then hindering and damaging others. Thus did Moses at first, and thus did Saul. They failed to help when they themselves were off the

ground of faith. How could they lead others right when wrong themselves? If Lot wants well-watered plains, surely he is off the ground of faith, and he is found helpless among the unrighteous. If Peter is restless, he is off faith—goes a fishing and has company enough; but anything but blessing follows them. If Saul wants distinction, he is off faith and is rash and extreme in everything. Abraham abides in faith and patience. Paul abides in faith and patience, and they serve truly and well to the end.

And not only so, but their own souls know it. And this is the present reward of faith. Abram is refreshed and blessed by Melchisedec. Paul knows himself to be “possessed of all things.” What a reward for the work of faith! What wages, if we may so say! It is the “fullness of joy,” which the Lord pronounces to be the portion of the one who keeps His commandments and abides in His love. (John 15) Serving Christ the soul is cheered and refreshed on the way. ‘How much greater is the cheer that Christ pours into the heart of the true servant than Melchisedec could to Abram! Thus the true servant is not depressed and complaining, or comparing present things with the past; dissatisfied and discontented, retiring into corners to unburden his murmurings; but, on the contrary, he is so truly from the place of faith doing the works of faith, according as the interests of Christ are presented to him, that he knows in his own soul the reward of faith. He has his wages—fullness of joy—Christ unfolding Himself to him in blessed nearness, and he knowing the fellowship of the Holy Ghost; and what the kingdom of God is—even righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 222

Babylon

(Rev. 17; 18)

“Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.” This is a saying much to be remembered. It teaches us that we are not to make ourselves the judges of what sanctification or holiness is; God’s word is to determine this; because holiness is that character or mind which is found by God’s word or truth.

We are apt to think that our own moral sense of things is the rule of holiness. But the word of God claims to be such a rule: “Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.” (John 17)

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense, or the religious sense, of man approves, how would it change its character! And the Lord cannot change His standard of holiness, though He may be infinitely gracious to the shortcomings of His saints.

Those other words, “for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified through the truth,” which stand in connection, have their own force and value also. Thus, in the whole of His utterance in John 17, the Lord strongly takes a place apart from the world, and puts His saints in the like place, praying that they may be kept there. In this sense, I believe, He speaks of sanctifying Himself. Through all this Church-age He is apart from the world and the earth, and sanctification depends on our communion with Him in that separated place. “The truth,” testifying as it does of Him, links us with Him in that place; and sanctification is thus “through the truth,” leading us to fellowship with an unworldly Jesus.

We may see instances of such sanctification from the beginning.

When the ground was cursed for man’s sake, holiness was separation from it, as in the persons of the antediluvian saints; uncleanness was cleaving to it, as did the family of Cain.

When the earth again corrupted itself and God judged it by the scattering of the nations, holiness was separation from it, as in Abraham; and apostasy was a clinging to it in spite of judgment, as Nimrod did.

When Canaan was judged, Achan’s sin savored of the apostate mind; but Israel became a holy people by separation from it and from all people of the earth by the ordinances of God and the sword of Joshua.

But Israel revolts. The circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and with them all on the face of the earth or in the world becomes defiled, and holiness is separation from it in companionship with a rejected heavenly Christ.

The whole thing, the world, is the judged or cursed thing now. It is the Jericho. While the camp lingers in the wilderness, we may be at charges or in labors in a mission to draw out the Rahabs; but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and capabilities of the world. Such doings would be unholy, not according to “the truth,” however morally conducted, or

benevolently intentioned.

Glory in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the perfect thing of this age; there must be companionship with a rejected Christ also. Babylon, I believe, the mystic Babylon of the Revelation, may be brought to boast in a crucified Christ, and be Babylon still. For what is it as delineated by the Spirit? Is it not a thing worldly in character as well as abominable and idolatrous in doctrine and practice? Rev. 17; 18 give us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness much more than in its idolatries. Babylon of old, as in the land of Chaldea, was full of idols, and guilty of the blood or of the sorrows of the righteous. But it had also this mark; it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression. So the mystic Babylon. She has her abominations in the midst of her, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus stains her; but still more fully is she disclosed as great and splendid, and joyous in the earth during the age of Christ's rejection. She is important in the world in that day when the judgment of God is preparing for the world: she can glorify herself and live deliciously in a defiled place.

It is not that she is ignorant of the cross of Christ. She is not heathen. She may publish Christ crucified, but she refuses to know Christ rejected. She does not continue with Him in His temptations, nor consider the poor and needy Jesus. (Luke 22; Psa. 41) The kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth her subjects.

Is not, then, the rejection of Christ the thing she practically scorns? Surely it is. And again I say, the prevailing thought of the Spirit about her is this—she is that which is exalted in the world while God's Witness is depressed and in defiance of that depression, for she knows of it. Babylon of old well knew of the desolations of Jerusalem; Christendom now well knows and publishes the cross of Jesus.

Babylon of old was very bold in her defiance of the grief of Zion. She made the captives of Zion to contribute to her greatness and her enjoyments. Nebuchadnezzar had done this with the captive-youths, and Belshazzar with the captive-vessels.

This was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom. Christendom is the thing which glorifies herself and lives deliciously in the earth, trades in all that is desirable and costly in the world's esteem in the very face of the sorrow and rejection of that which is God's. Christendom practically forgets Christ rejected on the earth.

The Mede or Persian is another creature. He removes Babylon, but he exalts himself. (Dan. 6) And this is the action of the Beast and his ten kings. The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings; but then they give their power to the Beast who exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, as Darius the Mede did.

This is the closing, crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet. Our conflict is with Babylon and not with the Mede, with that which lives deliciously and in honor during the age of Jerusalem's ruins (i.e., of the rejection of Christ).

Chapter 223

Kingdom of Heaven and of God

Two sentences of two papers have been attacked with sufficient readiness to suspect evil.

One is in the August number, on John 18, p. 128. I might be surprised that any discerning reader should not have gathered from the drift of the paper that morally (not “totally”) ought to have been printed.

The other occurs in Remarks on Mark 14 (Sept. No., p. 137, col. 1), where the writer says that expiation properly is “not the pure, however precious, act of Christ’s death.” This has been tortured to mean a denial that Christ suffered for our sins, or that such suffering up to death is atonement! Can perversity go farther? One main point of the passage, which extends over a long paragraph, is that while His death was necessary for expiation, His endurance of divine wrath, forsaken of God for our sins, was the essential thing (not without this the act of dissolution). Possibly those who found fault here are not aware how far enemies of the truth go in destroying the atonement by making it consist in the bare death and blood of Christ without the bearing of God’s judgment of sin—a fatal error. None but the divine person of the Son, become man, can meet the case; without the shedding of His blood was no remission; His death was absolutely requisite to free us from sin: but all this availed only because He endured the forsaking of God for sin.

Chapter 224

To Correspondents: He Endured the Forsaking of God for Sin

“One really distressed” does not understand the meaning of that which is in question. The uniform doctrine of the papers on the “sufferings of Christ” (which appeared in these pages in 1858, since then reprinted exactly) is that the smiting of Christ actually took place only on the cross. He did feel anticipatively in Gethsemane what He was about to undergo; and the more deeply in grace, because He was not under it by any necessity of His person. That is, He entered in spirit before the cross into that which only came upon Him when crucified. To quarrel with this language (which is only the reflection of scriptural statements, as has been proved without the semblance even of an effort at disproof from God’s word) seems to me petulance, where it is not a deeper opposition to the truth, and malice against those who are content with scripture. The actual smiting of Psa. 69:26, as far as Christ was concerned, was on the cross, but atonement is not there contemplated; for others are similarly spoken of in the same verse, and are they, too, atoning? Does not every upright and intelligent saint see that this association of others puts atonement out of the question? Produce one passage which makes the actual smiting before the cross; or own yourself mistaken.

Chapter 225

The Glory in the Cloud

The cloud which conducted Israel through the wilderness was the servant and the companion of the camp. But it was the veil or the covering of the glory also. Commonly it appeared in the sight of Israel only as a cloud, and the glory was known only by faith to be within it. But still the glory was always there, and at times it shone forth.

Such was that beautiful mystery. It was occasionally a bidden, occasionally a manifested glory. It was the servant and the companion of the camp, but It was, so to speak, its God also.

Now, all this was Jesus, God manifest in flesh, God in “the form of a servant” commonly, occasionally shining forth in divine authority, and always entitled to the honor of the sanctuary of God.

Let us look at instances of this shining forth.

Israel had to be defended. The cloud changes its place and comes between Egypt and the camp, and then the glory looks through it and troubles the host of Egypt, so that they come not nigh Israel all the night, and this was doing for the camp the service of God.

Just so, Jesus. On a kindred occasion Jesus acts exactly as the cloud and the glory on the banks of the Red Sea. He comes between the disciples and their pursuers. “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” He defends them; and then, as of old in the borders of Egypt, He looks through the veil and troubles the enemy again; and all this with the same ease, the same authority, as in the day of Pharaoh. He did but, as it were, look out again. He did but show Himself, saying, “I am he,” and the Egyptians lie on the shore again. (See Ex. 14:24, and John 18:6.) Can we refuse to see the God of Israel in Jesus? “Worship him, all ye gods.” He is the God of Psa. 97:7, and yet Jesus. (Heb. 1:6.) The Egyptian gods worshipped Him at the Red Sea, and the Roman gods in the garden of Gethsemane. And when brought again as the first-be-gotten into the world, it shall be said, “Let all the angels of God worship him.”

But further, Israel had to be rebuked as well as defended, to be disciplined as well as saved. The same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work as well as the other.

In the day of the manna, in the day of the spies, in the matter of Korah, and at the water of Meribah (Ex. 16; Num. 14; 16:20) Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and as often the Lord resents it. The glory is seen in the cloud, expressing this resentment, a witness against the camp.

Just so Jesus in His day. When grieved at their unbelief or hardness of heart, He asserts His glory, His divine person and power in the midst of the disciples, and is thus, as of old in the wilderness, rebuking their way. (Mark 4:37-41; 5:39-43: 6:36-51; John 14:8-11.)

Surely, here again was the mystery of the glory in the cloud realized in Jesus, God manifest in flesh. That cloud veiled the glory, and was at once the servant and the God of Israel. The cloud was the ordinary thing; the glory was occasionally manifested, but it was always there, and in the

temple. And is not Jesus in all this?

But I would look a little more particularly at one instance of Jesus as the hidden glory, alluded to above, that in John 14 In the parting scene on the shore at Miletus, we see the dear apostle full of affection towards the saints, and also strong in the consciousness of integrity. (Acts 20) But there is no glory shining out there. Paul was a servant and a brother, He was a vessel in God's house. Others had been blessed through him: but he was, all the while, a companion, a brother, a fellow-servant, a minister, and apostle, and such only. No veil is to be rent to let him appear other than he is seen to be. There was no hidden glory in him, nothing to be manifested personally which had not been manifested.

But there is another parting scene where we get this. I mean that which is presented to us in John 13-17 We find there the tokens of the most devoted affection, as we may get in Paul on the shore at Miletus. Jesus girds Himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and washes His disciples' feet. But with all this, mark the sense of His authority and of Himself, of His office, and of His person, which fills His soul. He knows Himself to be the "Lord and Master," though washing their feet, and "that he was come from God and went to God." (John More is glory in the cloud again. He is the servant of the camp again, but when Israel's ways or worlds challenge or demand it, Israel shall again, for their rebuking, look to the wilderness again (Ex. 16:10), and see the glory in the cloud. And so, quickly afterward (John 14:1-3), the same Jesus would render them other service. He would prepare mansions for them in heaven, as well as wash their feet while on earth. He would alto return to take them home. But if the disciples, like the camp of old, be unbelieving, the glory shall shine through the cloud for their confounding, and Jesus will say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father."

Thus, Jesus is the clouded glory. And very grateful all this truth is to those who trace, and delight to trace, that glory in its full brightness because of the thickness of the veil under which, in measureless grace, He hid it. He was the servant and the companion of the camp still, on whatever stage of the journey they were. Here was love—the patient serving love known of old to Israel in the desert. But it is the love of the glory. That is the joy, had we but hearts to take it. Paul's was love, patient, serving love. But it was the love of a brother, of a fellow-servant, of a man of "like passions," the service of a Moses. Jesus' was the love of the glory.

The glory in the cloud was the God of Israel. (Ezek. 43:4; 44:2.) The God of Israel was Jesus of Nazareth. (Isa. 6:1; John 12:41.) The Nazarene was as the cloud which veiled a light, which, in its proper fullness, no man can approach unto, though discovered by faith.

Here let me add that it is the business of faith (through the indwelling Spirit) to discover the hidden true glory, and to refuse the displayed false glory. How quickly Abram discovered it! (Gen. 18:3.) How beautifully Abigail owned it in David, type of Christ! (1 Sam. 25) How did the wise men discover it in a manger, after they had passed by all the false displayed glory of the world round Tiered in Jerusalem! (Matt. 2) And how did old Simeon discover it in the Child, the same Child in the temple, and passed by all the religion, glory, and array which was then filling that very same spot! (Luke 2) Faith was doing this, discovering hidden glory, all through the life of Jesus. Under the despised form of the Galilean, at one time, the Son of God was owned; at another, the Jehovah of Israel; at another, the Creator of the world; at another, the Son of David or the King of

Israel. All these were different glories of the same person hid under the same veil.

How precious to Christ was that faith which rent the veil! The wise men, Simeon, Anna, rent the veil of infancy, the dying thief rent the veil of the cross. And see Mark 10 The Lord was speaking of His deepest humiliation (ver. 34), but at that very moment the sons of Zebedee speak of His kingdom and desire it. The multitude speak of “Jesus of Nazareth” (ver. 47), but the blind beggar at that very moment speaks of “the Son of David” and prays to Him for help.

How precious is sweet faith as this! And I ask myself, am I rending veils in like power of faith? Do I see glory in the Church still? not doctrinally merely in the person of Christ, but really and livingly in the persons elf His people? If I am delighting in, and honoring, a member of Christ under the veil of worldly degradation, such as men would neglect and despise, I am doing this ancient beautiful work of faith, rending veils.

Chapter 226

Our Pilgrimage, Priesthood and Suffering

(1 Peter 2)

PETER looks on the Christian as one redeemed and set out on his pilgrimage on his way to the inheritance. Having got redemption, the forgiveness of sins, knowing they are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, they were reminded that there was an inheritance kept for them, ready to be revealed, and they set out on the journey as pilgrims and strangers here. This is very precious, especially when we see Christ before us in it. None was so thoroughly a pilgrim and stranger as Christ, and He says of the disciples, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” His life becomes our example. This path to glory, following in His footsteps, is founded on redemption being fully accomplished.

This is very different from the truth, brought out in another place, of our being “seated in heavenly places in Christ.” This we have in Ephesians.

In the beginning of chapter 2 there are some things I desire to notice. Chapter 1:17 speaks of passing the time of your sojourning here in fear. This is not heaven; there is no fear in heaven; but when I talk of sojourning here, I have cause to fear. The saints know at what a price they have been redeemed out of the world. Then go and act as those redeemed.

Ver. 21. “Who by him do believe in God.” Many souls believe in Christ, but hardly know what it is to believe in God by Him: it is to get a knowledge of what God Himself is in Christ. It is not any knowledge of salvation through interest in Christ’s blood, but to know God’s thoughts in connection with His Son. There is not only His goodness, but great depth in it: for He thought of me before I thought of Him. He takes every day interest in me; He is going to conform me to the image of His Son, the firstborn among many brethren. The soul confides in God: “that your faith and hope may be in God” (not in Christ, which is true too). But I believe in God by means of Christ. I do not only think of Him as a Judge, but as a Savior God. I have got home in spirit to God and would walk with Him: as of Israel, God says He brought them on eagles’ wings to Himself. Thus we are put into relationship with God, who has begotten us again in Christ raised up from the dead out of the whole scene. Flesh is all gone: “the grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away” (ver. 24)—the people as well as the nations. Take any—all—flesh: it is entirely worthless. It seems hard to say it is gone when we pass through all the bustle and vanity of the world; but to faith it is done with already. New life is received through the incorruptible seed of the word. We are set in a new place—going through a world we do not belong to, as pilgrims and strangers. Christ is our pattern.

In chapter 2 we first find what we are as priests in a double way.

Ver. 4. Christ came down from God, and He must be disallowed of men. Everything seen in Christ was the perfect reflection of God; and we who are now seen before God in Christ have therefore all Christ’s perfectness in His eyes. We are “living stones,” having the very same nature and life within: here is the first thing noticed. We are built up “a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up,” &c. Our function is to be constantly worshipping God. “Father, I thank thee that thou hast

heard me." We are before God in the holy place— "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Aaron's priesthood shows it in a figure. None but a priest had a right to go before God at all. We are a consecrated people—yea, priesthood—having "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. 10 alludes to this consecration of the priests, sprinkled with blood. Offering up "spiritual sacrifices is for ourselves (I speak not now of intercession for others), the consequence of being born of God and consecrated to Him. We are spiritual and not mere carnal priests, and have something spiritual to offer up. It is an immense and very distinct privilege of all Christians, and this now. God owns no other priests, but all saints are priests—it extends to every believer in the world. There is no true priesthood distinct from this, save that of Christ for us. 171 (priest) means one brought nigh by sacrifice, bringing that which puts nigh.

"Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious," &c. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious [or, is the preciousness]. This is sometimes looked at as an experience of feeling; but what is here meant shows the contrast between a believer and an unbeliever. Though "precious" to the believer, He is a "stone of stumbling" to the "disobedient," appointed not to disobey, but, being disobedient, to stumble at the word.

Ver. 9 calls "that ye should show forth the praises [virtues, excellencies] of Him," &c. This is not offering sacrifices; it is rather the Melchizedec pattern than the Aaronic. When Christ takes His place as Melchizedec, He will lead the praises of the people, and it will be the manifestation of His excellence and the praise will be made good by what He is. Here, if all the saints were what they should be, His praise would be manifested. When we see Him, we shall be like Him, and His praise will be shown. There is the priesthood of worship, as being brought nigh; there is the showing forth of His worth as a kingly priesthood: this is the kingly part. In Rev. 4 the twenty-four elders, referring to the full courses of priests, show forth His praises in glory. There is displayed glory in them a wonderful testimony to the efficacy of the work of Christ. There is the throne of judgment set and the twenty-four crowned elders sitting in peace, associated with Him in the judgments. Their position shows the completeness of the work that has set us to show forth His praises. Then they prostrate themselves before God, and that is worship. In the judgments they are associated with Him; when His praise is sounded, they worship. Worship is the highest display of what God has done and is shown out. It goes out to God and owns what He is. There is this double blessing come with a royal priest hood.

Showing forth the praises of Him thus does not mean preaching the gospel. Peter speaks of what they were as a royal priesthood, and going in as a holy priesthood. Showing forth His praises is down here, and does not carry with it so much the stamp of thanksgiving, gratitude, but it equally takes in the thought of redemption. We are brought into "marvelous light" to show forth that light. While Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. Now we have to show forth His light. We have an interested heart in it—the interest of those who have been and are the objects of His love. "Return to thine own house and show how great things God hath done for thee." Called out of darkness into His marvelous light, we stand before the world as witnesses for God. In the first, the priest belongs to the holy place, as going in to worship God. In the second, on the other hand, he is called to show forth His praises to the world. A priest is consecrated as well as redeemed. So we now worship, and have to show forth Him who has called us. We know Him by what He has been to us and done for us. We "are not of the world." Looking at Christ as specially gone in and

as coming out, we follow Him in spirit going in, and anticipate His coming forth by now showing forth His praises. He sets the saints to do first what He will do Himself perfectly. The Church has failed. He set it to show forth His praise. What has broken down He, however, will accomplish Himself in power, when He comes forth in glory. This gives a peculiarly distinct character to our call. He said, “I have sent them into the world.” Were they not in the world? Not in the highest, truest sense, for they were by grace taken out of the world. They were a peculiar people “that they should show forth” Of Israel God said, “This people have I formed for myself” —a peculiar people to Himself; they for earth and we for heaven. This gives a distinct character to the walk, which should speak of Him who has set them so to live. Why can we do this and that? Because He has done this and that for us. Our position and ways should speak for Him.

The “marvelous light” goes with sin all put away, and not a spot left on us. Our whole business in the world (in going through labor and toil, it may be), the one thing to do is to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us thus. The blind man thought it wonderful if they could not see He had opened his eyes. It gives us a deep responsibility to be put in such a place. Begotten again by Christ’s resurrection, we are not men in the world; as redeemed persons we are, of course, born again, but to be a holy priesthood near Him, so as to worship Him, and a royal priesthood to show forth His praises. There are also the joys and privileges of the heart right with God through Christ and His work.

But what have they to do in the world? “I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them.” That is a part of Christ too. Now we see what it is to be a witness for Christ—the world hates them.

Ver. 20. “If ye do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” What would the world say to this? What! let every one trample on you? The world trampled on Christ. I am not speaking of this country or any other in particular, but; in the world all over, oppression, misery, discontent, are going on. I am not of the world, though I may mourn over it. To see them devouring widows’ houses is a terrible thing, especially under religious pretexts: but we have not to set things to rights. We have a peculiar place as Christians. We have immense privileges and consequent position in the world. “If ye do well, and suffer for it, and take it patiently,” &c. This is Christ reproduced in His members. These are the praises of God shown forth by it, not rights in the world. One may as a Christian go through the world very quietly in a general way; but if there is the contrary, and one takes from me my coat, shall I not give him my cloak also? If I have lost my coat and kept Christ’s character, I see nothing to regret. The effect of being put into the world as a peculiar people, begotten again, redeemed, priests holy and royal, is to present His character in the world; and the measure is as our faith or unbelief. The sufferings of Christ went much farther than any little we may suffer. “When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” These sufferings of Christ give another character to all I may have to go through. When Christ is before me, I have another object, another motive. The early Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Why? Because it was for Christ’s sake. We have very little of this in England, more in some other countries. Christ being stamped upon all characterizes our showing forth what He is. We have a natural sense of righteousness, quite contrary to the spirit shown in Christ which we have to follow.

There are two very distinct kinds of suffering that Christ endured. In redemption Christ suffered (chap. 3:9). If you suffer, let it not be for sins. Christ has done that for you. “He once suffered for

sins, the just for the unjust." Do not talk of suffering for sin; that is not what a Christian has to do. Here is the complete contrast of Christ's suffering and the Christian's. Christ suffered alone in that, never to have a follower. He stood alone that there might never be an atom of wrath for us. From whom did He suffer this? From God. Christ suffered for sin from Him. He drank that dreadful cup at His hands: and the effect of Christ's suffering for sin from God is that all judgment is passed from them who believe. They have no fellowship in the cup of wrath. Their sins were therein, and that was all from them. The ark in the midst of Jordan typifies this. When I come to the other character of His sufferings, it was for righteousness' sake, and for love. Walking through the world and up to the cross, He suffered dreadfully from man, the contradiction of sinners, &c. There were "dogs" there, "strong bulls of Bashan" staring upon Him at the last. He suffered from those around closing in upon Him. Even on the cross He had this kind of suffering as well as the others. Men were instruments of Satan to bring all kinds of suffering on Christ.

Suffering for righteousness' sake and for His name's sake are different. One person may suffer for a good conscience and another may suffer martyrdom for preaching Christ. This last is for His name's sake. These two kinds of suffering are distinguished in the sermon on the Mount, and also here in chapters 3 and 4; that which is for His name's sake is a higher kind than for righteousness' sake. Christ was the light, and they hated the light. He was hated for His goodness and for the activity of His love also. Through His active life Christ had no suffering from God. When suffering from God, "the hour" was come. It was at the close He was under the judgment; and unmingled grace is the result. On the other hand, His sufferings from man for righteousness will be followed by judgment. "Let their table become a snare." (Compare Psa. 69 with Psa. 22)

Christ is an example to us in His suffering from men. I am partaker of His sufferings. He suffered from the unbelief of those around Him. "He sighed deeply in his spirit," mentioned on one occasion, "because of the hardness of their heart," seeing this wretched world going on, deceiving itself: we ought to feel it too. He suffered also perfectly with the feeling of a man. "Reproach hath broken my heart." "They may tell all my bones." "They look and stare upon me." Hanged up as a malefactor before the world, He felt it all; and the more refined the feeling, the more acutely His disciple's unfaithfulness was felt by Him, though love to Peter brought him back.

The nature of man does not like to be reviled now for preaching the gospel or righteous ways. "Unto you it is given." (Phil. 1) We do not ordinarily think of it as a gift at all, we do not like it. But Christ bore our sins, "that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness," even to the laying down our life. There should be no limit to suffering in the service of love. There is no suffering to get into the position, but suffering because of being in it.

This makes very clear the distinction between responsibility and grace. Duties flow from a relationship that exists already. If a man is legal he expects to get something for his suffering. Grace teaches me that I am always to act as a child, because I am one. The believer is what he has to praise Him for. "We are made the righteousness of God in Christ." Therefore I can go and speak of it. Because of my lot in the blessing, I can go and show forth His praises.

What a blessing to carry the consciousness of what God is through this world!

In prayer I have not only to ask for things, but to realize the presence of Him to whom I speak. The power of prayer is gone, if I lose the sense of seeing Him by faith. Prayer is not only asking right

things, but having the sense of the person there. If I have not that, I lose the sense of His love and of being heard. We are brought into His “marvelous light,” by which we are to test everything we do. Let us suffer for doing well. This is not easy unless Christ and the power of grace are dwelling in our hearts.

The word of God presents various relations—for instance, the bride of Christ, and brethren one with another. Affections and duties too belong to each relationship. Again, the Christian can be viewed as having to say to God while walking on the earth. Or the Church may be collectively looked at as the fullness of Christ: we are thus members of His body; we are identified with Him in heavenly places (this position being revealed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven). In Col. 1 the apostle speaks of his being minister of the Church, “to fulfill the word of God.” The word of God was completed when the Church was brought out. All the truth of God was then revealed. It was looked at as needing nothing to be added. It had been given partially before; then all had come out.

There is the individual position of a child of God, wanting daily supplies from God, as His child. He loves His child, caresses His child, chastens His child; and then His patience and help are exercised over us.

But we cannot lightly speak of His patience towards Christ’s body as such. In Ephesians we have both aspects of our position, the individual and the collective, as in the first and last parts of chapter 1. Hence we may observe that Christ is not priest to His body. Viewed as united to Him, it is perfect. Ephesians does not speak of this, and when priesthood is the subject, as in Hebrews, it is not the doctrine of the Church which he brought out. We are regarded individually in respect of need and weakness. There is abundant sweetness in knowing that He takes cognizance of all our wants and failings. In Hebrews it is said, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest.” We are not said to be seated there, as in Ephesians we are seated in Christ in heavenly places. In 1 Peter 1 we are said to be begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; it is the ground of our setting forth on this pilgrimage of which Peter speaks, “strangers and pilgrims.” We have to do with God and we have to do with the Father. God does not give up His claims as God because He is our Father, but deals with us as God in those things that relate to His claims as such. Christ walked in the perfectness of a man with God, and as a Son with the Father: through redemption He has brought us into the same position.

Never as priests have we to do with the Father. The nearest place we have as to God is priesthood: we are priests to God. Christ is not a priest between us and the Father. We have an advocate with the Father. In chapter 2:6, the holy priesthood alludes to Aaron; in verse 9, the royal priesthood refers to Melchizedec.

The high priest went into the holiest alone, “the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.” There was an analogy, but rather contrast than exact similarity. The Lord Jesus, the great high priest entered within the veil. But as to Israel, there is no priest to them until He comes out, as no priest witnessed to Israel of the acceptance of the sacrifice till Aaron came out on the day of atonement. So with Christ. He will come out to them: in the meantime, as a nation, they are maintained, kept, but must wait. For us it is different. He is gone in for believers. He Himself is not come out, but the Holy Ghost has already, and we know by virtue of this the sacrifice accepted. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” is witnessed by

the Holy Ghost; so “by whose stripes ye are healed.” All the saints of God know Christ gone in and the Holy Ghost come out.

In Heb. 10:12 Christ is seen standing in connection with Stephen. He does not sit as it were till Israel has formally rejected the testimony, when the cry of Stephen reached His ear. He took His place, sitting down until His enemies are made His footstool, after their refusal to hear the Holy Ghost’s testimony. Stephen being received to Christ in heaven, Israel as Israel must wait outside.

The consequence of Christ’s priesthood is that He makes us priests. He has entered in once into the holy place. That relates to Himself, and He makes us children with the Father and priests to God. He has the pre-eminence of course. The moment the least thought of a priesthood comes in between us and God, the truth of Christianity is gone. There is only now the priesthood of all believers. We are priests by virtue of the competency to enter the holiest of all. There is as much liberty for us to enter into the holiest as Christ Himself. To deny the priesthood of all believers is to say that all saints cannot enter into the holiest by virtue of that blood.

Israel could not go in because of that blood, and therefore they wanted priests: but now the veil is rent and the way into the holiest is open. His death made all the difference as to our right to enter. It is the contrast of theirs.

In Heb. 10:22 the allusion is to the priests who were washed with water and sprinkled with blood before they were anointed. Christ has made us all priests to God, and with that we have the title to offer praise, “spiritual sacrifices to God.” We go directly to God.

In another character, again, there is the same principle: “I say not unto you that 1 will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.” (John 16) Going to God through priests was Jewish, this is Christian.

We get into a daily condition of soul founded on the work Christ has done: exercises (not legal) of soul with God begin, as going within the veil. We are all priests: then whom are we to go for? We go together—we are a holy priesthood. In a certain sense, the priest if he sinned was to have an offering presented for him by another priest—Christ the priest. The priest offered burnt-offering and the fat of the peace-offerings for a sweet savor, without thought of sin in these, but representing worship. Zacharias (Luke 1) was burning incense within, while the people were without. On the great day of atonement the priest, as a guilty person, confessed the sins of the people. Christ on the cross stood for His people, as their substitute or representative priest. After that, when the blood was carried in, the priestly office began.

There is no veil now: we go in, whether presenting worship, praise, &c. Christ is gone in for us. I have nothing to do to offer for myself; I have an abiding title to offer sacrifice. What sacrifice? Praise, thanksgiving. Why? The only sacrifice fit for my place. I can praise God for His own glory as well as for my own blessing; but I cannot be in the holiest and mourn. If I am hindered in going in through failure, I mourn, and there is the working of His Spirit to restore the communion, but there cannot be worship, which is offered in the Holy Ghost. There is no veil that ever hides God at all now. My feet may have to be washed before I can go in rightly. (John 13) We are not fitted for worship if our feet are unclean. There is the power of the Holy Ghost needed for that, and then His work is to tell us we are unclean—not to set us worshipping when we are unclean, but to make us wash. Christ, the Advocate with the Father, the High Priest over the house of God, washes the feet

for the sanctuary. We have not ceased to be priests, but are unfitted for priestly work when we have failed; we are bathed, but we need the feet washed. There must be cleansing from all defilement, according to the purity of the place we are brought into. We can intercede for others. Not only are there holocausts, the food of God in the offering; there is another kind of offering for the saints, supposing failure in others. There is the spirit of intercession for one another, and not only offering sacrifices ourselves.

The blood has been put on the mercy-seat. We stand in its abiding (not renewed) efficacy. When we fail, it is not its renewed efficacy that we know. When did that blood lose its efficacy? Never. He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. The application of the word, called the “washing of water,” by the power of the Holy Ghost to judge us and to restore us and bring us back is what we want. This is shown, in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, in the “red heifer.” The red heifer had been burnt long ago; and they were to mix water with the ashes, so bringing the sacrifice to remembrance. The heart is brought back to remember what was done. The blood of Christ never can be repeated in its application.

Thus in verse 5 the holy priesthood is within the rent veil. The next thing (ver. 9) is “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (Melchizedec). The nation of Israel will be a kingdom of priests compared with other nations. When Christ displays His Melchizedec priesthood, He comes forth as royal priest. He has it now, we know by faith, but when He comes out He will be seen as priest on His throne. The counsels of God for Christ in connection with the earth will be fulfilled. Christ will come out with all the glory He has taken in heaven and all will be in communion with the display of His glory. He will reign as a king, and everything will be cut off that is contrary to His glory. (Lev. 9) Meanwhile we have this to do; we are set to show forth His praises who has brought us into His marvelous light. We do it in common and as individuals. It will make us suffer now.

Moses and Aaron came out, the fire spewing acceptance. It will be perfectly fulfilled in the world to come.

Our privilege is to go in as worshipping priests in the holy place, and coming out of it to show forth His praises in the world. In all this we find the office of the great High Priest to meet us— “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4), this “need” being the consciousness of our inability to do anything.

All enjoyed privileges make us humble, because they bring us into the presence of One so infinitely above us. Theoretical knowledge only puffs up. All the praise in our hearts before God should flow from the Spirit, and this will bring us into the consciousness of being in the sympathy of those there—God and Christ. Knowing God as my Father, and going to Him with the knowledge of His countenance smiling upon me are very different: the one may exist without the other. Conscious acquaintance with the thoughts of those who are there (God and Christ in the holiest) is our privilege.

Chapter 227

The Jews

It has often been shown from Scripture, in this periodical, that the Jews are to be helped back to their own land in unbelief; that the plan will seem at first eminently successful; that they will have the temple once more in Jerusalem; but that the Antichrist will present himself and be received, and, setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place, will bring on the last great conflicts of this age, the chief of the Eastern world opposing, as the Beast and the Western kings will be his allies, all to be destroyed by the Lord Jesus, the Western powers first, and the Eastern a little later. It is needless to go over ground repeatedly traversed when treating of Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apocalypse in detail, not to speak of detached essays.

The reader will carefully bear in mind that without discussing minute points, this supposes a partial gathering of the Jews to their land, especially (it would seem from Isa. 18) by the help of a friendly maritime power. But this utterly fails to bring in divine blessing; and the nations, who were kindly disposed, return with more than their old fury to disperse and destroy. To this the Lord draws attention. All that looked so promising comes to nothing. Then Jehovah appears in behalf of His people, judges the apostate Jews with their Gentile partisans as well as their foes, and brings in the real promised blessing and His kingdom over the earth. Compare also Zech. 12-14. It is only at the close of this time of crisis or at the beginning of the day of the Lord, that His gathering of scattered Israel takes place, in contradistinction from the earlier return of Jews by the aid of the Gentiles which may take place at any time. These things had been seen and stated frequently as the sole warrant of Scripture.

But it may interest many of our readers to know that there is at present a movement on foot, on purely worldly and political grounds, which aims at accomplishing that which the word of God distinctly attributes to man, destined to run, I will not say, the usual career, but a most extraordinary course of sin, pride, and blasphemy, and to end in the bitterest disappointment and by the sternest judgments of Almighty God. This will be evident to the attentive readers of the following “Note” which, after being discussed among some of the great and wise of this word’s politicians, has been communicated to leading men in various countries:

“The disturbing circumstances in which Europe is at present placed ought not to render the fact forgotten that the Eastern question, which has already agitated its governments and peoples, has the strongest tendency to rise anew, perhaps at no distant date, to complicate a situation already sufficiently grave.

“The day when this question will demand a definitive solution will, in all probability, see the whole of Europe plunged in inextricable difficulties.

“The efforts of diplomacy can lead to but sterile expedients. The present epoch, however, whose spirit of justice and of humanity tends to reject the system of violent conquests by fire and sword, holds at its disposal another and more powerful agency, that of pacific conquest by means of civilization.

“What is there, then, to do in order that grave complications be prevented, and that the East may be regenerated by the infusion therein of the spirit of the civilization of the West?

“One of the most powerful means would be the creation of a great society, which should have a character eminently international, and which should propose for itself the task of conciliating the specific interests of the various European powers with those of civilization. This society would open to the Occident sources of wealth both new and abundant; it would become for the East an efficacious means of moral regeneration. Finally, it would operate to the great honor and profit of all the nations associated therein.

“This association may present itself to the universal public in the manner as follows:

“The International Society of the Orient has for its object:

“To favor the development of agriculture, of industry, of commerce, and of public works in the East, and, above all, in Palestine.

“To obtain from the Turkish government certain privileges and monopolies, either at Constantinople or in other parts of the empire, chief of which shall be the concession and gradual advancement of the lands of Palestine.

“To distribute at cash prices such of those lands as the company will have acquired or received in concession, and to effect the colonization of the more fertile valleys of the Holy Land.

“The Turkish Empire contains resources of all kinds, which need but to be developed by a powerful company to yield large results. But the Porte possesses neither the means nor the energy necessary to originate and lead to a successful conclusion these works of public utility which are imperiously demanded for the internal development of the Ottoman Empire; restricted to its own resources it can neither augment its revenues nor create new; it is incapable of giving an energetic support to agriculture or to trade, from which alone can proceed wealth and public prosperity.

“It remains, then, to the West, where the creative forces superabound, and which possesses the requisite capital, to profit by the advantages which Turkey presents, and to take in hand a work capable of so immense results. Operations conducted with ability in this undeveloped country are naturally in the highest degree productive. But success in such an enterprise demands the formation of combinations which will have, at the same time, the approbation of the great powers and the support of the Sublime Porte. Thus, and that the society may be enabled to concentrate its energies, it will be proper to utilize certain special circumstances in which Turkey at the present moment finds itself situated, and at the very threshold Palestine offers itself to the mind as eminently fitted to become the next field of operations.

“It is known that Palestine needs only labor in order to produce abundantly. It is a country one of the most remarkable and most fertile of the globe. In it one meets the products of all the latitudes, and the emigrant of Europe finds these in the climate of his own country. Commerce and private industry, which will come to complete the work of agriculture, must attract thither, in great numbers, merchants, colonists, and capitalists, both Christian and Israelite.

“The resurrection of the Orient, seconded by an awakened religious sentiment, will be aided by the cooperation of the Jews themselves, of which the valuable qualities and remarkable aptitudes

cannot but be in the highest degree advantageous to Palestine.

“The society, after having established its commercial bureau at Constantinople and in other cities of the Turkish empire, will construct a port at Jappa, and a good road or railroad from that city to Jerusalem. Upon the route of this railroad the lands would be conceded by Turkey to the society, which would be enabled to sell them to Israelitish families. These, in their turn, would create and foster new colonies, aided by their Oriental co-religionists, whose love for their ancient nation is still as ardent as in times long past. Special committees would send hither, at their expense, Jews of Morocco, of Poland, of Moldavia, of Wallachia, of the East, of Africa, &c.

“The results sought for and achieved by the society, by means of a sincere entente rationale, the co-operation of Turkey and the establishment of Western population in Palestine, will be beyond a possibility of failure, and that, too, in a future less distant than we can think as follows:

“The reconstruction of the Holy Places at Jerusalem, which would be accomplished as an international work, and in a manner worthy of Christianity.

“The end of the conflict, which incessantly renews itself between the great powers, in regard to the Holy Places.

“The transformation of the ancient Jerusalem into a new city, which will rival in importance the finest cities of the West.

“The creation of European colonies, which will become in time the centers whence Occidental civilization will spread in Turkey and penetrate to the remote Orient.

“Under the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan, the society will administer with intelligence and equity the territories which will be transferred to it. In the same manner, for a long epoch, an English company administered and governed the Indies.

“There is ground for believing that the Sultan, recognizing the financial support which will be lent him by the enterprise, will accord to the Holy Land a special administration. Under the able direction of the Porte, this administration would offer a genuine security to the population emigrating thither, and full guarantees for the capital there invested. Thanks to the combination which will open to her so valuable resources, Turkey will not be obliged to contract new loans in order to pay the interest of its antecedent debts.

“The infant colonies will be rendered neutral, diplomatically, as has been done with the Swiss confederation, and by a treaty somewhat analogous to the convention signed at Geneva in behalf of ambulances, hospital corps, and the wounded of armies. It is less difficult than might be supposed thus to neutralize Palestine by an agreement of the great powers. There even exists a remarkable precedent in the neutralization of the Lower Danube, obtained officially from the seven powers signing the Treaty of Paris. Moreover, the commission of the Lower Danube has originated a flag and a small fleet: it possesses revenues and a numerous personnel: it seeks at present to control a loan of three millions, all in the manner of an independent state.

“To prepare the organization of the International Society of the Orient, it is important that many minds be led to preoccupy themselves with these great and noble questions. To this end it is indispensable to institute a committee composed of men of influence and honor; of divers nations,

having at heart the advancement of the same views in the interest of all.

“The elements of that committee are at present fully prepared.

“Its program, at once economic, financial, benevolent, scientific, &c., is at the same time international; it can wound the susceptibilities of no nation. Influential names in France, England, and elsewhere are ready to connect themselves therewith.

“HENRY DONANT, “Founder of the International Convention, in behalf of the wounded in time of war. “GENEVA, March, 1866.”

Henry Dryer

Chapter 228

To Correspondents: The Smiting of Christ

Cannot “One still distressed” understand the statement that our Lord both anticipated the smiting, and that it actually came on the cross; and that neither one nor other is in Scripture used for atonement, but rather for His humiliation and rejection in which atonement was wrought? There was anticipation in spirit before the cross, and there was actual smiting on the cross; but how does this prove that smiting is atonement? Of course, the smiting was present, and not anticipation, and, as all admit, actual atonement was there; but where is smiting said to be atonement, save in traditional phraseology? Nor is it that those who prefer to speak with Scripture wish to force their convictions on their brethren; but why should others who are in this merely led by custom denounce those who cleave to God’s word till it can be shown they have mistaken it? Page 36, to which reference is made, does not teach that the actual smiting of Christ was before the cross. The correspondent is mistaken: why persist in so evident an error, acted on by others? Ought any one to lay so serious an insinuation without proof? The alleged proofs are to my mind evidence of nothing but mistake and Not many readers are aware that Mr. B. W. N. has just written on this subject (14th Nov. last). Does he then hail as his allies the men who, as calumny pretends, have adopted doctrine so similar to his own? If Mr. D.’s doctrine were in the least like that of Mr. N’s tract which was condemned in 1847, he might well triumph that old foes were now (unwittingly perhaps) his friends. But mark the solemn fact. Mr. N., instead of the smallest agreement with those he calls “Darbyites,” evidently feels that, of all men living, they are the most opposed to his views. But, further, be adopts the same line of argument which is common to all the attacks on Mr. D.’s pamphlet. He does not admit more than they do, that there was anything but atonement in the cross. He certainly betrays a treacherous memory (in the face of what he has written and what we too well know) when he denies that he “over maintained that the Lord Jesus suffered either in life or in death except sacrificially and expiatorily as the Redeemer;” but assuredly he now takes up the same argument as the other detractors of Mr. Darby. In the sight of God Mr. H. and they are thus together, though they may have other reasons and motives which keep them apart. I entreat them to pause, and all brethren to weigh the fact well.

As to an attempt at criticism on Psa. 69:26, to reason from a blunder in the Septuagint and the Vulgate against the certain force of the Hebrew original shews only bad logic, bad scholarship, and bad divinity.

But what will the reader think when informed that the statement as to the Septuagint and the Vulgate (of no real weight against the Hebrew, even if correct), is not warranted by fact? No doubt most known copies of the Septuagint have that strange version, τ■ν τραυμ■των μου, (“my wounds”), which has influenced many. But in accordance with the Hebrew, another reading is known (τραυματι■ν), in a manuscript marked 115 in the ponderous edition of Holmes and Parsons. Of course, editors vary, as they lean to one or other of these texts. But I cannot, with the Hebrew before me, hesitate myself which to consider correct, and which an error; particularly as it may have been only a slip of the scribe. For the difference consists of a single letter—the most diminutive to a proverb—an iota! As one here agrees with, and the other differs from, the Hebrew,

what fair mind can doubt which of the two in this has the best claim to represent the truth? “My wounds” has no right to be put forth as a just translation of ηΒμΘμΖικΘ (chalaleka) “thy wounded ones.” The Vat. and Sin. are copies of the Septuagint of great value generally, but in this instance preposterously wrong. The Portuguese (115) is another copy of the Septuagint and here commends itself as being exactly in accord with the original, and so with some probability represents what the translators really gave out. At any rate, if the Seventy originally gave king Ptolemy the ordinary Greek text, they did not (“Y. Z.” may be assured) represent the Hebrew as it is. The Hebrew MS. variation in the singular, as far as I can see, has no weight. It seems due to assimilation.

Haste and want of knowledge, once more, are equally apparent in the appeal to the Vulgate. For it happens that there are three well-known Latin versions of the Psaltery in the works of Jerome. The Roman and the Gallican profess to be merely versions, less or more corrected, of the Septuagintal translation of the Psalm But the true Hieronymian version from the Hebrew exhibits “vulneratos tuos” (“thy wounded ones”), faithful to the original and substantially what we have in our common English Bible. The Roman and Gallican Psalteries were not true translations, but only versions of a version: Jerome’s direct work from the Hebrew confirms, instead of unsettling, our Authorized Version.

But if the verse certainly speaks of the association of others with Christ in being smitten and wounded, it is beyond a doubt that atonement is not in question, or that others have a part in atoning (which no Christian can allow). Why then hold out against God’s word?

The context of Zech. 13 is just as decisive, that smiting is not atonement; though He who was smitten on the cross did also, as forsaken of God for our sins, shed His blood for them, suffer for them, die for them, and so make atonement. But gathering His sheep was the effect of atonement, as scattering was the effect of smiting, which was rather the general outward fact; while the forsaking of God is a far deeper thing, yea, unfathomable. It is dullness of apprehension as to the atonement, and want of faith in the power and precision of Scripture, which makes men anxious to press such scriptures as Psa. 69 and Zech. 13 into the service of a truth still more profound, and abundantly asserted elsewhere in both Testaments. But what can be expected from any who could think that to believe the Psalms, or Old Testament, is a development of the New Testament?

“Y. Z.” has more reason for his difficulty in comparing pp. 36 and 59. But it is evident to a fair mind that, in p. 59, suffering from God is spoken of as direct infliction from God; and the doctrine of the writer is and has always been, that this is atoning. Whereas His shame and rejection as Messiah are only taken from God by piety and faith, but were in fact the doing of wicked men. Hence in p. 36 Christ is not said to have “suffered from God” as in p. 59. They are called “the suffering under the government of God,” which can only be objected to, I think, by those who do not understand what it means.

Chapter 229

The Vine

The vine, as the symbol of a fruit-bearing system on the earth, is used in a remarkable manner, and runs through a large body of Scripture. We read in Psa. 80:8, that the nation of Israel is likened to a vine which the Lord brought out of Egypt, casting out the heathen from Canaan and planting it there to bring forth fruit. Then in Isa. 5:1-7, we learn all the care and culture He bestowed on His vine that it might bring forth grapes, “fruit meet for him by whom it was dressed.” The result was that, instead of fruit answering His culture, it brought forth “wild grapes.” And He says in Jer. 2:21, “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?” And so the Lord permitted the “wild boar out of the wood” to waste it. He also says, “I will take away the hedge thereof;” “I will lay it waste;” and “I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” It was only fruitful in iniquity and false to Jehovah. “Israel,” He says, “is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself.” (Hos. 10:1.) So the Lord gave him up to the Gentile king, Nebuchadnezzar, to rule over him, commanding him to submit to this punishment, as of the Lord. (Read Jer. 27:1—12, especially verse 12.) Under their last king, Zedekiah, they might have remained tributary, as we read in Ezek. 17, the kingdom might have remained “a spreading vine of low stature” under the Gentile king; who took an oath from Zedekiah, and allowed him to remain in his land. But this “vine of low stature,” instead of observing the oath which Nebuchadnezzar accepted of Zedekiah, and remaining tributary, he sent his ambassadors to Egypt. Or, as the parable in Ezek. 17 says, “this vine did bend her roots towards him;” and so the king of Babylon took him captive, and broke down his city and laid it waste, and so it ceased to be the “vine” of God in the earth; it ceased to be fit for anything but “fuel for the fire.” (See Ezek. 15)

And into this vineyard which had been laid waste, at last came the Lord Jesus. Israel, as Jehovah’s vine, had been brought out of Egypt. So Jesus replaces and recommences morally the history of that people, and we read, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15.) The Lord then replaces Israel, which had been set aside as a fruit-bearing system on the earth. He presents Himself not as the best branch of that vine, but, “I am the true vine.” The root of the new fruit-bearing system on the earth; and the disciples then become the branches. Abiding in Christ, and Christ in them, they would be fruit-bearing branches—the Father glorified in them—and so they would practically be Jesus’ disciples. This lasts in principle all through the time of the calling out of the Church, but the point is fruit-bearing on the earth; not as raised and seated together in Christ in heaven, where there is no purging or pruning, nor fruit-bearing.

When the present time of the heavenly calling shall have passed, and the Church shall be taken away, Israel comes before God again, not yet as owned, but previous to the kingdom being established in the world. We find their state in Isa. 18 aptly described as a “vine,” returned to their land by the help of some great maritime power, but not yet owned of God. “Afore the harvest [the harvest and vintage are figures of the last acts of judgment which take place before the kingdom is set up in glory], when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape ripening in the flower;” when all seems to man’s eye to go on well, the Lord does not interfere but con• ciders apart in His dwelling, and

then suffers the apparently re-established, fruit-bearing vine to be again trodden down and destroyed by the Gentile powers. And the end of what is again a corrupt fruit-bearing system in the world finds its judgment at the hand of the Lord in Rev. 14:15-20, as the “vine of the earth” whose grapes were fully ripe, and which are then cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The Lord Jesus-Jehovah is seen in Isa. 63:1-6 coming from this judgment of the vine of the earth and winepress of the wrath of God, in which the nations of the world share (see Isa. 34), His garments red with judgment; and He comes to renew His relationship with the spared remnant of Israel, for the “year of his redeemed is come.” And the result of all this is, that Israel again becomes His fruit-bearing “vine” in the world. “A vineyard of red wine,” which the Lord Himself (now that they had failed under the old covenant) will keep night and day, watering it every moment; and “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” (Isa. 27:2-6.)

Frederick G. Patterson

Chapter 230

Conquerors

When we look a little at the different agents of evil and of delusions exhibited in the Book of Revelation, we wonder how any soul will escape. And then, when we remember that though these agents have not yet been manifested, yet that the energies which are to animate and use them are already abroad and in action, and all working now in mystery if not in revealed forms, we stand amazed at the sight we thus get of the conflict in which we are engaged.

There will be “the dragon” and his “great wrath” —the “beast” and his “false prophet” —the “frogs” — “Babylon” — “the kings of the earth” —and “the whole world wondering after the beast.”

What tremendous agents in the work of delusion, darkness, and blood! What strong temptations and what appalling difficulties will then beset the path of the wayfaring saints! Who will stand? Who will find safe conduct through this array of hindrances? Who will discover the path of life and light amid all this thickening and overwhelming darkness?

And yet with each feature of this terrible scene, with each member of this great system of subtlety and strength, in the mystery or spirit of it, we have now to do; though of course some part of it may be more in real activity than others. But it is our duty still and always, to recognize the dragon and his wrath, the beast and the frogs, Babylon, the king of the earth, and the world deluded into infidel or idolatrous wonder and worship—to recognize each and all of these in the mystery, or in the hidden energy, of their working.

The field of conflict thus spread out is serious indeed. But, as this same book unfolds to us, we have at the same time to recognize the better region, that is, the heavenly, where we get other objects altogether, and all, I may say, for us.

The prophet of God in Patmos passes, in vision, with great ease and rapidity from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. The two regions are alternately before him, and he sees the action in each. But the passage is made with ease and with speed.

In chapters 4, 5., he is in sight of heaven. So, at the opening of the seals in chapter 6, passing however at once to see the results of those opened scenes on earth: so again in chapter 8 we find him in vision of both the regions. And, in like manner, I may say, throughout. He hears the music and the conferences in heaven, the rapture and the hopes there; and then again he is amid the infidel pride, the confusion, and all the workings of apostate principles, which are giving character to the scene on earth. He passes from the exulting marriage feast in heaven to the terrible judgment of the Rider on the white horse on all the confederated iniquity of the earth.

We see something of this in the opening of Job. There we are, in vision, both in heaven and on earth, as in the twinkling of an eye.

Is it not the business of the soul thus to act still? There are two regions—that of faith and that of sight: and the soul should pass rapidly and frequently into the region of faith. Had Job thus visited heaven, and heard and seen the action there, he would have been ready for the trials and sorrows

which awaited him on earth.

Little one knows of it indeed, but the soul covets the power to follow John in the Revelation, passing, as we see, easily and speedily from earth to heaven and back again, and always prepared, I may say, without amazement, for the shifting scenery.

But beside this, for the encouragement of our hearts, I observe two victories achieved in the progress of this book—one over the accuser (chap. 12:11), and another over the beast (chap. 15:2).

The accuser was defeated by a certain army of martyrs, and the weapons of their victorious struggle are hung up before us; for we are told they conquered by “the blood of the Lamb,” by “the word of their testimony,” and by “their not loving their lives to the death.” These had been their armor in conflict with the accuser.

If he went up, as in Job’s case, to the presence of God with charges against them, they met him there with “the blood of the Lamb.” They pleaded the sacrifice of God’s own Lamb according to God’s own testimony respecting it. And to the charge that “skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life,” they rendered up their lives to death in answer.

Here was their victory, and such and such the weapons which accomplished it. Heaven could employ itself in celebrating this victory. Was Jesus standing when Stephen was martyred? Easy then for heaven to be engaged in rehearsing with joy these conquests of this martyr-band.

But again, we have another victory celebrated in chapter 15. It had been obtained over the beast, as the other had been gained over the accuser.

The conquerors here are like Israel on the Red Sea in Ex. 15 And just as in that song of Israel, so here in this song of triumph, we learn the character of the previous truth, and how it was the conquerors conquered.

Moses and the congregation rehearse the fact that a victory had been won. But more than that, they rehearse how it had been won. They sing of the horse and his rider being thrown into the sea, of the Lord, as a man of war, casting His enemies into the mighty waters, of the depths covering the foe. And they let it be known that Israel themselves had not fought, but that the Lord had made the battle all His own.

Thus the style of the victory, its instrument and strength, is published in this song, as well as the fact of victory. And I judge in like manner so does the song in Rev. 15

All the world had wondered after the beast, and their wonder led to worship—or it was itself worship. (Chap. xiii.) His power appeared to be so great, his history so marvelous, that all the world wondered and worshipped, except (as I may say) this conquering band who paid their lives as the price of their faith in God and fidelity to Jesus.

But the song, as I have said, utters, as I judge, the weapons they had used in that day of battle. And they were these. These martyrs were admiring and worshipping “the Lord God Almighty,” while the world around them were admiring and worshipping the beast. The world was wondering at the greatness of the beast and the marvelousness of his history; but they were standing in the

holy adoring admiration of the Lord and the marvelousness of His works. (See Rev. 15:3) And while all beside were fearing the beast who could and would kill their bodies, they lived in the fear of God only, giving heed to the angel's voice which had spoken of His coming judgment. (See chap. 14:7; 15: 4.)

Thus this fine but short song tells of the manner of the victory, or the weapons which had accomplished it, as that song of Israel at the Red Sea had done before.

But further. I might extend this thought as to victories in the Book of Revelation, and say, generally, that from beginning to end it is the book of victories.

It contemplates corruption or apostacy—evil in the Church and in the larger scene outside; or first, among the candlesticks, and then in the earth or world.

But corruption or apostacy occasions struggle or conflict on the part of saints; and accordingly, the saints in this book are addressed or contemplated as conquerors; such as have been in conflict because of corruption and have come off in victory.

They are formally regarded in this character in this book. Thus it is as conquerors they are addressed by the Spirit in each of the letters to the churches. "He that overcometh" is the language in each of them. Because in each church there is contemplated a struggle or conflict by reason either of corruption within, or danger and enmity without. (Chap. 2, 3)

And I suggest that the crowns of chapter 15 are more formally the crowns of victors than of kings (see chap. 3:11), as though we saw the "overcomers" of the previous chapter enthroned in chapter iv.

So in the very next scene (chap. 5) the Lord Jesus is recognized as a Conqueror. In that character He takes the book. The word "prevailed" is the common word for "overcome." (See 5:5, Gr., and foot note.) Then, in the progress of the book, we see two victories celebrated in heaven, one obtained over the accuser (chap. 12), and another over the beast (chap. xv.), as I have before noticed. Then, on the earth, we see victory achieved, victory over the closing concentrated enmity and apostate strength and pride of the whole world. (Chap. 17:14, or 19:11-21.)

And further still, for I ask, Is not the first resurrection contemplated as a resurrection of conquerors? Is it not a reign of conquerors which we see in chapter 20:4?

And so forever for the inheritance of all things, after this is in the bands of conquerors. (Chap. 21:7.)

Can I ask my own soul what measure or character of victory marks my course? Can I inquire of myself, Do I know what conflict is because of corruption, and what the victory of separation from it?

The more we are conquerors, the more are we morally fit to be readers of the Book of Revelation. John, I may say, was a conqueror in the first chapter, for he was a martyr or confessor in the Isle of Patmos, "a brother and a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," and in that character he gets the Revelation communicated to him. And I suggest again that it comes to him from a Conqueror, because it comes to him from "Jesus Christ" in the character (among others) of

“the faithful Witness,” the character in which He overcame the world. (See 1 Tim. 6:13; see also John 16:33; Rev. 3:21.)

Indeed the four leading ideas in the book seem to be corruption, conflict, victory, and kingdom, the judgment of God being in exercise throughout.

The book assumes so to speak, that those who have tasted the grace of the Savior should stand in the rejection of the Savior. This may give a character to the book which will be somewhat strong for our timid hearts; but it is fitting that the volume of God should close with such a chapter, if I may so call it. Because the blessing of the creature was not the only business in creation, neither is it in redemption. His own glory was proposed as well as His creatures’ good. And it is His glory to judge a reprobate, unrepentant world; and His people glorify Him by taking part with Him in that judgment; and they judge it now in weakness by gainsaying the course of it even at the hazard of goods, liberties, and lives, as they will by and by judge it in power, when seated on their thrones in the regeneration.

The volume then closes as it began, for His own glory, of course in a different way (i.e., in the judgment of all the apostate principles of the world in their ripened condition). And the saints are rightly expected to be on His side in that action. This is their place and character in this book. The present is an age of easy profession, and the martyr strength and devotedness which are found in this book is not the common element. O for faith and love to reach it!—to be on the side of a rejected Jesus against the world!

But more than this: the book contemplates the Saints as heirs as well as conquerors. The expectation and the desire of getting the earth into possession and under dominion, occupy the mind of Christ and of the saints throughout.

In the opening of the prophetic part in chapter 4, we see the rainbow, the sign of the earth’s serenity, round the throne in heaven. And the One who sits on the throne is clothed in His glory as creator, for whose pleasure all things were created. We are, thus, in spirit, in Gen. 1

In chapter 5 the book of the inheritance of the earth passes into the hand of the Lamb and all rejoice. We are, thus, in spirit in Gen. 2, where the Lord God Himself, and all the creatures owned the dominion of Adam, the Lord God by conferring it, the creatures by submitting to it.

Judgments under the seals and under the trumpets, the necessary precursors of the kingdom, then take their course; and in chapter 10 the Lord Jesus, as the mighty angel, triumphs in the now approaching moment of inheritance and dominion over earth and sea; and, in chapter 11, the saints in heaven do the same.

The voice heard in heaven in chapter 12, and the song of the victor-harpers in chapter 15, alike utter joy over the prospect of the kingdom. “Now is come the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ,” says the voice in heaven. “All nations shall come and worship before thee,” the harpers sing.

Then in chapter 19 the joy in heaven is this, that she that corrupted the earth has been judged; and the voice there (as of many waters and mighty thunderings) utters “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” And the action which makes the earth the Lord’s property takes place.

In chapter 20, the first resurrection is spoken of as being for the very purpose of bringing in or manifesting the kingdom. Speaking of the risen ones, the prophet says, “they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

And how does the book close? Not with a description of the Church in the hidden places of heaven, as the Father’s house, but with a sight of the Church in the manifested heavens, the place of power or government, up to the light of which the kings will bring their glory and honor, and forth from which will go the waters of the river and the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. And this is such a view of the heavenly places as suits the earth in the days of the kingdom; and of the servants of God and of the Lamb, who are there, it is said at the close, “and they shall reign forever and ever.”

To Correspondents

The “Distressed One” writes, unfeignedly owning his mistake, and feeling that he wants further light.

Tertius’s pamphlet is to hand, but calls for no particular notice. He finds “seven” strange doctrines in his brethren: might he not have filed a bill of “seventy times seven” as well-founded as his complete number? It is true that strange engines have been put into requisition to give appearance to the present indictment; but the end and the means are worthy of each other: who can say what they may achieve yet?

It is surprising that any should have interpreted as a publication the statement (in the “Bible Treasury” for January, p. 205, col. 1) that a certain person had just written on the subject of Christ’s Sufferings (14 November last). It is not usual to notify a book but a letter thus precisely. The fact stated is correct, and it is not without God’s hand in it How far it is in circulation by copies I know not; but I have seen two. Let me add that it exhibits the usual lack of plain honesty which characterizes both real heretics and those who would make others seem such who are sounder than themselves. It denies what the author is not accused of, and conceals what he really maintained. False itself in doctrine, it confesses that those who have of late been wrongfully charged with his views, he knows to be his strongest adversaries; and it presses the same error or ignorance as to Christ’s sufferings which has been broached in other recent assaults.

A. F. (M., Ireland) will feel, the more he weighs both 1 Peter 3:18 and the use of the word “spirits” in scripture, how harsh it is to deny it to the disembodied (angels’ and other purely spiritual beings being excluded by the nature of the case), and to predicate the whole phrase as a description of the state of the antediluvian unbelievers while alive. They are characterized as in prison, but there is no hint that they were so when preached to. The legendary view (which is not A. F.’s) fails also in moral connection and import. The judgment of all flesh at that time came in the flood; their spirits are in prison since, kept for a more solemn judgment in the resurrection of the unjust.

Chapter 232

Belshazzar’s Feast in Its Application to the Great Exhibition

Daniel 5

While Jeremiah was left at Jerusalem to witness the course of moral corruption there, and to warn of coming judgments, and while Ezekiel was among the remnant in the place of discipline or of righteousness on the river Chebar, Daniel is set among the Gentiles, even at Babylon, to learn the history and the ways of the Gentile, or the world.

We may see this in his first six chapters, which constitute the first part of the book. In chapter 1 we see the Gentile, or the world, set up. Then in chapter 2 we get the same system, the world, in its political career onward to the kingdom, figured in the great image, seen in all its parts, from its head of gold to its toes of clay-iron; and judged, in the appointed hour, by the stone which becomes a mountain, to occupy the scene of power all the world over with an untransferable kingdom. Then in the four following chapters, the stories of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius give us the moral course of the world. In Nebuchadnezzar we get a persecuting power, connected with human religion or idolatry. The king sets up an image and demands the worship of it on pain of the fiery furnace. The righteous refuse and suffer. In Belshazzar we get the easy, worldly, self-indulgent thing, with contempt of religion. The king makes a feast, worshipping all that which ministered to his pleasures. The righteous are utter strangers to it all. In Darius we get a persecuting power again, but it is in connection with self-exaltation. The king makes an interdict, that none are to be treated as God but himself for so many days on pain of the lion’s den. The righteous again refuse and suffer.

These are plain and sure distinctions in the progress of Gentile iniquity. And it may strike us, I judge, very clearly, that we are at present rather in the day of Belshazzar. Persecution and idol-service gave character to the preceding day, and persecution and the deification of man to the day which followed; but all was easy indifference, with thorough satisfaction in the present things of the world, in the day of Belshazzar. Refusal and consequent suffering form the path or history of the righteous in the times of the idolatrous, persecuting Nebuchadnezzar, and of the self-exalting, persecuting Darius; but in the times of Belshazzar, perfect and thorough separation is the place of the saints of God.

There is a voice for us in all this. Daniel is not seen at the feast. And there is one, though not in his strength yet much in his spirit, who is absent also—the queen, the king’s mother. The king is ignorant of the man of God who was then in his dominions. He is also unmindful of the doings of God which had been in the same dominions in the days of his father. But the queen has recollections and knowledge of these things, and she is a stranger to his feast.

Is not the question then with us to be this: Who is the separated one now? Who is going to the king’s feast, or who, in the light of the Lord, is separated from it? The present is an easy, self-indulgent, worldly moment. The gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of wood and of iron, are praised. All the capabilities in the world to make a feast are produced, and displayed, and gloried

in. Social accommodation and social delights are the great object. Man's works, the fruit of his skill and the resources of his country, adorn and furnish the scene, and are the host of the feast, that which gathers and entertains. Man is providing the joy of this awful hour in the world's history—awful indeed, not in the judgments or sorrows which are upon it, but in the moral principles which are quickening it. The captivity of Zion was heedlessly forgotten by Belshazzar, and the vessels of God's temple were profaned. The operations of His hands were not considered, but the wine and the tabret were in his feast. So now; the rejection of Christ is by common consent forgotten, that man may meet his fellow, greet him with a common joy and with a common welcome, because they are all of one earth, of the same world, of kindred flesh and blood; and all God's claims on His elect and testimony against the world are thrown together as what for a season must be passed by, till the feast-day is kept.

Where then, again I ask, is the separated one? Where is Daniel? Where is the king's mother? The feast does not attract either of them, though they may be in different measures of strength. Daniel knew the character of it before the judgment of it was pronounced. He does not wait for the fingers of the man's hand to put him into his place in relation to it. He is not moved by the mysterious writing on the wall. Sudden destruction, as a thief in the night, does not come upon him. He and his companion, though "a weaker vessel," are, in the spirit of their minds, in the place from whence these fingers were sent—they were "children of light and children of the day." The judgment upon the feast had no terror for them, for they were not at the feast. They had judged it already. Their separation was not sleep. "They that sleep in the night, and they that are drunken are drunken in the night." But they were no more indifferent to it than taking their pleasure at it. Their separation therefore, as I said, was not sleep. In a divine sense they watched and were sober. (1 Thess. 5:3.) In the separated place Daniel knew the judgment of God about it all, long before the writing on the wall announced it to the world. All this is full of meaning for us.

I am not going to say that the form of evil which Belshazzar's day presents is the worst. Nebuchadnezzar set up an idol before that day, and Darius set up himself after it. The fiery furnace was heated for the saints in the former reign, and the lion's den was open for them in the latter. The day of Belshazzar witnessed nothing of this. The abomination in the plain of Dura did not demand worship then, neither did the royal statute forbid worship toward Jerusalem then. But still there is something in Belshazzar himself, if not in his day, which especially provoked the Spirit of the Lord. Daniel can feel for Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar is brought to a right repentant mind, and the judgment of God is reversed. Daniel, too, can feel for Darius, and Darius is seen in humbled gracious meltings of soul, and we can all pity him—pity him when we see him unwittingly involved in results which a moment's vanity and easiness of nature had led to. But from us Belshazzar gets no kindly movement of heart, from the Spirit of God in Daniel nothing but stern rebuke, and from the hand of God nothing but swift destruction, the fingers on the wall announcing it, and the sword of the Median executing it. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

He was the easy man of the world. He despised all religious fear. What he worshipped was his pleasures, the gods of silver, of brass, and of gold, the vessels which could fill out his entertainments and make provision for his lusts. He did not summon the world to either his idol or himself, but to his board and to his holyday. Nebuchadnezzar makes an image, Darius a royal decree, Belshazzar a feast. But Jerusalem and her sorrows are forgotten, the Temple and its

furniture despised. The wonders which the God of Jerusalem and of the temple had freshly wrought in the land were all a dream or a fiction with him, and the very spoils of His house he can use in making merry with his friends.

This was easy worldliness—the heartless way of man who can forget God's wonders, and the rejection and humiliation of Christ. And all this is terrible. The harp, and the pipe, and the tabret are in such feasts; but the operations of God's hands are forgotten. Till now the vessels of God's house had been held in some fear and honor. But now they are profaned and made to serve the lusts of the king. God had ordained them to witness the separation of His priestly nation, and His own worship in the midst of His people; but the king makes them the instruments of his sport.

And what, I ask, is the effort to deck out the world, to enjoy it, and to boast of it, while Jesus is rejected by its citizens? Is it not a thing in kindred spirit with this? The rejection of Christ is forgotten, yea, despised—for that is gloried in and displayed which continues the word, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Is not this somewhat of taking of the choice vessels of God's house, in the very day of their captivity, to make merry with them? The present moment may surely thus remind us of Belshazzar's feast. Gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood are praised; the resources and capabilities of the world are displayed, thoughtless of its rejection of Christ. And are any of the captivity at the king's feast? Israel was captive together with the vessels of the temple. Would any of them be so thoughtless as to make merry with the king who was despising the spoils of that house? Would any of the servants of the rejected nobleman take part with the citizens in setting forth the wonders of their blood-stained land? (See Luke 19)

The mind turns with these thoughts to the present moment. It cannot refuse to give itself, in some sort and in some measure, to the subject of "The Great Exhibition." It would not be fit that it should be indifferent to it—for it is no common sign of the time and ought to be morally judged.

It will be pleaded for. No doubt of it. It will be said, that it is designed to encourage brotherhood among the nations, and to promote the great business of social comfort and happiness as wide as the human family. But, I ask, are these God's objects? God has scattered the nations, and never proposes to gather them till He gathers them to Shiloh. God would have us strangers here, "content with such things as we have," without making it our business to increase or improve them. God would have us testify against the world in its present condition, and therefore neither flatter it, nor reconcile it to itself, nor glory in its capabilities. The Exhibition is therefore in full collision with the mind of God. Christ exposes the world; the Exhibition displays it. Christ would alarm it, and call it to a sense of judgment; the Exhibition makes it on better terms with itself than ever.

It is indeed a mighty advance in all the apostate reprobate principles of man. Efforts of a like kind we may be familiar with; but they are commonplace in comparison with this. As prophets speak, touching advance in the ways of evil, this is indeed "adding drunkenness to thirst."

I regard all admiration of it as a step in the way to "wonder after the beast." That will be but a further expression of the same mind; and how serious, if evangelical religion be sending its contributions to it, or becoming one of the Exhibitors at it! Deep must be the infatuation. To tell the world one day what it is in God's esteem, and the next day to become one of the wonderers after its resources and capacities! Admiration like this savors of worship.

Like the old prophet at Bethel, when a saint is in a place or a position unwarranted by the call of God, the enemy will find easy occasion to use him. Still I own, when I think of it, it is to me wonderful that a Christian should find satisfaction in this thing. That it is an awful advance in the development of those evil principles which are to mark the day of Christendom's ripened iniquity, I have not the least doubt.

The Lord of old scattered the nations. (See Gen. 11) This was judgment on a bold attempt of theirs, when they were of one speech and one language, to make themselves independent of God. And has He reversed that judgment? There is indeed an appointed time when it shall be reversed. Jerusalem shall be a center, and Shiloh a gathering object. The nations will flock to Zion, there to see the King in His beauty. And none of them there, we may say, shall appear before the Lord empty. The tributes of all the lands shall beautify the place of God's sanctuary. The fruits of Midian and of Ephah shall be there—gold and incense from Sheba, the flocks of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth, the glory of Lebanon, the forces of all the Gentiles. All shall flock there, like doves to their windows, and kings shall minister there. Gold too shall be for brass, silver for iron, brass for wood, and iron for stones. All shall be for glory and beauty in the earth then. But this is still future. This is for "the world to come," after the Redeemer has come out of Zion, and turned away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isa. 59 and Rom. 11.

The reversing of the judgment of scattering at Babel is left for the kingdom of God at Jerusalem. He that scattered must gather. He is Lord of the nations. "The powers that be are ordained of God." It is His pleasure that they should be scattered nations still; for one universal monarchy is appointed of God for Jesus only—as it is written, "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "His dominion shall be from sea to sea:, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

The name of Jesus was, indeed, proposed as a, gathering object in the day of Pentecost. Tongues were then cloven as they had been at Babel. But it was to reunite what had been already severed. But, this proposal, like every other on God's part to man, was disappointed. The hard, unbelieving heart did this. And what is man now proposing? He who refused God's proposal to gather to Jesus, in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, is proposing to gather to himself. He will exalt himself as at Babel. He will be independent of God. He will be like the Most. High. The beast will issue his decree on pain of death; his mark will be received on the forehead, and all the world will wonder after him. (Rev. 13) This is in the prospect of the world's history. He who will not let Christ be exalted will surely seek to exalt himself. And such an one is man.

Isaiah, anticipating in the Spirit the last days, warns the people of God against saying "a confederacy," in common with the world around them. (Chap. 8) And I ask myself and others, do we in deed and in faith receive these notices from the prophets? Do we judge that man will thus exalt himself and confederate—thus gather round himself? And if we treat these warnings of the character of the last days as divine, can we doubt from all we see and hear, that man has already begun to practice his hand in kindred attempts, in efforts which shall issue in all this?

The facilities and the speed in linking the nations one with another is now well known. It is used and gloried in. And what is this "Great Exhibition" but another trying of his skill in forwarding the main leading purpose of man's heart? No doubt it suits the spirit which is moving all this, to have it under the sanction of religion. When he can use it for his own ends, nothing suits the devil better.

He would fain have had Christ exalt Himself under the sanction of Psa. 91. And again and again, he would have acknowledged Christ, had He allowed it—as the spirit of divination would have witnessed to Christ's servant, had he received it. (Acts 16) But this could not be. The beast, however, will have his false prophet. He will use religion for his own ends. But divine religion takes us only into God's ends. And it teaches us this (with the authority of the real intrinsic holiness of such a principle): we can have no fellowship with that against which we are called to testify. (Eph. 5:11.)

Nor can we say that the judgment we form on this matter is a small or an indifferent thing. It is not so. The subject is well fitted to exercise the judgment of a saint of God. It is eminently so, I believe. His mind generally will be much affected by his sense of this thing and his decision respecting it. The mind can become dull. The eye gets dim betimes. And if such a process as that be going on, the next attempt of the enemy finds us less prepared. And I ask, Is not all that dangerous, when delusions are multiplying as they are and as they will?

We are counseled to buy eye-salve of Christ, that we may see. That is something beyond or beside faith and confession of the gospel. Laodicea had the common faith, and in a sense boasted of it, but Laodicea wanted eye-salve. And sure I am that let this great shop of the world's ware expose what it may, that eyesalve is the very thing which will not, cannot be had there. It is the article which would detect the whole character of the place, and it could not therefore be had there. It is a palace. Man is not enthroned there as God, it is true. Things among the children of men are not quite ripe for that yet. It is not a temple where man sits, showing himself as God. (2 Thess. 2) But man's works are displayed there. Man's art is enthroned there, and man expects to be admired and wondered at there, and thousands enter it (as another has observed) in the spirit of doing homage to man. It is a mirror in which the world is reflected in a thousand attractive forms, and the unworldly, humbled, earth-rejected Jesus is forgotten. Jesus may be named there, it is true, but an unworldly Jesus is practically forgotten there.

It is indeed as I surely judge, solemnly, awfully significant. It is full of the spirit of the last days. This palace for man's productions to be gazed at, is but a stage before the temple for man himself to sit in—and admiration of it is getting a generation ready, morally ready, to "wonder after the beast." One is amazed that any Christian can find the least satisfaction in it.

This Exhibition (for it calls itself by that significant name) in its way spews all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. It does not hide this. It professes to do this. Like John Bunyan's Vanity Fair, there is the Italian row, and the German row, and the English row. It has human skill and resources in all variety, and from all lands. It presents the kingdoms of the world, and "the glory of them." And who, I ask, was it that did this before? The Spirit led the Son of God into "the wilderness," a place of strangership and pilgrimage—but the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

The world, according to the scriptures of God, is a lost and a judged thing. It is incapable of recovery. The word of God does not, in a single passage of it, warrant the thought that it can be advanced or cultivated for God. He has judged it—though in grace the judgment tarries, and the longsuffering of God is salvation. But the world is a system past all hope of recovery, till the judgment be executed. But confederacy is an attempt to fix the world in its present condition, to settle it, though it be in departure from God and in enmity against Christ. This was the thought at

Babel of old.

Separation of His own out of the world is God's way now. And this separation is the deepest and most thorough judgment that could be passed upon the world. This is a more complete judgment of it than by the waters of the flood, or by the plagues of Egypt, or by the sword of Joshua. The withdrawal or separation of all that God owns bespeaks final thoughts about the world, and not merely a purifying of it from present corruptions, as by the waters of Noah, in order to put it on a fresh trial. The trial of it is over, the judgment of it is pronounced, and the delay is but for the salvation of the elect. The attitude of the Church, that is, separation from the earth, and heavenly calling, tells us of the full moral condemnation of the course of things here. And thus the Church judges the world. Her position and calling does so.

The "servants" of the departed "nobleman" very well know that the country of the "citizens" has very great resources, and very great capabilities; and they know that in due season such will be both used and displayed. But they cannot allow this thought while that country is as it is now—stained with the blood of their rejected master. The cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us," is ever in their ears. And with that cry from the land, can they, in company with the "citizens" who raised it and still keep it up (for the character of the world, as we have said from scripture, is unalterably fixed), be occupied in investigating and producing the treasures of their country and the skill of its people, and glory in the thought of the common advancement?

They cannot, when alive to the character of the place where they are, and awake, as they should ever be, to the cry which followed the rejected Jesus as He left it—they cannot. The cup of the Lord's indignation is to go round the nations, and they must drink it. An awful reverse this will be from Belshazzar passing the wine among his courtiers and concubines in the cups of the Lord's house. And solemn it is in those nations feasting and praising the gods of gold, and of silver, of iron, of brass, and of wood while such a handwriting as that is on the wall against them. If not on the walls of the palace, it is in the books of the prophets. (Psa. 75; Jer. 25)

Incorruption, I may say, cannot inherit corruption. The spotless Jesus cannot hold an unpurged dominion. The woman of Rev. 17 glorifies herself, and lives deliciously in the earth during that very time in which the judgment of God is awaiting it; but the bride of Rev. 21 does not become manifested in the earth till it has been cleansed and is ready, not for the judgment of the Lord, but for the presence of the glory.

There is infinite moral distance there. The world must be judged ere it can be adopted of God. The earth must be purified before it can be furnished and adorned for Him. This has been again and again transacted in the progress of the divine government. Noah, God's saint and representative, took the earth to rule and to enjoy it, but it had previously passed through the purifying of the flood. Israel, God's people and witnesses, took the land of Canaan to possess and enjoy it, but it had been judged by the sword of Joshua. And according to these types the earth is to be cleansed; out of the kingdom is to be taken all that offends and does iniquity ere Jesus will take the power.

Ornament and furniture well becomes it, for it is the Lord's footstool. Eden had not only its plants, and trees, and fruits, and flowers; but its gold, its bdellium, and its onyx stones. Solomon, in typical days of glory, trafficked in all desirable riches. And the millennial Jerusalem will receive all the treasures of the provinces. (Isa. 60) But the present age is not millennial; the earth is not yet an

extended Eden. Corruption is not judged; the things that offend and do iniquity are not taken away, nor is there any divine commission to that end. The field of tares is not to be cleansed now—it waits for the angels and the time of harvest. The saint submits to “the powers that be,” knowing that “God” will stand in the congregation of them for judgment in due season. (Compare Rom. 13:1 with Psa. 82:1.)

It is despite of the holiness of God, we may therefore say, to be presenting this evil world in its ornaments and furniture, in its resources and capabilities, as this Exhibition is doing. And it is also despite of the wrongs and sorrows of Christ. The citizens who have cast outside their city and country the blessed Son of God, are exhibiting what their country can produce, and what their hands can skillfully weave and fashion. I ask, could a servant of such a rejected Master aid and encourage such things? Could he be a servant a moment beyond the time that he thus practically forgot his Lord’s rejection here? He could not. He might, indeed, be a useful member of society, and serve his generation in their generation well; but a servant of Christ (properly speaking) he could not be if once he forgot the world’s rejection of Christ; and acceptance of the invitation of the citizens (see Luke 19) to come and rejoice with them in the resources of their country and the skill of their people would at once be such forgetfulness.

The sorrow and the humbling of a saint is that he remembers the rejection of his Master so coldly and acts on that great fact so poorly. But to have it estranged from the soul so as to consent to take part with the citizens from one end of the world to the other, in a great confederated effort to display the world as a wealthy and desirable place—to do this in full and hearty fellowship with all, on the ground of the common humanity, is confounding light and darkness, Christ and Belial. The language of the whole thing is this—We will forget, at least for a season, the claims and the sorrows of Jesus, and have a holyday with the world that has rejected Him.

Has so little “eye-salve” been bought of Christ as to leave the saints in such a blinded condition of soul as this? “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” When Daniel and his companions entered the place of the Gentiles, they carried one purpose of heart with them, that they would not defile themselves with the king’s meat. (Dan. 1:8.) He knew not what this might cost him, but this was his purpose. He had bought this eye-salve of Christ, ere he stood among the uncircumcised. And in the strength of the Lord, he and his dear companions stood. The fiery furnace and the lion’s den witness the victory of men strengthened by Christ. “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.” And so at Belshazzar’s feast. Daniel entered it as a conqueror, as afterward he entered the lion’s den. He had no affinity with the feast—not a bit. He was, in the day of it, as we have seen, a separated man. But he was called to it, and he entered the banqueting hall as a conqueror. The king who was there promised to make him “the third ruler in the kingdom.” “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another,” said the servant of Christ. He was as much a conqueror in the day of the feast, as he was in the day of the lion’s den.

Noble attitude of a saint of God! Could such a man have accepted an invitation to the feast? Morally impossible. And “the eye-salve” which Christ had supplied him with, disclosed its further virtues, as he stood in that palace of the world’s enjoyments. There was nothing in the language of the writing on the wall’ beyond the astrologers of Babylon more than beyond Daniel. Not so much, I might say. At least the words were as familiar to a Chaldean as to a Hebrew.

But the wise men of Babylon, the scribes of Belshazzar's court and kingdom were not equal to interpret them. They were morally incapacitated. A single eye to Christ alone can do so to this day—the "eye-salve." If we test a thing by any test but Christ, we shall misinterpret it. It will appear fair, and good, and desirable, if we try it by its relationship to the welfare of society, or to the advancement of man and the world; but if we look at it in the light of a rejected Jesus, its bloom will be found to be corruption. Standing in the festive hall, Daniel traces the whole scene in Babylon at that hour in relation to God. He rehearses before Belshazzar God's way with Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar's way with God, and then Belshazzar's own hardness and infidel pride in defiance of Him who had wrought the wonders. This was Daniel's key to the writing—of course, I know, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But still this was the prophet's moral apprehension of the king's feast. He judged it in reference to God—and what could the end be, but awful and sudden destruction? The writing must speak of judgment, though the lords and the captains, the wives and the concubines, sport themselves in the king's hall.

"Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." It is blessed so to do, but it is hard. We judge of things in reference to ourselves, and not in reference to Christ. We think rather of the world's improvement than of His rejection. We talk of human capabilities rather than of human and incurable apostasy. We want the eye-salve, without which we cannot see—we cannot discover the feast, or read the writing on the wall.

The disciples wanted it on the Mount of Olives, as they looked on the Temple. They saw the building, but not with the eye of Christ, not as anointed with the eye-salve. He had seen it, and all that surrounded it, with the eye of God; and costly as it was, and beautiful beyond comparison, He had written the judgment of it; yea, on the very wall He had written the judgment of "that beautiful house." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem—behold your house is left unto you desolate." This was writing with the same divine authority which had sentenced Belshazzar and his feast. But the disciples still eyed the beauty of the stones, and Jesus, in patient grace, but because of their demand, and unanointed eye, had to re-write the doom of that place: "Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down."

Sad to tell of it then, sad to see it now, sad to know, in our own worldly hearts, the secret of all this darkness. We may be sorry to find it thus among disciples, though prepared to get it plentifully among the children of men. The kings of the earth, the merchants, and the mariners bewail the fall of Babylon, and we wonder not. They judged Babylon in reference to themselves—they had lived deliciously with her. How could they have eye-salve to know her, and to see her with the mind of heaven? God "remembered her iniquities," but they remembered her as one "wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness." They therefore bewail, when heaven rejoices. The lords at the feast tremble, when heaven traces its doom. But sad it is that saints should be admiring the "costliness" which the mind of heaven has already judged.

What words in our ears, beloved, are all these—what writings under our eyes! O for the anointing which Christ has for His saints! O for power in our souls to judge the king's feast, the Gentiles' greatness, the world's advancement, the jubilee of Babylon, in the light of the rejection of the Son of God, in the hearing of that cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Then let us ask ourselves, if we have a pulse of affection or allegiance to Jesus, can we glory in this present moment with all its costliness and pleasures?

Chapter 233

Apostolic Succession

Succession was contemplated in the Jewish polity. It is not in that of the Church, because no time, no future, is in the thought of the Spirit, so as to sustain the idea of succession. “If I tarry,” I may say, in the language of Him who orders the Church. “The latter times,” and “the last days” are regarded in their moral wakings, as being always present and the churches and ministers are addressed as about to meet the Lord on His return. The Church is as one generation, her time as one day.

No successional office is contemplated. It is true, Paul is to be “offered up,” and he would have Timothy act in the midst of the saints; and as men were speaking “perverse things,” he would have Timothy commit “the truth” to “faithful men” (see 2 Tim). But all that is something very different from successional office.

Indeed no one can be said to stand in the place of another, or to do another’s business, in a dispensation where all ministries flow from personal grace and power, as in the Church. Ministry or service cannot therefore be after a pattern or precedent or predecessor, but according to the ability which God giveth. Office without power or grace is an idea foreign to the polity of the Church.

It is co-operation rather than succession (with different measures of power and authority, I grant) which we discern in Timothy’s ministry. He helped Paul’s work, rather than succeeded. him, according to a perpetual apostolate.

There was a good deal of ministry in apostolic days altogether independent of apostolic appointment. The fruit of it, or the grace of the mode of conducting it may be questioned (as in the Epistles to the Corinthians), but never the lawfulness of it, or its consistency with the polity of the Church.

Persecution (as another once observed) ordained preachers of the Gospel in Acts 8; and, I may add, divine delight does the same in Rom. 10:15. Beautiful and precious truths! And no one instance have we of the Apostles ordaining to preach.

If corruption enter, the original order yields, after special energy of the Spirit to keep the original purity, and after a time of divine patience. Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete were instances of this special provision of the Spirit; the voice of the Spirit to the Apocalyptic churches is an instance of this divine patience. But corruption prevailing, the order is changed. We see this in the Epistles to Timothy. It is no longer Timothy behaving himself in the house of God, but Timothy purging himself from the vessels to dishonor of the great house and walking with a remnant in a clean path. (See 1 Tim. 3 and 2 Tim. 2, &c.)

So, in the progress of the Epistles, ecclesiastical order seems to be lost sight of; the earlier Epistles of Paul assuring it, those of James, Peter, John, and Jude not doing so.

Paul’s apostleship is the divine interruption of the order constituted in Matt. 28:19, 20, or of the institution of the twelve (see Gal. 1:2.) There is nothing successional or derivative in his

apostleship; and it becomes a mere play of words or of the fancy to divine office from the twelve now: at least without shutting out St. Paul.

“The Spirit of God has, in this world, to wander among ruins” has been truly said—Church ruins, I may say, as well as personal.

Right conclusions, I doubt not, therefore, come from a due understanding of the history as well as of the nature of the dispensation, as it is anticipated in the Scriptures of the New Testament. Disturbances through corruption are contemplated by the Spirit in the Apostles, and the path of the godly is guided—they are to leave corruptions, whatever their connection or genealogy may be.

Chapter 234

Dorman’s Appeal

W. H. D.’S “Appeal.”

Dear Brother, This “Appeal,” which I had not seen when your letter reached me, was brought me by a brother to whom it was sent unsought. Brethren must change woefully from what I have known them, if its perusal affect them otherwise than with real grief for the writer, his companions, and any Christians who may be credulous enough to receive statements which I refrain from characterizing as they deserve.

Nothing can be simpler than the doctrine for which I am responsible, which seems to me unquestionable. No doubt W. H. D. holds the same at bottom, though he may prefer his own way of putting it and I beg leave to cleave to my own. But I have no wish to impute to him what he hates. I have never taught or implied that Christ’s death was unatoning; I have nowhere explained away or denied the intrinsic character of anything previously stated. I assert openly and decidedly that the blood or death of Christ is viewed in some scriptures as through man’s sinful deed, and consequently as bringing judgment on him, in others as the fruit of God’s grace in judgment of sin, and so the basis of all blessing to the believer. “His blood be on us and on our children,” and “a propitiation through faith in His blood” may illustrate both points, for which many proofs might be produced from Scripture. I believe too that God’s smiting, &c., in every scripture in which it is used of Christ (Psa. 69:26; Dan. 9:26, and Zech. 13:7), can be demonstrated to be on the side of judgment rather than of grace, the contextual connection proving it to be no question of atonement. But while unwavering in this conviction, I treat no man as unsound who does not see it. Is it a new thing for such as are wrong in their views to be violent in their denunciation of those who are more right than themselves? is nobody else to see more than they see They are not asked to see or to say they see, if they cannot; but do they want to hinder others? This is what it comes to.

This “Appeal” will not convince any fair-minded Christian that the dignity of Christ’s person is lost sight of by those it attacks; nor do I think that Crantz’s Greenland or Brainerd’s Journal will help the writer much to understand the point in dispute. No one doubts that it is not a matter for preaching to the unconverted: are we as Christians never to go beyond the good’ news? The editor of Present Testimony needs no defense of mine. But for myself, I do hold to the proposition that God’s word connects having nothing with the Messiah cut off in Dan. 9 Is this the effect of atonement? It is of His cutting off. Does any one then cavil at the antithesis, that cutting off is the loss, as atonement is the gain, of all? W. H. D. is silent on Psa. 69:26: had he been equally reserved on Zech. 13:7, it would have been no damage to his new tract or his old one. He may think it only proper spirit to allow himself the license he takes in page 19 and elsewhere; but to me it is as clear as light whose intelligence is at fault. Compare John 11:52. Does not this verse speak of Christ’s death, His atoning death, that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad? Compare also John 10:15, 16 with the passage in Zech. 13:7. On the other hand, who can see people gathered to eternal life in John 5:24? This is to interpolate, not to

interpret. It is scripture which makes scattering the effect of smiting, and treats death in atonement as the forerunner of gathering. Israel too will be gathered when the Lord applies that atoning death to them. The scattering of the disciples when Jesus was smitten was a sample, the beginning of that which befell the Jews at large not long after. The gathering of the Church was based on the same death viewed in grace, as that of Israel will follow by and by. The argument which essays to weaken this is mere wrangling and beneath notice; but it is instructive as indicating the writer's state and tone, as well as his feeling toward those he does not (perhaps, cannot now) comprehend.

But there is another statement of mine which has been attacked with sufficient heat and din of words to stun those who can be alarmed by sound. Now I believe that atonement demanded that Christ should suffer the judgment of our sins, and that God should forsake Him when thus made sin on the cross. Where all was marvelous, this is the great marvel which bows our hearts before that suffering One, the mighty God, yet crucified in weakness. Do they want scripture for it? This infinite fact is what I sought to convey in the incriminated sentence: "That which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death." I used, as I was entitled to use, the word "pure," in its idiomatic sense of mere, nothing but; and I meant then, as I am bold to repeat now, that even the precious blood of Christ, the Word made flesh, is atoning because He bore our sins and their judgment on the cross. The whole force of my remark was leveled against severing His death from that stupendous expression of sin-bearing and infinite suffering at God's hand. Alas! it seems that these men would like to think us guilty of treason against Christ and His cross.

Here I go farther than as to "the smiting." Many servants of God, probably Brainerd and the Moravians, have interpreted smiting of the atonement. I may think them mistaken as an exact exposition of scripture; but as they are substantially right, I should not in such a case notice a flaw of phrase. For in the smiting of Christ atonement was wrought. But the man who denies the judgment of our sins and God's consequent abandonment of Christ on the cross, separating these from the act of death and His blood that was shed (the good Lord pardon any sounds of discussion on so holy a theme I), seems to me most seriously wrong, and evidences how meager is his own perception of the hatefulness of sin before God, because he thereby slights the true revealed character and consequence of Christ's suffering for us.

"The pure.... act of Christ's death," in my sentence, does not mean His death (p. 11). When scripture speaks of His death as reconciling us to God, or of His blood cleansing us from all sin (to refer to the various scriptures this tract cites), it never means what I called the pure act of His death (i.e., His death apart from the judgment of our sins by God); but, on the contrary, His death efficacious according to the perfection of God's moral dealing with our evil on the cross. This, therefore, gives in one sentence the simple and conclusive answer to all the noisy declamation, and, I must add, the groundless slander, of W. H. D.'s new tract. I hurl back the shameless taunt of holding or teaching the unatoning death of Christ. What I declared and do affirm, is that His atoning death is not merely because He died, but because God made Him to be sin, and that so He died and sled His blood for us. He who hesitates about this truth appears to me a man to hesitate about. Does not W. H. D. believe it? I trust and believe he does; yet his rash and alienated spirit dared to say over and over that "atonement is the bare (pure) act of Christ's death." Now either he used my words in my sense, or he did not. If he did not, it was a fraud; if he did, he said

over and over what he does not believe (namely, that atonement consists in Christ's death without our sins being judged by God's forsaking Him on the cross). This indeed would be to mutilate His cross and to divorce atonement from His death. But no I will vindicate W. H. D. from this at least, against his own "too strong" feelings, and against his own unguarded and unwarrantable words. He did not mean, any more than I meant, what he says. But oh! is this a brother's love? Is this jealousy for the truth, or for what?

As to the statement that to interpret the Psalms of the Jewish remnant and of Christ's special connection with them is a fifth gospel and a development, the writer had better have let it sleep. The apostles had the Psalms as we, and they had the Holy Ghost too. There was no need of a fresh interpretation; but that they knew nothing of their bearing on the Jewish remnant is what no man is warranted to say. All the talk about authoritative, or the New Testament only, is nothing to the purpose, or a mistake. Who makes J. N. D.'s exposition of authority? All this is the language of no less than confusion.

I have not thought it worthwhile to speak of the uncommon preoccupation of the writer, who seems to deem his own opinions indisputable, and the worst possible construction of those he reviews (save B. TV. N.) absolutely settled. Is this righteous or decent? I am content to have shown briefly that the gist of the pamphlet is a mere blunder, which is in no way relieved by entitling it "A solemn appeal," or by calling on his brethren to judge as heretical that which it is all but a heresy to deny.

But I must point out ere I conclude, that even plain matters of alleged fact cannot here be safely taken on trust. Thus the writer says (p. 11) that Christ's smiting from God "is now allowed by Mr. Darby to have been only on the cross, though formerly contended against." Is this the truth? When and where was it contended against? I have always heard the same statement and never understood what is insinuated here. In the "Sufferings of Christ," which raised the question, Mr. D. stated exactly what he states now—that the act of smiting took place only on the cross, though the spirit of it was realized before, especially from the last Passover. The same misstatement occurs again in page 21. It is untrue, therefore, that it is a concession now, for it was always so explained.

Let me add that the writer goes much too far in his notion of "an impossible mental conception." Had he said impossible to himself, it might be true. Is his mind the measure of the possible? I am satisfied that there are many Christian men and women who find the conception in question perfectly intelligible to them.

Possibly the writer never had faith in God as to the path he followed his leader in for eighteen years: such at least is the melancholy portrait he presents of himself, though I see no sign of humiliation and self-distrust, but, on the contrary, morbid suspiciousness of others and no small acrimony now. Is this the temper to enter on the consideration of stale calumnies against his brethren, which in a happier mood he used to despise? He ought to know what "second-hand" means; and the new regime some will think a change for the worse. As he reminds us, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." What a painful comment on the text is his own tract! Happier they, in my opinion, who by grace have known how to walk across difficulties and in face of dangers, with loving respect for the worthy but with none the less independence of judgment before God.

The moral I gather from this fresh sorrow is, that the spirit of unbelief works, first, in giving up an uncompromising judgment of all allowance of real heresy; secondly, in calumniating as heresy that

which is real and important truth. It was reserved for the present “Appeal” to fall into the absurdity of trying to fasten the semblance of heresy on a truth which, I cannot doubt, its writer himself holds. The issue for the assailed I for one can happily leave in the Lord’s hands; and I can ask my brethren to join me in beseeching His pitiful mercy on the assailants.

I am, dear Brother, yours faithfully, The Writer of “Remarks on the Gospel of Mark.”

William Kelly

Chapter 235

Thoughts on the House of God

Our first duty, I doubt not, is this, to acquaint ourselves with our condition in the dispensation. We are not only to know the character of the dispensation itself, but its history and progress

In order to attain this, we must distinguish between a state of apostacy and the act of divine judgment.

Kingly power, for instance, in Israel was not apostacy, but divine judgment. It was the fruit of sin or of a revolted heart, I grant. But its presence in Israel was only divine judgment.

So, the division of the tribes afterward. This also, was judicial, the punishment of sin, but not, in itself, a state of apostacy.

The captivity in Babylon was of like character. The fact of Israel being captive there was the witness of divine judgment, and not of itself, apostacy. Now, according to all this, I read our present condition. The scattered lights, the fragments of the candlestick, is a condition of things which has come from unfaithfulness, most surely; just as kingly power, the division of the tribes, and the Babylonish captivity, were the fruit of sin in Israel.

But, like them, the present broken condition of the saints is a divine judgment.

But upon this I further say, it is always obedience to accept the punishment of sin, or to bow to the judgment of God. Not to do so is rebellion. (2 Chron. 36:13; Jer. 24) to make efforts to escape from such judgment is but adding sin to sin, as in the going up to the mountain, after pilgrimage of forty years in the desert had been judicially awarded. (Num. 14)

Therefore David, for instance, rightly owned kingly authority in Saul; the prophet Elijah, for instance, owned the scepter of the ten tribes apart from the throne in Jerusalem; the godly remnant bowed to the sword of the Chaldean, Persian, Greek, and Roman, in their several seasons, as Jesus himself did in his day. In like spirit, I doubt not, we are to own the divine judgment in the present broken condition of the saints. Here, however, another duty arises, for we are still to distinguish things that differ—we are not to add sin to sin.

King Saul used his power in such a way that the righteous were driven out. The head of the ten tribes acted as an apostate, and the righteous had to refuse his calves at Bethel and Daniel the Chaldean demanded the worship of his image, and the righteous, who had before bowed to his sword, suffer death rather than bow to his idol. So, as to ourselves. While we accept the present dismemberment of the saints as a divine judgment, and must not sin by refusing such punishment; neither, however, must we add sin unto sin, by not walking according to that light which we have, or by consenting to the apostate actings around us, in the place of the divine judgment.

(We have a beautiful illustration of these principles in the conduct of the returned captives. they own the Persian power, and take favors from it, in that way accepting the punishment of sin and bowing to the judgment of God. But they will not admit of intermarriages with the heathen, or strike

hands with the Samaritans, for such things would have been evil compliance, and contrary to the light of the Lord.)

Then again, having found out the present state of things, or our condition in the dispensation, it is our duty neither to refuse to do what we can, nor to affect what we cannot.

The captives in the book of Ezra, returned from Babylon, acknowledged their want of Urim and Thummim. (Chap. 2:63.) Nor do they imitate the cloud and the glory, or affect to make something and call it the ark. But they do what they can. They build the city walls, and the house of God, they keep the feasts, and order the Sabbath. And the prophet seals, I may say, the rightness of all this, telling them, as from the Lord, that His Spirit was with them as with their fathers at the Exodus. (Hag. 2:6.)

So, their brethren before them, who had lived, and it may be died, in Babylon, in like mind, take knowledge of their condition, and do what they can, without affecting more. They refuse to sing the songs of Zion there, and hang their harps upon the willows. Their condition admits of no more, and no more will they attempt.

So, as to ourselves. We should enter, for instance, on 1 Cor. 12-14. In kindred spirit and intelligence. We are not to imitate those chapters, or play the part of Corinthians, as though we had all the gifts of Corinthians. Nor are we to assume to be the only light in our place, as the church then was at Corinth. But we must have faith to know this, that the scattering of the lights or the judgment of the candlestick is not the withdrawal of the spirit from his temple, the gathered saints. We must hold to God’s principles in the judged place or the scene around us.

In typical language, we bow to the sword, but not to the image of the Chaldean, we own the head of the ten tribes, but not the calf at Bethel.

We are not to expect, it may be, such corporate power as would have been, had no divine judgment come upon the candlestick; but we are not to be a body or congregation without faith to regard it as a habitation of God through the Spirit, with power to order and feed it in the Spirit.

And again, as we are not to surrender God’s principles to the corruptions around, neither are we to give them up because of some disappointed efforts in asserting them. “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” The light of the Lord must be borne aloft and apart. We are to distinguish things that differ. We are not to give up principle because it is hotly assailed, neither are we to do so because it has been poorly and faintly illustrated. The principle outlives a thousand disappointing attempts to exhibit it. The light is not be judged because of the soiled lamp through which it may shine. We are no more to identify it with that than with the darkness around. I may be grieved and disappointed that the candle has been, as it were, under a bushel, but I am to remember that it is a candle still, able to give light to all that are in the house.

And though disappointed in the house of God, in the candlesticks of the sanctuary, it is a comfort to know that the perfect order and worship of that house waits till the inheritance be reached, and we are at rest from all enemies about. (Deut. 12:8-12.) So was it in Israel. Worship in its fullness waited till the peaceful day of Solomon. Then the house was built, and sacrifices, and offerings, and joy before God marked the time as well as filled the place where he had bet his name forever. (2 Chron. 1-7) So Rev. 21:9-22:5 (which is our 2 Chron. 1-7). The building of God shines in its

glorious beauty, and all is temple, and the worshippers worship. God has his congregations and his worship now, it is true, as of old He had His sanctuary at Shiloh and His altar at Gibeon. But we wait for such in their perfection, till the rest and inheritance be reached; and a comfort to know that God waits for it till then also. (see again Deut. 12:8-12; 1 Chron. 22)

And still further. I know that it is the proper business of light, or of the renewed mind, to prove what is the acceptable will of God, and that too in all things. (Rom. 11:2; Eph. 4:10; Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:21.) But still we are to distinguish things that differ, I doubt not, as in the following manner, and by the following rules.

The faith of God's elect is to be required.

If it be not at the first confessed (2 John 10), or if it be afterward abandoned, fellowship is to be denied.

The holiness of God's house is to be required. If it accompany not the confession of the faith, fellowship in like manner is to be denied. (1 Cor. 5) 3. the discernment of divine principles is not to be required in all things. As far as we discern them, we must act on them; but such a discernment being a matter of spiritual attainment, we are to bear with different measures~ of it.

This division of subjects is very simple. It involves, however, practical and needful admonitions for this day of division and disturbance, and is good in guiding us wisely in our communion with others.

But further still. I believe it is right in us to hold the divine idea of the assemblies of the saints much before the mind. They are called "an habitation of God through the Spirit," and are, therefore, sacred spots, had we but faith to discern them duly. But we eye them too much with the eye of sense. We know them rather as we see them than as we are taught about them. We read them according to the writing of flesh and blood, and not according to their description under the pen of the Holy Ghost. We are disappointed in the exhibitions they make, and this is a godly sorrow; but we should also delight ourselves in the brightness and purity which belongs to the idea of them that is ever before the mind of God.

This idea may be discovered in its great features from the light of different scriptures.

This "habitation of God" is not mere stonework, however carved and polished, even like Solomon's temple, but formed of materials quickened or instinct with the life of the Son of God Himself. As Peter says, "to whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house."

God Himself is there through the Spirit. He is at home there— "the house of God, the church of God." and as he says of such temples or assemblies of saints, "I will dwell in them and walk in them," he is either resting there or active there. If the house be silent, He is dwelling there; if it be stirring, He is breaking the silence in the energies of the Spirit, as if it were letting the walk or footsteps of the Lord be heard in his courts.

8. This habitation of God through the Spirit answer the sublimest ends and purposes which the mind can conceive—as we may thus see—(1.) There is conducted the worship of God, "a holy priesthood" being there "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter

2)

There is dispensed nourishment for the saints growing up into Christ in all things, the highest richest destiny to which a creature could be appointed. (Eph. 4:15.)

This teaches angels, instructs the natives of heaven in the manifold wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 11:10; Eph. 3:10.)

(4.) This subdues the proud and hard heart of sinners. (1 Cor. 14:24, 25.)

These are some of the features of the Spirit's idea respecting the "habitation of God."

But let me add, that to entitle any gathering to be regarded, it is needful that it should present itself as having come to Christ as a stone "disallowed of men," and also, as a place, where "the holy priesthood" is commensurate with "the spiritual house" (see 2 Peter 2:4, 5). I feel that I could not regard any gathering as an habitation of God through the Spirit which did not, according to this, take its distance from the world or from man, and own all the members of it equally within the priesthood as within the house or gathering itself.

Chapter 236

Thoughts on First Corinthians 15:47-49

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

There are two characters of relationship into which we are brought; one is our union with Christ, and the other our relationship along with Christ to God as our Father, He being the firstborn of many brethren. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” This last is the result in glory, but it is founded on this great truth of, “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” It flows from our connection with the Second Man (He Head of a spiritual race, as the first Adam was head according to the flesh).

This is a different thing from His relationship to the Bride, and the headship of the body. It teaches us how the whole of the Old Testament Scripture looks at our history in the first Adam, closing that history entirely, and then brings in a new One. This is not brought out until the Second Man is raised from the dead. He was in person the same before, but He was not Head of a spiritual race until He was raised. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone,” &c. It was only then that He could take such a position with His disciples as to say, “I go to my Father and your Father.” All thought of any union with Christ, as man, is wrong. He could not unite Himself with us in sin: He could show compassion, but it was impossible there could be any connection between us and God in the flesh, as men in nature. When Christ takes a new position, outside every position in which flesh could be taken account of, we are united to Him in spirit; but the whole history of man shows the impossibility of connection between man in nature with God. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” “And as I said to the Jews, even so say I to you, Whither I go, ye cannot follow me now.” Flesh, corrupt and corrupting, cannot enter into glory.

True, flesh works in the believer; but Scripture goes deep and brings out this truth, “in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” So the apostle afterward says, “When we were in the flesh.” I do not know whether you would be able to say that—when I was in the flesh. If we can say so, our responsibility now is to walk as men in the Spirit. A Christian is not to walk as a man, but as a Christian. There are duties of husbands, wives, children; and the relationships between man and man have to be sustained of course; but before God I am not looked at as a man in the flesh at all. The flesh tries to hinder. It comes to be a hostile power to what I have from the last Adam; but if you walk merely as men, you are lost.

Flesh showed its weakness. The word to Adam did not provide for sin, and supposed no lust in man. In the garden of Eden lust came in, sin came in, and the separation was complete between God and man. Adam then became head of an excluded race.

Law, given afterward, supposed men dead, but it invoked responsibility. Man left to himself became corrupt before God. The earth was filled with violence. Then a flood came. Then came the law as a trial of man. Promise was not a trial of man, but it manifested grace without a question of man. There was no promise to Adam, the promise was to the Second Adam, the seed of the

woman. God cannot promise to sin. There was no question of responsibility in promise. He gave it to man and left it. Afterward the question of righteousness is raised. We may little weigh what the terms of the law imply. Were I to say, If you do this, you will get a fortune, this implies that you have not a fortune without. You cannot say, Do this and live, if you have life. When God said to man, “Do this and live,” it implied his being dead. Man did not think so, but it was the ministry of death and condemnation, because it demanded obedience, which man could not render. Law does bring out man’s guilt; he cannot be subject to the law of God. But there was another thing that proved his guilt more thoroughly. Will they accept God’s terms when He came to them in grace? Christ came, and in His life was the perfect manifestation of goodness; He came amongst men to do them good, healing the leper, &c. But could flesh find anything attractive in Him? He was an outcast among the people to whom He brought home the goodness and love of God.

When law was given, they were not subject to it; and when Christ came, they would not have Him. Therefore the Lord said, “Now is the prince of this world judged.” “They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Man, tried in every way, is proved to be bad.

In other circumstances, viz., that of the Christian, there is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the same impossibility of its pleasing God. All flesh shows utter rejection of God Himself, and is proud of itself all the time. Before God executes judgment, man has entirely cast God off. The wonder of the cross is that He came—the sinless One came into the very place where flesh is. “He who knew no sin, was made sin for us.” He finds Himself in the fully revealed position of man before God; He puts Himself there in grace and in obedience too. There was more than that: “He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” He was “made sin,” and put it away by giving up the life in which He bore it. God deals with Him about sin, and the very life ceases in which He takes it, and then He rises up. God had dealt with it, put an end to it entirely on the cross. There was an end of the old man, and now it is said, “Reckon yourselves to be dead,” &c.; “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Christ has taken the place of the first Adam in sin. All that I was in, Christ has stepped into and borne. He rises up and I have an entirely new position. I am now in Christ. He has closed forever the history of the flesh (we have it as an enemy—but its history is closed forever before God) and commenced a place for us in Him the Second Adam. “Father, glorify thy Son.”

He returned to His place before God, having accomplished righteousness. He is Head of a new race, a family of His own. He has new glory as thus Head of a race. We are livingly united to Him—we are in Christ. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” We are not in flesh, but before God in virtue of accomplished righteousness. All God’s dealings with man before were grounded on sin having come in; so law, promise, government, until Christ came. Now His dealings with us are founded on righteousness. God has His righteousness before Him in a man. The Son of man has glorified God on the earth, and God has glorified Him in heaven. It is as a man He is there, though He is much more to be sure.

Life I have in Him and righteousness. Life is in the Son, the Second Man, and I can treat the flesh and all connected with it as an enemy. As to that, I am dead: flesh has no place now. I have life in Christ: flesh is dead. I have nothing to say to it, no relationship with God in flesh; I have to pray against it, fight against it, read, and use all the means I can against it; but I am not in it. There may be confusion in the mind, but not in the relationship. God can have nothing to do with flesh.

“Reckon yourselves dead,” for He has died. It is not said, Die, to the flesh. The flesh will keep itself alive as long as it can. It will try to mend itself—try to be better. There would be no sense in telling the flesh to die. But Scripture says, Ye are dead. Flesh has been judged in Christ, and therefore I am entitled to say, I am dead and am a new man. Then walk in the Spirit, walk as Christ walked, as the Second Man, not as the first. You cannot get back to innocence, the uprightness of creation. True you are upright, if in the Spirit, but more, righteous and holy. All this is equally true about sins. As surely as the first Adam was turned out of the earthly paradise, and became head of a race, so He, the Second Man, is Head of a race for the heavenly paradise.

Faith takes absolutely what God says. Where does it take its place? Half way, or entirely, with Christ? Flesh never can take its place before God. Faith says, I have no place before God, but in Christ Himself. He is righteousness on the throne of God. Any half-savior, any half-place would not do. We grow up into His likeness: but our place before God is the same at first. Christ’s life upon earth is a perfect pattern for us, manifesting God in all His ways.

Our position before God is one of full favor. And we have the hope of glory before us. How it elevates the heart—not us! Grace humbles us, but elevates the heart. I have boldness before Him in the day of judgment. When we reach the heavenly tribunal, we shall be like Him, the heavenly One.

Grace alone does it. It enables us to discern between flesh and Spirit, not only between what is right and what is wrong; but we can say, That is flesh, or That is Spirit. It may look very fair, but if it is flesh, it comes to nothing. If all the world thinks a thing good, that is not Christ and I would not believe it. If a man walks with the Lord, the flesh is judged. There are the different growths of the babe, the young man, the father; but if we walk with Him, we discern what a thing is. The flesh is very subtle, but it will not last out when the Lord tries me; the wood, hay, and stubble, will not stand. Gold is a rarer thing in the world than wood, bay, and stubble, but it lasts longer.

Can you say now, “When I was in the flesh,” with the very distinct consciousness that you are not in it now? Then you are called not to walk as if you were in it. The Spirit has not a fair show. You cannot go on with Christ; you may walk with Christians, but you cannot walk with Christ, without the power of the life in exercise—not going to look for the power, but having it. May the Lord give us to know what it is to be in the Spirit and not in the flesh! It may try the conscience, but the end will be peace and joy.

Chapter 237

Hooker and the Law

We are told of absolute law, and referred to Hooker. Hooker, as is known, pleaded the cause of the Episcopalian establishment against Travers, resting it on the nature of law, with a view to justify the obligation of what was not contained in scripture. I have nothing to do with his views; but it is singular enough that what is referred to, contains the germ of the two principal infidel doctrines of the present day, and of the Puseyite movement. Quite unknown, surely, to himself; but a false principle bears its fruit in its own season. One the subjecting God to the law he has imposed on himself in a way which destroys His sovereignty; the other exalting conscience under the name of right reason, quoting Plato, Aristotle, &c., for proof, so as to give conscience a title, enfeebling that of scripture; and on the other hand, insisting (contrary to the reformers) that scripture does not prove itself, but we must have proof of it from another source; and further, that scripture does not contain full direction for men. I quite admit he did not contemplate the consequences. But the great standpoint of infidels now is, that God acting necessarily by, and having established, uniform law, miracles are impossible; and that conscience or right reason must judge of scripture. That scripture cannot prove itself is the warhorse of popery, as is its insufficiency.

Chapter 238

Gethsemane

(Luke 22:44.) (Translated From the French.)

The state of the heart has more to do than exegesis with the understanding of this passage. Yet important doctrines, or rather facts and truths relative to Christ, are connected with these remarkable verses. I shall try to bring out the position in which the ever-blessed Savior is found here, although the appreciation of the bearing of these verses depends, after all, on the spirituality of the heart. It will be understood that doctrines about Christ are connected with them, when one knows that verses 43 and 44 have been omitted by more than one manuscript, evidently because according to the view taken by the copyists they made Christ too much a man. Now it is this which gives to these verses their true value: Christ, in the gospel of Luke, is essentially man. We there find Him in prayer much oftener than in the other gospels. Thus after His baptism by John, it was whilst He prayed that heaven was opened upon Him; it was whilst He prayed that He was transfigured. (Chap. 9.) So also He had passed all the night in prayer before choosing the twelve disciples. (Chap. 6:12.) All this is exceedingly interesting, yea, of profound interest for the heart.

But other elements present themselves in the consideration of these verses which are before us. An immense change was taking place at this time in the position of the Savior. Until then He had, by His divine power, provided for all the wants of His disciples, entirely disowned as He was, and in appearance dependent on the kindness of a few women (for it was their particular privilege thus to devote themselves to Him), or of other persons, for His daily bread—if needed, a fish. They brought Him exactly what was necessary to supply His wants. And when He sends His disciples to preach in the cities of the glorious laud, He knows how to turn the hearts so that they lacked nothing. But He was to be rejected. The things concerning Him were, to receive their divine and wonderful solution, and to be accomplished according to the depth of the counsels of God. He was going, not to shelter His disciples from every evil; but not to shelter Himself, and to be exposed to the outrages of those who said, “He saved others; himself be cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.” Christ was not yet drinking the cup of wrath. That was accomplished on the cross: it was there, that which He suffered from the hand of God, supreme and expiatory in its nature. But the moment was come which He Himself described by these words: “This is now your hour, and the power of darkness.” The hour of temptation, not of wrath but of temptation, when the Savior must have thought at the same time of the terrible cup that was before Him. The enemy tried to overwhelm Him by the circumstances, before which human nature, as such, would shrink; and is view of the forsaking of God amidst these circumstances. The Savior entered at this moment into the trial; but He entered into it perfect in every way, receiving the cup in obedience from the hand of His Father. As to the circumstances, and as to that which weighed upon His soul, Satan and the men under his power were everything: as to the state of His soul, they were nothing; His Father was everything. This is one of the most perfect and profound instructions for all our troubles.

It is to this supreme hour that the Apostle John alludes when he says, more than once, when no one touched nor could touch the Lord: “His hour was not vet come.” But I would enter into some further consideration of the character of this hour of temptation. The Lord in His grace deigned, led by the Spirit, to allow Himself to be tempted, having associated Himself with us to take part in our miseries and troubles. Satan tempted Him at the beginning by all that which (sin apart) induces man to act from his own will, that which leads him into sin when he listens to his own will—the need of food, the world and its glory, the promises outside the path of obedience, and in distrust of God and His faithfulness.

But the Second Man maintained His integrity, and Satan could not succeed in making Him depart from the path of the man of God. The strong man was bound and Christ returns, with the power of the Spirit, being untouched in His soul, “to spoil him of his goods.” He delivered all those who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him; He was the man who conquered, gained the victory over Satan, as the first man had broken down. By the Spirit of God He cast out devils; the kingdom of God was there. All the effects of the dominion of Satan disappeared before Him, even death itself. Alas! this did not change man’s heart; he was, in the affections of his flesh, enmity against God. Death was needed for the redemption of man; quite a new state of being, his reconciliation with God; the righteousness of God was to be glorified; the claim that Satan had over man, by sin in death and that by the judgment of God, was to be destroyed and annulled. The righteous vengeance of God against that which was hostile to Himself was to be manifested. So that all the enmity of man against God, all the anguish of death viewed as the power of Satan and the judgment of God, all the energy of Satan, and lastly the wrath of God (and it is bearing in the latter that expiation has been accomplished) were to meet on Jesus, and did meet on the head of the Lamb of God, who opened not His mouth before His oppressors. Terrible testimony spewing that the hour of man and of his will is the power of darkness; the hour of God in righteousness for man is but the righteous wrath which abandons Him, and finally excludes from His presence him who is in hostility against Him. What powerful and infinite proof of grace, that Christ tasted that in His grace; that God gave Him that we might escape it; that Christ tasted it, offering Himself without spot to God for that! Outwardly, the power of Satan and the malice of men led Christ to death and the cup of God’s wrath. And it is thus that the perfection of Christ knows how to separate absolutely these two parts of suffering, and to turn the terrible suffering, from the power of Satan in death, into perfect obedience to God His Father, because He passed through that fearful hour of temptation with God, and without entering into it one moment as a temptation which might have for its effect in Him to awaken His own will. Such is Gethsemane; not the cup, but all the power of Satan in death and the enmity of man taking their revenge (so to speak) on God (“the reproach of them that reproached thee, fell upon me”): all perfectly and entirely felt, but brought to God in an entire submission to His will. It is the Christ—marvelous scene!—watching, praying, struggling in the highest degree; all the power and the weight of death pressed upon His soul by Satan, and augmented by the sense He had of what they were before God, from whose face nothing then hid Him; but He always kept His Father absolutely before His face, referring everything to the Father’s will, without flinching for a moment, or trying to escape that will by giving way to His own. Thus He takes nothing from Satan or men, but all from God. When He is well assured that it is the will of His Father that He should drink this cup, all is decided for Him. “The cup which my Father hath given, shall I not drink it?” All was between Him and His Father, the obedience is calm and perfect. What ineffable victory, what supreme calmness! suffering, yea, but between Himself and God! Satan

now was as nothing, men were the instruments of the will of God, or the redeemed of His grace. See what happens when they come; Jesus went forth, and when He announced Himself, they fell to the ground. He voluntarily offers Himself to accomplish the work, and thus permits those to go in safety, who had no strength to shelter themselves, to subsist in that terrible moment when the triumph of good or of evil was to be decided, and where the righteousness of God against sin lent its force to the power of death and the malice of those who were the voluntary slaves of him who possessed the power of death.

The perfect bond of love has overcome through the subjection of Christ as man to the judgment against sin, by which righteousness can triumph in blessing according to love; the expiation of sin has been made, and the power of Satan and of death annulled for him who comes to God by Jesus. But Luke 22:39-44 presents to us Christ conscious of that which was to happen, and, as man, occupied in communion with His Father, with this final and decisive trial. Was He to enter into the temptation, that is to say, to yield to a will of His own, even by desiring to escape death and the cup of judgment, or to find an occasion of obedience, instead of sparing Himself? For Him obedience, however terrible the sufferings, was the joy and breathing of His soul.

Not to dread the judgment of God would have been insensibility; to avoid it would have been to fail as to the will of His Father, since for this cause He came to this hour. It would have been to fail as regards the salvation of man, in which the whole character of God revealed itself even to the angels. But here Christ does not draw the character of this moment from elevating and encouraging motives, but He goes through it in entire subjection to the will of God with all the pain attached to it. He prays. Verse 43 puts the question in all its simplicity. An angel appeared to Him to strengthen Him. It is a man having need of help from on high. If He had not been that, it could not have been the deliverance of man.

The pressure of anguish only becomes stronger on realizing the evil with which He had to do; but this struggling agony of soul is only expressed by more intense prayer. His soul attached itself more strongly to God, and He rises—having perfectly gone through the valley of the shadow of death, the power of Satan, the horror of evil as opposed to God—He rises victorious. The cup which His Father would give Him He will drink. Then it will not be a question of struggling, watching, or praying, but of subjection. A perfect calmness marks the cross, a calmness of darkness where man's eye does not penetrate; but the subjection is perfect. Here goes out the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." It was perfection, the perfection of suffering; of subjection, but not a struggle where the soul cleaves to God in order not to enter into the temptation, a temptation—mark it well—not by means of something agreeable, but of all the power of evil, of death, of Satan, who tried to make the Savior shrink before the awful cup which was found on the path of obedience, the cup which produced our salvation, and the glory of Jesus as man. On the cross, in the solemn hour of expiation, all takes place between the soul of Christ and God. In Gethsemane, the Christ, in presence of all the efforts of Satan, cleaves to God so as not to enter into temptation, but follow the path of obedience, low as it brought Him. Now He descended into the lower parts of the earth, alone, forsaken, betrayed, denied, and, lastly, abandoned of God—perfect, victorious, obedient, the Savior of those who obey Him. And notice here, therefore, that in Gethsemane, infinite as were His sufferings compared with all ours, Christ is an example to us. We have to watch and to pray, to struggle in prayer, perhaps, so as not to enter into temptation. Sometimes even, when some

affliction comes upon us by our own fault (in Christ no doubt it was the fault of others), it is difficult to submit to the ways of God. It is the same thing when, in one way or another, the path of obedience and of uprightness, the path of life, is painful. A more easy path, more verdant to the eyes of the flesh, is to be found by the side of it. Then in our little troubles our portion is that of the Savior, to watch and to pray so as not to enter into temptation. The trying path (see Psa. 16) is the path of life. There God is found; there is the deliverance for His glory and for our own. May God keep us in it! We need His grace, we need sometimes to struggle in the presence of God, to hold good; but He who overcame is with us. And if we have gone through the trouble of circumstances with God, the circumstances themselves will be but the occasion of obedience when in fact they do happen. This is the secret of practical life.

In the expiation, it is evident that Christ was our substitute, and is not our example except in the fact of His perfect subjection. There were, doubtless, on the cross, profound sufferings of body and soul, where Christ was a perfect example of patience for us; but in speaking of the cross we are pretty well accustomed, and rightly, to have the moment of expiation before our minds. It is in this sense only that I make a difference, as to the example. It is important in these days to maintain as clearly as possible the idea of substitution where Christ was alone, of suffering in which we had no part but by our sins. One is willing to have Christ as a burnt offering, a Christ who offers Himself (we, by grace, can offer ourselves, we ought to do it); but a Christ who is a sacrifice for sin some often will not have. Are we to suffer for our sins and to bear them I? Morally speaking, there is a glory in expiation, in the cross, which there is not found in glory. I shall share the glory of Christ with Him, by the infinite grace which vouchsafed it to me. Could I have shared the cross? The Christian knows what he has to reply. May God teach us in exercises of piety, but may He keep us firm in the simplicity of that faith which rests on a perfect expiation, accomplished by Him who has borne our sins in His own body on the tree!

Hence, to understand Gethsemane, we must understand Christ as man, as He was at the time of His first temptation in the wilderness; then all the power of evil and of death in the hands of Satan, and in presence of the judgment of God in death against sin. If Christ had not gone through that—the horrible bottomless pit, this deep mire, where there was no footing lay on our path—who could have gone through it? Satan tried to make Christ shrink before the abyss which our sins had opened, to place it between His soul and God. The effect on Him was to make Him draw near, with greater intensity of soul, to God, to ascertain His will while realizing all the horror of that moment in fellowship with Him, and then thus to find therein an occasion of perfect obedience without entering into temptation.

The cup of judgment itself He drank on the cross.

A word on our portion in following His example, if a trial is before us. If it be the will of God that we should pass through a trial, if even we dread it, our wisdom is to present ourselves before God, and to place all before His eyes. There may be anguish; that in which the will in us has not been broken will be laid bare. When we would avoid the temptation because it is painful, that is, spare ourselves instead of yielding the fruits of righteousness, instead of submitting ourselves to it for the good of our souls and for the glory of God, the evil path of selfishness, which the heart tries to take, becomes evident; we choose “iniquity rather than affliction.” When these exercises are sent for the development of grace, grace is developed, God working with the trial in the soul. When it is

discipline, positive chastisement, and the soul submits—receives the discipline from the hand of God, the discipline has lost its bitterness and borne its fruit. In it God is all in holiness for the soul. I do not desire that one should anticipate evil, but, when the evil is in view, that one may pass through it with God and not with man—that one may watch and pray so as not to enter into temptation.

John Nelson Darby

Chapter 239

Confederacies of Men and Judgments of God

Scripture contemplates hostile associations of men and of nations. Isa. 7, 8, was the era of one and the prophecy of another. Joel 3 tells of “multitudes, multitudes,” gathered together in the day of Jerusalem’s final sorrow. Psa. 83 anticipates a confederacy against the Israel of God; and “Gog” is the witness of a host of nations leagued in infidel defiance of the Lord.

But scripture also contemplates civil or worldly associations; and it is our business to watch their spirit, their purpose, and their working, awful indeed as they are in forming the character and history of the world, and in urging it on its way to meet the judgment of God.

It was confederacy of this sort which was among the descendants of Noah. The one speech and the one language of the children of men in that day led them to judge that they were strong, and that by a little skill and effort they might wax still stronger, even to independency of God. The material under their hand in the plain of Shinar promised very fair. They were all of one language, and were journeying in one direction. They were invited by favorable circumstances (providences as they might say), and they would make a common effort, and try the industrial resources of nature. Things looked well for progress. With a little skill and diligence of their own, the fruitful plain would yield them brick and mortar, and they might accomplish much. And why should they not use the resources of nature, and exercise their own capabilities? Why should they not try what “the raw material,” by man’s “art and manufacture,” would lead to, and do for them?

This was the language of the children of men in Gen. 11. Whether God would have it thus or not, they never thought of waiting to consider. He was not before them. They did their own pleasure. They built a city and a tower, that both name and security, glory and strength, might be theirs.

Thus was it in those early days. In other and very distant days, in the days of the Savior, it was the same—with this aggravating circumstance, that confederacies then formed themselves of strange discordant elements, because of the working of the natural enmity of the heart to God, let that heart be disciplined or trained as it may be, whether in a Jewish or Gentile school. In that enmity, the Jew and the Gentile are found together; and so are the Pharisee and the Sadducee—the men of different politics and of different sects. The world combined these diverse materials against an unworldly Jesus. This was the secret of their confederacy. The Pharisee and the Sadducee were men of different thoughts altogether, considered simply in themselves; but the world can be their common object in resistance to Christ. This is seen in Matt. 16:1-5. “Show us a sign from heaven,” they come together and say to Him. That is, they challenge the Lord to accredit Himself in some way that the world could appreciate, or that, otherwise, they would reject Him by common consent.

This is to be laid to heart. The world has power to combine very different elements when an unworldly Christ stands out as a common enemy. Herod and Pilate were made friends together. There may be the secular and the ecclesiastical, even the infidel and the superstitious; but let an unworldly Christ appear, and He will be challenged as the object of common enmity. A heavenly stranger sojourning on earth for a time is resented as a trespasser by both; and however else they

may differ, they can confederate and act together against Him. God, such as man's heart or man's religion gives Him, man will accept; but the true God, whose image Jesus is, will never do for him.

All this is for the present consideration of our souls. For the world is becoming a common object in these days of ours. All are aiding its advancement, and the development of its capabilities, and the multiplying of its desirable and delectable things; and such a generation as this may easily become the material of a confederacy or common association against the unworldly Jesus and the Church of God.

Strange coalition of this kind is presented to us by the Lord Himself in Luke 11.

It is a solemn word of warning; and, I may add, a seasonable word just in this present day.

The unclean spirit had been the original tenant of this leprous house. In due time he left it, seeking other scenes of action. But after a while he returns, and finds his old house in a new condition. His absence, the absence of an unclean spirit, had left it open to other influences; and, accordingly, on his return he finds it "swept and garnished." This, however, does not disappoint him. He rather deems it to be more suited to his purposes than ever. And it is in this fact—this solemn awful fact—that I judge there is something for our careful and special observation at this time, and for this generation.

This leprous house changed its style or condition, but not its owner, nor its fitness to answer the purposes of its owner. If the unclean spirit had been disappointed in his wanderings, he is not so on his return to his old dwelling. So far otherwise is it, that he goes to gather seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they all make entrance into the house more thoroughly than ever to accomplish its ruin. And they succeed. The last state of it is worse than the first.

This is a picture, indeed, of strange unexpected confederacies. An unclean spirit enters a swept house, associating with himself seven other spirits. This is a strange coalition. Things are found together in this house which naturally suited neither the house itself, nor each other. But still, there they are in company, and dwell and work together. An unclean spirit, with seven other spirits, in a swept and garnished house!

Is this Christendom in her last state? Is it to come to this? Is it not, I rather ask, on its way to this already? Are there not symptoms, somewhat too plain to be mistaken, of such strange unnatural alliances all around us? Are not elements in themselves repulsive, beginning to try their capability of combining? Is not "alliance" the favorite watchword of the day? Is not the unclean spirit of darker earlier days making fresh entrance into a reformed and swept and ornamented house? Is not this the Christendom of the present hour? Are not the premonitions of the Divine Prophet realizing before us and around us at this moment?

There are many spirits abroad at present, "gone out into the world." The old "unclean spirit" is abroad in growing vigor, the spirit of idolatry or superstition. The infidel spirit is abroad. The worldly spirit is abroad—that energy which, with its ten thousand arts, is embellishing and furnishing its native place, using refinement of all sorts, morals, religion, intellectual culture and intellectual delights, science and music, books and pictures, everything that can set off and recommend the world, and linking "the million" with nobles in the enjoyment of it.

Thus is it in the history of this present hour. The affecting truth that Jesus is the rejected Jesus in this world is practically forgotten in all this. That mystery is scorned by some, denied by others, slighted by others, and but coldly, carelessly, and feebly acted on by us who thoroughly and entirely own it among the deep and precious things of God. For we say, How could God meet anything in this world but rejection? The world had already departed from Him, ere He came into it. It had set up for itself long before, even from the days of Cain and the city of Enoch. But how deep-seated its enmity must be, when it refused to know such an one as Jesus! This enmity of the world was as the enmity of the Jews, who could forget all their hatred of the Gentile, settled and rooted as that hatred was in the very heart of the nation, and say, in the desire to rid themselves from Him, “We have no king but Caesar.” They refused the waters of Shiloah that flowed softly, and rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah’s son.

But confederacy has not closed its history, or spent all its energy yet. Far otherwise. It must be witnessed in full action at the end, as it was at the beginning. We have seen it in the early days of Babel and in the matured meridian days of the Lord Jesus, and are still to see it in the declining days of the Apocalypse. And the “old Serpent” will be the life and instigator of confederacies at the end, as he was at the beginning, and hitherto. The book of the Apocalypse witnesses this, specially in the mysteries or symbols of the “Woman” and the “Beast.”

The Woman sits on many waters. Multitudes, tongues, nations, and peoples, all receive the cup of fornication at her hand. Kings of the earth, merchants of the earth, inhabitants of the earth, every shipmaster and sailor, and such as trade in the sea, are subject to her. The beast has the whole world wondering after him. In himself he combines the lion and the bear and the leopard, and he has ten horns and seven heads. The false Prophet ministers to him, and the kings, by one consent, give their power to him. All that dwell on the earth worship him. Small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, receive his mark in their forehead.

These are awful tokens of confederated energies of evil. And in them we see the beginning reproduced at the end. For confederacy is the mode or form in which man makes display of his natural pride and apostasy.

And in that form of confederation God will judge the revolted children of men speedily, as He has already done in early days. At the beginning, it was the alliance between the Woman and the Serpent that He broke, saying to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” It was those who were gathered in the rebel-plain of Shinar that He scattered over the face of the whole earth. And so it is the body of the Apocalyptic Woman in her pride, He will give to the burning flame (Rev. 17:16; 18:8); and His supper, “the supper of the Great God,” shall celebrate the doom and ruin of the Beast and his associates. (Rev. 19)

Our present victory, beloved, is by separation. Separation is holiness, if it be separation to the place and character which the calling of God suggests.

The purpose of the serpent in the garden was to withdraw Eve from the condition in which the Lord God had put her. She was to sacrifice that, and get advancement from him. She consented; and at once as a “chaste virgin” she was ruined. Her purity was lost. Whatever she gained, she lost that. She lost what God had made her.

The Church, like the Eve of Gen. 2, should be what the hand of God has made her, taking, as it has done in this age, the cross of Christ as its instrument or material. And that cross has brought her nigh to God, but estranged her from the world. And when the principles of the world propose to cultivate and advance the Church, and such proposal is listened to, we see again, what of old we saw in Gen. 3, the mystic Eve has lost her virgin purity.

The proposal to advance the Church by such means is attractive. But so was the proposal of the serpent at the beginning— “Ye shall be as gods.” This was an angel of light, a minister of righteousness, in the judgment of flesh and blood. But it worked corruption and utter moral ruin, for it beguiled her from the state in which God had left her.

And this generation is doing its best to commend the world to the Church, the Tree to the Woman again. It speaks, as though the world were now a very different thing from what the Cross of Christ has declared it and proved it to be. It speaks, as if Christ were no longer a rejected Christ. But if the saint listen, as of old Eve did, he is so far corrupted; for he is surrendering the place, the condition, and the character, which the cross of Christ has given him and made him.

The serpent would fain give man a garden again. And a happier garden it shall be than God once gave him. He shall have every tree in it. The world shall be a wise world, a religious world, a cultivated world, a delightful place, and still advancing. The man of benevolence, the man of morals, the religious and the intellectual man, the man of refined pleasures, all will find their home in it. And this shall be the world’s oneness. And all who desire their fellow-creatures’ happiness, and the common rest after so many centuries of confusion and trouble, will surely not refuse to join this honorable and happy confederacy.

Nothing will withstand all this but “the love of the truth” —nothing but faith in that word which gathers a sinner to Jesus and His blood, and the hopes of a poor world-wearied believer to Jesus and His kingdom. Come what may to you, beloved, though it be moral or refined or religious in its bearing, it is “unrighteousness,” if it be not of “the truth.” (2 Thess. 2)

The world is “to wonder after the beast” before “every tongue confesses Jesus to be Lord.” Each will be in its day; but the beast will have his day, his day of the rule of evil, ere Jesus has His day of the dominion of light and righteousness. The saint has to walk apart from those schemes or confederations which are undertaking to make the world what God can accept, till the rejection of Christ be answered from heaven. Little do many who favor the system of religious ordinances, and assert the rights and dignities of office, think that they are combining with those who are cultivating the masses, and the people by liberal institutions. But it is so; for all are cultivating man, instead of renewing him. All are doing something against the truth, and not for the truth. (See 2 Cor. 13:8.) The attempt is very specious. The system of the beast and his kings will, in its day, be very fair. They have all “one mind;” and from the attractiveness of such unity nothing will preserve the soul but the faith that knows the principles of God, and that anything or everything that purposes to set the world in order till judgments have cleared it, is of the god of this world and not of heaven. The thing that is to have this “one mind” is the very thing that with stands the Lamb, and is judged of God in the day of the Lord. (Rev. 17:14; 19:19, 20.)

Easy to write this, beloved, but I know that it is the power of separation that is to be cherished by us. It was so in the soul of the dear Apostle, as we see him in 2 Timothy. In that affecting Epistle,

he breathes a spirit which was strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and consciously treading the borders of the glory. And with this he had ardent love for the prosperity of the Church, and of his beloved Timothy. Here was the hidden virtue of his beautiful and distinct separation from the world, or the corrupted “great house,” which was then rising up before him and around him. His separation was in the power of this faith and hope and charity. And to like grace the Spirit calls us in this day, when the “great house” of that Epistle has become the Christendom of this day.

The scenery of the prophets (and that scenery is as real as what at this moment is under our eye) and I may say, very specially that of the Apocalypse, is acquiring increased distinctness in the thoughts of many of the saints of God in these days. In other days it was looked on as dim and clouded. And is not this, I ask, some symptom that we are approaching those regions—that we are conscious of increasing distinctness because of nearness?

And ‘besides; there is something of an instinctive turning to thoughts of judgment and of glory among us. There is something of a sense of this solemn fact, that God is about to interfere in some way or another with the course of things around us. The energies of evil are seen to be very active, and the world to be very haughty and self-sufficient. The present day is the manhood of the world. The world is playing the man now. It speaks of other days as one would remember his childhood. It is boasting itself beyond all former pretensions, and promising to do greater things still. And so will it proceed, till in the moment of its loftiest pride the judgment of God overtakes it.

The people of God should wait with the girdle and the lamp, which are the beautiful standing symbols of their calling till the Lord appears—that is, with minds girt up unto holy separation from present things, and with hearts brightened up with the desire and expectation of coming things.

These thoughts of judgment may profitably move our hearts at this hour. But let me add, for it is a comfort to remember it, that the judgments of God are always only by the way, and never close the scene, or terminate His action and purpose. He does indeed pass through them, but He only passes through them, or rather with them, onward to glory and the kingdom, which is His calling. The deluge, one of His judgments, led to the new world under the government of Noah. The judgment of the cities of the plain was survived, and Abraham is seen on high, the next morning, above it all, and Lot is delivered. The judgment of Egypt was the redemption of Israel destined for the inheritance.

And for still further strength and comfort I may add, that if the mind could be delivered from the blinding and prejudicing power of self-love, it would speak the judgment of righteousness, and justify God in His judgments. Look at Adam. His hiding ‘behind the trees of the garden gave judgment against himself with God. Look at the camp in Num. 14. Their utter silence, the moment the glory appeared, did the same. It was like Adam’s hiding of himself. Look at David. Nathan catches his conscience when he appealed simply to his moral sense, his estimate of right and wrong, his measure of iniquity and his retribution. He got from David such a sentence as justified the judgment of God against himself. He little suspected that he was pronouncing sentence in his own cause. But it was so; and (self-love being dismissed or set aside for a moment, and the moral sense being left alone in company with the offense) David out of his own mouth is judged, and God’s judgment is justified.

So, the husbandmen of Matt. 21. Like Nathan with David, the Lord catches the conscience of the Jews, and makes them pronounce their own condemnation. And all this, because self-love was again, as it were, sent out of court, and the mere moral sense, the sense of good and evil, right and wrong, is alone on the judgment-seat. The decree of God against them is there anticipated by themselves.

And so with the man without the wedding garment in Matt. 22. He got into the marriage feast with a careless heart, just thinking of himself in the power of some form or other of mere nature. But again, in his case, when the sense that judged what was fitting and necessary was called into exercise, and there was nothing to interfere with its action in the conscience—when the simple, unmixed thought is presented to him, whether any person in such a dress should be in such a place, he is “speechless,” he is convicted, be has nothing to say, and his own judgment tells him that such an one as he has no business in such a place as that.

Thee may be used by the soul as illustrations of the great truth, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that He will be justified when He speaks and clear when He judges. Out of our own mouth will He condemn. When Eve pleaded the serpent’s guile, and Adam pleaded Eve’s gift to him, the Lord God did not condescend to answer the pleas. And who of us at this hour does not justify Him in pronouncing that sentence without replying to those excuses?

All this is for us and our comfort, when we think of Him with whom we have to do; and we may sing of Him and of His praise, when the subject is either “mercy” or “judgment.” (Psa. 101:1.) But judgment, again I say, never closes the scene. It is never “the end of the Lord.” The things of Job were all set right, and much more than that, ere “the end of the Lord” in his history was reached. His things in the world, in his own person, both mind and body, in the family, and in the Church, were all in confusion. His cattle were stolen, his houses were in ruins, his children were dead, and his brethren were set against him, he misunderstanding and reviling them, and they injuriously reproaching and condemning him. All was thus out of order, within and around him, as to the world, the family, and the Church.

How could there be more confusion! But God’s “end” lay beyond all this; for we never reach God’s end in either discipline or judgment, the discipline of an individual saint, or the judgment of a people or a world.

So does the holy Jesus alone close and crown the book which details the coming judgments of God. (Rev. 22)

How little does the soul rise up in the power of these things which are so easily discerned, and so freely spoken of and written about!

John Gifford Bellett

Chapter 240

Notice: Reprint of “The Sufferings of Christ”

The Sufferings of Christ; reprinted from the “Bible Treasury,” 1858-9 And A Man in Christ; reprinted from the “Girdle of Truth,” 1858. Second edition, with an introduction and notes. London; George Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row, B.C.

From this new edition, which we advise the reader to procure, we cite the following weighty remarks (Introduction, pp. 11-23):

I hold as to expiation or atonement fully and simply what every sound Christian does—the blessed Lord’s offering Himself without spot to God and being obedient to death, being made sin for us, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, His glorifying God in the sacrifice of Himself, and His substitution for us, and His drinking the cup of wrath. I believe, though none can fathom it, that what I hold and have taught and teach makes this atonement clearer. I mean the not confounding the sufferings of Christ short of divine wrath with that one only drinking of the cup, when He was forsaken of God. I see this carefully brought out in Psa. 22. In the midst of cruel sufferings, of which the Lord in Spirit speaks prophetically there, He says, “But be not thou far from me, O Lord,” twice over. Yet, and that is the great fathomless depth of the psalm, He was as to the sorrow of His soul forsaken of God. With that no other suffering, deep and real as it was, can be compared. But the Holy Ghost makes here the distinction in order to bring out that wondrous cup, which stands alone in the midst of all things, the more clearly. And this makes other suffering more true and real to the heart, and the drinking of the cup (that on which the new heavens and the new earth subsist in immutable righteousness before God, and through which we are accepted in the Beloved) has a truth and a reality which nothing else gives it. The mixing up accompanying suffering with this, in their character, weakens and destroys the nature of both. We come to the atonement with the need of our sins; once reconciled to God, we see the whole glory of God made good forever in it. I add, as regards Christ’s relationship with God, I have no view but what I suppose to be the common faith of all Christians, of His being His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, that, as a living man here below, divine delight rested upon Him. Though never so acceptable in obedience as on the cross, there He was acceptable as, for God’s glory, bearing the forsaking of God. That of course was a special case.

But two objections have been raised here to what I have taught, and to these I turn. One is a certain change which took place in our Lord’s position then, His being given up of God and giving up Himself into the hands of men to accomplish the purposes and glory of God and make propitiation for our sins. On this the New Testament is as clear as possible. We read, “No man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.” From His own lips, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” He tells them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of men. Till His hour was come, hostile as they might be, this could not be. Hence He tells His disciples, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it for I say unto

you that this that is written must be accomplished in me: And he was reckoned with the transgressors, for the things concerning me have an end." And again, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness." Now, though for the purpose of bringing about the work of atonement, delivering the Son of man into the hands of men was not atonement. The hour of the priests and scribes was that of the power of darkness. Before that, if the crowd would throw Him down from the brow of the hill, He passed through the midst of them and went His way. No doubt He gave up Himself. This side of the wondrous picture John gives, when he shows the band of men going backward and falling to the ground, and records the unspeakably precious words of the blessed Lord, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." But up to this, in the accomplishment of the counsels of God, there was a hand that restrained the will or the force of the people. Now the Son of man was to be delivered into the hands of men. It was not the actual moment of atonement, though the path to it; but the hour of evil men and the power of darkness. Was it sympathy? With whom? To deny a change in the position of the Lord and God's ways with Him as a man on earth, I do not say or think in His relationship with God, is flying in the face of Scripture. It was not atonement, it was not sympathy, but the suffering of the blessed Son of God now going to be delivered into the hands of men, whose hour as instruments of the power of darkness it now was, which it was not before. But there was complicated sorrow. He was meeting indignation and wrath. He was not yet drinking the cup. He was not yet smitten, but He was going on to it, given up to that which was the instrument of it, pressed that it should be done quickly, was in the hour which meant all that and meant all that to His soul. It had its own sorrow, but His soul was troubled—first prayed that He might be saved from the impending hour, but bowed to it as the hour He was come into the world for; then urged that it should be done quickly, then was sorrowful even unto death, because, now, just delivered up into the hands of men, He was meeting indignation and wrath. The very thing that made His sufferings then so deep was that He knew that He was meeting indignation and wrath. The wickedness of man was heartless and without conscience, but it led on step by step to the cross, to the cup which He had to drink. He was now as Son of man delivered, or just about to be delivered, into the hands of men, rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, the leaders of Israel. The shadow of death from the cross was not merely foreseen in the sunshine of divine service and favor, but passing over His soul, though not yet drinking the cup. He tells us so Himself. He was in this not sympathizing with others. He looked for sympathy from others, and prayed His disciples to watch with Him. He was not actually drinking the cup, but He was meeting indignation and wrath, I repeat. This gave to His delivering up to man its force and sorrow of death. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and in the days of His flesh made supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death.

There are two collateral points which have been insisted upon: the Lord's connection with Israel, and His full meeting and resolving the question of good and evil, so that deliverance might be absolute and eternal. I am not sure but that in the tract these two points are intermingled so as to produce possible confusion in the mind. The latter is far deeper and requires more spiritual apprehension than the former, which connects itself (not with what is absolute and essential, eternal and perfect good, and putting away evil fully judged and completely estimated in the ways and work of Christ, but) with God's government in the earth, of which Israel is the center. God has made Israel that center, as Deut. 32 clearly states, and while He has called the Church to be the witness of sovereign grace which associates her with Christ in heavenly glory, yet He has (from

the moment He took Israel to be His people) never changed His counsel nor purpose in that people. Enemies as touching the gospel, they are still beloved for the fathers' sake; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. But God has always put men first under responsibility, and when they failed, accomplished, or rather will accomplish, His counsels in grace.

But as regards Israel, the trial was twofold, as indeed in a certain sense with all, their faithfulness to Jehovah, and their reception of Messiah, of Him who comes in the name of Jehovah and who is Jehovah Himself, but Jehovah come in grace. The one was the controversy with idols, brought out in Isa. 40 to 48, where their comforting and Christ Himself withal are promised, but where the question is idolatry, Babylon, and Cyrus, but looking on to final deliverance for the righteous. On that I do not insist farther. The other was the coming of Messiah, of Jehovah Himself in grace as a test. This is treated from chapter 49 to 57 going on to final deliverance of the righteous, but turning on the rejection of Christ, introducing atonement, here especially for the nation, but embracing every believer. This question I need not say was brought to an issue in the history of Christ, the future result for Israel being still matter of hope and prophecy, yea, of Christ's own prophecy in Matt. 23; 24 Christ died for that nation, or it could not have had the future blessing. Now we must remark that what is promised to Israel is fulfilled only to the remnant. The hopes are the hopes of Israel. It is Israel's blessing; but if God had not left a very small remnant, they would be like Sodom. This remnant, a third part, will pass through the fire, through the terrible tribulation such as never was, though in a large degree sheltered and hidden of God. Still they will pass through the fire. (Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2, 3; Isa. 26:20, 2] with what precedes.) Abundant scripture might be quoted to the same purpose. The prophetic part of the New Testament confirms this, in the Apocalypse and in the Lord's prophecy in Matthew, and it is diligently expounded in Rom. 9-11 to reconcile the certainty of these promises with the no-difference doctrine of the apostle. What part did Christ take in these sorrows in spirit? That their rejecting Him was the immediate cause of their own rejection, is evident. (Isa. 1; Zech. 13; 14, and the Lord's own prophecy in Matt. 23; Luke 19:42, 44.) That He lied for the nation John tells us, as does Isa. 53. That He wept over Jerusalem, the true Jehovah who would often have gathered her children. (Luke 13:32-34; 19:42.) That it is in Israel God is to be glorified in the earth, Isa. 49 makes perfectly clear. Equally so that His rejection was consequently felt by Christ as having labored in vain and spent His strength for naught and in vain; though the answer brings out necessarily a far fuller glory as the result of the work which He knew to be perfect.

This leads us at once to the truth that the Lord was deeply sensible of the effect of His rejection as regards the nation. The law had been broken, but idolatry given up, and Jehovah was come into the midst of His people with deliverance and blessing in His heart and in His hand—come surely to give Himself for them as an atonement, but first presenting Himself to them the true heir and vessel of promise, the minister and crown of all blessing, the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God. But He was the outcast of the people and labored as regards that in vain, nor (though the remnant got far better things, as Christ's own glory was largely enhanced by it) could the remnant then have the blessings and glory promised in and with the Messiah: they were to take up their cross and follow Him. Jehovah, anticipating the great final deliverance, sent that Elias in spirit who was to come before Him and the great and notable day of the Lord. They did to him whatever they listed, and the Son of man was to suffer. The New Testament, as the Old, brings, as to Israel, Christ's presence and the last days together: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till

the Son of man be come." (Matt. 10) And "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," quoting Psa. 118, as He did for the rejected stone. At the same time the body of the nation was now apostate, crying, "We have no king but Caesar," rejecting formally their Messiah, and, in Him, Jehovah come in grace to speak a word in season to him that was weary. Was the Lord indifferent to all this? Was He, because He was going to accomplish a greater work in atonement, indifferent to the setting aside of God's beloved people, to the present merging all the promises, as regards them, in judgment and long rejection, wrath coming upon them to the uttermost; to the entire setting aside of the promises looked at as resting on the reception of Messiah come in the flesh, His own laboring for naught and in vain, and being cut off as Messiah and having nothing, and the people apostatizing and joining the Gentiles against the Lord and His anointed, so that wrath and judgment came upon them—was He indifferent, I say, to all this? or did He feel it? Sympathy with His disciples we can understand. But was all this no source of suffering to the Lord? He could not sympathize with apostasy. He was in no such case, but faithful to the very end, perfect in it with God; but was it nothing to Himself, no sorrow, that God's people were thus cut off, cut off Himself instrumentally by that very apostasy, so that the then hope of Israel closed with Him, for that Isa. 1 positively declares? He could not separate His own cutting off from theirs as the consequence of it. This Dan. 9:26, as well as Isaiah, plainly testifies.

Let us see how His Spirit works in His servants. The Lamentations of Jeremiah are the deep and wondrous expression of this; not only that what had been so beautiful under God's eye, how Nazarites whiter than milk had been set aside, but God had cast down His altar, profaned His sanctuary. So Isaiah would have Jehovah rend the heavens and come down. (See Isa. 63; 64) So Daniel in the beautiful pleading of chapter 9. Has Christianity removed and destroyed this feeling? There was one who had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his kinsmen according to the flesh, Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, God over all blessed for evermore. That was the way Paul would know Christ no more; he knew Him in the glorious and heavenly results of atonement, but his heart groaned over Israel as God's people to whom the promises and Christ in the flesh belonged. He could wish himself accursed from Christ for them, as Moses had wished to be blotted out of Jehovah's book for their sakes, Israel according to the flesh, but God's people according to the flesh, and to whom according to the flesh Christ belonged. Israel was responsible for receiving Him. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Did Christ's Spirit produce these feelings in His witnesses before and after His coming and rejection, and He Himself remain indifferent, careless, as to His people whom He had foreknown? It was not so. Indignation and wrath were coming upon them, and He felt it. It had well nigh been executed in Paul's time, and by Christ's Spirit he felt it, though his heart had known Christ in glory and would only now so know Him. This is the language of scripture: "And his soul was grieved," we read in Judg. 10, "for the misery of Israel." In all their afflictions he was afflicted," I read in Isa. 63.

That same Jehovah came as man. Did His humanity dry up His concern for Israel and His lost sheep? The same Jehovah then could weep over the beloved and chosen city, and say, "Oh that thou hadst known even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." He was not merely Jehovah, but as Messiah He took Messiah's place in

Israel, not in its apostasy surely, but with the godly remnant who, as to earthly promises, could then as well as Messiah Himself take nothing. The Shepherd was smitten and the sheep scattered. He was the Head and bringer in of the promises. His cutting off was the setting aside, as then presented, all the hopes and promises of Israel; and as Messiah He was to be cut off, and, as the consequence of that, judgment, indignation, and wrath, were, to come upon Israel. Indignation is, I may say, the technical word used for the time of trouble in the last days. And Paul says wrath was come upon them. I believe Christ entered into this, felt it all in connection with His own cutting off. No doubt He went infinitely farther. He made atonement for them, but He felt fully the rejection of the people, bore it on His heart, told them not to weep for Him but for themselves, for judgment was coming on them. He was the green tree, and this came upon Him. What would be done in the dry, dead, and lifeless Israel?

But this leads me to cutting off and smiting. Not only is the judgment of Israel connected with the cutting off and smiting of Christ, as we have seen, but the condition of the remnant in Israel in the last days, and of the just as the remnant of Israel from Messiah's days, is deduced from this. It is so in Dan. 9. The weeks are not yet run out for the ceasing of Jerusalem's desolations and wars.

The last terrible half week is to come, of which the Lord tells us in Matt. 24, referring to Dan. 12 And why all this? Messiah was to be cut off and have nothing. It is not glory gained by atonement which is spoken of here, but Messiah's cutting off so that He had nothing of the glory and kingdom of Israel; but Israel on the contrary came under judgment and a desolator. Zechariah teaches us the same thing. The blessed One who had been man's possession (servant) from His youth had been wounded in the house of His friends. His own were guilty of it. But there is more than this in His death; the sword is to awake against Jehovah's Shepherd— "the man that is my fellow," says Jehovah of hosts. "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." His sheep, as connected with Him in Israel, were scattered, and then the prophet goes on to the portion of Israel and the remnant in the last days; two thirds will be cut off and the remnant go through the fire. We have already seen that in Matt. 10; 23, the Lord connects the same periods, and in the latter case with His rejection. They stumbled on the stone and were broken; when it fell on them, it would grind them to powder. If I find the details and feelings more entered into in the psalms, I find the teaching and history in the gospels of what brought it all about. Now I fully recognize that the smiting was on the cross, that is distinctly stated in the papers I am republishing. But I affirm that Christ entered into all these sorrows and sufferings on His way to the cross, and that in a special manner as looking to be cut off, when His hour was come and He was to be no longer absolutely safe from the machinations of the people become His enemies, but delivered by them to men.

Further: the charges and accusations made have led me to search Scripture on the subject, and I do not find that smiting is ever used for atonement (though atonement also was wrought when He was smitten), but for the cutting off of Messiah in connection with the Jews. Forsaking of His God is that which in Scripture expresses that work which stands wholly alone. Some passage may have escaped me, but I have searched. It does not trouble me that it should be so taken, because it is certain that when He was smitten, atonement was wrought. But I prefer Scripture to the sayings of men, and until they produce some scripture which disproves it, I shall believe that the act of cutting off of Messiah is spoken of in smiting, and not the work of atonement to which nothing can be compared. The smiting or cutting off of Messiah is used in connection with another subject in Scripture, though He was there wounded for the people's transgressions, and with His

stripes they will be healed. But the cutting off and smiting is referred to the setting aside of previous hopes in the flesh, not to securing future ones in promise, though that work, blessed be God, was done then. It is not that there was wrath inflicted on Christ for any state or relationship He was in besides atonement. I believe Christ never was in the state or relation which brought it, but that He entered into all the sufferings of Israel in spirit, passed through them in His own soul, felt what would be done in the dry tree, though He was the green one.

But what I have said leads me to another difficulty which has been raised—that governmental wrath would, but for atonement, be necessary condemnation. I hold so fully. Israel was the scene of God's righteous government, and indignation and wrath were coming on them in that way. That is the positive testimony of scripture, these words being used, as they are both together, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah: indignation, as I have said, technically in Isaiah and Daniel for the great time of trial in Israel, and wrath by the Apostle Paul, and more than one equivalent to them in the Lamentations. But if Christ had not wrought atonement, there could not have been indignation and wrath as chastening and teaching for good. It must have been condemnation. It could not be said, By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, referring to the last days; nor could Jerusalem be told that she had received at the hand of the Lord double of all her sins; nor by the Lord that she should not come out till she had paid the very last farthing, if atonement had not been made. God could exercise judgment as government because of the atonement. He could show Himself righteous in forbearance as to the Old Testament sins by the blood-shedding of Jesus. He was long-suffering in that government, abundant in goodness and mercy and truth, yet would by no means clear the guilty. But the cross laid the foundation for that. It laid the foundation for heavenly glory, but it laid the foundation for that too. Christ, therefore, while He saw and felt, entered into, all the sorrow and indignation on Israel in the fullest way; went on farther that it might not be condemnation, and made atonement. Indignation and wrath in His case was not merely governmental, but the full dealing of God with sin—which is atonement. I find both plainly revealed to me in Scripture, for I have shown that Christ in spirit did enter into the sorrows of Israel connected with His own cutting off. Smiting (■■■ in Hebrew, πατασσω in Greek,) is used for the cutting off of the Shepherd of Israel; but, when smitten, He was forsaken of God, and made atonement for sin; was bruised for Israel's and our iniquities.

I have now to turn to another objection, which was presented to me in my correspondence—Christ's resolving the whole question of good and evil. It is the one sole and whole foundation of blessing. The same gross mistake was made as to it as to all the rest. He must have known, it was alleged, evil in His heart to have gone through it. It is difficult to deal with such entire darkness of apprehension. Why, God knows good and evil perfectly. Has He (the Lord pardon even the question!) any evil in His heart? But there was more as to Christ. He had to learn it by going through every temptation by it—its bitterness in its pressure on His own soul. He had none of it. He was the Prince of life; did He not know what death was? He was love in its expression: did He not know what hatred was? And just because, and in the manner in which, He was love, was the horribleness of hatred known to Him, even in detail. The love in which He sought the poor of the flock made Him feel what was the spirit which sought to hinder their coming in. When He denounced the scribes and lawyers, did He not feel the evil they were guilty of? The truth is a holy soul alone knows what evil really is, only He went through it all as trial. Was not His horror of corruption and hypocrisy measured by His holiness and truth? Was not His perfect

absolute confidence tried and pained by the distrust and unbelief He met with, even in His disciples? Was not His delight in His Father's love (I cannot say the measure, for it could not be measured, but) the gauge of His sense of wrath? Was not the horribleness of Satan's asking Him to worship him known in the fullness of His own devotedness to His God? Was He not tested and tried by everything save sin within, that could try a soul; and, had it been possible, turn Him away from God? Was not sin known to Him by the assailment of temptation and the holiness of His own soul? Did He not learn obedience by its costing everything that was possible from man and Satan and God? He knew evil to reject it absolutely; to feel it absolutely by the tested perfection of good, which alone could perfectly feel what evil was; and die and give up self rather than fail in devotedness to His Father's will and holy obedience; and then be made sin for us, so as to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. He died for sin, "but in that he died, he died unto sin once; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He has no more to do with sin, save to judge the sinner hereafter. The whole of God's glory, as compromised by sin in the universe, was made good, glorified, exalted, in the fullest trial—everything that could try holiness and love. Hence the time will come when in heaven and earth righteousness will be established forever, sin unknown, and God be perfectly glorified.

Chapter 241

The House of God at Jerusalem

Virtues make an object more attractive to a right mind than dignities or station. If a stranger passed before us, and we were told that he was one who by his courage or intellect had won great consideration for himself among men; and then another passed, of whom it was said that he was a man of the largest heart, rich in deeds of self-denying, unpretending benevolence, it is this one who would be the more engaging to a right mind.

David took great delight in God's house. His word to Zadok evinces this. (2 Sam. 15:25.) God's tabernacles were ravishing in his sight. (Psa. 84) And doubtless, because he enjoyed specially the sense of the divine presence there, and God was witnessed to his soul in life and power. But still he inquired there. (Psa. 27:4.) And what did he find of God in it? In that mystic house, I may reply, God passed before him in His virtues (to speak as a man) rather than in His dignities.

The Lord did not, in that house, bang out His trophies, the ensigns of His glories or greatness. The furniture of it did not tell of His omniscience or almightiness or universal sovereignty, but of His goodness and of the interests which poor sinners had in the provisions of that goodness. It left the personal dignities of the Lord of hosts (again to speak as a man) without a direct formal witness. It was in His love rather than in His glory He passed before them in that mysterious, significant house, and thus won the heart of the worshipper by the dearest attractions.

In such a picture of Himself as this, in the light of a perfect love toward sinners, God was seen in the tabernacle; and on the principles of the heart it was therefore for David to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

It is surely wonderful so to speak, but so we may, that God's house was built for the sinner rather than for God. The structure and furniture of it declared this.

At the entry stood the brazen altar, which told him of God's provision for his sins, or his condition as a sinner. Behind it was seen the laver, which told him of provision, in like manner, for his ease and assurance in going into the divine presence. Within the first veil he saw the candlestick, the table, and the golden altar, which told him of his high condition in Christ, and in what character of worth and honor he was welcomed in the house of God. And the presence-chamber, reached within the sacred veil, let out the wondrous secret, that God Himself had found an abiding rest in that house just because it was suited to the need of a sinner, and that His heavenly hosts, the angels, delighted in it also; for there the glory was enthroned on the mercy-seat, and the cherubim with fixed eye gazed upon it.

The beauty of a love which took such counsels for us as all this mystic furniture of the house revealed might well have charmed the heart of David. Well might he say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, OF Lord of hosts!"

So the servants of that house, as well as the furniture, told the sinner that all was for him. If the priests and Levites waited to do the commands of the Lord of the house, by His express and

standing orders the business of all who came there was to be made principal. Every guest, every visitor, saw himself diligently attended. This was the character of the whole domestic arrangement. The priest and the Levite were always in waiting to do the needed service at the altar for the sinner-guest who visited the house.

The apparel of these servants of the house was all of a piece with this. The family dress, the livery, told the guest that it was the Lord's pleasure to have his wants and himself chiefly attended to. The shoulders of the chief servant of that house bore their names, the names of the guests, and so did his breast. All that either strength or affection could secure them was theirs. And he wore on his forehead a miter, which ever let them know the unsullied light in which they were ever presented before the Lord of that holy place Himself.

Surely, like the Queen of Sheba, we may well notice, among other things, "the apparel of the servants," and be lost in wonder.

So also the occasional ways or ordinances of the house, as well as its fixed furniture, servants, and their standing orders, were for the sinner.

Some of them, indeed, evinced that sinners appeared at that house as debtors or worshippers; but commonly they witnessed that it was as beggars, or needy, or guilty ones they were there. And what was the joyous and august round of festivities performed in that house every year, but the celebration of the sinner's history? Each of the annual feasts recited some one stage of the wondrous journey of a poor captive sinner from redemption to glory, from the Passover in Egypt to the ingathering or harvest of Canaan. (Lev. 23)

Chapter 242

He Will Swallow Up Death in Victory

There would seem to be a difficulty from the position which the words “He will swallow up death in victory” occupy in the strain of the prophet Isaiah, which, containing many subjects, begins with chapter 13, and ends with chapter 17. But, as usual, every difficulty of scripture serves only as an occasion to discover its perfection. The difficulty is that, according to the order in which the prophet brings the statement into his strain (chap. 25:8), the event would seem to follow the great crash of universal judgment related in chapter 24, embracing, as it does, the world and all its systems, the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. Yet we know that the Apostle Paul applies the passage to the resurrection of the Church, or first resurrection, embracing, of course, the saints of the Old Testament days. This event we know happens previously to this crisis of judgment detailed in Isa. 24, introductory of the kingdom—a clear proof, by the way, that the Church does not pass through the tribulation: her promise being that she would be kept from the hour of temptation which comes upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. (Rev. 3:10.)

It would seem to mean that, in a general way, without giving the order of the events, the first resurrection would take place at such a time as that spoken of in the group of chapters 24-17, and without pointing out the order of the occurrences, or the moment of time for their fulfillment—a general thing with this prophet.

But the order is much more precise than this when we come to examine Rev. 20:4. We have there three classes of persons spoken of:

1st. Those who are received up when the Lord comes, i.e., the Old Testament saints and the Church.

2ndly. Those of the Jewish remnant who had been martyred under the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9); and 3rdly. Those who had not worshipped the beast, &c.

The last two classes would, of course, lose their lives, and with their lives the earthly blessings of the kingdom about to be established; and they receive, instead, a heavenly blessing, and a place in the first resurrection, having loved not their lives unto death. All three classes enumerated compose the first resurrection, which, as we know, is not a period of time, but a class of persons, although not raised at the same moment of time but within a period extending from the taking up of the saints at the Lord’s coming, and through the period of judgment which passes over the world, and till the eve of the kingdom.

Now the last two classes not being raised at the same moment with the former, and being comprised especially of the slain remnant of the Jews, it is towards More the Prophet Isaiah has his attention specially directed, forming as they do the prominent subject in his burthen. Hence the order in which we find them in Isa. 25, after the judgment of the world, and at the time when the Lord establishes His kingdom in Zion. This answers so beautifully to the word in Rev. 20:4, “They lived (this word applying especially to the two latter classes) and reigned with Christ a thousand

years;" while the first mentioned class was raised previously to the time when the crisis or tribulation took place.

The mind of the Spirit in the prophet is chiefly occupied with these last mentioned classes; while Paul, who is the instrument used in the revelation of the higher and subsequently revealed truth of the Church, uses the same passage when speaking of the resurrection of the saints who compose it when Christ comes; the passage thus embracing all those of the first resurrection, and the order of resurrection of tile Jewish prophet having in primary view the slain ones of the Jewish remnant who are raised last in order of time, and at the closing moment of the events related in Isa. 24-27.

Frederick G. Patterson

Chapter 243

The Joyful Sound

“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” (Psa. 89:15.) What is the joyful sound here spoken of? The Hebrew word is t’ruhah ■■■■■■■■■ the sound of a trumpet. But not every sound of the trumpet was so called. To assemble the people to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation no such sound was required. The single blast for the princes to gather together was not this. To call Israel to their feasts and fasts the trumpet sounded, but not such a blast as is here referred to. But if the congregation, as they lay encamped in the wilderness, were to strike their tents, the camp to be broken up, and the people to keep close to the symbol of the divine presence, as it preceded the camps, or journeyed in their midst, then this special sound was heard. Also, if the land should be invaded, they were to sound the alarm, which seems to have partaken of the character of this sound, though the substantive, as in the previous case, is not expressed, but the verb from which it is derived.

Besides these special occasions, there were two regular times when the trumpet sound t’ruhah was heard: the one, the fiftieth year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, to proclaim the advent of the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:9); the other, annually, on the first day of that same month, called the day of the trumpet-sound, or (as the Authorized Version) a day of blowing of trumpets (Num. 29:1) ■■■■■■■■■ This latter seems to elucidate what is spoken of in the Psalm.

It is not the announcement of the Jewish festivals in general as is often understood; for them no such trumpet-blast was blown (see Num. 10:10 in the Hebrew). But the reference is surely to the first day of the seventh month, when, after a pause in their feasts since the day of Pentecost, the trumpet sounded to tell the people of the commencement of Tisri, in which the day of atonement and the feast of Tabernacles would be kept, and the year of Jubilee be from time to time proclaimed.

Looking at the Psalm from a dispensational point of view, this explanation will be found in character with the circumstances of the people in this, the third, book of Psalms. They are restored to their land, their captivity brought back (Psa. 85); the day of blowing of trumpets has had its fulfillment; they are gathered again round the center God has appointed on earth, but the full blessing is not yet entered upon. For this the Psalmist by the spirit of prophecy pleads. His promises to David are unfulfilled But, restored to their land, they plead for them, so can say, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.”

Chapter 244

Thoughts on the Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church

1 Corinthians 12

Thoughts on the Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church

(1 Cor. 12)

It is not the gifts that we shall be occupied with, but especially verses 12, 14. We may consider the Holy Ghost in the Christian looked at as an individual. (1 Cor. 6:19.) He may also be considered in the Church as a body. (1 Cor. 3:16.) In the first case, it is very important to distinguish, in the Christian, between the work and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, because His work is a work in man, whilst, as to His presence, it is God Himself—consequently there is power.

But we will now speak of the Holy Ghost in the Church, the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is that which constitutes the unity of the body. The Holy Ghost dwelling in Christians unites them in one, because there is but one Spirit.

There is another passage (namely, Eph. 2:22) which says that we are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

There are therefore two ideas:

First, to be a tabernacle, the habitation of God; Secondly, to be baptized of the Holy Ghost.

When one is saved, the first thought of faith is that God dwells in us. One wishes God to dwell in and with us, and God recognizes this desire of faith. (See Ex. 15:2.)

In Ex. 29:43, 46, we find that God answers the prayer that Israel had made in their song on the borders of the sea. He made His abode in Israel by means of the ark.

Well, in Israel, all this has been lost, for that which is the nearest to God becomes the worst, when one is unfaithful. (Eli. Sam. 4) In the days of Eli, they were not able to retain the tabernacle and the ark as Joshua had given it to them. When the people had entered into rest, they had to bring the ark into battle. It is the occasion for pronouncing Ichabod upon Israel. Here is the judgment of God exercised upon His people. (1 Sam. 4:21; see Psa. 78:69.) Then when God had disciplined His people, He raised up David to be the one who should deliver them. (Psa. 78:65-72.)

In Psa. 132 you will find that the thought of God was to have the ark in His rest. When God begins again His work in grace, He returns to the rest of the ark; this thought is awakened. If you examine the Psalm, you will see three petitions of David, and God, when He answers, goes beyond each petition in blessing:

Petition, verse 8. Answer, verse 14, 15.

“9.” 16.

“10.” 17, 18.

It is a question of restoration. Meanwhile all is changed; the tabernacle was at Gibeon, and the ark in Sion. And the song, in which David celebrates the rest of God with His people, is sung not before the altar, but before the ark. At that time the great thing was the King, and the ark rested on mount Sion, the place where faith sought the presence of God on the earth. Sion was the place where “the Lord awaked.” (Psa. 78)

After all Gibeon was a high place (at least for faith). Solomon did not rise to the height of David’s faith. He did not present himself before the ark; he went before the altar at Gibeon. (1 Kings 3:3.) Later, be went before the ark in the temple, where everything was found united; but at first he did not go to Sion.

Although these things are but imperfect shadows, it is the same for us. One finds in the New Jerusalem that the throne of God and of the Lamb are there. “Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.” God and the Lamb are there. It is, then, this first idea—the Church is the “habitation of God through the Spirit.”

As it has been said, God accommodates Himself to the state of His people. When His people are walking in the desert, God walks there also: He goes before to conduct them. When they are settled in safety in the land, and His enemies defeated, God builds Himself a house. For the present, the Church is “the habitation of God through the Spirit.” It remains to be seen what we have arrived at now.

With Israel God hid Himself behind a veil. It was then the law, and Israel would have been consumed if God and Israel had come face to face. Now God has accomplished in redemption the work which places us definitely before Him. Christ having died, God could gather together His own—it is the Church: Not only could He establish the relationship that was possible of a people on earth with God, as in Israel, but gather together His own. Caiaphas said that Jesus should die for the people; and John adds “to gather together in one the children of God.”

The children of God in Israel, David, &c., were not gathered together. It was a bidden election of some, as alas! men would have it now-a-days to hide from the Church what it has. But Christ died to gather them together. The question was, What is to be done with these children of God? In Israel there was nothing to be done for that. Now that Israel is judged, God adds these children to the Church. (There is always on earth a vessel of the revelation of God; Israel, in their time, were so. But “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” The Church takes the place.)

I return to Eph. 2. It was not only children of God converted, but children of God gathered together, and gathered together on earth. This is simple, and essential to remember. It was not only a question of salvation, but of gathering together the saved ones. This could not be done before the death of Christ. After His death He could not do it in person, because He must needs ascend up on high to present His blood and appear for us. Then He sent the other Comforter to gather them together. It is this which is called being baptized of the Holy Ghost—not regenerated only, but baptized. We see it in the case of the disciples at Jerusalem, and in the cases of Samaria and Cesarea. In the latter case God baptized of the Holy Ghost immediately, before the baptism of water, to show that He received the Gentiles. In this He departed from His ordinary ways.

Touching this baptism here are some examples from God's word: Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5. We have here the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which was the promise of the Father. In recalling the promise, Jesus does not say baptize with fire, although there were tongues of fire to purge the inward man, because this baptism of fire announced by John the Baptist refers to the judgment by which the Savior will "purge his floor." Acts 2:31-33. Mark here, that Christ Himself received the Holy Ghost, after having ascended on high, though as man He was baptized on the earth. Here He receives it in an altogether new manner, as His disciples here below for His disciples. And this is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the sending of the Holy Ghost upon people already disciples.

Psa. 133 is more the latter than the former rain. We have the firstfruits.

Christ has received the Holy Ghost; but one must remember that we are not speaking of His person, who fills the heavens and all things. He, the Head of all things, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and humbled Himself to receive all things.

It must always be remembered that the God-man could have done all that He wished, only He did not do it; but we cannot say that He was under any necessity. Of Christ, the word never says that the Spirit abides in Him, dwells in Him, though He consented to be led by the Spirit; it says that He was sealed and filled with the Spirit. It takes care not to state the thing in any way that might present anything equivocal with respect to His person.

John 14:16-20 is distinct that the Holy Ghost gives the knowledge of this unity.

It is not life which forms unity.

If the baptism of the Holy Ghost were the life in us, it would be an incarnation, as in the case of Christ.

All this leads us to understand that, being baptized with the Holy Ghost, we are one body on the earth. It is not in heaven that we are baptized with the Holy Ghost. The important thing to know is, what the unity of the Spirit is. (Eph. 4) Seek for this unity, for there is an unity. He who does not seek for that unity, does not gather with Christ.

There is not only one Spirit, but one body.

We must seek to unite and to realize the position of Daniel and that of Nehemiah. Daniel, among the Gentiles, received the revelation of their history down to the end. And Nehemiah even dares to build Jerusalem. One must be very near the Lord to realize these two positions. For us who believe, the first thing to do now is to realize what the body is.

We come now to another general question: the Bride.

In that which occupied us, we saw Christ as the Head of the Church, seated at the right hand of God, until God puts His enemies under His feet. Meanwhile, He gathers together His own, the Church. Baptizing with the Holy Ghost, He forms the body, fills the house, and comes to dwell there.

The reception of the Gentiles is not a fact ignored by the Old Testament. Having said in Eph. 2:1, 2, what man is, Paul takes the thing by the other end, and says, "But God, who is rich in mercy," &c., &c. Then there is that which we do not touch upon—the relationships of this body with

Christ. If it is a question of the Father, it is not a question of the body; it is children.

At the end of chapter 5 we have two things said of the Church. It is the bride of Christ, and it is His body, Therefore, what is evident is, that there is but one, for Christ has not two bodies, nor two brides.

As to the relationship which exists between Christ and the Church: He certainly nourishes and cherishes it, even as His own flesh. He cannot fail in His affections towards the Church, although it is often unfaithful.

The Christian is thus considered in two ways: one may see him in Christ in heaven, setting aside his infirmities; or else one may see him in his weakness on the earth. Then Christ is seen, not as Head of the body, but as Priest alone in heaven; this is the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Church is the Bride. Two things flow from this.

1. This body is but one. 2. It belongs to Christ.

It must be remembered, that although this will be accomplished in heaven, it was begun on earth. The actual realization of this grace is the real conflict of the Christian. It is not Rom. 7, the flesh in the presence of law, presented as being something, but the conflict of the Holy Spirit resisting the flesh (Gal. 5:17), the flesh being recognized as worth nothing.

If I have laid hold of what the Church of God is, everything else falls. There can be nothing else.

It remains to be seen if it does present that state, for God can recognize nothing else.

The Church ought to have been faithful to its Bridegroom, during His absence. It ought to have been His—only His.

Christ could not manifest Himself in person, He is in heaven. The Church was on earth, His letter of commendation before the world; the unfaithfulness of the wife toward her husband does not change her responsibility as wife. We have, 2 Cor. 3:3: ye are the epistle, and not, ye ought to be. At any rate, if the Bride is unfaithful, Christ remains faithful. But the Church is no longer now-a-days standing as His letter of commendation before the world.

“How long shall I be with you and suffer you?” says the Lord in Luke 9.

It is when the actual power against demons becomes useless, that the end of a dispensation comes. When the people of God allow themselves to fall, Satan has the upper hand. Then Christ must exercise judgment to show that in spite of all He is the stronger.

When it is a question of the consciousness of our responsibility, let me ask, has the Church—the true Christians—been, and is it faithful to its heavenly character? If the Church is unfaithful, Christ is faithful, and He is faithful at all times, according to the state of the Bride; He can give her food if it is hungry, or medicine if it is sick. He cannot give all the blessings of the beginning; it would be to deceive the Church. If the time of judgment is come, He must prepare the Church for His arrival.

But then it is of all importance that one should know what the Church is, according to the thought of Him who is coming: the effect of this is apparently disorder, because what is already done must be undone. if my house is made ready for me, and in my absence those to whom I have confided

the care of it, permit strangers to settle in it, and divide the house among themselves as they please, when I return, I destroy all their work, in order to restore the house as I wish to have it. In such a case, and until the Master returns, those who love Him as well as His house, are better lodged in the open air than within.

There are three things:

First. The Church belongs to Christ—it belongs to Him by redemption; this is what He did at the cross when He gave Himself for it. Now comes that which He does in the second place. He makes it morally what He would have her to be; He washes it by the word. That is what He is doing all through. And, thirdly, for glory, He will present it to Himself. Beautiful proof of His divinity! He can present the Church to Himself, whilst, as for Adam, God had to present Eve to him.

If we do not lay bold of what the Church is, and that we are the Church, we cannot hold our ground against that which is the contrary. If we have not the consciousness of the Bride, we cannot have her affections.

Christ is coming quickly, and He prepares the affections of the Bride. All this is connected with the waiting for the Lord.

He comes in judgment against this world, but the Church will be with Him at that time. At the same time, we shall be in the place which our work manifests.

When it is a question of the joyous hope of the saints at the coming of Jesus, then all the Church has one common joy. It is there that we find, not the waiting for the manifestation of Jesus, but the hope of Himself, to be forever with Him. Now as to the coming of Christ, when it is not the relationship of the Bride, it is His appearing.

Ibis is the difference between the ministry of Peter and that of Paul. Peter saw Jesus on the cloud, Paul beyond and within it. It is thus, as to His coming. It follows that Paul, when he speaks of His appearing, declares that we shall appear with Him in glory.

Rev. 22:17 has reference to that. The prophecy closes with verse 6.

In ver. 7 the Lord says, “Behold, I come quickly.” Pay attention to the contents of this book. This is for faith.

Ver. 12. “I come quickly, and my reward is with me.” This for conduct meanwhile.

Ver. 17. He announces Himself. Then the affections of the Bride are awakened. He has no need to say “I come” in this place, it is enough that He says “I am the morning star” for the Church to bid Him immediately “Come.” Rev. 2:26 shows that the Church has a portion in the Morning Star.

Chapter 245

Extracts from Correspondence: Dependence

It is so true that we have all grace in our living Head, and I do pray that we may be enabled, in holding fast the Head, to draw continually thence, and to be preserved from what would hinder the life of that blessed One in our mortal bodies. When one thinks what it is to have such a life and such a fullness to draw from, and that really we are to enjoy all that it supplies, in God's own presence, in the light in heaven, it gives a thankfulness and a steadiness of joy that the Holy Ghost alone can give or make us understand. But we have to seek that there be an exercised spirit, that our living way and habitual state be according to this. Christ was not always in the glory of the transfiguration. He met and felt an unbelieving world; but He was always consistent with the glory which that revealed, and indeed with what was only dimly shadowed then; and that in every spring of action and manifestation in life; and in us this must be sought to be realized within. It is not an effort to copy (though we do copy) but to be, or rather so to draw from the Head that what we are in Him be not hindered in its manifestation by evil. To overcome we need power as well as the desires of a new nature; hence constant dependence, not uncertainty as to the nature and life which desires, but dependence for force or power on Another for the accomplishment (I mean here below) of these desires. It is the difference of Rom. 7 and 8.

There is another point I will mention, as I have been led to this, that all proper and happy affections suppose the relationship to which they belong, not merely the nature capable of them. An orphan has the capacity of loving a father and a mother, and this makes it unhappy. A child who has its parents has the affections which belong to this relationship. So the existence of the divine nature involves the desires natural to it; but spiritual affections have their place in known relationship with the Father and with Christ. And this is founded on redemption and grace, which must be known as an assured thing accomplished, and indeed the relationship into which we have been brought by it, in order that these blessed affections, which flow from a known God, exist in our souls. But then what a sure and immutable source of happiness we have—divine and immediate nearness to God! He has adopted us to Himself as children in Eph. 1, and given a nature capable of enjoying it, and the Holy Ghost as power (unlimited in itself), and that based on a redemption which places us fully in unclouded favor, and in a position as assured and accomplished towards us in it—in a position as assured as the value of the redemption itself—eternal redemption. The Lord keep us in His peace, and walking before Him in all holy conversation and godliness, that we may meet in unfeigned joy. Adieu, dear—. The Lord, our gracious Master be with you and near you, and all His beloved people, and deign to bless me also. I have been these latter times in general very happy with Him, but it has been with a look into the blessedness before me in His presence, which has made me feel how little one sees into it even as one ought, though at the same time how great it is; but it is a wonderful light into which one is permitted to look. I speak of the happiness of His presence in light.

Chapter 246

Extracts from Correspondence: Exercise of Gifts

There is a point in your letter I would just touch upon, and that is respecting the exercise of gifts. When the object in going to the Lord's table, and to meetings for worship, or for prayer, is to "exercise gift," it is plain that the true character of such meetings is not understood. I do not go to exercise gift, but to break bread, to worship, to meet him who has said, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and "do this in remembrance of Me." The very expression shows a wrong thought in the mind, giving one the idea of a performance, which it too frequently resembles. This was the case with the Corinthians. "They came behind in no gift;" but instead of using them in subjection to the Holy Ghost, to the glory of God and the edification of His children, they were exercising them (i.e., glorifying themselves by them). I do not know anything more sorrowful or dishonoring to the Lord, or that has brought more sorrow amongst gathered saints than this. Real subjection to the Holy Ghost, with a sense of the Lord's presence, would at once put a stop to the thought of "exercising gifts." A sense of His presence at once displaces all thoughts of self. It is indeed most grievous, when we go to wait upon the Lord and to enjoy His presence, to find some forward self-sufficient one making himself the center of the meeting, occupying the time, filling the minds of his brethren with painful thoughts about himself, instead of happy thoughts about Christ, thus marring communion, interrupting worship, and hindering blessing in every way. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" —a liberty in which the Spirit leads (and not the energy which is of the flesh); then the Lord alone will be exalted, for no flesh shall glory in his presence. Then God is everything and man nothing. May the one object of all our hearts be, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever! Amen.

Chapter 247

Extracts from Correspondence: God’s Presence is Power

I trust there may be no questioning of what was once so plain to many as a path of duty. I am a little afraid of some being unsettled by looking too much to the present condition of gatherings, instead of the fact of God’s having a further work of chastening to accomplish, which we have deserved and must bow to. If there is disappointment because God does not use us more than he does, may it not be that we are thinking more of our faithfulness than of our guilt as to the evils we have separated from? If we look at our present low condition and murmur in our tents, shall we not be likely soon to question our position? If Satan can unsettle, he will. There are some who talk much about the want of power in the gathering, having a standard of their own as to what power is, forgetting that God’s presence is power, whether it be to break down or to build up.

Chapter 248

Extracts from Correspondence: Christ in Gethsemane and on the Cross

I was much struck lately with the way in which Christ was answered and overcame in Gethsemane and on the cross. I apprehend, while looking forward to the dreadful cup, the proper and immediate trial of Gethsemane was the power of darkness; the great point was to get between His soul and the Father (as before, by desirable things for life). But he could not. Christ hence pleading with His Father, receiving nothing from Satan or man in the cup, received it from his father in perfect and blessed obedience. “Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

Hence His soul is entirely out of the darkness in respect to His enemy, and He can say in peaceful hour calm of others, “this is your and the power of darkness,” and presents Himself willingly that His disciples might go free. How blessed the perfectness which, at His own cost, always kept them free. For in their position Satan would have caught them in his hour, had not the Lord 81 God forward in the gap; and so ever. When needed for Peter, He can allow just so much as was good to sift, but stay the proud billows for him, which were to go clean over His own soul. He was thus, I judge, entirely out of the whole conflict with darkness before it came in fact. He passed through it with God—His Father.

At the cross, I apprehend, there was another thing. He was forsaken of God. He had immediately to do with God, and just wrath against sin, and He in that place, so that love could have no refuge for His soul; and here too He is perfect. And having accomplished this ineffable work, His soul having drunk the cup unmixed, atonement having been made, He comes forth as heard, and the act of death is just His own giving up His spirit to His Father. In the time of peace He had said so, but He was to pass through death in His soul, and did as an offering for sin. But, then, what was death? It was One who had overcome death, undergoing it in its infinite atoning efficacy, and gives up His soul more than pure, which has put away sin, into the hands of God His Father. What is death here, if the overcoming of Satan made it obedience? The bearing of wrath gave title to give up life into the merited reception of infinite favor. Death was His. It was not yet power in resurrection, but His soul given up to His Father. It was death; but death the closing of an accomplished life of obedience in woe, and the introduction into that infinite favor in life beyond all relationship of promise down here, which the work in which He had glorified the Father placed Him in.

And so through Him is death to us. It ceases to be a closing life. We have a title through Him to give up our souls in it into His hands, as we see in Stephen. It is the closing of conflict to be in the life, in the power of which we live to Him, absent from the body and present with the Lord. He gave Himself up—it was power, though in reference to the Father, into whose hands He commends His spirit—that His resurrection might be by the glory of the Father. For in this even He did not take glory Himself. Death, or what is called death, is thus a totally new thing. It is having done with all, as a redeemed soul, to enter into another world.

But I speak now of Christ. He had emerged from all this, and a far more dreadful hour, and could tell the thief be should come with Him into Paradise—speak in peace to John of His mother. His hour was come for this: and knowing that all was accomplished, after saying “I thirst,” He gave up His soul into His Father’s hands. These two considerations have deeply affected me, seen in some details of which I never traced the general bearing and importance.

Mark 4:1-34

God, sooner or later, will have all manifested, all things and all persons. Again and again, this is declared. This thought, I may say, pervades scripture.

So will He have His own grace in the operations of His Spirit manifested.

In the parable of the sower different soils had been disclosed. The one seed, the same in each soil, was the occasion of this.

The good soil had been made good by the husbandry of God, or the hidden visitation of the Spirit. It would not have been good otherwise. But having been thus visited by God, it must be fruitful, because of this principle that God will have His operations manifested. He never lights a candle to put it under a bushel.

This is further taught in the parable that follows, “the seed which grows secretly.” For there, the earth is declared to bear fruit fit for the sower “of itself.” That is the point in the parable. God has tilled that soil, and it must therefore be fruitful.

And on the authority of this great truth, that all is to be manifested, the Lord warns us to take heed to the heart, for all in our history depends on that. (Ver. 24, 25.) And the parable of “the mustard seed” appears to enforce that warning. The evil soil of the heart is betrayed and convicted. That which yields luxuriant entertainment for the unclean grows naturally there.

Thus, there is a great manifestation through the preaching of the gospel. Christendom becomes a field of wide and varied observation. Within it, there is ground visited and tilled by the Spirit, and fruit is yielded to the divine sower; and within it also there is the native ground of the human heart, and fruit in luxuriant abundance is yielded to the unclean.

By and by, however, complete manifestation will be made, and all this constitutes truth of a solemn character.

The secrets of the heart shall be all declared. God will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained. All shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. This is one holy serious truth connected with this, and which may well persuade us even now to be upright and truthful in all our ways.

And there is another. If our ways are by and by to be all manifested, and the very counsels of the heart declared; if there be nothing in us now that is not then to come abroad, so God’s operations declare themselves. If He convert a soul or visit a heart, making good the soil in any of us, we may be sure that such operation is ordained to show itself. His tilled ground shall bear fruit “of itself.” If no fruit appear, the fact of the Spirit’s hidden husbandry may be denied. On the ground of this great truth that all is to be manifested, the Lord exposes the folly of hypocrisy. (Luke 12:1, 2.) The apostle, in his ministry, behaved himself in the faith of it. (2 Cor. 4:5.) The great white throne with the opened books will at last vindicate it and illustrate it. (Rev. 20)

Chapter 250

The Throne of God and the Son of Man

It is important to distinguish between the ways of God in government on this earth, whilst nations and peoples are living upon it, in all the busy activities of human enterprise; and the judgment after death, which awaits mankind, when “small and great, stand before God, and the books are opened.” The difference maintained in the scriptures between a first and second death is marked and bold—at the end of a “threescore years and ten” life, in this world; or in the beginning of that undying life of woe hereafter, when “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” There are, further, important distinctions, and varieties in the present ways of God, towards the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church, some of which it is my object to notice. So real indeed is this difference in the governmental actings of God in time, that a Gentile can never with propriety take on himself the responsibility of a Jew—nor a Jew charge himself with the responsibilities of a Gentile—nor a Christian with either. Moreover when Christ was on the earth, and standing in His own peculiar relation to each of these classes, who has not loved to trace Him in the perfectness of His own paths, and intercourse with each, as He enters into the narrower circle of the nation of Israel, at one time; or passes into the broader one as a man, in the midst of mankind; or at last in that new group of men and women, who were the nucleus of Christianity, and of a newborn Christian people? He weeps over His own city Jerusalem before He leaves the world. He sends the Holy Ghost down from the heavens, when He is gone up there, “to gather out from the Gentiles,” a people for His name; and He is coming a second time to call away the Church from this earth, when “the marriage of the Lamb is come.” Who does not see these differences in result, as “the Jews, and the Gentiles, and the Church of God” in their various relations to Christ are viewed now in the light or shade of their respective histories; or when each is glorified in the glory of the coming Lord and of the approaching King and His kingdom?

What will be manifestly true in outward form and fact then, when “the oil of joy” and “the garment of praise” take their place and do their work, had an equal reality, but a very opposite one, when dispensationally and “in the days of his flesh” that blessed Jesus, who will fill all hearts with gladness, “offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” as He entered into the afflictions of His people, or took His place as “the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” It is to this part of the wondrous life of Christ, in these varied trials of man and of Israel, when He went His weary way through this earth, that the following remarks will be confined—the past; and with this part of that engrossing past! Before the great mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh,” had appeared, Isaiah had been called forth in that magnificent outburst of prophecy, to measure the nation and its worship, by nothing less than “the throne and the temple” of the sixth chapter, and “the holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts.” What less than this standard could the Jehovah of that day apply to “the Commonwealth?” Indeed we shall see that whenever God introduces any fresh manifestations of Himself in power and grace, these necessarily form in righteous government the new responsibilities of the people. And Isaiah will say, “Woe is me, for I am undone,” as he weighs himself in these balances, “because I am a man of unclean lips;” or, as he applies this standard of the throne and the temple and the Holy One to the state and condition of

all around, he will add “for I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips,” and assign as the groundwork of the whole action “for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts!” The theocracy of Israel was maintained in their midst by the throne and by the temple, and Isaiah must first, as the testifying witness from Jehovah to His people, judge himself in the presence of the Holy One, as we have seen, and then go forth with the balances of the sanctuary, and declare everything according to truth and to God, as he does throughout his prophecy, with the reserves of Jehovah’s grace and the resources of the people either for present faith, or else for a future day in sovereign power.

The throne and the temple had not only distinguished Israel, but likewise the glory had traveled along with them in their journeyings, and accompanied them to the last; and had in temple days of rest made its abode in their midst. What a people are they under Solomon their king!

Another prophet from “the river of Chebar” must in his turn be called forth to estimate morally the condition of Jerusalem according to “the vision of the glory!” And who has not mourned, as chapter after chapter spews us the reasons why the glory is first grieved, and then seen lingering over God’s center of earthly blessing—hovering upon the city and the people till, hopelessly grieved, it departed! The principle is a very simple, but very important one, whether viewed in the light of Isaiah’s “throne and temple,” or Ezekiel’s “vision of the glory;” and the principle is this—whatever God bestows, if rightly used, becomes the sure guarantee and measure of the people’s blessing; and if not held for Jehovah’s honor, He cannot accredit His people in their disobedience, and will “profane His throne by casting it down to the ground,” and by recalling the outward and visible glory, as in Ezekiel’s time. It is not my intention to go into the touching details of these two prophecies, but only to seize the characteristics which mark each in its way; and which especially bear on the subject of this paper. I might add that Jeremiah is as perfect as these two prophets: only he of course will not be charged to view the state of the nation, and its responsibilities, by “the royal throne,” or “the visible glory,” but will report all according to the two covenants of Hagar and Sarah, or of Mount Sinai or Mount Zion. Hence, he will say in the depth of his Lamentations, “How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!” And now that prophecy has brought to light present delinquency and the threatened forfeiture of all that Jehovah had given, except they nationally repented, what greater prophet than Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, is yet to follow? what greater person than these, or any of their predecessors, is yet to come in upon the scene, and vindicate the offended rights of the throne of Majesty, and of the grieved and departed glory, and of the broken covenants? Should there be any such One in reserve, as there surely is, upon the pages of each of these three prophecies, yet how shall He “when the fullness of the time is come” vindicate these to the full, without also going down into the righteous consequences of the nation’s disobedience in this earth? Inflictions had come upon them on account of what Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had respectively been commissioned to bring to light, and upon what righteous plea are these to cease and be changed, save upon the fact that He, who in due time would vindicate and secure by Himself the offended rights and claims of Jehovah, would also by entering into the sorrows and afflictions of His own people, and suffering with them, cry out from their very depths to Jehovah, and be heard because of His own perfections and obedience, and in this way discharge all preceding liabilities, and even found a new claim before God as a man, and an Israelite, on the double title of His own glorious person

and of having glorified God upon the earth! What a pathway was marked out for the blessed Lord, if we call to mind the Levitical types and ask ourselves, who is to take them all up and fulfill them, but He to whom they point?

Again, when the prophecies come before the mind in their double character of present consequences governmentally, as well as of future recovery and blessings, who is there that can clear away all the existing obstructions and charge himself with the formation of new, and abiding, and permanent positions upon this earth, whether for man or for Israel, but He whose meat and drink it was to do the will of the Father who sent Him, and to finish His work? Who could magnify the law and make it honorable, but that very Jesus whom the law could not measure? As regards all besides, whether under Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, the law disclosed the fact “that the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” Jesus alone has found “meat out of the eater, and honey out of the strong.” The line of the promises and of covenanted blessings from the first to the last, whether as centered in Adam, Abraham, Noah, or David, are all “made yea and amen in Christ,” and will as surely be “to the glory of God by us” in their respective times and seasons. Do we think of ancient prophecies? the Lord Himself will tell us, “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” Do we think of the whole of the Old Testament, as to its applications and fulfillments in its long line of shadows, and types, and fingerposts? that same Jesus will say, “These are the words that I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me.”

The place which John the Baptist held is remarkable in every way. All previous testimony gave place to him, and as “the prophet of the Highest,” in the song of Zacharias, or as “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God,” in the older strains of Isaiah; or in the more modern narrative of Matthew, “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 these witnesses serve to tell us that the greatest of those “who are born of women” will readily give way to the alone Lord, whose paths he was making straight. Who does not love to hear John himself say, “Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him;” and again, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” The prison in a later day, and its voice by John’s disciples, “Art thou he that should come or look we for another?” will tell us how this “friend of the bridegroom” would readily precede his Jesus Messiah as a suffering witness, and change his joy into present sorrow if “the way of the Lord and the highway of our God” took that course. Still later, “John the Baptist’s head in a charger” will declare how worthily in all respects, both in life and in death, he would “make straight in the desert” at one time, or in “the rough valley neither eared nor sown” at another time, the ordered goings of “the desire of all nations.” Precious thus to anticipate the ordained path and the appointed steps which Jehovah-Jesus would tread; a path as truly ordered in the counsels of eternity as ever they were taken in time: or as when the body “thou hast prepared me” was necessary, in which every purpose from everlasting to everlasting was to be carried out in the veiling manhood below! Promises and types, prophecies and testimonies, the throne and the temple, the long line of anointed kings and the longer line of consecrated priests, have all done their work and served their

purpose: and what a work and purpose was theirs Refreshing as every soul has found it, to view the incarnate and suffering One in the lights and shadows of the past, with what joy do we bid adieu to testifiers and prophets, yea, to the very last and greatest of them, and feel our relief as we rest our eyes and hearts on “One” object, and only “One,” in the whole universe around us—“Jesus, the Lamb of God,” and He “dwelling amongst us.”

The ways of Jehovah in government and in grace will all center in this delight of the Father’s bosom. Nothing less than what is personal, and personally perfect, is now between God Himself, in the supremacy of His own holiness, and men on the earth, “publicans and sinners,” with whom this “child, born into the world,” will grow up; and as He grows form a new foundation for His joys and sorrows, His delights and His sympathies. No longer with “the morning stars,” who shouted for joy when, as the Creator, day after day, He gave them their fresh occasions of praises and of songs, till “the seven days’ work” was finished; but in a ruined world, where all was wrong, and sinners in their sins around Him; where all was one universal groan to God in felt misery, and in a yet more fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation hereafter. He, He Himself, is come into our midst in grace; these groans and tears, these sighs and sorrows, and their deep, deep causes, measured in their infinite extent as towards God, and Satan, and man, upon this earth in time, and in hell eternally, have gone up to the bosom of the Father, and brought out “the Son of his own love,” as when in typical times the unconsumed bush, and the fire, and the voice called out a Moses as the deliverer of a captive people. Then “the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and am come down to deliver them.... and to bring them up out of that land,” &c. Now all eyes are upon this Jesus-Emmanuel, the Son of the Highest, in the place of the lowest; come “not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” and, in due season, “to give his life a ransom for many.” The heavens, and the earth, and hell, are each and all, for these varying reasons, moved at His coming. Anointed of the Spirit, and led of the Spirit, according to every declared thought and purpose of God, and every manifested act and deed in righteous government amongst men and Israel, He will measure the whole claims and calls upon His own person; and, single-handed, for He has no fellow, stoop down to greatness and victory; and stoop He will to vindicate and justify God in the very place where man by independence and pride had lost himself and ruined all that had been munificently put under his lordship. Man, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has now embodied and charged and taken all upon Himself that concerns the glory of God in His ways upon earth—and, as a stranger in the earth, He will nevertheless be at home with “a sinful man” in a boat, or with “a woman at the well,” or with “a master in Israel.” If He leaves the place of the stranger, and takes that of “the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” it will be to learn in spirit, with a widow of Nain, how to descend into the depths of her troubled heart, as His own sympathies entitle Him to do. Will He leave Nain for Bethany? it will be with Mary and Martha to enter into their sorrows and sufferings, and make Himself master of the whole scene, as He mingles His tears with theirs, and surpasses them all in His own perfectness, as He groans to God and according to God. He will take up the whole range of sin, and death, and the grave, and corruption in the depths of genuine human feelings; as great in the tears He shed as in the groan He uttered, or as in the voice which cried “Lazarus, come forth!”

If we narrow the circle of our observation, and see Him in the midst of “his own” after the flesh, in more strict Israelitish associations and goings, who does not love to view the Messiah with a

repentant remnant, “confessing their sins” in the swellings of Jordan? Will He join them there and identify Himself with them in those depths, for other reasons, and be to the broken heart and troubled conscience a nobler guarantee of a safe passage to blessing than ever Joshua and the typical “ark of the covenant” witnessed in (externally) a more triumphant period of their history? He will do this, and if a “Jesus baptized” goes outside and beyond the scope of John’s thoughts and ministry, He will give the key to His prophet and forerunner by saying, “thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” and all will be well between them. Sorrows and their reliefs met together at Nain; tears, and groans, and their resources met together at Bethany: just as a repentant people in their sins and “the fulfiller of all righteousness” begin to settle these matters with the heavens and with Jehovah in the waters of Jordan.

Jesus-Emmanuel is making everything His own concern, in living obedience to His Father, or in loving sympathies with all around Him; and in the midst of His own sorrows and sufferings going down in moral perfectness, where none but He could make a path for Himself, and out of that new place, where devotedness to God, and obedience as a servant, and sympathy as a man, and sufferings in grace, had led Him to cry to God out of such trials and sorrows, and only cried to be heard and answered. The Gospel by Luke will take us along the lonely paths of this sometimes solitary Man, though never an isolated One. How could this be with Him, who had come down into the whole range of God’s dishonor, and of Satan’s triumph, and of man’s disgrace and defeat? No, never withdrawn from “the Father’s business,” though often withdrawn from surrounding things about that business, we find Him throughout Luke as the dependent but confident One. “He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed;” and if we quit this wilderness, Luke will tell us, “It came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” What a night was this!—the Son of man upon this earth, taking on Himself all the failures and liabilities of men in their relation to the powers of God in righteousness, and justifying the Judge of the whole earth by accepting the consequences of their disobedience, and making that the very starting-point of His own walk with God and men below. Where could He look but to heaven? with whom could He speak on matters like these, but with the Jehovah of Israel? and to whom could He pray but to Him who accredited this Son of man at the outset by the voice from the opened heavens; “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?” Our blessed Lord will not only take all these accumulated liabilities on Himself and glorify God by their means, but, whilst doing this in righteous obedience and suffering, He will carry all their weight and pressure to God, and in “the night seasons” not be silent; yea, “meditate on thee in their night watches.” At this point we may connect the offended holiness of Isaiah’s day, in its separation from backsliding Israel, with the re-establishment of the Holy One, not as yet with the nation, but with the true Israelite, the Messiah and Head of that people, as “the Spirit of God, like a dove descending, lighted upon him;” or as the annunciation by the angel declared to Mary, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Precious fruits are these in their seasons! Likewise the broken covenant of “the Lord our righteousness,” as proclaimed in the time of Jeremiah, will no longer be estranged from “the wilderness of Judea.” The Messiah is in the baptism of Jordan, as the “fulfiller of all righteousness,” and the heavens are opened to Him. In like manner the grieved and departed glory of Ezekiel’s day will await Him, till He in righteous title walks up the mount of transfiguration, and when “as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white

and glistering." The voice from the excellent glory, "this is my beloved Son," will find its resting-place once more, and neither the glory, nor "the Lord our righteousness," nor "the Holy One of Israel," will ever be grieved again; but "holiness upon the bells of the horses" in a coming day shall be the "ribbon of blue," and "thy people shall be all righteous" will be their millennial name under "the new covenant" and their Mediator; and Ezekiel's "vision of glory," with the Spirit and the wheels in all their activities, shall be the new characteristics of the relations of Jehovah with His beloved people, when Jerusalem shall shake herself from the dust at "Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

In His own person, the Messiah, Jehovah-Jesus, has secured the old relationships between the Lord and that nation, and will make them good for the people by His work upon the cross, where (having vindicated the righteous government of God in the earth by His living perfectness) He will glorify His Father still further, by means of sin, and death, and the grave, and will charge Himself with our personal transgressions and judgment, and, as the sacrifice and substitute, suffer— "the just for the unjust to bring us to God." Positions, and new ones, as regards their foundations and stability, are won for Israel, and through Israel for the Gentiles upon the earth, in the coming dispensation. Redemption by blood, and resurrection in life and power, in the ascended and glorified Lord and Head, must have their place and get their bold in every future position, and how securely will all feet stand upon this Rock of Ages! the stone which the builders once refused, become now and forever "the head of the corner." In the title and ways by which He has thus won back and secured all that was out of place and out of position, both for man and for Israel, by His own personal righteousness and obedience—by the descending steps which He took and which led Him into the consequences of His people's rebellion, when living in their midst, that in all their afflictions He might participate and be afflicted and take all their sufferings up according to God. A new footing was found for Him who did all this, and a call made on "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" from the righteous Sufferer below! Another and a new link is thus formed between God and this "Son of man" —between Jehovah and this true Israelite. And He who has secured all by going down into their sorrows and trials is become the procurer of reliefs and mercies and blessings for them on the way. Their Messiah, who will be the leader of their praises, in the future time, when the great congregation shall once more shout and fall upon their faces, in the consciousness of full and everlasting deliverance, is now the leader of this same people in their present condition, and the foremost in their midst, as "the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." The Jerusalem over which her Messiah wept, when her sons and daughters "would not be gathered," the city of the great king, which could not penetrate the veiled majesty and glory, when He rode into her very center as the meek and lowly One, sitting on a colt, the foal of an ass—the nation under its Caiaphas, which condemned Him as a blasphemer, when He at last lifted the veil and confessed Himself to them—the people who mocked Him, and denied Him in all Hi; rights and titles, will yet be pardoned for these added enormities on the person of the Jesus-Emmanuel, according to that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Nevertheless, in righteous government Jerusalem shall receive "at the Lord's hands double for all her sins," till "her warfare is accomplished" and her iniquity and bloodguiltiness forgiven. "How is the faithful city become an harlot: it was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers therefore saith the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies."

How really Jesus made all their sorrows His own, and how truly He took all up with them, according to God, when in their midst, is not only witnessed by His tears over Jerusalem, but at the close of His varied ministries, and when He had been rejected in them all, and He is forced into the place of the “Prophet,” as the witness from Jehovah against them! He will even then say “for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” If He sees nothing but their passing through the time of tribulation “spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” He will precede them in the thoughts of His own loving heart, and say, “then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains, and let him which is on the house top not come down to take anything out of his house.” His considerate pity will direct “him which is in the field,” and awaken afresh His companions, as He says, “Woe unto them that are with child, and to them which give suck in those days.” Moreover, He will guide them in that distressing hour of their yet future punishment, as well as associate Himself with them in John the Baptist’s days, and say, “pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.” He will enter with them into the very dangers of that hour, and leave a word of caution for His elect, “then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there, believe it not; for there shall come false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders.” Precious it is to hear Him add “inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect;” and then close up these last words of parting sorrow with “behold I have told you before” —perfect in everything, as He alone could be! The foremost in our sorrows and griefs and sufferings in the governmental ways of God on the earth is viewed also in the light of the future by Isaiah, where He says, “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.... he shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.” This Spirit on Christ below, or as the Spirit of prophecy on Isaiah, or as the Spirit in the Psalmist of Israel, or as the descended Spirit in Paul, will associate each in his varied relations and in his respective seasons, with the marvelous history, past, present, and future, of Jehovah’s favored nation! Like the Moses of their earliest days when, in intercession for the sin of the people, be said, “If not, I pray thee blot me out of thy book which thou hast written,” so will Paul take up the accumulated sins and heavier condemnation on account of a rejected Messiah and a crucified Christ and Lord, in Rom. 9: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites,” &c. The apostle who “travailed in birth” a second time (for the Galatians bewitched), till Christ was formed in them, will turn his aching heart back upon his “kinsmen” in the flesh, and even say in deeper tones, “I could wish that I myself were separated from Christ, for my brethren.” The Paul, who with a broken spirit said “Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,” will exceed himself, and go into depths where tears and travail in birth cannot be the measure of his heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, as he declares, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.” We may well ask, in the surprise which such language creates in our souls, what character of sorrows and sufferings are these, in behalf (not of the Church, but) of a people “to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen?”

How little we even know of such sympathies, and sorrows, and heavinesses, and their effects, whether in an apostle or in a Messiah as He bore all upon the perfectness of His own heart, with this very race of people, during the three and thirty years of His exercised soul according to the holiness of God! Can a Moses in ancient days outshine in the depth of his feelings their own Messiah-Jesus? Will the apostle of the Gentiles go beyond his Lord and Master in this dispensation, in this “continual sorrow of heart,” in this “truth in Christ” to which “the Holy Ghost is witness?” Who among us will not rather confess that there are ranges of sorrows and sufferings in the scriptures with which we are but little acquainted—classes of experience in the Psalms, the prophets, and Moses, which we may do well to learn unshod; and in this, as in all other respects, sit at Jesus’ feet and be taught by Him? Shall our selfishness as Christians only lead us to know our blessed Lord as easily touched with our infirmities, now that He is in the heavens, feeling what every member feels? or shall we know Him also as entering into the state and condition in which any of the members of His earthly people suffer, that He may be as perfect in sympathy with them below as He is with the Church now that He is on high? No, rather let us bow down in worship and adoration as we see Him doing the Father’s will from first to last, and marvel as we are taught; “for it became (God) to make the captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings.” “He suffered, being tempted.” “In all their afflictions, He was afflicted.” Precious Jesus, Emmanuel, Messiah, the Christ, and Lord! Son of man, Son of God, the Son!

Chapter 251

Thoughts on the Church

Acquaintance with the truth of the Church is indispensable for the setting free of the soul. I call him set free who has done with all questions between himself, God, and Satan.

Having entered into that understanding that we belong to the house of God, as if we had always been of it, the question arises, What has Satan to say to it?

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the point is that all is settled through Christ's blood, and I can draw near. For the Church it is, I am of the family of God. My life is from Christ; it comes from above. I am with God. By the blood of Christ I draw near from without; as a child I am within whence I come.

There is for me a difference between peace in the conscience and peace in the affections. As regards justification, the blood delivers me from a God of judgment, and the resurrection delivers me from the power of Satan, because the enemy cannot go farther than death. Then, in speaking of the Church being risen with Christ, we are one body with Him in resurrection, in a sphere where Satan has nothing. If I remain, as it were before the blood only, God always continues to be for me a judge; but being risen with Christ, I am united to Him in heaven. And such is the Church's place, for the Church is composed of those who are one with Christ in heaven, and nothing else. We exist in virtue of the love of God, instead of having done anything to satisfy His righteousness. The lack of deliverance now-a-days arises very much from the affections not being subdued. Therefore people do not really get out of this struggle till they have the consciousness of the love of God. One cannot enjoy the love of God without being in holiness. If the heart is full of love, God Himself is there, and this is holiness. Resurrection puts us there consciously; without resurrection and the power of the Spirit one is not of the Church. On the earth I am not said to be dead; I have a right, it is true, to count myself dead; still the flesh is in me; whilst in heaven, my life is hid with Christ in God and this by virtue of His resurrection and ascension. With the flesh I am not in heaven, for I am not united to Christ by virtue of the flesh. In resurrection the Church is there, where is neither Jew nor Greek. Viewed in Christ, in its privileges, the Church is in a condition which goes beyond the state where a conscience is needed: yet this is brought home to the conscience by the fact that the Church is on the earth with a testimony. John does not speak of position; but he signalizes the nature which responds to this position: Paul is rather occupied with position. Consequently John is always individual, whilst Paul speaking of position according to the counsel of God can consider the body. There are two features in John—love and righteousness. To dwell in God is that which is most elevated in the doctrine of the New Testament. It is indeed communion; only that carries communion very far. Amongst our acquaintances, how much better we know the people with whom we dwell! To dwell in God, it is to dwell in Him in love. Surely God loves us always: it is infinite grace to enjoy it. But to dwell in God is more than that: it is to find oneself in this love, to sail there, as it has been said of the deluge, sea upon sea, boundless ocean. The only cognizance that I can take of this space is that I cannot get out of it. If we dwelt in God somewhat habitually, that would express itself. The Savior does not give, like man, from high to low; that is why He rejects

the word “benefactor.” “And he said unto them,” &c. (Luke 22:25.)

The Church is in heaven as to title and its privileges, and on the earth as to fact and its duties. On the earth the Church ought to be the manifestation of the activity of God’s love, and of His holiness, according to the power of the Holy Ghost. As we have seen, the Church by resurrection in Christ is in heaven; but in fact it is also on the earth. If we had ascended to heaven to receive the Holy Ghost, the unity would be only for heaven; but the Holy Ghost having descended to the earth to form the unity, that unity is here below.

The body of the Church could not exist before the glorification of Jesus, for that would have been a body without a head, which would have been more monstrous even than in a human body.

In Eph. 1:7 we have in Christ the remission of sins by His blood. Then, in verse 9 et seq., having given us a position of salvation, God makes known to us His intentions and plans. Meanwhile, in awaiting the accomplishment of things, we have the earnest in the gift of the Holy Spirit until the redemption of the purchased possession. Not till verse 22 do we bear of the Church on high.

Chapter ii. shows us how we are brought in. Finding men dead in their sins on the earth, God, in His infinite mercy, quickens them, raises them with Christ and seats them in Him in heavenly places. In verse 6 together twice occurs: the first is “together” with Christ; the second is together—Jews and Gentiles. We have not got the body in this verse, but that which He does to form the body. In verse 14 we get nearer the Church, and see there that the formation of the Church could not take place until after the death of Christ, who has broken down the wall of partition.

Verse 15. The Messiah ought to have been the key stone in all things for the Jews; but they rejected Him, and this has given place to His death and the formation of the new man. Every ordinance is enmity. Take baptism and the Lord’s supper, as they are misused in human systems, and you will find thus. See the various religious bodies. They make a constitution; then of two things one: I must either swallow what is against my conscience or keep outside. There is also another evil in a constitution, when, to avoid offending the conscience, they reduce it to the lowest degree they can find. If God questions, it is the only thing that unites these two conditions; liberty and order. For me I should never separate from an assembly of Christians unless it had ceased to be the Church. I am speaking as to principle.

The Church being formed it is one body. In verse 20 the apostles and prophets are those of the New Testament. Moreover, when it is said “for to make,” &c., it is something quite new. (Ver. 21, 22.) Not only new but in contrast with that which had preceded. This is again a proof that the Church is formed on the earth. In the first half of the chapter we see the fullness of grace which seeks individuals in order to save them; in the second, the revelation that God’s intention was not only to save by this work of Christ, but also to unite these saved ones.

In chapter 3 we have a further revelation, namely, that not only the Church did not exist under the Old Testament, but also that it was not revealed. There are moral connections of all importance—as that the election of the Church was before the foundation of the world. So when man on the earth was put under responsibility, God revealed His counsel for the Church before the foundation of the world, outside the course of this world.

In chapter 4 Paul takes the Church itself. Verse 2. The call is to be the house of God. Then one must walk according to this call, according to the presence of God. The unity of the Spirit exists, because there is not only a body, but one body and one Spirit. The unity of the Spirit being lost would make use of the bond of peace to prevent unity. Verses 7-10. It is in this that it goes beyond the revelation of the Old Testament; for in Psa. 68 Christ ascends on high; but there is more here—it is He who descended who ascends: then He fills all things. This gives a very remarkable character to the person of Christ, namely, that in order to have dominion over all things He must fill all things. “Thou hast received gifts for men.” (Psa. 68:18.) It is the idea that He has received gifts in humanity. As man He received gifts to give them to men. This is a main point—that the Holy Ghost, instead of remaining solely in His divine being, should come into man. It is the doctrine of the Holy Ghost which makes the Church to be one body on the earth, and that it cannot be anything else. At the end of the first chapter Paul supposes the doctrine of the thing. At the beginning of the second He gives what God did to put the Church in the condition where Christ is, and at the end of the same second chapter, the revelation that it is the tabernacle of God on the earth.

Finally, in the fourth, he declares our responsibility of walk according to this calling that we are the tabernacle of God, and develops the power of operation according to the fullness of Him who fills all things for the forming of the body. Every mayor is a Frenchman, but every Frenchman is not a mayor. It is the same with the Church; it shares the general privileges with the others, but it has its special privileges as the Church. The Christ of the Church is a Christ so glorious, that He can be in heaven and in my heart. Paul says the two things in the same phrase, Gal. 2:20. Verse 11. The Apostle Paul sees Christ so much in resurrection, that here he only sees the apostles since Christ is risen on high, without taking account of the call of the twelve whilst Christ was on the earth. Verses 11-16. We have there the undeniable proof that it is the body on the earth, the whole body.

Further, I will not use such an expression as I cannot,’ to diminish the responsibility of man. If the Church has not the consciousness of being the bride of Christ, it cannot realize either the affections or the duties of the bride. One cannot discern them, if will ignores spiritual affections. Would it be with the Church as with the children of the two women before Solomon, one half in the national church and one half in the free church? Oh! no, answer the spiritually enlightened affections, rather take all. Yes, the unity is possible on all the earth. Take, for example, a Moravian. Well, at every point of the globe, in Greenland, in Europe, this Moravian is at home. It is the same thing with a Wesleyan. If I have the idea of making the Church as it ought to be down here, I shall be discouraged; but if I view the Church according to God, and I walk to that end, I find myself in the obedience of faith, and God encourages me. People say, We must content ourselves with that which is possible. I reply, You have never seen the vision of the assembly; you have never seen the Church according to God. He always puts before faith an object that one never obtains before one has been put there by the power of God. It is what will take place in glory as to life eternal (1 Tim. 6) for the Church (Eph. 2, John 17) etc. There is another thing, if the people did not go up against the Amorites when God ordered it, they would be beaten if they rose up a second time; but God will be with them in the wilderness. Even the ark will be at the bottom of Jordan to open the entrant? into Canaan. One must count upon God for the present. The visibility of the Church was plain because of the difficulties which it had to surmount to maintain unity.

Would it be an evil to allow of an invisible Church, as God is also an invisible God? If God was manifested in flesh, so I say, the Church has also been manifested here below. (1 Cor. 12:28.) It is evident here that it is not a question of heaven, but of the earth, of the Church; for in heaven there are no healings, helps, properly helpers [it is, in manner of speaking, gifts which are not substantive but objective; gifts of too little scope to act alone, but which are of great help when there is another to shelter them]. There is still another passage on the Church to mention in this epistle: it is verses 16, 18 of chapter 10. We have here one body manifested in the act of breaking one bread. It is that which has led people to call the Lord's supper a sacrament. Originally "sacrament" designated the oath by which the Roman soldiers pledged faithfulness to their standard. So in taking the Lord's supper, Christians declare faithfulness to Christ. (Chap. 14) In each locality the union of the local church was the expression of unity of all the body.

If the Church is one, it cannot make an alliance with itself; if it is, with whom will it ally itself? with evil? (Matt. 16) One sees by this that Christ had not before Him the idea of the existence of the Church up to then. Several confessed the Christ during His life, but it was only Peter who recognized the title of Son of the living God—a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is not the idea of being raised up with Christ, and being in heaven with Him; but rather that of being raised up with Him and walking on the earth. One is not in heaven in this case, one is going there. As to moral character, the doctrine of the Epistle of Peter can be applied to the saints in the high places of Daniel, and again to those raised up after the rapture of the Church. The saints up to Christ had indeed inward life, but they had no intelligence of it; they would not have been able to discern the flesh. There is again this difference, that this life did not connect itself with the Messiah as existing in heaven. God thought of the Church, but He would not leave the Jews, before they themselves had left Him. It is for this reason that the Church was not revealed until later. In verse 18, for "I say also unto thee," read "And I also say unto thee." The Father has told thee something about me, that I am the Christ. Well, I tell thee something of thyself. Thou art Peter, and on this rock, &c.

Now the Son takes His place as Master of His own house. God had revealed (not given) to Peter the name of Christ, now Christ gives (not reveals) to Peter a name concerning his position of service in the Church, as Adam gave a name to all the creatures. Does this promise annul the fact of the failure of the Church? No. One must distinguish between the responsibility of man and the faithfulness of God. The failure is but another proof in favor of this power which is able to keep the saints and save them after all. It is the same with the Jews; this lie will abound to the glory of God. The keys are not of the Church, but of the kingdom. In his ministry, Peter always acknowledged the Jews; hence, in the beginning of the Acts he never mentions the Church. He needed to make use of the keys for the work of the kingdom. As to the Church, it was rather Christ who baptized with the Holy Ghost, and who could make use of such and such a person. And what is remarkable is, that not until Paul, is Jesus proclaimed as the Son of God. The same as to the promises:

Peter acknowledges Israel as the heir (Acts 3:25), whilst Paul says that it is the seed of Abraham, which is Christ. (Gal. 3:16.) As for binding and loosing Peter was steward in the house, while working also for the kingdom. To bind and loose is not only in reference to people, but also to things; whatsoever thou shalt bind, &c. He loosens from the law, for example in Acts 15:9, and when he eats with the Gentiles. Now-a-days one binds and unbinds persons, as in John 20.

Peter was invested with a certain authority in Matt. 18. As to the force of verse 18, I decide nothing; but verse 19 seems to have a very simple application. The Holy Ghost acting in the Church, if two or three agree, the Lord is with them. Like government in a state, it does not make the laws; but it makes use of them; it is invested with discretionary power. Only we must remember that we have not discretionary power outside the word. Such is the perfection of the word, that there is not a single case for which it has not spoken; but it needs wisdom to apply it. It is remarkable to see the wisdom of the ways of God. That which was the Church at the beginning has pretended later to be the kingdom.

Although the tares were sown in the midst of the wheat, the children of the kingdom remain always children of the kingdom, whilst the assembly as such may corrupt itself. That is easily understood. The unity is broken; the children of God who formed the unity always remain the children of God; but there is no longer unity; it is no longer the Church as such. The rule for me is not to leave an assembly if I think it is the assembly. If the principle of an assembly is to have the children of God gathered because of Christ, I will not leave it, notwithstanding the neglect which has admitted unconverted souls, I would work for its good, and the righteous dealing with these unconverted; but I would not withdraw: quite the contrary. If I find a gathering wholly composed of Christians, but who are not assembled on the principle of the Spirit's unity according to the word, I would not unite myself to them in any way. I would not separate myself from false brethren who might have slipped into an assembly; because, at all events, there was the assembly into which they had slipped.

For admission to the Lord's supper, not only faith is required but peace. At present I count upon the Savior to lead me, knowing that His grace is sufficient for me. We are the guardians of the Lord's table; but in one sense we are also the guardians of the Savior's sheep, and from love to them, we shall wish to see them as one flock, far from the dangers of the world; it is a great responsibility for which however the Lord's grace is always sufficient.

In a case of sin, it is better to leave the individual there, for the assembly to suffer from it until it judges itself, than to exercise discipline among a few which might lead to the scattering of the assembly. As we must hold to the purity of the Church's conscience, one must, in case of sin, wait till it has the conscience before acting. If these two or three made a rule, they would not be in the place of the word; but in holding to the word, they are authorized for the execution of the thing.

The Church administers to the house of God (I am not speaking of the keys now). First, Unity. There was one body working by its joints of supply. Secondly, There is the power of God by the Spirit confided to the Church for that which was within it. The great principle is that the Holy Ghost was there directing everything, while making the Christians to act as servants of Christ the immediate bead of His house. (Heb. 3) The root of all is that the Church has disowned the presence of the Holy Ghost; it has forsaken the principle which constitutes the foundation of its existence. That is what I call total failure and apostasy. For the Church it is the abandonment of the principles on which those who made profession of them were united. In reality the apostasy of the Church is impossible. There is outside all the counsel of God—within the saints—there is life (John 10); but, on the other hand there is also the result of its responsibility on the earth.

Modern Protestantism denies the power of the Holy Ghost to form on the earth one body. The Reformation had in view other things; but it did not deny this one. There were two things in Protestantism, the authority of the word and justification; some have lost now-a-days one of these

things, others another. As to popery, there is unity, it is true, but a unity of which the pope is the center. To deny unity is unbelief on this subject. When one arrives at the fact of the fall, one finds at the bottom Judaism; it was that against which the apostles struggled at the beginning.

Judaism, if we consider the Church, is, it seems to me, the principle of succession in clerical ordinances, in the place of the Holy Ghost rendering the servants immediate servants of Christ. This goes even further, because they have made a priesthood—in a word, the clergy. There are many other things to add—legalism, the earth—but these do not belong especially—to the unity of the Church.

The facts are, 1st, The Holy Ghost is not owned as the power in the Church;

2ndly, The unity is lost in the sense of the visible body on earth;

3rdly, The sense of our responsibility to be one as a testimony on the earth—in a word, the idea of the Church is lost. The consciousness of the relationship of the Church with Christ is also lost. Could not one say, one is fallen through lack of love P Then if love is found again, the failure no longer exists! No; not only that, for power is necessary for unity.

The consequence of this failure is, further, that the heavenly character is lost—the principle of action is falsified (as in the clergy). Peter and Paul could not preach in the Church, such as it is now known: and if Satan comes with ordination, he is received. All the working of the gifts is laid aside and replaced by human systems, which do not recognize the action of the members in the aggregate. They make churches, because they do not believe in the Church. There is still an important question—it is to find out where this failure has begun. It is difficult to say. We find already at Philippi that each one sought his own interests. At first the evil did not affect the unity of the body, but it was soon to do it. That which is serious in this evil is that it began in the Church. See again among the Colossians, how they began to lose sight of the Head of the body, and it is from this source, nevertheless, that, for the Church, flowed all its life. The Church Judaized in losing the consciousness of its unity with the Head. We see the same tendency as to justification among the Galatians. As to the Ephesian church, it had abandoned its first love. In Acts 20 we see that the departure of the apostle was to let loose these wolves. We can only see how the evil has come in, but it has spread very far, as is evident when we come to the apostasy. It is solemn to see that it is in the Church that all this began.

James 5:14. There is an internal administration or power which is completely wanting now-a-days. The Church was competent as to the ways of God with the members of the Church. There is at present total incapacity in the house. If that is not a failure. I hardly know what a failure is. Alas! the Church has not now the consciousness of itself. There is another great point—it is that the Church and the world are united together.

The First Epistle of John shows us the worst evil was already there. It is the evidence of two things 1st. That the presence of Antichrist is that which characterizes the latter times, and that it is in the Church that it springs up; and 2ndly, that this evil was already in the days of the apostles. It was indeed the latter times, for this moral character, the essential character, was already there. The Church ought to have been the perfect testimony of what Christ is; whereas it has become the source and cradle of corruption—the formal denial of Christianity. There was already, to begin, the denial of Christ come in the flesh; they denied the Father and the Son: they did not deny God.

“Whoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service, because they have not known the Father nor me.” Satan always comes, with an old truth which does not put faith to the test, to oppose the one where there is power. The Savior marks the latter times by that which existed in the days of the apostles. We must remark that here these antichrists came out from the midst of the saints. That is a difference from what one sees in Jude.

Jude 3. The moral force of this phrase lies in this, that Jude, having the intention to write to the saints on their common salvation, had to leave that in order to occupy himself with the adversaries and apostates, whom he points out to the vigilance of the saints. We see in this epistle, not the fact, but the introduction and the progress of the evil up to its judgment.

In verse 14, Jude passes over all the period of Christianity, and shows it was against those who were there, then present, that the judgment came. Such is the history of the ruin of the Church. It is into the Church that Satan has introduced those who are to be specially the objects of judgment when the Lord comes with the saints. It is not only that the general system has failed, but, besides that, the evil entered when all was in good condition. The virgins slept in the forgetfulness of the coming of the Lord. They had to go out a second time. It seems that they had entered some place more convenient to slumber in. Christians having entered into the world to sleep, it becomes a question of going out again. We learn, then, from Jude, that the evil, which is the object of judgment, enters into the Church. He identifies the evil with the judgment at the end. He passes over the history of the Church, save that he gives the character of evil in verse 11; three characters of evil summed up in Cain, Balsam, Core. There is perhaps here a certain analogy with the dragon, the false prophet and the beast at the end. Although religious corruption is serious, it is in the character of Core that one perishes. It is in the Church that these three things have sprung up. We saw higher up that the negligence of Christians allowed Judaism and worldliness to enter. Now we see people with these characters enter. Satan did not fail to profit by the open door. Then it is that God declares clearly the apostasy. 1st. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness and deny the only Sovereign God and Lord Jesus Christ. Although when they entered they confessed Christ, Jude does not allow himself to be deceived—he puts his finger upon the evil, and declares that they deny Him. Later they will be seen to go out, as it is said in John.

There is this besides that they were spots in the love feasts of the saints; that is the reason why it is said of them that they were twice dead—dead naturally, and dead as to their profession. “Wandering stars,” they have the appearance of giving light, but disappear immediately in the darkness.

How do they distinguish themselves? They pretend to have great knowledge; they were forward in things which they did not understand; they occupied themselves with fables, with endless genealogies; they affected a great elevation of mind, &c. (Ver. 18.) Remark too that Jude also says, like John, that the presence of these men is the sign of the last times. One has elsewhere in the word directions how to conduct oneself with regard to such men (1 Cor. 5, for example), but it is not the subject here. Jude gives the thing as a revelation to serve for the instruction of the Church until the end. The Holy Ghost does not treat of all the subjects at once. Now that in the aggregate the evil has overflowed one must go out. We are responsible for the evil which has entered, even when we have not done it and are not of the system where it is (Popery, &c.), because, being identified with the true Church, it is that which allowed the evil to enter.

The responsibility is individual. When it is a question of conduct, the Lord takes notice of our conduct in that state of things. But when it is a question of the heart, it identifies itself with the whole body, to whom the testimony of God had been confided.

2 Peter 3. It is very nearly as in Jude, with this further character, that there are mockers who deny the return of the Lord.

2 Thess. 2:3-7. Here indeed is the apostasy. We have here the facts of the apostasy established. If there is an apostasy it is little. But the Christian testimony has not continued in its primitive integrity; so that there is no restoration, and the end of that is judgment. Two important things are to be borne in mind in this subject. First, There must needs be an apostasy. (Ver. 8.) Secondly, This apostasy is a thing of such a nature, that it is the occasion for the judgment of God. (Ver. 8.) For my part, I do not think that the apostasy is consummated, although since the days of John and of Jude the development of the principle has made great advances.

Heb. 6 may be applied to the Christian system. Having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and having turned away from it, there is no restoration. The guilt of the Jews viewed as a nation, is that they rejected the Son of man; they will be re-established in the Millennium, whilst the Gentiles fallen as to the Holy Ghost (there is no blasphemy yet, but there is the analogy of the principle) will not be restored. Verse 7, returning to 2 Thessalonians, is the formal declaration that the mystery of iniquity had already begun to work in the days of the Thessalonians. We have already seen that elsewhere. He restrains who makes a hindrance. The important thing for us is to know that there is a bridle which restrains the development of evil, without inquiring what this bridle is. The fathers said that it was the Roman empire. Well, I admit this for a time, as for our days God employs other things; He can maintain the civil governments to serve as a bridle for man's will in order that the evil may be checked. So long as the Church is here below, God maintains the authority necessary towards the ministers of His justice in all that which contributes to the good of His Church. (Ver. 9.) Satan disposes of the creatures although he can create nothing, so that for man it is a miracle. With a magnifying glass, by the concentration of the sun's rays, I could produce a fire, which would be a miracle with a window. Satan does something like this with men. But there are two things that Satan entirely ignores—the love of God, and spiritual discernment. (Compare ver. 9 with Acts 2:22.) You will see that the same signs which characterized the Christ are those which will characterize the man of sin. Again, in the time of Elijah the question between Jehovah and Baal was settled by fire from heaven descending at the voice of Elijah which the false prophets then could not do. In the Apocalypse we see that the second beast will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men. The acts of power which were a testimony of God by Christ, as well as of Jehovah in Israel, will be exercised by the man of sin.

It seems to me that Judaism occupies a very great place in the prophecies that concern the end.

1 Tim. 3:15. The word is for the Church, and the Church for the world. After all the Church is always the depository of the truth. It is in the world the sphere where one finds the truth. Viewed in its aspect in that which appears, it is an immense lie; but viewed in that which is of God, one finds the truth which God maintains by the faithfulness of His grace. One finds even among the Papists fundamental truth—the deposit is there; but the additions and the transformations render it false as to testimony. Earthly. priesthood and human ordinances are brought in between God and man who cannot get near Him.

In 2 Tim. 2 the man of God was to purge himself from the vessels of dishonor in the house of God—Christendom. Evil is not to be sanctioned, however earnestly we may seek to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Indeed fidelity is essential. If the Lord know them that are His, let him that names His name depart from iniquity. Other names should not bind us to iniquity. It is not discipline here, but conduct regulated in view of corrupt Christendom, and this relative as well as personal. “Flee also youthful lusts, but seek righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Thus he may count on fellowship according to the Lord even in such circumstances—not isolation, but communion by the will of God. The perilous times of the last days need not hinder this. From the pretenders who deceive the silly and resist the truth one must turn away. For there will be professing men since they have the form of piety; and here they respond to the picture that we have of the heathen at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans. The heathen, it is true, are more undisguised there; whilst in 2 Timothy the evil is more hidden: they have the form of godliness. One sees in verses 6, 7, that there was activity in these things—“ever learning,” they are silly women (γυναικ■ρια), captives under the tyrannical influence of these individuals. On the other hand, there are the scriptures which make one wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. The two things are the word and faith. Faith is the key to enter into the word with. What is very remarkable here is that as security he does not give the Holy Ghost but the word. The Lord (Luke 24:44) acknowledged the Old Testament as it was received with the various readings. Moreover, in that He sanctioned the faith of those who had acknowledged it before it was sanctioned. You do not understand all the code of laws, but you read it acknowledging that these laws express authority in the land. The Church does not give any authority to the word, but was its guardian. To the Church the oracles were confided. It is in this that it has been unfaithful—in the keeping of this deposit. For that which calls itself the Church has added to Scripture the Apocrypha.

Observe “From a child.” It is the authority of the book which is recognized (from father to son); for Timothy as a child was hardly able to judge whether it was the word of God. We have in these verses all that is a security for the perilous times.

Peter also says the scriptures, when he mentions prophets. (2 Peter 1:20, 21.) Again, he recognizes the writings of Paul as inspired writings. (2 Peter 3:14.) I believe in literal inspiration because it is said “by words taught by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Cor. 2:13.) But if one come to this, I should rather say absolute inspiration, because I believe that the Holy Ghost is the AUTHOR of that which has been written. He has made use of instruments for this. You find them over and over again in their special features and individuality. From Him is the difference of the facts reported by some and not by others, in the Gospels.

Then I admit that God permits all these difficulties in the word (the various readings, &c.) in order to stumble unbelief.

One has an example in Isa. 8:13, 14. God permits that there should be things in the manifestation of the truth, which suffice to stumble those who do not believe. If human science can judge respecting the Bible to decide if it is the word of God, then the spirit of man must be above God. This is infidelity, apostasy commenced, which is consummated for the Christian profession by the fact that it ceases to be the Church, just as death brings a man to his end. It is like a shadow, which, at the decline of day, grows lodger and longer, and then—ceases.

Chapter 252

Ruth’s History

Ruth’s history illustrates the life of faith, as Abraham’s does, in parts and parcels. Ruth allied herself with the poverty of Naomi and with the wealth of Boaz. This is faith. It knows Jesus in rejection on earth, in all dignity and acceptableness in heaven. It adopts both as its own. Faith after this manner enjoys freedom before God and gets victory over the world.

To Correspondents

The Editor is not able to inform C. B. C. who published the life of Mdme. de K., alluded to in the last Number of the “Bible Treasury,” but probably any intelligent Swiss or French Protestant bookseller knows the book.

Chapter 253

To Correspondents: University Education

A. B. may be assured that the course of education pursued in every university is highly objectionable. The classics are bad enough as the effusion of heathen mind; but the books of the day on metaphysics, logic, ancient history, and physical science, not to speak of theology, are even worse, as emanating from nominal Christians, who are nevertheless tainted deeply with rationalism and Pantheism, if not open Atheism. There is a decided return to the naturalism of Aristotle, which bodes ill for those exposed to it. Sir Wm. Hamilton, Messrs. Mill, Grote, Dr. Donaldson, &c., will illustrate what I say.

Chapter 254

On Reconciliation

Reconciliation is, to use familiar language, making all straight; and even primarily, I believe, used in money-changing as that which makes the sum even, so that there is satisfaction of the parties in the matter; and thence passing into the more ordinary sense of making all smooth between alienated parties, and reconciling one who is alienated or at enmity. But it is not simply the change of mind from the enmity, though that be included; nor is it justification. It is the bringing back to unity, peace, and fellowship what was divided and alienated. We must not confound in scripture "Making reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17), with "reconciliation" in 2 Cor. 5; Col. 1; Rom. 5:10, 11. The former is making propitiation, atonement, ■λ■σκεσθαι, and ■λασμ■ς, propitiation (1 John 2); while on the contrary "atonement" in Rom. 5:11 should be reconciliation, καταλλαγ■. Compare 1 Cor. 7:11, "Let her be reconciled to her husband;" where it is not merely her mind being restored to affection and good feeling, but matters made straight between them—the relationship made good. So it is between us and God; but the alienation was on our part. It was not alienation on God's part, but righteous judgment against sin in His creature, and that righteousness must be met in order to bring back the alienated creature into relationship with God. Only now it is much more than bringing back, because of the purposes of God in Christ, and the infinite value of the work by which we are brought back to God. Still it is an establishing a blessed and peaceful relationship with God, and us in it.

Reconciling God to us is quite unscriptural in expression and thought. No act or dealing could change God's mind, either in nature or in purpose, but He acts freely in what is before Him according to that nature, and in bringing about that purpose; and though His mind be not changed, yet the meeting, satisfying, and glorifying His righteousness, is according to that mind and the imperious claim of His nature and authority, is necessary in the highest sense, that is, according to that nature. His holiness too is involved in reconciliation. Reconciliation is the full establishment in relationship with God according to His nature and according to the nature of that which is reconciled. It now acts in redemption and a new nature, and as regards all around us, a new state of things, so that it is more than re-establishment. It is re-established inasmuch as the old relationship was broken and forfeited, but it is not the returning to that but the establishing a new one which has the stability of redemption and is the accomplishment of the purpose of God. Still it is a bringing back into the enjoyment of divine favor that which had lost it. This reconciliation is twofold in scripture—of the state of things and of sinners. Thus in Col. 1 all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, "and, having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven; and you that were sometime enemies and alienated in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." The force of the word is evident from the first case. Then there is no question of changing the disposition of the reconciled things, because the purposed reconciliation spoken of in verse 20 refers to all created things as to the vast majority of which no such change can take place. It is the bringing of the whole created scene of heaven and earth into its true order and right relationship

with God, and to its right standing and condition in that relationship.

The first passage which suggests itself, when we come to inquire into the use of the word in scripture, is 2 Cor. 5:18-20, particularly verse 19: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” It is not God is in Christ reconciling. The passage states that the apostolic ministry had taken the place of Christ’s personal ministry, founded on the blessed Lord having been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It is the aspect of Christ’s ministry down here. God was in Him reconciling the world. Man would not have Him, but this was the service and aspect of His ministry. He was proposing to the world a return to God in order and blessing, not imputing their trespasses to them. If man had received Him, it would have proved that man in the flesh was recoverable, though he had sinned; though such indeed was not God’s thought, the result proved he was not, and the Lord had to be made sin for us. Man had to be redeemed out of the state he was in, and justified on a new footing, not recovered from his ruin as man in the flesh still. Lawlessness and ease had both proved men sinners in fact. God was in Christ saying, I am not come to judge; return, and I will forgive; return to order and to God and nothing will be imputed. But the mind of the flesh was enmity against God, and the true state of man was brought out. The sin of the world was demonstrated by their not believing in Christ; righteousness in their seeing Him no more and His going to His Father. No doubt a change in us is needed to our being in order and peace before God; but reconciling is more than a state of feeling, it is a being brought back to the condition of right relationship with God. In Col. 1 already quoted, we find it the purpose of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into this order and condition. All things were created by the Son and for Him, and all the fullness of the Godhead which dwelt in Him will bring all created by and for Him into its due condition and order, into a normal state of relationship with itself. But we, the apostle adds, are reconciled, Christ being our righteousness, and we the righteousness of God in Him. We are, as regards the very nature of God, in our normal place with God, according to the efficacy of Christ’s work. Being moral beings, a new mind was needed for this, and Christ is our life, perfect according to what He was for God, that we may have it. The believer is reconciled in the body of Christ’s flesh through death. We are before God with the entire putting away in His sight of our old rebellious nature, and by a work and obedience which has perfectly glorified God Himself, so that we are the righteousness of God in Him. Nothing is wanting to our place and standing in Christ, our old state being gone, quickened together with Him; dead, and the old man put off; risen, and the new man put on, we are in Christ before God according to the efficacy of His propitiation and work. We are so consciously by faith and the presence of the Holy Ghost by which we are sealed, for our being presented “holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.”

Hence in Rom. 5:10, reconciliation is attributed to Christ’s death, not to a change of mind in us. “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” And, “We have received the reconciliation.” (Ver. 11.) Remark here that the Christian is spoken of as being reconciled. Now it is quite true this does not and cannot take place without a work in man by which the peace Christ has made is appropriated, it cannot take place without faith. The Spirit of Christ works in quickening power in us, makes us know our state, gives new desires, makes us judge our old state, and finally shows us the value of Christ’s death and our standing in Him, but peace was made, God glorified perfectly when Christ was made sin, so that His love can seek us and grace reign through righteousness. It is not that God is changed, but He can freely work in love

according to righteousness for His own glory in virtue of that which has been presented to Him. Propitiation has been made, and hence, according to righteousness and abounding in love, He can bring back the sinner to Himself according to these, and, faith being there, has brought back—has reconciled. That which is the foundation of reconciliation has been offered to God, but it is not God who is reconciled or brought back into a normal place with man, but who reconciles in virtue of that which has been wrought by Christ and presented to Him. Propitiation is the foundation of reconciliation, the reconciliation of the sinner; and in due time that of the universe. Thereupon the gospel beseeches men to be reconciled to God, to return to Him in true relationship in Christ, who has been made sin for us. It is not then propitiation, it is not at all reconciling God, nor is it merely a change in man or his feelings; but it is the standing of man (when applied to him) in peace with God according to the truth of God's character in virtue of redemption, man being brought morally back in a new nature which by the Holy Ghost appreciates that redemption and enjoys the peace—joys in God as well as has peace with Him.

There is one passage which remains of these wherein the word is used, which has to be considered. But rightly apprehended it confirms and clears the sense given. "If the casting them away be the reconciling of the world." (Rom. 11:15.) Now the sense is more vague here it is true, but it confirms what we have said. The Jews had been in ordered relationship with God though unfaithful to it, the world out of all relationship, men were utterly without God in the world, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, without God in the world. On the fall of Israel this state of things ceased. God now called all persons everywhere to repent. God took up the world again, no longer winking at the ignorance. The world was again put in relationship with God, so that His grace and gospel went out to deal with it as that which thus far stood in relationship with Him, not as it did when Judaism was owned. These are all the passages where the word is used.

It is important to note that the Christian is always treated as being reconciled. It is more than being justified—this is being authoritatively pronounced righteous by God, whether from sins or now actually in Christ. It is more than the restoring of the heart to God, though both have place in order to reconciliation; for to be with God fully revealed in joyful and settled relationship with Himself, all in order between us, it must be as justified according to His righteousness and the objects of His love as those who have tasted it. We have been brought into both by Christ's work, but with hearts livingly renewed and tasting that love, or we should not as moral beings be in it. It is thus a word of great power and blessing. Nor is there an expression more full or more complete connected with our restoration, than that of our reconciliation with God. It supposes God revealed, in all that He is, and man in a perfect place and standing with Him according to this revelation—reconciled to God.

Chapter 255

Paul’s Doctrine

Colossians 1; 2 Timothy 3

Is There Ever a Time When It Is of No Practical Value? (Col. 1; 2 Tim. 3)

The truths unfolded and warnings given in the Epistles of Paul, invaluable at all times, are of incalculable value at a day like the present. The seeds and first symptoms of all that which is now seen in well-developed character around us had their existence thus early in the history of the Church; and divine wisdom, foreseeing the results of them all, has not only foreseen but provided for the difficulties and exigencies of such an evil day. This is one of the blessed characters of the ever-living word of God. It proves, as the difficulties arise and complicate themselves, how matchlessly full of divine and unerring wisdom it is. One is not surprised at anything that has arisen. Scripture has prepared us to expect that the evils would arise, and the truth would be surrendered, and falsehood glossed over with an appearance of the truth, as we painfully discover around us. Still the unerring and unfailing manner in which it meets, and guides, and directs the Christian who is subject to it, in every difficulty of his path, in a labyrinth of evil, and unfolds its varied and wondrous beauty and resources for the Church’s need, elicits a note of praise, often silent, but deep, to Him who is its author, and whose perfect wisdom shines in that which is so worthy of Him!

One is struck with the wisdom and beauty of the style in which Paul, when writing to the Colossians, unfolds before their eyes the glories and magnificence of Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell. (Chap. 1) The work of the Father for them and in them, in making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; translating them into the kingdom of the Son of His love, the center of all His counsels. Their danger lay in “not holding the head;” and thus they were allowing themselves to be deceived by the craft of Satan, under the pretense of humility and lowliness, and were turning ordinances into a means of gaining a standing before God, instead of using them as a memorial of their having been introduced into a standing known, and enjoyed, and possessed before Him.

Before one word of warning or upbraiding falls from his pen, he discloses the glories of the Son, the center of the Father’s counsels; by whom, through sin-bearing, and death, and judgment, the fullness of the Godhead had cleared the ground for the reconciliation of “all things,” in the new creation, of which He was the center, and through whom believers had been reconciled to God.

What a rebuke to the state of things which we find touched upon in the second chapter of the epistle!— “philosophy,” “vain deceit,” “traditions of men,” “elements of the world,” “meats,” “drinks,” “keeping of holy-days,” “new moons,” “sabbaths” (which were shadows which had vanished into their nothingness, when the substance, Christ, had come), “voluntary humility,” and such like. Things with which the natural mind could occupy itself, and which had a “show of wisdom” and worship devised by the human will, so gratifying to the flesh.

The apostle ranges as it were through the region of creation, providence, redemption, and glory (chap. 1:15-22); as if he said, “There is not a spot in the wide universe of these things that I will not fill with Christ. I will so unfold and expand Him before your eyes, that I will only have to mention the follies of chapter ii. which have occupied your minds, to make you blush about them; and this is the very One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and who dwells in you (chap. 1:27), and ye are complete in Him. (Chap. 2:10.) Foolish people, see what you have been doing. Is not that a more touching rebuke for you, than if I had charged you with the infantile follies of which I have heard?”

I desire to put before my readers a line of truth which has struck me much of late in chapter 1 of this Epistle, coupled with 2 Tim. 3; and to bring before their minds certain truths of great importance which the apostle presses, when the seeds of the evil had begun to show themselves, and which in this day have grown up and ripened into such a harvest. It seems to me that he has them specially in his mind as the grand preservatives which would guard the faithful against all that was coming. This is the more remarkable when we find that he presses the very same things on the consciences of the faithful in the perilous times of the last days. So that whether in the beginning, or the ending of the church’s sojourn here, the truths which would preserve and gird the loins of God’s people would be the same.

I gather from the general teaching of the epistle that the apostle, who had never seen the Colossians (chap. 2:1), had heard of them through Epaphras, whose ministry of the gospel had evidently been blessed to them. He had brought tidings of them to the apostle (chap. 1:8), of their fruit-bearing reception of the gospel. The apostle contemplates a double condition of soul: first, that of the knowledge of the glad tidings; and secondly, a condition produced by being filled with the knowledge of God’s will, for which be prayed (ver. 9, 10); in order that, through it, they might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, and be fruitful in every good work, and thus grow through the knowledge of God. In a word, it is the knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Consequently, he contemplates his own ministry under these two heads: first, that of the gospel to every creature under heaven (ver. 23); and, secondly, that of the Church, which completed all the counsels of God. (Ver. 22-26.) Revelation up to the point of Paul’s ministry had embraced creation, the law, redemption, the person of Christ, the ways of God, His government, &c. There was but one thing now, and that was the revelation of the mystery of the Church, which when given, completed or filled up the word of God.

Christ—the Son of David and heir of his throne—rejected by the Jews and by the world; crucified and slain; raised up again by the power of God, and by the glory of the Father, seated in the heavens in the righteousness of God, having answered God’s righteous judgment against sin, death, judgment, wrath, the curse of a broken law, all borne and passed through to the glory of God; sin put away, sins borne; the “old man” judicially dealt with, and set aside forever; a man—the Second man—the last Adam—in heaven in divine righteousness. The Holy Ghost personally on earth witnesses to the righteousness of God, and to the justification of the believer according to its full display. Eternal life by and in the Spirit, and its conscious possession, communicated to the believer by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost acting as the power of this life in his walk, guiding, directing, controlling, and rebuking him. The believer in Jesus sealed with the

Spirit, his body a temple for His indwelling, uniting him to Christ—a Man in glory; and thus the bond of union between all those who are His, one with another, and with Christ. His presence and baptism constituting “one body,” composed of such, here in this world. God dwelling amongst His saints here, as a habitation, in Spirit, not in flesh. The Holy Ghost, the power for the exercise of the gifts that Christ, when He rose and ascended up on high, received as man, and bestowed on men—members of His body—thus “dividing to every man severally as he will;” reproducing too, “Christ,” the “life of Jesus,” in the mortal bodies of the saints. The power also of worship, communion, joy, love, rejoicing, and prayer. Teaching them to await the hope of righteousness by faith, even the glory itself. Leading them to await for Christ, and producing the longing “Come” in the “Bride;” while her Lord still continues, the object of her hope, in the hearers, as the “Bright and the Morning Star.” Meanwhile transforming them into Christ’s image by unfolding in the liberty of grace, the glories of Him in whose face shines all the glory of God!

Such are some of the features of the “doctrine” of Paul.

We find then a condition of soul in the Colossians for which the apostle can give thanks. (Ver. 3-6.) They had received the gospel, and it was bringing forth fruit in them since the day they knew the grace of God in truth. But he will know that the mere knowledge of the gospel, blessed even as it is, would not enable them to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” It needed something more than the mere acceptance of the glad tidings to guide the steps of the Lord’s people in a walk worthy of Him; and hence, while he can give thanks for the first condition of soul produced by the glad tidings, he ceased not to pray for them that they might have the second.

How many of the Lord’s people are in the first state in the present day rejoicing in the grace of the gospel; and yet who never have attained to the second! nay, who even think that anything beyond the mere knowledge of the gospel is but speculation, or opinions of men, without power or value for the practical walk of the saints. I think I am warranted in saying that after Epaphras saw Paul, and learned the deep and paramount importance of that knowledge for which Paul prayed that they might know that Epaphras was so fully convinced of the value and importance of their learning the second character of the apostle’s ministry, that he himself likewise, labored earnestly in prayer for them that they might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” (Compare Paul’s prayer in chap. 1:9, 10, with Epaphras’ prayer in chap. 4:12.)

We see therefore three prominent and important matters which the apostle presses in chapter 1.

First. The importance that the saints should be instructed in the second character of the ministry, of the Church—the body of Christ, its Head. So that understanding the deep responsibility which flowed from membership of such, they might hold fast the Head, and walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

Secondly. That the scriptures were now filled up, or completed, by the revelation of this mystery. No room was left consequently for tradition or development of any kind. It was the grand summing up of all the revealed counsels and purposes of God the Father, for the glory of the Son. They had, up to this, embraced and treated of creation, law, government, the kingdom, the person of Christ, the Son; redemption, &c. There might be, and doubtless was, still a. further development of the details of these subjects, as by John in the Apocalypse, &c., but still it would only be the unfolding, and the summing up of the details of what had been the subject of inspiration. Paul’s ministry it

was then revealing the mystery concerning Christ and the Church, which completed the word of God. (Chap. 1:25.)

Thirdly. The glory of the person of the Son, who is the image of the invisible God. No man had seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, had declared Him. (John 1:18.) He had created all things. By Him all things were upheld. He was the first-begotten from among the dead, and as such the Head of His body, the Church. All fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and to reconcile all things to Himself; and He had reconciled the saints, who before had been aliens, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, in the body of His flesh through death. Thus the regions of creation, providence, redemption, and glory; are ranged through by the apostle, and Christ unfolded as filling all things. It is the glory of the person of the Son.

To repeat them, that the mind may recall them simply, they are three: viz., 1st, the doctrine of Paul; 2ndly, the scriptures, which had been now completed by his ministry; and, 3rdly, the person of Christ.

These were the truths on which so much hung and flowed from, which would be the safeguards for the faithful in an evil day.

I do not here enter into more detail, but notice them as those truths to which be directs special attention to meet the dangers he foresaw in the beginning of the history of the Church.

I now turn to the instruction which he gives in the Second Epistle to Timothy, which would afford an unerring guide to the faithful at the closing of the history of the Church in the last clays. The mournful heart of the apostle unbosoms itself to one whom he loved, and to whom he could communicate his thoughts freely; he unfolds to him the irreparable ruin into which the Church was fast drifting in her outward, responsible condition. He does not look for any restoration—not even the ability on the part of the faithful to leave the outward professing mass. He does not in the Epistles to Timothy speak of the inward graces and Christian affections, which are to be the more cultivated than ever in such a state of things, as he does in the Epistle to the Philippians. He does not speak in them of the Church as the body of Christ or bride, nor of the relationships of father and children, as elsewhere. What he treats of is the outward thing before the world, in the character (as in 1 Tim. 3:14-16) of what it had been set in the world to be for God. It was His house, the assembly of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth, the vessel in which the truth was to be displayed; and the mystery of godliness—the manifestation of God in Christ, and the surrounding truths—was to be her testimony in the world. She was as a light-bearer to reflect Him as His epistle, and respond to God's purposes in this place. In the second epistle the apostle sees that all was now hopelessly and irrevocably gone. The house of God had become a great house in which iniquity was rife, and vessels to dishonor had found a lodgment and were at home in it. Paul had been "turned away from" by all in Asia. He is here, I doubt not, a representative man, one through whom the Holy Ghost can say, "Be ye followers together of me" (Phil. 3); and one who walked in the power of his own doctrine. He marks out in a clear line the pathway of the faithful in such a state of things: they were to depart from iniquity— "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord (κυριον), depart from iniquity." (Chap. 2:19.) Every one who owned Him as Lord. Whatever Arm it would take, the simple and primary step should be to depart from iniquity. From vessels which were not honoring Christ in their walk, one was to purge oneself, and thus that one might become a vessel unto honor, fitted and meet for the Master's use. Fleeing from youthful

lusts (i.e., inward personal holiness) was to be the character of one's walk. And then (all before this being negative) the positive following of righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who were calling on the Lord out of a purged heart. (See chap. 2: 19-22.)

But the question now comes, When the saints had done this, when they had departed from iniquity, purged themselves from the vessels to dishonor, were walking in holiness and following these things together, is there anything provided for them, when corruption surrounds them on all sides, to keep them together after a divine fashion in the midst of it all? Would they not be open to the admission of evil amongst them again, and thus find that separation from it was of no avail? In the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul had shown an Epaphras the necessity of having the saints instructed in the second part of his ministry when they had been established in the First: that is, when they had received the grace of the gospel, that they might know the full counsels of God in the doctrine of Paul, in order to walk worthily of the Lord. Yea, that he ceased not in all earnestness and in the Holy Ghost, to pray that they might be thus instructed. Would this now be that to which he would again point them? Here then comes the grand truth, he recalls the very same three things as those which at the beginning he had pressed upon the Colossians as the safeguards for the faithful in the perilous times—times when the profession of Christianity is described in words so nearly like those by which he had described the corruptions of the heathen world, when sunk down into the lowest ebb of degradation and departure from God. If the closing verses of Rom. 1 are compared with the first four verses of 2 Tim. 3, this will at once be seen. In describing the various manifestations of evil in these verses, three prominent features will be found in them: viz., 1st, Self-predominating (Christianity is the denial of self); 2ndly, A form of godliness, while the power would be denied; and, 3rdly, Active opposition to the truth by the most subtle device of the enemy—that of imitation—the device of Satan in Egypt by the magicians, by copying Moses' miracles performed by the power of God, and thus Satan's power practically nullifying that of God. To counterbalance those characteristic features, and to keep the faithful after a divine fashion, the apostle names the same things as before we noticed to the Colossians: 1st, "My doctrine;" 2ndly, The "Scriptures;" and, 3rdly, The person of Christ as an object of faith. These he unfolds in the remaining portion of the chapter. (Ver. 10-17.)

The doctrine of Paul (see also the manner of life which flowed from it) is that which is to keep divinely together those who would call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It embraces all the principles and truths connected with it, as when first revealed. Ruin and failure could not affect it nor hinder the practice flowing from it. Nor would it ever be impracticable for the faithful few to exercise the godly discipline and exclusion of evil from their midst, inculcated by him. (See 1 Corinthians) Outward unity, seen to such a beautiful degree at the first (Acts 2; 4), might be gone forever. The unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ would never fail, and this the Christian was exhorted to endeavor to keep. (Eph. 4:3, 4.) Come what would, there never would be a time while the Church would sojourn here, when Paul's doctrine would be a nullity or impracticable to the veriest handful of the faithful who sought to call on the Lord out of a pure heart, and live godly in Christ Jesus.

Such then is the prominent and first-named point in the chapter. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine," &c. The resource—the safeguard—the ground or principle of action of the saints in an evil day. Without Paul's doctrine, they had nothing stable to preserve them and keep them together on divine ground in the midst of corruption; with it, they would find that under their feet

which would never fail.

Have we then Paul's doctrine? We may boast, as all do, that we have the scriptures—surely it is well. We may have confidence that an ever-faithful Lord will never leave or forsake His people, and that He knows them that are His, and will keep them unto the end. But can we say that we have Paul's doctrine of the Church—the body of Christ on earth formed by the presence and baptism of the Holy Ghost? Having it, can we say that we are as living members, acting upon the truth of it through the never-failing supply of grace He gives? Or, do we come under the character of those who are described as "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth?" —Those whose mind and intellect the truth has reached, but without faith, and hence without practical value in our lives? Of the truth, we can say as of faith: "What profit, my brethren, if a man say he have the truth?" if he have not shown that he has faith in it; and thus has learned to act upon it as something in which he believes? It is always a sign that a man has faith in the truth which he knows, when it has had its corresponding effect upon his life—when it has been acted upon in practice. No man has ever had the joy and power of a divine truth till he has accepted it, and walked therein. Many are thus ever learning and never able to come to a divinely confirmed knowledge of it, because the practice is wanting. It is learned in the intellect; the natural mind is touched perhaps with the beauty and divine excellence of it; it cannot be denied, but there is no faith in it. It has not been learned in the conscience and in the soul; and when tribulation or persecution arises because of it, he is offended—deems it non-essential perhaps—and surrenders that to which he has never come to a divinely-given knowledge. If ever there was a day when there was such a thing as "salt which had lost its savor," it is the present. The most touching the very highest—truths of God have become the topics of the world's conversation. They are held by many after a fashion, in which the edge and power of them are lost. A worldly walk and conversation are coupled with the intellectual knowledge of the highest truths of God. And like salt that has lost its saltiness, one can but ask of it, "Wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but (even) men cast it out." (Luke 14 '34, 35.)

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (2 Tim. 3:10-14.)

May the Lord open the understanding of His beloved people, that in the midst of the confusion and corruption of such an evil day—when, men are saying, "What is truth?" and yet not caring for the reply, they may find that there are such principles in the word of God as no amount of man's failure can ever touch, and which are ever practicable to those who desire humbly, to walk with God, and to keep the word of the patience of Jesus, till He comes. May they learn to walk together in unity, and peace, and love in the truth, for His name's sake.—Amen.

F. G. P.

Chapter 256

Patriarchal Longevity and the Deluge

The rationalist objects to the long lives of the patriarchs, but he does not say why. Nor is there any reason why a man should not be constituted to live nine hundred as well as seventy years. It is a question of the sovereign power of God, on which mere reasoning is absurd. The longevity of the patriarchs would have rendered the peopling of the earth easier, as well as the communication of true knowledge more secure. But the skeptic does not even state the difficulty with any accuracy; for the earth must have been peopled from two persons, or at any rate from six since the flood, according to the Mosaic account.

After that, five hundred years, four hundred, and so on; and on the division of the earth in Peleg's days, two hundred years were the allotted term of man's life; and, ere long, "threescore years and ten." But if we take the flood as the point of departure, the universal tradition, Mythology, and worship of men confirm the account of Moses, and of the existence even of the three sons of Noah.

The statements of ancient Eastern writers, preserved for the most part in Josephus and Eusebius, are as clear and distinct as possible, confirming the account of Moses even to the sending forth of the birds. And the traditional mythology of Egypt, Greece, and all the neighboring countries preserve the various facts and words connected with the flood, the ark, and Noe; tracing up their history each one to this same personage, making a god of him. And the eight became, in a remarkable manner, the sacred divine number in Egypt (the great converter of Mosaic history into fabular divinities), while he is in many fables represented as hid in an ark from the fury of a mythical representative of the deluge, and coming out by a new birth, and celebrated as the inventor of wine. A sacred ship was carried in procession in many places. The very word "ark" (in Hebrew, ■■■■■■ teba) having given its name to many of the places in which these superstitious memorials of it were preserved. The preservation of the ark on Ararat is recorded by the most ancient historical records in existence; and in various places where temples connected with these events were erected, a large cleft was shown, through which the waters of the deluge are said to have retired.

In the east the general historical account was preserved more clearly and fully; a very natural result of the fact, that it was from thence, according to the Mosaic account, that the various colonies of the human race started whereas in Greece and places connected by colonies with it, each (though stating it in a way which, even to their own serious writers, proved it a far earlier history) attributed it to the first king of their own colony, and localized it. But they all agree in doing the same, each for his own colony; thus proving its universality, and in many instances acknowledging that their founder came from Egypt, and in one case in a very peculiar ship thence held sacred—the very one which was carried in procession in the rites of Isis, in which the ark and the deluge were celebrated.

Besides this, the tradition of a deluge is universal all over the world. I may add, that the ablest naturalists, such as Cuvier, allege it to have been universal. Where does this universal tradition

come from? Whence its connection with the author of the human race preserved in an ark, and beginning again the history of man who had perished by a deluge?

I may add, that there is an ancient medal of a city in Asia Minor, called by the Greek name of the “ark,” on the reverse of which you have an ark, with a man and woman in it; the top taken off, and a bird flying with a small bough in its bill, and another resting on the ark: a man and woman are also outside, come down on the dry ground. All these, remark, are heathen notices of the deluge.

The skeptic suggests physiological difficulties as to the peopling of the earth.

Some physiologists have thought, on physiological principles, that the earth must have been probably more populous at the time of the deluge than now; but to such mere probable calculations it is really useless to have anything to say. The population of the earth increases so much more rapidly uncles’ some circumstances than under others; so amazingly faster, too, in proportion to the space over which the population has to spread; or, on the other hand, diminishes from oppression or misery; that assertions made offhand as to possible numbers, really prove nothing else than the disposition of the objector. The skeptic—who has not confidence in scripture, because he will not believe it to be God’s word, and who has great confidence in these surmises, because he is sure they are man’s—considers the latter, of course, certain, the former of no authority, and talks of demonstrations; though as to demonstration, for instance of the antediluvian population, it is a mere absurdity to talk of it. Does he suppose he has any demonstration that there has been no deluge; the testimony to which, and even to the Mosaic account of which, is everywhere, and the proofs of which, according to the authority of such men as Cuvier, are everywhere also? All this shows simply the will to make objections, and the hardihood of objectors.

I have already shown that there are proofs from universal tradition throughout the whole world of this great event. Some geologists have very likely rejected it; but it most certainly is not the case with all. Of the ablest there are those who do not. I do not doubt its universality; so that I leave any reply, founded on a contrary idea, aside.

Scripture states, that “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” Now this last may be a figurative expression for a very extraordinary quantity of rain from clouds; but it is either descriptive of what for quantity would be a miracle (for it uses an expression never repeated), or else it is some miraculous out-letting of water other than from the clouds. The expression, “All the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” if it is not some miraculous outpouring of the sea itself, must mean some outbreak of waters from below, which, as never repeated, is to be called, so far as such events can be, miraculous.

The skeptic says, “from the clouds and perhaps from the sea,” as if clouds were certainly one source of the waters of the flood; and, if there were anything else, the thing to be added was the sea. Now something the clouds is certainly mentioned. Would any one suppose, from the skeptic’s words, that if it were not the sea, it certainly was some divinely-caused outbreak of waters from some hidden source? He certainly does not dream of a “miraculous creation and destruction of water.” Be it so. But why, then, two words? Does not the narrative speak of some outburst of water known on no other occasion? What is the fact? It speaks neither of clouds nor sea. But, besides rain, it speaks of the fountains of the great deep being broken up, and the windows of heaven opened. It is never said, the water drained back into the sea; but that “the waters returned from off

the earth continually:" and declares the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. That is, the narrator does present it as having its source and its arrest in the extraordinary intervention of God—call it "miracle," or what you please.

In a word, it is certain that the sacred writer does, in the distinctest way, point out some very overwhelming outbreak of waters from an extraordinary source.

The reader may remember, that when God began to form the world, what subsisted as already created was one vast mass of waters, called "the deep:" "darkness was upon the face of the deep," and "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." The earth stood, indeed, by God's power, out of the water; but what unknown mass of waters was engulphed is not stated, nor what were the waters which were above the firmament or expanse. Whatever store of waters there was below broke forth over the earth, and from above came down upon it. The skeptic's statement of the passage is a total misrepresentation of it.

He states, that the ark was not of dimensions sufficient to "take in all the creatures," more exactly the animal race belonging to the dry land. It has been proved, over and over again, that it was. It has been calculated that it was a vessel of more than forty-two thousand tons, being four hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five broad, and forty-five high; eighteen times as much as the largest man-of-war, one of which can stow, say, a thousand men, with provisions, for a very much longer time than the flood lasted, besides an immense weight of guns, shot, &c.; so that it is evident that the ark could easily have received the animals that could not live in the water.

As to the dispersion of animals, the discovery of many remains of different kinds, as of large elephant species, embedded in ice in Siberia—hyaenas and their prey in a cavern in Yorkshire—has remarkably confirmed the deluge. The extinction of many species and introduction of others in the most unlooked-for way, renders such speculations of no weight whatever.

Chapter 257

Brief Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 3

2 Corinthians 3

This chapter brings out the way in which the power of the truth works on our souls to bring us into the presence of the Lord. It begins with the effect of this in testimony to others; and then lets us know how the effect is produced—what a Christian, and so what the Church, really is.

The Corinthians had been calling in question the apostolic authority of Paul. How does he meet this? He appeals to themselves, to their own calling of Gad when they were turned to Him from idols, “as the seal of his apostleship.” It is as though he said, “If Christ has not spoken by me, how is it that you are Christians?”

So chapter 13:3-5 is not at all a precept to doubt, to examine and call in question their own Christianity. The apostle is showing the absurdity of their doubt of him. “If you want, to examine me, examine yourselves: you commend my ministry, because you commend Christ.”

Then he goes on to tell us what a Christian is. He is a representative of Christ, just as much as the tables of stone were the representation of the law. Only in that case the writing being with the Spirit of the living God, not with ink, Christ is engraven on the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, and they known and read of all men. The world ought to see Christ engraved on the heart of a Christian, just as much as Israel could see the letter of the law on the tables.

It is written on the “tables of the heart,” by the “Spirit of the living God.” Thus merely outward conduct (though there must be that for the world to see) will not do, but Christ within, as the motive and end of all we do.

There is a certain external respect for right and wrong as the result of the Bible and professed Christianity in these countries, which we do not find among the heathen. But a man may be following lawful pursuits, and be all that is correct outwardly and moral, yet if Christ is not the motive, it is all good for nothing. God did not send His Son into the world to bring in a negative Christianity. There must be that result which is worthy of the work. It must be evident through the power of the Holy Ghost. There will be failure, for we are poor, feeble creatures; but the world will see where we are going by the road we are taking. A man may get on slowly or stumble, but it is evident what road he is going.

We have to look to ourselves and see how far we are devotedly following Christ, with full purpose of heart—how far we can say, “This one thing I do;” but we must take care at the same time not to get into legal bondage by this standard. If I say, “Here is a rule of conduct: follow it,” this cannot reach the heart, the affections. The ministration of the letter brings only failure, condemnation, and death; for it prescribes a rule which man, being a sinner, can never follow. It does not change man, but it puts him under death; it proves him “ungodly and without strength.”

We may turn even Christ into that letter of condemnation; we may take His life, for instance, and make it our law. Nay, we may turn even the love of Christ into our law, we may say “He has loved

me, and done all this for me—I ought to love Him, and do so much for Him, in return for this love," &c., and thus turning His love into a rule of life, it becomes the ministration of death—for the only thing a rule can do is to condemn. With the children of Israel, Moses put a veil upon his face, for they could not bear the sight of the glory—it condemned them. Man tries either to hide his condemnation from God, or his conscience from His condemnation. He excludes himself from God—from the glory of His holiness and from His glory as seen in Jesus; and when His glory shall be revealed in the end, it will only bring out condemnation more fully.

In contrast with this ministration of death and condemnation, we see the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. Now have we this? It is not Christ down here. The Holy Ghost here supposes Christ to be gone; and now it is the power of the Spirit of God revealing the glory of Christ to the soul, What has the Holy Ghost to tell us of Christ? He reveals Him not only as the pattern of godliness, but as always manifesting grace. The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of vile, miserable sinners: and Christ says "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

The whole life of" Jesus was a manifestation of grace: He laid Himself aside for others. He gave Himself to all who came to Him. He "had no time so much as to eat;" in the midst of a world of wickedness He was the perfect manifestation of the goodness of God. And this was not all. He died for sin; put Himself under the whole power of God's wrath for sin—He was laid in the grave—He ascended into heaven; and sent down the Holy Ghost as a witness to His glory, and as the minister of righteousness. So it is now God ministering, not requiring.

If I am brought to look to Jesus, I can say, He bore my sins—I did them, but He bore them—He gave His soul an offering for my sins; He has taken the whole charge of my sin. I trace my sins up to the cross and there I have done with them. They are all gone.

Where, then, do I see the glory? Is it on Sinai; or in the face of Jesus Christ who has put away all those sins which were revealed and condemned at Sinai? He has entered into heaven, because they are put away. In Phil. 2 we see Christ in heaven, not only in virtue of the glory of His person, but because of the work He has accomplished. "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him," &c.

We are thus able not only to bear the sight of that glory of God, but to rejoice in it. Our souls rest in it. We do not ask to have it veiled, but that we may see every ray of it. Our hearts can satiate themselves there, because it is the testimony to the love of God, and the perfect putting away of sin.

There is also the ministration of righteousness. "Seeing then we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech." It is not a little hope here and a little despair there, but it is a message of perfect righteousness to the vilest. "By the obedience of One many were made righteous." Now, it is God putting in fruit, and not requiring righteousness.

What is the practical effect of this work of Christ received in the heart? Not, to make a man careless about sin. Not to give him liberty to sin because Christ has borne the wrath due to it. The last verse shows how we are made this living epistle. Contemplating Christ we become like Him. If the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me, I can say, "What a Christ I have!" and there is the spirit of holiness at once. I long for Christ, and look at Christ, and thus I get like Him. The very thing which brings an accomplished righteousness to my conscience makes me like

Him. Then, mark, there is no veil on the heart or on the glory. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us has taken it away. And it is said of Israel, “When they shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” When Moses went in to the Lord, he always took off the veil; but the children of Israel could not bear the sight of the glory: so he put it on when he appeared to them.

For believers, there is no veil anywhere. They can look at the glory because it tells of salvation, not of judgment—accomplished salvation and effectual righteousness. What perfect liberty to be in the presence of God and enjoy Christ in all His fullness! (Ver. 17.) “The Lord is that spirit” (i.e., the mind of the Spirit in all these Old Testament things).

Then what is the consequence of this ministration of the Spirit? What follows my knowing that I am the righteousness of God in Christ? that God delights in me? I have a constraint upon my heart to serve Him and follow Him. If I think of His love, have I any fear? I fail constantly: has God any afterthought about me, or about my sins? There is no uncertainty: nothing is between me and God but the love which has placed me there; without spot and in perfect freedom, for He has given Christ for me. It is now, not God requiring anything from me, but God giving things to me; and this that His Son may be glorified in me: not that man may be glorified, but His Son Jesus glorified. God is making a marriage for His Son. We have to be the epistle of Christ. We have this privilege—to glorify and manifest Christ. We should be delighted to be this epistle, cost what it may. Christ died for me, and I have to represent Him. Of course I shall fail, often and again; but the heart at liberty before God will run in the way of His commandments; and this because the affections are set upon God and the glory of Christ. My life, my daily path, must be an answer to the love of God. I am debtor to Christ, for He loved me and gave Himself for me. What an amazing privilege to be permitted to glorify Him in any little way in our path down here!

Mark 4:14-29

As the Gospel of Mark gives us the character of the Lord Jesus as the servant of God, so likewise do we find the service of Christ coming out in a most remarkable way. For in every act the divine glory of Christ stands out in virtue of and by His service, and not merely by miracles, though that is true in its place. But if Jesus takes the form of a servant, there must be the divine power for the accomplishment of the service. If it be the mere healing of the body, if Jairus' daughter is to be raised, divine power must be there to do it. He had to make good the word of God spoken in Ex. 15:26, "I am the Lord that healeth thee;" and this could not be done but by divine power. He is content to be as the servant; but if He is God's servant, there must be this power of God, though with the entire abrogation of self. So He said "I do always those things that please him." But no act of His service could be accomplished without this divine power; for if sins are to be forgiven, "who can forgive sins but God only?" and He, the Son of man, forgave their sins. "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." Thus all through His service we see the divine glory brought out.

Then another thing appears, which is, that when He ascended up on high He transferred the same spirit and power of service to His disciples, and so to us, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. When the Lord was down here, He took the place of a sower in connection with others: for He is not now seeking fruit in the Jewish vineyard and finding none; He had set it aside for the present, as the "degenerate plant of a strange vine," and had now come to sow that seed which had not before been brought to the earth. He came to produce fruit where there was none. He is not yet come to reap: that will be when He comes again, as the parable expresses it, "As if a man should east seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.... But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

There are three things in this chapter; and, first, the full responsibility of the effect of what we bear. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." This shows that the result of your hearing puts you in the place of testimony. Therefore, "take heed what ye hear: for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." I am looking for whatever you have received to come out again, and, according to the kind of reception the truth has met with in our souls, will there be the fruit produced, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

Then, secondly, between the time of His sowing and His coming again to reap, the seed is springing and growing up, "he knoweth not how." The Lord is apparently inattentive to the whole thing. During all the toil and exercise of heart accompanying the service the Lord is apparently unconscious. Tares spring up among the wheat without His taking any notice or interfering at all, leaving it all to the exercise of faith in the laborers, while He, in one sense, is doing nothing. Thus when they were crossing the sea, they get into trouble by reason of a storm that came against them; and while they were toiling against it, He was fast asleep on a pillow in the binder part of the ship. They had also trial in another way—that He could suffer them to be in danger and apparently take no notice. "They awoke him and say unto him, Master, rarest thou not that we perish?" They

were in the same ship with Christ: therefore nothing could be more safe; but they had lost sight of the glory of His person, and thought they were going to perish, thus connecting the circumstances with themselves and not with God. But with Christ in the ship they were as safe in the storm as in the calm. In the next chapter, where the man who had the legion cast out of him “prayed Jesus that he might be with him, howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee.” He desired to be at rest with Jesus; but the Lord said, No: you must go back to be a witness of grace in a world that has turned Jesus out.

Then, thirdly, now that we have the apparent absence of the person of Jesus, but not as to grace (that is always and everywhere present), we have to walk by faith and not by sight. The word of God now takes the place of Christ’s personal presence: as it is the word of God that can alone give us the mind of God. Of course, the Spirit is needed to apply it. And this it is that makes us responsible for the truth we hear, though, of course, we can do nothing without grace. A light is not put under a bushel but in a candlestick, that it may give light around: and I have put you as a light, that you may give out the light. Or why have I lit up the light in you, but that you may give out the light I have lit? “God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And as there is nothing hid that shall not be manifested, God is now looking for the outshining of that out of our hearts, which He hath shined in. This is the way that God works. He first puts a word in our hearts that we may bring it out again. If God has lit up a light in my soul, it is that it may shine out to all around; and if not, why does it not? Ah! there is some hindrance within, some hidden lust in the heart that dims the light; and if I do not search it out at once and judge it before the Lord, that He may put it away, I shall, sooner or later, fall into some open sin; then discipline will bring it out manifestly. It is as much as to say, If the light I have lit up in you is not shining out, I will bring out that which hinders it. “Judge yourselves that ye be not judged of the Lord.” “For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.” But here it is meant in reference to the truth, no doubt. Supposing the Church has failed, well, the things by which it has failed will be brought out to light. All God’s counsels of glory He has entrusted to the Church. “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels” through unfaithfulness; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. If you only mete out a scanty measure, a scanty measure will be meted to you in return. “For he that hath, to him shall be given.” What you have received you are to give out, that you may get more. When Christ comes again, He comes to reap the harvest of everything He has sown. Then during this interval of the Lord’s sowing and reaping, while the seed is springing up, He knoweth not how—that is to say, while He is apparently absent from us, not interfering in all our trials and conflicts—yet we have this on which to stay our souls, that we are in the same vessel with Himself; and, however much the ship may be tossed about by the storms and waves of the devil’s raising, while we have Him in the vessel, we are as safe in the storm as in the calm.

Next, we have two things brought out here—the grace of God and the light of life; and whether it be one, two, or twenty talents we have received by way of gift, the reception of the grace of God into our souls will make us tell out the truth as it is in Jesus. And as Jesus, when here, was the light of the world, so (having lit up this light of life in our souls) He is looking for us to be light-bearers in the midst of this dark world where He has left us (like the poor man out of whom the legion was cast), that “our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works may

glorify our Father which is in heaven." Then how great is our responsibility as to our hearing! ("Take heed what ye hear;" "To him that hath shall be given") that in hearing of God's grace, we may possess it in the knowledge of what God is. And, when hearing of Christ, our souls should realize all of Christ—to hear, seize hold of it in all its power; and hearing, also have it, and be it, even the light as it is in Christ. And that will make manifest everything that is contrary to it; for we only want the light of Christ to make manifest all that is Babylonish or Egyptian.

"Take heed how ye hear." As far as our flesh is not mortified, we shall not possess the truth: and only so far as our flesh is mortified, can we possess the truth. And to the same extent as the flesh is continually judged and kept down, will our "loins be girt about with truth," because the flesh cannot receive the truth. And when we really possess the truth in our souls, it judges ourselves and all that it finds within first, and then shines out.

May all that we have heard, and our hearing of Christ, thus be manifested by us to the praise of His glory!

Chapter 259

Earlier Days of Moses

(Ex. 2-4)

There are two scenes in the early life of Moses which may afford us profitable admonition.

In Ex. 2 we see him under all external disadvantages. His soul has no help from without. He is in Pharaoh's court, and, as the apostle says, in the midst of "the pleasures of sin."

He is, however, as true a Nazarite there as Daniel was in the court of Babylon. The scene around casts him on his resources in God. He has to drink all alone and in secret of the waters at the fountain, for the land is dry and thirsty with no grateful streams at all. But he flourishes, he is strong in faith, and stands in victory over the world.

This victory at first displays itself in him by his telling the courtiers not to treat him as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (Heb. 11:24.) This is an exceedingly beautiful notice of his faith. It lets us very much into the intimacies of his mind and daily walk among men. He was not ashamed to own his origin and early history, the loathing of his person, as it were, in the day that he was born, and that all his goodly estate was through the adoption of a foundling by the king's daughter. And this passage from Hebrews gives us to say that he may have checked the servants and officers of the palace in their disposition to flatter him with his titles and distinctions. This was indeed beautiful. This was above nature. This was victory over "the pride of life." This was a lovely instance of self-emptying, of making oneself of no reputation. This was precious moral virtue in the soul of one who is said to have "esteemed the reproach of Christ."

Then he went out from the palace, and looked, amid the brick-kilns, on the burthen of his brethren. (Ex. 2:11.) This was the second stage in his life of devotedness and single-heartedness, while he was yet in Egypt, and all external things were against him. "It came into his heart," we are told, to do this. (Acts 7:23.) And it is well, and the fruit is pleasant, when affection is the parent of service.

Such was the man Moses in the midst of Egypt and Egypt's temptations and hindrances, The place was barren of all help for a soul that walked with God. Moses flourished there. In affection and in service, in sympathy with the saints, and in triumph over the world, his standing and his course were beautiful. But, in process of time he is driven thence, and the outward scene entirely changes. In Ex. 3 we find him in the bosom of a happy godly household. He has his venerable father-in-law, a worshipper of God, his wife and his children, and he tends a flock at the borders of the mount of God. This was retirement in Midian to Moses, the contrast of the late scenery around him in Egypt. It was rather the Church than the world. He was now helped from without.

This is what we all experience at this time. Our external condition is for us. We are in the bosom of a family at the mount of God. We have got into brotherhood. But all this is not necessarily good. It is either good for us or evil for us, according as it is used by us. Such atmosphere is either healthful or relaxing, according as we walk in it.

Moses so used it as to find it relaxing. He is not the man in Ex. 3 that he had been in Ex. 2 The contrast is very exact. He is invited to look on the afflictions of his brethren a second time. But he is full of reserve and reluctance, hard to be moved. And why this? His brethren are the same, his own flesh and blood still, his father's children; and their burthens and griefs are just as heavy and sharp as ever. And besides, he has greater encouragement to work now than he had then; he has the sympathy of the Lord now with those afflictions of Israel, expressed too, or conveyed to him, in the affecting vision of the burning bush. And he is invited into this holy service by the voice of the Lord from the midst of it.

Why, then, this reserve or reluctance? The atmosphere of Midian had proved relaxing. Egypt had presented external difficulties, and he was wakeful, spiritual, and energetic in the midst of them; Midian had afforded external religious advantages, and he had, insensibly perhaps, become easy and slumbering over an unfed lamp. The shifts and reasonings of unbelief, as well as the patient and unupbraiding grace of God may be strikingly marked in the communion of the Lord and His servant. The first argument of the reluctant heart of Moses is drawn from himself. "Who am I," says he, "that I should go unto Pharaoh?" The insignificance and feebleness of his person, he assumes, must plead to have him excused.

God answers this without a rebuke, but tells him that he may forget himself altogether, for that He will be with him.

Unbelief then draws its plea from the Lord assuming, as it were, that there had been some indistinctness in the present divine manifestation. "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Gideon was in this mind in Judg. 6:17; and the Baptist, in his measure, in Matt. 11:3.

But the Lord answers this likewise without a rebuke, brightly revealing to His servant all the strength and goodness that awaited him in the path He was now setting before him.

Moses is still slow of heart, and in the shifts of unbelief draws his third objection from the people, saying to the Lord, "They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice."

Still does the Lord wait, unupbraiding and giving signs and wonders, which will constrain the people to receive him.

Can Moses be reluctant still? Yes. Unbelief has resources still. He insinuates that all his present communion with the Lord had not profited him, but left him just the man it had found him. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant."

Can the Lord be unupbraiding still? Yes. This personal slight and indignity, as we may call it, awakens no rebuke. "I will be with thy mouth" is the divine answer.

But now unbelief has no more arguments. The weapons of its warfare have been foiled, the arrows of its quiver all spent. Naked, undisguised, unsheltered, inexcusable unbelief—the deep departure of the heart from the service of God—stands open in its shame. "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." Then, but not till then, the anger of the Lord was kindled; and Moses may learn, in Aaron sharing the burden and the honor with him, what unbelief had not cost him.

Chapter 260

The Elohistic and Jehovistic Notion

The statement as to Elohistic and Jehovistic sources of the Mosaic history is without any other foundation than ignorance. And the low German habits of criticism—I say, low habits. Even Stuart, I judge ("On the Canon of Scripture")) does not escape this. For we do not read with God but simply as men, we are already on this low ground. Thus, judging as he and others do if a book has an ethical tendency for me, what a thoroughly narrow-minded way of looking at it, instead of seeing it as part of an immense and divine conception and communication of the whole history of men, and God's ways with them! Thus, for instance, Esther is the providential care of Israel even during its rejection not a principle of immense importance in God's dealings with men and His people? It is of the very last importance. Is such a knowledge of God not ethical for me? He could not reveal Himself, or it would not be the time or their rejection. All the style of reasoning I am commenting on, I must be forgiven for calling by the well-known term of "pettifogging." But I anticipate. There is—at least in what I have seen—a plodding diligence, no doubt, to find out something which has the character of human learning, no matter what, but something which will make a book (which somebody else has not made); but then it has all a downward tendency, and never rises above a groveling pre-occupation with the external means of truth, or the spinning out their ideas of what ought to be. Take even Michaelis, a learned man and attractive by his modesty. When he comes to touch the interpretation of scripture, it is puerile to the last degree. A child who reads the scriptures with a little simple intelligence, would smile at the wonders he finds out by Syriac and Hebrew (and, if Marsh is right, often a very slovenly use of them) and the working of his own mind. It is such naïf nonsense, and brought out with such good faith, that it produces the kindly feeling one has for the foolish questions of a child which betray his innocence. The mind of God in the passage never seems to occur to him, though he believes scripture to be inspired.

Now Jehovah and Elohim are always used each in its own proper sense in Holy Scripture. The latter is the Creator God, God in His own being as such. The former made known to Israel a personal name in which He dealt with Israel, and even with the world, though they do not Own Him. The appropriateness is always sensible to him who seizes the bearing of the passage. When the relationship (or work of God known in relationship) to Israel is expressed, we have "Jehovah." When the account is simply historical, "God" (Elohim) is used. In some cases either would give, if not so perfect a sense, yet very little different; since Jehovah is the true Elohim, and Elohim is Jehovah; and the use of Jehovah in these latter eases amounts to the writer's having God as known to himself in his mind. The Psalms notably show the different use of the two terms, as does the Book of Jonah. I will take a special example from the Psalms to show this—Psa. 14 and 53. These are very nearly the same; but in one Jehovah is used, in the other Elohim. In Psa. 14 Jehovah is used. Hence it says, "They were in great fear, for [Elohim—God Himself] GOD is in the generation of the righteous." The relationship, the consequence of 'this name Jehovah, is expressed in the presence of Elohim with the righteous, in verse 6: "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because Jehovah is his refuge." Now in Psa. 53 Elohim is used; it is the historical fact of what they were in the sight of Elohim. Hence we have, "There were they in great fear, where no

fear was; for Elohim hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee; thou hast put them to shame, because Elohim hath despised them." These Psalms convey the same truths. But the thought of relationship prevails where Jehovah is used; whereas, where Elohim is used, we have the general result as regards the enemy.

It may be interesting to those who do study scripture with spiritual understanding, however feeble, to draw their attention to the circumstance, that all the Psalms in the first book (i.e., to the end of Psa. 41) are addressed to Jehovah, except Psa. 16, in which, as cited by Paul in proof of Christ's partaking of human nature, and by Peter as proof of His resurrection, Christ's taking His place with man is most clearly brought out. "Preserve me, O Elohim, for in thee [in what God was as such, He having become man] do I put my trust. Thou hast said to Jehovah, Thou art my [Adon] Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee." He takes the place of subjection, not as equal with the Father. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but God." "[Thou hast said] to the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, All my delight is in them," He takes His place now along with the saints, not with Jehovah: as to Him, He tithes the place of a servant. How deep and admirable are the instructions of the word! Now, all these Psalms of the first book suppose the relationship existing as, however deserving rejection and not a people, was the case in Israel when Jesus was amongst them.

But in Psa. 42, i.e., the second book, it will be seen that they are cast out from God's sight—can no more frequent His temple and worship. Hence we at once find, not Jehovah but Elohim addressed. And so it is through this book, though, of course, He is owned to be Jehovah, and Jehovah as the only true Elohim. I have no doubt that, prophetically, the first book refers to the Jews in the latter-day returned to Jerusalem, and enjoying outwardly their hoped for advantages there; and the second has its application when they are driven out in the time of the great tribulation mentioned in Matt. 24.

It will be seen that the third book, beginning with Psa. 73, refers to all Israel (i.e., the ten tribes as well as the two) as such, and not specially the Jews, but only to the clean in heart, however, among them. They are still driven out—the temple pillaged and defaced—and Elohim is addressed until the last confederacy in Psa. 83, where the judgment prophetically spoken of introduces Jehovah, known as Most High over all the earth. Then in Psa. 84 they address Jehovah, and turn and mount up to the tabernacles of Jehovah Sabaoth and His courts, finding that man blessed whose trust is in Jehovah. Thence onward is praise to Jehovah, with contrition and exercise of heart, mercy celebrated in the true gracious or Holy One (Chasidika), Christ, the true David, which closes the book.

I may just add, that the fourth book celebrates (in all its bearings, but in special connection with Israel) the introduction of the first-begotten into the world; Psa. 90 giving Jehovah's interest in Israel, and Psa. 91 Christ's taking Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the true Elion Shaddai—the names by which Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Then it celebrates Him in this character, and develops the coming of the Lord to reign, and that in detail from the cry of the needy till He is fully again seated between the cherubim.

In the last book (from Psa. 107) we have the general bearings of it all, and the praises and hallelujahs which result from it—a kind of historical comment upon all God's dealings with the world, Israel, the Messiah, and His place while all was going on. Already, in the last Psalms of the

fourth book, Christ's government, that, while utterly brought low even to death, He was Jehovah, is brought out in the most astonishing way. The healing of the paralytic in Luke is a distinct allusion to Jehovah's name in Psa. 103:3. But I must not go farther here on this subject.

Again, look at Jonah, where there is not, and cannot be, the smallest pretense of two accounts. The intercourse between Jonah and God is under the name Jehovah. When the seamen learn who his God is that he is running away from, they fear Jehovah, and call upon Jehovah. Where it is a general testimony of repentance in strangers (chap. 3:5, to the end), it is Elohim. And when we have the general supreme dealings of God with Jonah to make him show what He was with man, as God, it is again Elohim. Now, in Jonah, this has peculiar force, because the relationship of Israel with Gentiles, and of Gentiles with Jehovah, is in question. It is the last public direct testimony of God to Gentiles before Christ. And this goodness of God to Gentiles is really what Jonah dreaded, as discrediting his message of judgment, which Jewish pride might like to see executed. (See Jonah 4:2.) Hence, on one side, we have Gentiles brought, in the moment of judgment on the Israelite, to confess Jehovah; and, on the other, God, as such, showing Himself good—the faithful Creator, who thought of those who could not distinguish between their right hand and their left, and even of the cattle. At the same time the proper relationship of Jehovah to His prophet, as such, is also fully maintained, and the word Jehovah, his God, more than once repeated. Now, here we have the elements of Jehovah's grace, and Elohim's true character and supremacy: what, in the nauseous systematizing of ignorance, is reduced to some imaginary documents which none of them know anything about but suppose. We have, I say, these two titles brought out in the clearest and most instructive way, as unfolding divine relationships for those who have the heart to delight in them, and justify that wisdom which is the joy of her children. The infidel must imagine and suppose some external cause, because he knows nothing of the real divine force of these things.

And I would remark, that I am not here bringing an external proof of the truth of the Jewish system; but that, supposing its existence, the reason for the distinctive use of the words Jehovah and Elohim is fully given within the system itself—is consistent and appropriate. This the infidel ought to have seen, or at least examined; because it is a part of the system he pretends to judge, and there are adequate proofs of its consistency within itself, which makes his arguments perfectly futile. For what he finds imaginary reasons for is accounted for on the plainest principles of the system be is judging. For every one can see that Jehovah was a proper name of God. to Israel, and declared positively to be such, though the name of the one true supreme God. Now, for the believer, the use of the names of God carries blessed divine instruction, for all His names have a meaning: Almighty, Jehovah, Father, all have a sense to his soul. But it is not even rational to seek for a reason in imaginary causes, when the real reason lies within the system, and makes a clearly stated and characteristic part of it. Now such is the difference between Jehovah and Elohim.

I would just add here, that it is perfectly indifferent to me if Moses used five hundred documents, provided what he in result gives me expresses exactly, perfectly, and completely, what God meant to communicate to me. I have taken the case of Jonah, because we have the use of Jehovah and Elohim where there is no pretense for this flimsy notion of documents. I may add, that I never found a case in which the use of either of these words did not seem to me precisely appropriate, and this distinctive use is eminently instructive. In the Psalms, this is peculiarly the case. This internal evidence of suitableness to relationship is the strongest possible kind of proof of the

genuineness and (the subject being moral and divine) of the divine character of the record, in which this suitableness is uniformly found.

Thus, not to speak of the Psalms, where it is shown more in detail (as we have just seen), the book of Jonah touches on the relationship of Israel to Gentiles; of the peculiar God of Israel with Gentiles; of God, as such, with the latter, with creation, so as to put everything in its place—without an idea of proving anything about it—according to the whole history of the Bible from Genesis to the end of Chronicles. It spews the feeling of a Jew on one side, and God's way of looking at it on the other. The proper place of Jehovah, in His character of God of Israel, is always preserved, and yet it is shown that this very Jehovah was the supreme God of goodness to men, let them be in the height of their pride, if there was room for repentance, a character which He would not relinquish even towards cattle. Nothing can be more important as a key to the whole question of God being Jehovah, and the peculiar God of Israel, and yet the one supreme and universal God—a thought so easily lost, at any rate as to goodness, if not as to power, by Jewish pride. It corrects all that a Jew could draw falsely from his peculiar position.

One might suppose that the double accounts which the rationalist alleges to exist, are in every case distinguished by the use of Jehovah and Elohim. This is not the case. But it may be he uses the fact of these names being employed to establish, the existence of two documents, at least, and their use by the author of the Book of Genesis, from which they are drawn. But even this is untenable ground; because if the two documents were distinctively characterized by these two names of God, all account alleged to be drawn from one of the distinct documents would not, as it often does, employ both of these names, nor two accounts, alleged to exist because the writer copied two distinct documents, employ, both of them, only one and the same name. Such accounts cannot be referred to two distinct documents characterized by the distinct employment of each. The reader has only to read Gen. 6; 7, to convince himself of the intermingling of the words "God" and "Lord (i.e., Jehovah)," though never without reason, to see the futility of the system. I shall cite some examples further on; but it is easily seen by reading these chapters.

However, none of his objections on this ground (rather a favorite one with German discoverers) has the least validity. It was important, in a book addressed to Israel, to show that Jehovah, their God, was the one true supreme Elohim, the Creator, in contrast with the demon gods of the heathen. Hence, in Genesis, where creation and the ante-Israelitish history is given, we have these two names brought in together (the force of which is much lost in our English translation), or so used as to make it clear that Jehovah is Elohim and Elohim Jehovah, though this last was taken as a name of relationship only at the exodus, on which we will say a few words further on. The very creed, as I may call it, of Israel marks clearly the use of these words ■■■■■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■■■■ ■■■■■ ("Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah)." "And what nation is there that hath Elohim," says Moses, "so nigh to them as Jehovah, our Elohim, is in all things that we call upon him for 1" "Did ever people hear the voice of Elohim speaking out of the midst of the fire?" "Or hath Elohim assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation," etc., "as Jehovah, your Elohim, did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was spewed, that thou mightest know that Jehovah, he is Elohim; there is none else beside him." To the people, when Elijah brought down fire from heaven, cry out" Jehovah, he is Elohim; Jehovah, he is Elohim."

Having thus the undoubted importance of these words, let us apply this clear principle to that part of the history in which it was necessary to spew that Elohim was Jehovah, the Creator, Israel's God.

I have spoken already of the creation. We have first, as a general history, Elohim—God—creating everything in succession; and Elohim rests. (Gen. 1; 2:1-3.) Then we have Jehovah Elohim, and the particular condition of things under Him. This kind of repetition is universal in scripture history, when subjects are considered in a new light; as if I give Benjamin's progeny as such, and Saul's royal one, for example, as such. I am not exactly aware of three accounts, as the rationalist alleges, of man's creation. We have, besides Adam, a special account of Eve's creation. In this second chapter we have a detailed account of the condition and circumstances of man—the peculiar position he was placed in as lord of the creation—his wife's to him—out of what he was formed—how he became a living soul: details, as essential all of them, when his relationship with Jehovah Elohim was unfolded, as the historical account of Elohim's creating all things in general, among which man had his place, was in its place too.

In this there is only a perfect communication of divine truth, each thing being perfectly in its place.

Let us turn to Noah and the flood.

We have the sons of Elohim. (Chap. 6:2.) As to them and in connection with His peculiar dealings with man, Jehovah said (ver. 3), "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." We have "sons of Elohim" (ver. 4), because here the expression is characteristic. "Elohim saw" (ver. 5), because here it was God in His own nature and character looking at man as such. "Jehovah repented" (ver. 6), because here it is His special thoughts and dealings about man as His—His feelings in connection with this relationship. Again (ver. 7), Jehovah, and Jehovah in relationship with Noah. Noah (ver. 9) "walked with God:" here it was morally characteristic, not his relationship to Jehovah under that name.

"The earth was corrupt before Elohim" —again it refers to God's abstract nature and character. (Ver. 11, 12.) So (ver. 13) Elohim takes up His creation to declare its end to Noah. He had the Creator's title to destroy His creation. Elohim Himself commanded Noah what to do in this case. In chapter vii. we enter into the full relationship of God with Noah as a deliverer; and it is Jehovah, just as we saw with Adam. There Elohim created. Jehovah had to do with Adam in a special way in the garden. Here Elohim is going to destroy His creation, and Jehovah has special relationship with Noah in the ark, as we have seen in verses 3, 6-8 of chapter 6., The peculiar relative feelings of Jehovah, not the simple character and supremacy of Elohim. Yet fully to identify the two accounts and connect them, we have in chapter vii. 16, "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as Elohim had commanded him, and Jehovah shut him in." The connection of the two names here makes the double-document system absurd. Now here we have the general command of Elohim given in the preceding chapter about His creatures to preserve them, as Creator; and then Jehovah shut him, Noah, in—that is, in the same verse, the special name of relationship in the case of the chosen and faithful patriarch. The rationalist says, "The two documents may indeed in this narrative be almost re-discovered by mechanical separation." Certainly it would not be more than mechanical; for German theology nothing more, indeed, would be wanting. Again in chapter 8, in preserving mercy we have Elohim's care of His preserved creation, and its deliverance to subsist on the recovered earth again. Then Noah builds an altar

(Ver. 20), and Jehovah's name immediately appears again, because it was important to spew that it was indeed Israel's God that was thus worshipped—God in relationship with man from the beginning. Elohim then (chap 9) begins the world, so to speak, again; but the moment it is a question of relationship (ver. 26), we have Jehovah the God of Shem.

This need not be pursued farther. One point only remains to be noticed—the twos and sevens of the animals. In the accounts of Elohim's directions for saving the different races of creatures, they are directed to be taken two of every sort, the male and female, to keep them alive. Nothing can be more simple than the meaning of this. When Jehovah is stating His thoughts as to Noah, and giving His directions in respect to His relationship with man and the earth, He directs Noah to take of clean beasts by sevens, still two and two male and female. And they all go in two and two, as Elohim had commanded, thus identifying, in the text itself, the two names in a way which would make the dissevering them difficult even on the mechanical process. The reason for distinguishing the clean beasts (still two and two, male and female) is too obvious to make the smallest difficulty. The twos refer, moreover, to male and female on a general principle. One must be very hard run up for a difficulty, or for a discovery, to find a contradiction here. The fowls of the air, which went in by sevens, are meant evidently clean ones too, as may be seen, chapter 8:20.

The cases of Pharaoh and Abimelech only confirm the remarks we have made. Moreover, in the parallel part of the passage, Jehovah is used in both cases. Jehovah plagued Pharaoh with great plagues. Jehovah had fast closed up the wombs of the house of Abimelech. Only there is added in Abimelech's case, God having known Abimelech's integrity in the matter, that He (Elohim) warned Abimelech in a dream. Now here Jehovah the God of Israel would have been quite out of place; for Abimelech was a Philistine, and Abraham already distinctively called. Yet, as a gracious God in nature and character, Elohim could chastise Abimelech temporarily for his error, and warn him, though He would preserve the integrity of the family He had chosen. Here let me remark, that undoubtedly Abraham was to blame. In the day when God judges the secrets of men's hearts, all this will have its place between God and Abraham; but in His government of the world, all having fallen into idolatry, God was showing His special care over one called out in grace to bear His name, and walk under His protection. Hence that special care of him and his descendants, till there was no remedy, because they respected the name of Jehovah less than a heathen, as was shown in Zedekiah's conduct with Nebuchadnezzar. He that touched them, Jehovah's called ones, touched Jehovah Himself, who declared He would protect them as El-Shaddai, the Almighty, such a one touched the apple of his own eye. Jehovah's power as Almighty had to be made good against the apostate and guilty heathen, for the sustaining the faith of His called ones, and the knowledge that there was a God of the earth.

But the statement that these names are contrasted in Abraham's case with Pharaoh and Abimelech, is unfounded. There is no divine warning to Pharaoh; and Jehovah's care of Abraham, in judging each, is related under the same title—Jehovah.

I do not know what the rationalist means by a double account of the origin of circumcision; I know but of one, that in Gen. 17. It is referred to Elohim, but He is called, as appearing to Abraham, Jehovah, and yet gives His name as El-Shaddai. It was a command connected with the character and nature of God. They were to be a separate people to Him, and the flesh be mortified. This "was not of Moses," who brought in specially the name Jehovah as the ground of relationship, "but

of the fathers," antecedent to the special relationship of the Jews with Him, and connected with the name "God Almighty," that Abraham might be a father of many nations.

There are no two reasons for the name of Isaac. God directs his name to be called Isaac—"laughter" —as a term of joy and gladness at this peculiar blessing to Abraham. Sarah takes up the name when he is born, and says, "God hath made me to laugh;" but this is no double account of his name.

God confirms the name of Israel to Jacob; but there is no double account of its origin. On the first occasion, God had a controversy with Jacob; but blesses him, strengthens him to prevail in the conflict, and gives him the name of Israel" a prince who prevailed with God;" yet chastises him, and does not reveal Himself to him. Jacob, after this, goes up to the place where his real meeting with God in blessing was to be, and puts away idols out of his house, knowing he is going to meet Him. Then God begins by revealing freely His name, and confirms to Jacob the title He had given him before. Here there is no kind of pretense for making two accounts—one using the word "Jehovah," the other "Elohim." Jehovah is used in neither. In the case of Bethel God appeared to him when he left the land of Canaan, and he called the name of the place "Bethel." God tells him, on returning, to go up there, calling it already Bethel; and then appears a second time there to Jacob, and Jacob thereupon confirms to it the name of "Bethel." He had a double reason; but it is called, in the second part of the history, Bethel already, before he gets there. So that the case is very simple and very clear, and there is no pretense of a reason to speak of it as two distinct independent accounts which are referred to.

The name of "Beersheba" was confirmed by Isaac, when he also established by oath his boundaries there with Abimelech, as Abraham had done. These circumstances both gave occasion to this name. Being the boundary-well, the engagement was repeated; and both engagements contributed to give it this name. But here there is not the smallest ground whatever for supposing that it was inattention to some other document; for it is stated (ver. 18), "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham. And he called their names after the names by which his father had called them;" And then it goes on to give an additional personal reason why the last had the same name.

As regards God's saying, "But by my name Jehovah was I not known to them," the meaning is as simple as possible. The words are— "And Elohim spake unto Moses [in the previous verses it is 'Jehovah,' spewing bow unfounded is the supposition of their belonging to distinct documents], and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." Now here we have Elohim, Jehovah, El-Shaddai, all spoken of the one supreme God as different names; and then the Lord declares, exactly according to Genesis, that to the patriarchs He had revealed Himself as. El-Shaddai. (See Gen. 17; 35:11.) This was the name, the power of which He was specially to make good in their favor, in protecting them in their wanderings, "what time they went from one nation to another people." Now that He was calling His people, He reveals Himself to them by another name, as the ground of relationship and of the expectation of faith on their part, as the existing One "who was, and is, and is to come," though still the Almighty. He who now promised would live ever to perform, unchanged and unchangeable. Jehovah was God's proper

and peculiar name with His redeemed people. He had never taken this name as the ground of His dealings with Abraham, nor laid it as the basis on which his faith was to act. the New Testament, God takes yet another—that of Father. Hence He says, “I will be a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” That is, God (Elohim), who had the two former names, Jehovah (or “Lord”) and Shaddai, (“Almighty”), now took this special one of Father with the saints. From the first calling out of the world to be separate from it, God Almighty, Jehovah, Father, characterized successively the position which God assumed for faith. Nothing can be plainer. I believe He is now God Almighty; but it is not the name by which He is known to me. He is known to me by the name of Father. “To us there is one God, the Father.”

If this be all German discoveries are worth, they deserve to be designated by a name which I shall not, however, permit myself to give them. I am sure they are not distinguished by any intelligence of the bearing of the work they are exercising their wits upon, nor of the force of the expressions contained in it.

Chapter 261

Thoughts on Galatians 3

The apostle has been speaking to the Galatians in chapter 2 as having had a sense of, what they had gained in Christ, and now in chapter 3 he has to address them thus: '" Who hath bewitched you to make you go back to law when you have been justified not by the works of the law, but in Christ?" is impossible for a man to be justified by the law. I cannot live to God till my accounts are settled with God. I have no fortune to spend until my debts are paid. The effect of the law being given is to kill man, but the apostle can triumph in the killing power of the law, because it has killed Christ instead of him. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless," &c.

All the promises were made to Christ, or rather confirmed to Christ. They were first made to Abraham (Gen. 12) and then there are gospel promises in view of the Gentile. It is "thee," not "thee and thy seed," as in Gen. 17, where the nation is spoken of, and which was to be as numerous as the sand on the sea shore. This is a Jewish promise, but in Gen. 22 it is to Abraham's "seed," not to him and his seed, but to His seed (Christ); for Isaac received back from the dead in a figure is a type of Christ, and it was to Isaac that the promise was confirmed or ratified, though given to Abraham.

The promises are taken up in Christ, as risen; and this is of the last importance to us, because before they are made over to us; there is a righteousness wrought, put for us. The law comes in meanwhile to raise the question of righteousness; and in such a way as to condemn men. God was righteous and the question has to be raised on that subject, not as to goodness. Man could not meet the demands of the law, because it required a perfect righteousness'; but Christ could and did, and has put us into the place in which we can receive the promise. "The law has, power: over a man as long as he liveth, but when is dead, he is freed from that law." Well then the law has no more power over me. If a man who is in prison dies, there can be nothing mere done to him. The apostle not only says "dead to the law," but "crucified with Christ." I have died to the law through Christ having died to it. It killed Christ, and now I live by Christ:

The death of Christ closed the whole scene morally. It was the end of law, the end of man, the end of the world; and a whole new scene commenced from that point.

There are two ways of looking at righteousness. If I had kept the law, I should have, been a righteous man. But to keep it I must love God with all my heart, soul, and spirit, and my neighbor as myself. This is human righteousness, which is never found in any man, save in Christ. The law is founded 'on the knowledge of good and evil which he got by sinning; then there is a righteousness needed to meet its requirements. There is another thing needed, which we read of in scripture, and that is, God's righteousness. All that God is was displayed in Christ; human righteousness was perfect in Him; but there was another thing needed, and this need He met on' the cross. He was not keeping the law on the cross. If God were to show perfect righteousness towards sinners, they must die. Then there would be no love displayed. But if love were shown to the sinner irrespective of the question about his sins, there would be no righteousness. Christ

glorified God on the cross in the display of His righteousness and His love. Then, having thus glorified God, He had a title to be glorified by God, and therefore God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in glory, There is the righteousness of God: All in which Christ glorified God on the cross, I am accepted in; therefore there is more than the cleansing from my. sins, through the blood of Christ. All the devotedness of Christ to His Father's will as far as death, is accepted of God, and by virtue of God's acceptance of Him, He is at the right hand of God, and in that I stand. I am as Christ, as Luther has expressed it.

Christ was born of a woman; born under the law. As a man He was obedient to it; but God could not be obedient to the law. He emptied Himself and became obedient, &c. "If a law had been given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law."

Law was not given till long after promise. The law was not given in Paradise. There was a law, but the question of right and wrong was not raised, but simply obedience then. There was no knowledge of good and evil in paradise, and therefore no law required to measure the evil. The delusion people fall into about trying to be justified by law, is owing to man taking up that, which God gave to prove what a sinner he is, to work out a righteousness for himself. The law was not given to bestow life, but to make sin appear sin.

As a man, Christ did what He was bound to do, in fulfilling the law; and therefore there would have been none in that righteousness to impute to us. If He had failed (which of course He could not)—if He had had a blemish or a spot, He would not have been a fit sacrifice for our sins. He had to make good to God, He had to make good before Satan, a perfect human righteousness. Therefore this was a part of the thing because it proved the fitness of the sacrifice.

Promise preceded law, and it was abstract and unconditional. It was revealed that it was part of God's counsels that they were to be blessed, but the question of righteousness was untouched by promise. The law comes in and raises that afterward.

If God had made the accomplishment of promise dependent on the fulfillment of the law, it would not have been pure promise. If you make a promise to your child, and be disobeys you afterward, you do not make him forfeit the promise, to do which would be to break your word; but you cannot pass over the offense without taking any notice of it. Your promise stands, but you must deal with him about his conduct, and not let him take what you have promised him, as if he deserved it. God made a promise, and man would come in and take the promise on the ground of his desert. Then God must bring in a law to prove his unrighteousness. The gospel is not promise but good news, after all is broken, to put us into possession of divine righteousness. Israel in their folly took up the law, as being able to keep it, instead of throwing themselves back upon God's promise to Abraham, and in their pride and presumption they thus took on themselves that which God alone could fulfill as the accomplishment of promise. Now the promise was really given to Christ. How? Was He to enjoy it alone? No! This was not God's thought. But how then can He bring in all these sinners, these law-breakers? He works out a righteousness for them before He claims the promise, that we poor sinners might share the promise: and this is the gospel.

Much as man boasts of conscience, he gained a conscience by sinning. There are two characters of conscience—the conscience of responsibility to God, and the knowledge of good and evil, and this man got by sinning.

The promise is made to Christ (not the Jewish, but the original promise of blessing). God does not make a promise to man as a sinner—He could not do that; but the serpent is told what He will do to Christ; and Abraham becomes the root through which the promise is to come. “He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” After that the law comes in to show the utter sinfulness of man: in his lusts, he is corrupt; and in his will, perverse. Thus man, as to corruption and rebellion, was proved to be bad by the law. So in 1 Cor. 15 it is said “the strength of sin is the law.” It brought out the sin which was there already, because it immediately created the desire to do the thing forbidden.

Man showed his inability to take the promise, because Christ was the embodiment of the promise, and they rejected Him. Man is left by the cross, convicted not only of a bad conscience and a broken law, but of a rejected promise.

Ver. 13, 14. The blessing is put upon all who are along with Abraham, through Jesus Christ, and the curse on all under the law. The promise takes its unhindered course through the blessing of Abraham which comes by faith. God could not disannul, by another act, a previous one.

The mind of man having a good opinion of himself, the law brings out all the rebellion of the will. The law was not against the promises, but put man under obligations. The law does not promise life, and gives no power to do it, because it does not give life.

Ver. 20. This is on the ground of the contrast between promise and law. When the law was given, there was a mediator needed, because there are two parties, God and the people to whom the law is given. The stability of promise depends on the faithfulness of One: there is no need of two.

Under law, God does not reveal Himself. He reveals what He requires of man, but there is no love, and no grace in love. The mediator Moses reported the words of God to the people. The thought in this verse, “A mediator is not of one, but God is one,” is not about Christ, the Mediator, as in 1 Tim. 2, but rather the abstract notion, that if you have a mediator you must have two parties; whilst, by contrast, a promise is given from one. God giving promise and Christ receiving it are one—God is one. The Church, as such, was never the subject of promise. It was hidden from ages and generations, and revealed now.

That which makes obscurity in the passage is that the conclusion is not drawn, though the premises are laid down.

Covenant in scripture is different from covenant as understood by us in common language. It is the form of dealing God takes with man, not an agreement between God and man, or man and God.

The Church gets all the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, because in Christ. Thus we have all the moral blessing of the new covenant in the Spirit, though not in the letter. “The blood of the everlasting covenant” in Heb. 13 is that which is finished and done with, and will go all the way through, and is available for all. The blood will never lose its value. It is the ground-work of all God’s dealings with man in all ages. The full display of the value of Christ’s death was made in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The power of it was proved in the salvation of the thief on the cross. Psalm al. may be a sort of embodiment of the book, or counsel between God and the Son from all eternity, and the divine power of the Son was shown in His being able to accomplish what was written in the volume of the book. For there was as much the power of God needed to be able

to say, “Lo I come to do thy will,” as to will it. If Christ undertook to do God’s will, He must be able to create a world if God wills it. The Father gives them to the Son, and He takes them back with Him into glory. The “sheep” in Heb. 13:20 are not looked at in the unity of the body, but as individuals (as they are throughout the epistle), and in that way I want the power of the blood.

“The law is a schoolmaster unto Christ.” God does not reveal Himself in law. The schoolmaster is not the Father, but one under whom the child is put to be taken care of, until he is fit to come into direct communication with the Father’s mind. Under law, it was like saying to a child under age, Do this, and do that, without giving reasons. But ye (those who are brought to be Abraham’s seed by being put in Christ) are all the children (sons) of God, through faith in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 262

The Atoning Death of Christ: Correction

I am sorry to think that any should need a word of explanation on a phrase or two in page 319, Col. 1. Nothing I venture to say is farther from the author than denying the resting place of his soul, and the doctrine he has ever preached—the atoning death of Christ. This is not the question, but the value of “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” as compared with “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Is not the one the expression of Christ’s total abandonment by God on the cross for our sins? Does not the other equally convey His departure after this in perfect confidence in and dependence on His Father? Is this last the expression of God’s judgment on sin? The author does not deny death in the fullest sense by speaking of Christ’s passing through it in His soul; and when he speaks of its being “more than pure,” the meaning is explained by what follows” which has put away sin.” Is this questioned? Is it not more than pure? Pure it always was; now that He had thus died, it went to His Father more than pure, i.e., the witness of redemption already effected. And this was proclaimed to man in resurrection. Curt and abrupt phraseology I admit; but I repudiate the wicked imputation put on our brother’s words. Even the greatest of inspired men presents things hard to be understood; is he to be blamed? or the Spirit who used him?

Chapter 263

A Living God and a Living People

Psalm 115;

A living God, to whom all praise and glory is due, and a living people to praise Him, might fitly be the titles of these two psalms. Psa. 115 speaks of the living God, and Psa. 116 of the living people. By whom they were written we are not told. That they are the utterances of one under the immediate guidance of the prophetic Spirit is clear, for they refer to days yet to come, and speak of a time of tribulation which has not yet dawned upon the earth.

Psa. 115 speaks of the living God. “Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake.” What a combination have we here. Mercy and truth have met together. We can sing of this now. Israel will one day sing of it; for of them, not the Church (as verse 9 shows), the psalm speaks. Brought in consciously guilty before God, having failed to stand before Him on the ground of their own righteousness, the godly remnant will sing of this, and turn to give Him all the praise and the glory. Jerusalem made a praise in the earth, the Jews (so long despised and ill treated) the nation to whom others will seek to join themselves (Isa. 62:7; Zech. 8:23); all this, blessed though it will be, will afford them no ground for boasting, but full ground on which to ascribe all praise and glory to Jehovah.

As yet, however, for them it is a walk of faith. The salvation of Israel has not come out of Zion. In the land, an earnest that all will be accomplished concerning them, but not yet freed from troubles, the Gentiles not humbled, nor idolatry cast out of Canaan, they notice the taunt of the heathen,” Where is now their God?” Where was He? None of them had seen Him. Of His mighty acts His people might treasure up a remembrance, but these acts had been displayed on behalf of their forefathers. His aim—where was it? What was His likeness, His appearance? Where could the heathen see Him? Man by nature cannot understand faith in divine things. The world cannot receive the Holy Ghost, because it sees Him not. The unconverted heathen will not believe in the God of Israel, till He makes bare His arm and confounds those opposed to Him. To the taunt of the heathen, faith, however, has an answer: “As for our God, he is in the heavens.” To those who walked by sight this might seem a poor reply. If He was God, why did He not appear to rescue His servants? If He was the living God, how could He allow His own to be persecuted to death? If He was the only God, why did He not prove it by entering into conflict with all those who claimed to be God? He was in the heavens was faith’s answer. In one sense this seemed but little to say; in another sense it was a great deal, for it claimed for Jehovah to be in that place, which all acknowledge is God’s proper place—heaven. Saying this, the faithful can wait for Him. He will come. Psa. 1:3 has affirmed it. They do not, however, ask Him to come. They await His time, for they know Him, and though unseen, they know He is conscious of all that goes on. All that they have suffered from others they accept as from Him. “He hath done whatsoever he pleased.” A God in heaven, acting in sovereign will and power, such was their God. How beautiful is their simple confession regarding Jehovah. “He hath done whatsoever, or all, that be pleased.” Bitter indeed was their lot, but it was God’s will. No murmur escapes their lips. Present ease might have been

purchased by apostasy, but then they would have forsaken the only help and shield—the living and the true God. “He hath done whatsoever he pleased,” is their stay under their trying circumstances. He held the reins of government. The blessing for His people not having come (verse 12 speaks of it as future), they wait for it. What but divine power could keep these souls faithful in the time of abounding iniquity? But kept by God, their eye single, they have light to see what is around them, and discern what the heathen did not.

These heathen who taunted them—what were they? what were their gods? God Jehovah was unseen, yet seeing all that went on. These gods could be seen, but could not see. God was the living God, who dwelt in heaven. These had the form of living creatures, but without life, and were found on earth. He acted as He pleased. These could not at all. They had their origin in the craftsman’s imagination, and owed their form to the artificer’s skill. “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands” —worthless objects, except for the value of the metal of which they were made. The work of men’s hands, what could they do for man? How could a dying creature make a living God to save him? What need of a God for the one who could make one? What mockery, what delusion was all this! Man could mold the metal into human form, shape it according to the noblest of God’s creatures on earth; but where was the life, where the will, where the power? “They have a mouth, but they speak not; they have eyes, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; a nose have they, but they smell not; hands, but they handle not; feet, but they walk not; they speak not through their throat.” Mouth, eyes, ears, nose, hands, feet, throat, all were there. Outwardly, there was nothing wanting. Yet they lacked one thing, the breath of life. That came from God; and man with all his will could not impart it. Like a corpse, with all the members complete, there was no life. In one respect they differed from a corpse. The corpse had lived; God had imparted life to it. These never had lived; for man was their creator, not God. Such were their gods. To see them was sufficient, if the eye was single, to discern what they were. But what of the heathen who made them? “They that make them are like unto them.” They too might outwardly have the appearance of being living souls, whilst in reality they were dead. Nor they only, but also “all they that trust in them.” Such was faith’s judgment about God, the idols, and their devotees. Poor, feeble, persecuted might be those who looked up to God; rich, powerful, prosperous, those who worshipped the idols; but these latter were really dead before God, however devoted, and apparently good they might be. To make the idol or to trust in the idol, proclaimed the person to be destitute of spiritual life.

To whom then should Israel trust, but in Jehovah? Strange it might be thought that such an exhortation should be needed. Could not all see the idols, and learn what they were? Had not their forefathers suffered for idolatry? Had they not for centuries abjured it? All true. Yet we read that the majority of the nations will return to this sin, and again worship idols. (Isa. 2:20; 17:7, 8; 30:22; 31:7; Hos. 14:3). And the exhortation to trust in Jehovah will be the more needed, because in that day those who apostatize will be outwardly prosperous, having more than heart could wish, and the waters of a full cup wrung out to them. (Psa. 73:3-12.) How truly therefore will it be a word in season, “O Israel, trust thou in Jehovah. He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust ye in Jehovah, he is their help and their shield.” And, since Jehovah, the true God, is the help and shield of those that trust in Him, such favors are not confined to Israel. So the exhortation takes a wider range, “Ye that fear Jehovah, trust ye in Jehovah, He is their help and their shield.” It is the day of faith for all, whether Jews or Gentiles,

who fear God, not the bright joyous time of deliverance. It is the time to trust, but to trust in Him, who is at once a help and a shield.

Language suited to saints surely this is. But what right had these to take it up? Were they not sinners themselves? Were they not suffering for their forefathers' sins in rejecting the Messiah of God? How then could they exhort each other, and the Gentiles, to trust in Jehovah? Their confidence is based on what He has done. "Jehovah hath been mindful of us." He had remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had remembered, too, the land. Their forefathers had forgotten Jehovah. He has remembered their children. "He will bless." They are hopeful, nay, sure. "He will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron." Nor does the blessing stop there. "He will bless them that fear him, both small and great." Israel, as God's earthly people, have a special place before Him. Aaron's house, as the earthly priesthood, have peculiar privileges from Him. (Ezek. 40:46; 44:16.) But Gentiles as well as Jews shall be blessed. None shall be overlooked in that day. How often have deserving people been neglected by the great ones or the earth! Jehovah will bless all who fear Him. That Israel should be blessed on earth by Him was nothing new to witness. He blessed them richly under David and Solomon. But the Gentiles are to be blessed likewise. Simeon predicted the revelation of the Gentiles (Luke 2:22, Greek) as one result of the Lord's incarnation. How, as we know, they were blessed when brought into the Church. By and by they will be blessed, when Israel are again owned as God's people. God will bring them to His holy mountains and make them joyful in His house of prayer, accepting their burnt-offerings and sacrifices on His altar. (Isa. 56:6, 7.) Ezekiel also speaks of this when announcing that the stranger shall have an inheritance in the midst of the tribes of Israel. (Chap. 47:23.) Full, indeed, will that blessing be, for "Jehovah," the Psalmist says, "will increase you more and more, you and your children." How clear is it that we are here occupied with an earthly people in millennial days! Not your children after you, but "you and your children," both together. And how complete must that blessing be, when the Creator of heaven and earth pours it down on them I If any doubt the accuracy of the statement, that we have here an earthly people, not the Church, nor those who will form part of any company of the heavenly saints, the psalm is explicit on the subject. "The heaven even the heavens are for Jehovah, but the earth hath he given to the children of men." Earth, not heaven, is man's appointed place, and the sphere on which those spoken of are to move. They speak of the dead as those apart from them, and preservation on earth, not resurrection, as the hope they have embraced. "The dead praise not Jehovah, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless Jehovah from this time forth and for evermore. Hallelujah." What an answer can they give to the heathen who know not God! Jehovah will bless His people, and they alive for evermore will praise Him. For them there is no death.

Such was their confidence. But what was their position" This psalm (116.) brings it out. "I have loved, for Jehovah hears my voice, my supplication." Confidence in Him, from the knowledge that He hears, draws out the heart's affection. The object of the saint's love is unexpressed. There was no need to express it. All would understand who it must be by the context— "Jehovah bears may voice, my supplication." The commandment to love the Lord, however often repeated, will not awaken any love to Him within the soul; but the grace shown will awaken desires and evoke affections which have not previously been seen. So the saint says, "I have loved," not because he was so commanded, though the commandment was surely before his eyes, but because Jehovah

has done something for him. “He hears his supplications.” It is not the voice of praise and thanksgiving; in verse 17 that comes in. It is the voice of supplication, of one in trouble, Jehovah hears. How can he feel sure of that before the full answer comes? “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me.” Past answers and preservation to the present tell that He has inclined His ear. He is a God who hears the cry of distress, so he will call on Him as long as he lives. “And while I live [lit. “in my days”], I will call.” The need was great. “The sorrows of death have compassed me, and the pains of hell have got hold of me; I find trouble and sorrow.” Death staring him in the face, trouble and sorrow his present experience, in Jehovah alone is his confidence. How different was his position to that of the heathen! He was learning the value of his God, a firm stay in time of trouble. The heathen had gods in plenty, but not one could hear or answer. Which of them had inclined their ears to the supplications of their devotees? But Jehovah, though unseen, had really hearkened to His servant. The end, however, had not yet come; so he adds, “And on the name of Jehovah I will call,” and then gives the substance of his prayer, “I beseech thee, O Jehovah, deliver my soul” (i.e., save me alive, for this is the desire of his heart). And the character of Jehovah emboldens him to do this. “Gracious is Jehovah and righteous, yea, our God is merciful.” Gracious and merciful He had proclaimed Himself before Moses (Ex. 34); righteous is He in all His acts. Daniel (9:47) and Nehemiah (9:33) owned He was righteous in casting His people out of their land. Ezra could speak of His righteousness (9:15) in preserving a remnant according to His promise. The godly in Israel will yet have cause to own He is righteous, when He acts in accordance with the vindication of Himself expressed in Ezek. 18:27. He had declared if the wicked forsook his way, and should do that which is lawful and right, he should save his soul alive. Was not the godly one an instance of this? Then God would act according to His character, and keep him alive on the earth.

Moreover, Jehovah was characterized by preserving the simple. As He has acted, He can act. What a resource it is to find shelter and confidence in the very character of God Himself! He is faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Faith lays hold of this, and buoys the heart up in the midst of troubles that would otherwise as a water-flood completely overwhelm it. “I have been brought low,” he adds, “but he will save me.” And fortified with the confidence which God’s actions in past times inspire, he can say, whilst in verse 4 he cries to Jehovah for deliverance, in verse 7, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee.” Much had He done in preserving him already, as verse 9 recounts, He will do (he feels sure) all that is requisite: “I shall walk before Jehovah in the lands of the living.” Over-confident, some might say, but what less could he look for? “I have believed, therefore I speak.” Fully assured of what Jehovah will do, he speaks of it openly. He would walk before Jehovah in the lands of the living. Appear, antes might belie his expectations, but God would not fail to perfect the deliverance of His saints, Greatly had he been afflicted, He had said in “his haste, All men are liars.” Now believing on Jehovah, he gives utterance to what he is assured of; and, putting himself in the position of one already delivered, goes on to tell out what he will do for the Lord.

What then could he do for One who needs no help from His creatures (see Psa. 50:12), and for whom “all the forests of Lebanon are not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering?” (Isa. 40:16.) How could he recompense Him? There could be but one way—to receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of Jehovah. He could not add one ray to God’s glory. He was to receive from Him and so glorify Him. What a position is this to be placed in! He

had said in verse 4, he would call on His name for salvation. When saved, he will not forget Him. “My vows will I pay to Jehovah now in the presence of all his people.” Worship comes in when deliverance is completed. As delivered, and because delivered, not to be delivered, does he worship, Publicly saved, he will publicly own it. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” He learns this by being kept alive on the earth; for it is of saints kept alive, not of saints who die, that this verse speaks, as the context shows. Rev. 14:13 will afford comfort for those who die during the tribulation. Here it is one preserved alive who speaks. We have something analogous to this in Psa. 72:14. “He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight.” God will not allow it to be shed. So here he looks to be preserved from death. And hence he prays, “O Jehovah, I beseech thee. I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.” All will be accomplished, and he will stand before Jehovah in the courts of His house at Jerusalem. The heathen might, as they surely will, destroy the temple, and besiege Jerusalem; but the courts of the Lord’s house shall again resound with the voice of joy and praise proceeding from a ransomed people. For the king shall build the temple of the Lord, as Solomon did in his day (Zech. 6:13), and Jerusalem be publicly owned as the city where Jehovah is (Ezek. 48:35)a full answer to the taunt of the heathen, which elicited from the godly remnant, that “He was in heaven.”

A translation of part of Psa. 116 is subjoined.

I have loved, because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplication, because He has inclined His ear unto me, and in my days (i.e., while I live) I will call. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold of me; I find trouble and sorrow. And on the name of Jehovah I will call; O Jehovah, I beseech thee, deliver my soul (i.e., life): gracious is Jehovah, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. Jehovah preserveth the simple. I was brought low, but He will save me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling. I will walk before Jehovah in the lands of the living. I have believed, therefore I speak.

Chapter 264

A Well of Springing Water

(Gen. 26)

Every reader of the scripture knows, and every child of God accepts, the great cardinal principle announced in the Epistle to the Hebrews, without faith it is impossible to please God." And each one acquainted with the gospels will remember the words, "if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed ye should say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should obey you." Moreover, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." God is not only good in Himself, but supremely good in the exercise of His goodness to the objects of His grace; and this is the mainstay and guarantee to faith, in its deepest trials, or in its largest expectations.

It is with faith in the patriarchal age that we shall have more particularly to do in this chapter (Gen. 26), and with Isaac as affording us an example of its earlier exercises, by which he obtained a "good report," and won a place in the chronicles of the illustrious dead, who still speak in Heb. 11, "of whom the world was not worthy." This is God's epitaph on the tombstones of His departed.

In the walk with God, which His people are called to take, faith will not only be rejoiced to keep close to Him, but will surely be tested by the contrariety of things around us, springing either from the flesh in us, or the corruptions that are in the world, or else from Satan. Besides these, God will try the faith of His people on their way, that He may be honored; and so we read, "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God."

In the patriarchal days, a famine was the test ofttimes which God providentially, in the way of His government of the world, allowed to come in between faith and Himself. "And there was a famine in the land beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham." What will Isaac do now? where will he turn in this dilemma? Will his faith in God use this famine as putting the all-sufficiency of God to the proof? or, will he, by taking thought for himself, allow God to prove to Isaac that the famine is too much for his faith? What a moment is this in our history as well as in Isaac's! "He went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines." The eye and heart of God are ever toward the child of faith, even when we are looking away from Him; so we read, "The Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in the land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee."

What can be so encouraging to the felt weakness, which quails before a great difficulty, as this re-assuring love of God? To know that the Lord takes such an interest in His people as to make everything that concerns us His own concern, if we will but give glory to Him, by leaving Him to spew that He needs the famine to prove how superior He is to it! God is thus seen not only coming down into the little circle of Isaac's misgivings and fears to sustain him, but leading out the expectations of this resurrection heir of promise into the breadth and length of God's own purposes touching Isaac's seed, and the possession of all the countries round him, and in the sure covenant that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." What was the famine in the

presence of such a God, and in the face of almighty power and faithfulness, which would secure this widespread blessing, and through this very Isaac too? What joy to a believer when he can thus read his own present safety, even to the very hairs of his head, in the light of the coming glory of God, with which He has associated us as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!”

“And Isaac dwelt in Gerar” as a stranger, though in the land of promise; and Abimelech and the Philistines will be, in the future day of Canaan’s glory, only what the famine really was to Isaac in Gerar—an opportunity for God to make a way for Himself, and, in doing this, to make a high-road for the faith that follows Him; for faith traveled in those days with God Almighty! No wonder “faith should be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” to the holy brethren of to-day, the partakers of the heavenly calling.

But to proceed with our chapter, the resurrection heir of promise, dwelling in the land upon this warrant from God, thinks it no liberty, and certainly asks no leave from the king of the Philistines, to sow in the land. “Then Isaac sowed and received in the same year an hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him.” What grace on the part of God, and what joy springs up in the soul, whether then or now, under the consciousness of doing the things that please God, and receiving blessing in our individual path and work “an hundredfold,” and in the same year. How like the God we know! True, the conditions of our service now as disciples are somewhat changed, but what of that? Discipleship will be content and glad to be as the Master and Lord; and should they be given out to us under the terms of following a rejected Christ in the world which has cast Him out, accompanied by “leaving father, or mother, wife, or houses, or lands,” still the covenanted promise is, “he shall receive an hundredfold more now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world to come, life everlasting.”

“And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great.” No, we are not called to serve a “hard master, reaping where he has not sown, nor gathering where he has not strawed.” The man waxed great, though here again the change in dispensation has made a corresponding difference in what true greatness consists. “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many.” And Isaac “had possession of flocks and herds, and a great store of husbandry: and the Philistines envied him.” The contrast must be always after this pattern between the man with whom God is and the men who, though they be in present occupation, are to be driven out, whether then or by and by, when the Lord—who is now “heir of all things” by resurrection title—comes into actual possession by righteous power. In the meanwhile we are content with the same holding as taught us in the first Corinthian epistle, “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” Was there ever such a conveyance as this and held on such security?

“And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.” It is of great consequence when the Abimelechs can discover the difference which God has put between flesh and spirit, between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, and make that the ground of their separation, or of our departure. “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” and again “thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass

together."

The children of God will do well to hold what Isaac held so firmly (viz., God takes care of His own promises and covenants with His people), for He "will not give his glory to another;" and they must take heed to dig their wells, and to uncover those which the craft or power of the enemy may have stopped. Of what use was the increase of flocks and herds (when God's blessing was reckoned by cattle) if the Abrahams and Isaacs did not acquit themselves on their part by digging the wells of water for them to drink? This is their responsibility. "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham, and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them." Faith re-produces itself; and how precious when faith got its title from God to do the strongest things like Isaac with his father's wells, and to reiterate his right by establishing their original names! Nor will be forgotten the faith of a later day, when it "uncovered the roof where Jesus was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay, and when Jesus saw their faith he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." What a lesson are we here taught by the Philistines at Gerar, or the Scribes at Capernaum; and what a stopping of the wells in either case, and what an unstopping! "Why doth this man speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

"And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water." How in keeping is Isaac with the double character in which he typically stood as the heir of all promise, and the heir in resurrection too (for Abraham received this son from the dead in a figure) as he finds this well of living water! And in truth we may say that it is only as we realize and take the place of union with Christ in resurrection-life and power, that there can be any good well-diggings on our parts, as having received the Holy Ghost, and maintaining our title in redemption to go through the length and breadth of the promised land. All other springs are dry.

At this point shall we not remind one another of Him who once rested upon the patriarchal well (of which Jacob, drank, and his children, and his cattle), and, sitting thereon, superseded it, and took the place of it? What a well of living water He presented to the woman of Samaria, as He offered Himself to her faith, and said, "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 be would have given thee living water." "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Oh, to have been at this well with the Lord and to have settled everything between the conscience and God with Jesus as she did; to have come thirsty, and found the water which springeth up into everlasting life; to have come with her waterpot, but only to leave it, and be detained at the well by Christ Himself: what an exchange!—what gain!

"And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with the herdmen of Isaac, saying, The water is ours, and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him." Of all the controversies perhaps those are the hottest which break out between herdmen and herdmen, amongst the flock of God. The title by digging was indisputably Isaac's, for his servants found the well of springing water. But right by tenure of the country was still with Abimelech. From this arose the confusion and strife of that day, and from the selfsame thing are continued the strivings among the herdmen of the present time.

“And they digged another well, and strove for that also, and he called the name of it Sitnah or hatred,” nor does the contention cease until the distinct separation of the heir of promise and resurrection-title takes place, from the herdmen of Gerar. Abraham the patriarch of faith, had adopted the same course in earlier days with Lot. “And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren: is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” Lot in Sodom, and Abraham in Canaan, measured their distances, and the respective histories of one and the other tell their own tale, and have a tongue for the opened ear of this day.

What instructive lessons are set us in these two wells of Esek and Sitnah, and bow many of the Lord’s people, shrinking from separation as from a viper, go on with the contentions and strifes, till the disputants, weary of all that stamped a character originally on their conflict, give in, and say when fainting, “What advantage shall the birthright be to me?” and sell it like Esau for a mess of pottage! The acceptance of this principle has produced, between the Church and the world, that monster system of iniquity pointed out in the Apocalypse, “Upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth!”

“And Isaac removed from thence and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and be said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.” It is in this well of Rehoboth that faith will always find its fingerpost, and secure resting-place. And how many thousands in this century alone have proved the blessedness of following the Lord fully and leaving the herd men of Gerar, and their wrath, at the same moment!

Separation from evil, when in fellowship with the Spirit, is separation unto God in true holiness, and in the title of Christ the appointed heir in resurrection-life and glory. What is this but real strength in the power of the Holy Ghost? This is to the Church of God what in type we read in the Book of Numbers, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; say ye unto it: The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves.” We must follow where God leads on His people, or be ruined by committing whoredom over again with the daughters of Moab, “when they called the people of Israel unto the sacrifices of their gods.”

“And Isaac went up from thence [Rehoboth] unto Beersheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake.” How precious to the soul, when the brightest hopes of covenanted blessing are written out to the full upon the sure ground of the Lord’s own faithfulness to His own promises and to Himself! What safety and peace do the heavenly people realize now, as we read in the progressive steps of a Father’s love towards ourselves, “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” “And Isaac builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants digged a well.” Near the heart of Jehovah for blessing, and under the shadow of the Almighty for security, were “the pillar and the cloud” of patriarchal days; and what a green spot for the altar, and the tent, and the springing well of bygone times! All that the pilgrim worshipper needs is found in the very

place where Jehovah manifests Himself, and proclaims His name as the God of Abraham, or as the God of Israel; or as now, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How truly, we may say, is the break down in worship, in these failing and faulty days, to be accounted for by the independency which will erect its “altar” where it pleases, and pitch its “tent” towards the well-watered plains of Sodom, and call upon “the name of the Lord” anyhow and anywhere! How this departure from the true character of worship is deepened when the worshipper has lost the perception morally of the perfectness which the presence of the Lord with the heir of resurrection, under the fullness of covenanted blessing (like Isaac), brings into the picture; as also that the correspondence on our part, whether then or now, must needs be “the altar,” “the tent,” and the “living well,” and then the out-breakings of heart and soul by “calling on the name of the Lord.” “The Father seeketh such to worship him, as worship him in spirit and in truth.” May the Lord lead His people back to Himself by giving them to unite these things together once more.

Little does Abimelech know of the value and meaning of these pledges and blessings between the Lord and His typical heir, of all the promises in resurrection-title; but the outward eye can see who the man is upon whom the favor of God rests. So “Abimelech went to Isaac from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee; and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, that thou wilt do us no hurt.” This part of the history is of great prophetic interest, inasmuch as the Gentiles are to be blessed through Israel, and will be so in the coming millennial times. “Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people;” or, as in Zechariah, “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” The order of God for the earth is, “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit.” And Abimelech, and his friend, and his captain, pay suit and do homage to the incoming heir of promise, and make a covenant that Isaac and the nation will do them no hurt in the season of their greatness and renown.

Of course, the Church—the body and bride of Christ, the mystery kept secret till Paul—is not in this picture; and it is of great importance not to confound the earthly people, and the Gentiles in their blessings below, with the heavenly people and their calling by a risen and ascended Christ to all spiritual blessings above; who in the meantime, while waiting for the Lord’s coming, are put into the place of separation from all else. “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcision nor uncircumcision, male nor female, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all” —a precious and peculiar portion of the Church.

And Abimelech said unto “Isaac, Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” The Gentiles shall come bending unto thee; “kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers,” and great shall be the peace of my people. How blessed to turn the burdened heart away from all that now groans and languishes under the bondage of corruption, and the penalties righteously inflicted on man for sin, to that bright prophetic morning which shall arise without a cloud, and reveal the Lord Himself as the second Adam and the true Israel, the securer and unfolder of every promise to the

nation and to the Gentiles; holding all things, as He then will, in the double title of redemption by His own blood and of maintaining it in the power of resurrection life and glory; the digging of wells superseded and gone to give place to rivers of pleasures. “Thy peace shall flow like a river, and righteousness be multiplied like the waves of the sea.” “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee: and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

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